

COWTOWN AND THE COLOR LINE: DESEGREGATING FORT WORTH'S
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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Introduction

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote the "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" in 1963, sharing his disappointment that "I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Councilor or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice."¹ This dissertation is a study of one such community - Fort Worth, Texas - that prized order over justice.

Fort Worth began in 1849 when the United States Army commissioned a line of forts on the Texas frontier. A year later, nearly six hundred white residents, along with sixty-five enslaved African Americans, lived in Fort Worth. Despite the presence of slavery from the town's beginning, Fort Worth residents gradually identified themselves with the western frontier rather than the legacies of the Deep South. Much of this identity stemmed from Fort Worth's hosting of cattlemen, cattle drives, and cowboys.

In the 1860s, Texas cowboys began driving cattle from regions in Texas along the Chisholm Trail to Abilene, Kansas, where workers loaded cattle onto trains and shipped them to markets in the eastern United States. The Chisholm Trail ran from Austin, Texas, through Fort Worth towards Kansas. Because of its location on the Chisholm Trail, Fort Worth became a major destination for cattle drives, earning the moniker "Cowtown." A railroad company established the Texas and Pacific Railway station in Fort Worth in 1876. The railway station and later slaughterhouses cemented Fort Worth's reputation as the cattle capital of the United States and fostered the city's identity as "where the West begins." Cowtown's history allowed Fort Worth residents to

¹ Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," 12 April 1963, (San Francisco: Harper, 1994).

view themselves as different from those in other Texas cities and claim a more western than southern identity. Despite its claims to a frontier heritage, Fort Worth functioned under the traditional southern institutions of segregation and racism, particularly when it came to educating minority students.

Fort Worth identified itself as “western” rather than “southern,” and especially prided itself on providing “equal” educational opportunities for white and black children. Although Fort Worth schools were a marked improvement over other Deep South schools, the educational facilities and scholastic systems provided for white and black students were by no means equal. Cowtown’s dueling and inconsistent heritage - western in self-definition but southern in regard to race relations – makes Fort Worth simultaneously anomalous as a western city yet also a microcosm of the impact of various Supreme Court integration decisions on a Jim Crow metropolis. Despite Fort Worth’s curious civil rights history, historians have yet to explore the city’s integration of its public schools. Early students of traditional civil rights history, which generally covers the years following World War II until the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and focuses on school and public place desegregation, typically have examined the movement in Deep South regions, ignoring areas that saw less violent battles over Jim Crow restrictions.

The presence of photographers and reporters at civil rights voting drives, protests, and sit-ins brought the Civil Rights Movement to the attention of both Americans and the world. Television stations all over the world broadcast pictures of Bull Conner loosing dogs on marchers and Governor George Wallace blocking African American students from entering their high school. Initially, researchers of the Civil Rights Movement

studied Deep South States like South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi in order to present the struggles and actions of civil rights workers. In spite of this attention, historians have largely overlooked the Civil Rights Movement in states outside of the Deep South. Recent scholars have only begun to study black activism in places like Kentucky and Maryland.² William H. Chafe's landmark tome, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, explores the Civil Rights Movement in another progressive southern city, Greensboro, North Carolina, but the movement in Texas remains largely unexplored.³ Notable historians like Alwyn Barr, Michael Gillette, and James SoRelle approached the immense and largely unstudied topic of African American history in Texas and produced seminal works like Barr's *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1523-1995*, Gillette's dissertation "The NAACP in Texas, 1937-1957," and SoRelle's works on the African American communities in Houston and in Waco.⁴ James Smallwood's *Struggle for Equality: Blacks in Texas*, published in 1983, expands on Barr's first edition of *Black Texans*, published in the 1970s.⁵ Charles M. Christian's 1995 *Black Saga: The African American Experience* also references race relations and the nascent civil rights movement

² George C. Writhe, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: In Pursuit of Equality, 1890-1980* (Frankfurt: Kentucky Historical Society, 1992); Peter B. Levy, *Civil War on Race Street: the Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003). Barbara Mills, *Got My Mind Set on Freedom: Maryland's Story of Black and White Activism, 1663-2000* (Bowie: Heritage Books, 2002).

³ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁴ Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1523-1995* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1996). Michael L. Gillette, *The NAACP in Texas, 1937-1957* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1984); James SoRelle, *Taking Sides: Changing Views on Controversial Issues in American History* (Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 1989-2006); "The Emergence of Black Business in Houston, Texas: A Study of Race and Ideology, 1919-1945" in Howard Beeth and Cary Wintz eds., *Black Dixie: essays in Afro-Texas History in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992); "Race Relations in 'Heavenly Houston', 1917-1945 in *ibid.*"; "The 'Waco Horror': the Lynching of Jesse Washington" *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 85 (April 1983); "An De Po Cullud Man Is In De Wuss Fix Uv Awl': Black Occupational Status in Houston, Texas, 1910-1940," *Houston Review*, 1 (Spring 1979).

⁵ James Smallwood, *Struggle for Equality: Blacks in Texas* (Boston: American Press, 1983).

in Texas.⁶ While scholars have broached the topic of desegregation in Texas, they have tended to focus on places like Dallas, Houston, and Austin, which served as bases for famous civil rights cases like *Sweatt v. Painter* and *Smith v. Alwright*. Historians have largely ignored cases filed in other Texas cities, such as Fort Worth.

At the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans in Texas began to experience increasing legalized segregation throughout the state. An 1889 law, upheld by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, segregated railroad cars. Progressivism proved popular in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Southern progressivism, however, revealed a different facet than its northern counterpart. As C. Vann Woodward concludes in *The Origins of the New South*, “progressivism [was] for whites only.”⁷

Texas during the 1880s and 1890s experienced political challenges and upheavals under Populism. The Populist movement attempted to unite, at least temporarily, white and African American farmers seeking improved situations. Their combined forces threatened Democratic control of Texas and even impacted national politics. Texas Democrats, concerned about the Populist threat to the Democrats’ control, sought to divide farmers along racial lines. They emphasized notions of white supremacy in their speeches, playing the “race card” whenever applicable. During the same time period, Manuel Guerra and Jim Wells operated a political machine in South Texas. South Texas Mexican Americans traded votes for public works and improved situations in the border region, as articulated by Evan Anders in *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era*.⁸

⁶ Charles M. Christian, *Black Saga: The African American Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995).

⁷ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 369.

⁸ Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).

The threat of Populism seemed “un-progressive” to progressives, who wanted middle-class political leadership. The rumors of political machines in South Texas also concerned progressives about corrupt voting practices. Working in collusion with conservative Texas Democrats, the progressives decided on a series of electoral reforms. In 1902, Texas voters passed a poll tax, requiring all registered voters to pay a cumulative tax every year. Progressive Texans hoped that this tax would purify the politics of political machines. Money from the tax would be used for the Texas educational system. During the next year, the first series of the Terrell Election Laws passed. The Terrell Election Laws initiated the secret ballot, challenging the South Texas political machine. It also required standard voting times and registration centers. From the Terrell Election Laws, Texas officials initiated the white primary, a law disenfranchised African Americans from the Democratic primary.

Lawrence Goodwyn wrote about the White Man’s Union in Texas and its efforts to eradicate black voting writings in his remarkable 1971 essay "Populist Dreams and Negro Rights."⁹ Darline Clark Hine’s *Black Victory* expands on Goodwyn’s work by detailing the electoral history of the white primary in Grimes County. Since Reconstruction, Grimes County contained a heavy percentage of African Americans. Grimes County residents elected black and white law enforcement officers, who cooperated together to police Grimes County. Aspiring white politicians challenged the mixed ethnicity of Grimes County law enforcement and terrorized the lawmen. They seized the town of Anderson, gained control of the state, and instituted the white primary, requiring all would-be voters to swear, “I am a white Democratic voter.” White

⁹ Lawrence Goodwyn, “Populist Dreams and Negro Rights: West Texas as a Case Study,” *The American Historical Review*, LXXVI (1971): 5.

primaries quickly spread across the state. By 1900, Texas functioned as a one-party state, so if an African American paid his poll tax, he could only vote for the sole Democratic candidate offered or a Republican who would never gain enough votes to threaten the Democrats' hold on Texas.¹⁰

Segregation laws increased rapidly in Texas from 1903 to 1926. The first laws segregated railroad cars, then waiting areas for cars, streetcars, schools, public areas, and residential areas. These laws also made interracial relationships illegal. Houston's African Americans protested the streetcar segregation by boycotting this means of transportation, but, although the boycott negatively affected the streetcar companies financially, Houston refused to change the segregation law.

Increasingly, segregation in Texas became both culturally and legally mandated. White Texans required African American residents to step off the sidewalk when approached by a white person, answer questions with "Ma'am," or "Sir," or enter and leave through a white family's backdoor. Alwyn Barr's *Black Texans* details reports of white shopkeepers demanding that African American customers ask for "Mr. Prince Albert Tobacco," because the depiction of the fictional character on the can shows a white man as the logo.¹¹

Racial harassment reached its peak simultaneously to the institution of these laws. Roughly one hundred African Americans were lynched from 1900 to 1920 in Texas. The most notorious Texas lynching occurred in 1916. Waco, Texas residents accused a sixteen-year-old African American male, most likely mentally challenged, of murdering the woman for whom his family worked. Her children found her beaten to death upon

¹⁰ Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (New York, Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1979).

¹¹ Barr, *Black Texans*.

their return home. A neighbor reported seeing Jesse Washington plowing a field roughly two hundred yards away from the house. Thousands of Waco residents watched as men hanged Washington from a tree in the middle of town and then burned his body. Patricia Bernstein's work *The First Waco Horror* describes the event. Bernstein's analysis of the pictorial history of Washington's hanging challenges Texans' defense of lynching. Progressive whites claimed that lower-class whites harbored racist stereotypes against African Americans. Those lower-class whites, they claimed, lynched at night without the knowledge or support of the middle-class. Bernstein's work challenges this perspective. From the photographs as well as interviews collected for W.E.B. Du Bois and the NAACP's *Crisis*, she concludes that thousands of townspeople, almost all of Waco's white residents, watched Washington burn. Schools released white children early to view the hanging. The sheriff and mayor watched from a window. Bernstein's depiction of Washington's death accurately describes Texas's race relations in the early twentieth century; like other Southern areas, Texas used intimidation and violence to assert white dominance.¹²

Despite sanctioning and even encouraging voting restrictions, many progressives viewed lynching negatively. Largely, most feared mob violence and disorder, but many objected to the terrorism inflicted upon the African American community. A Dallas woman, Jessie Daniel Aimes, organized bi-racial anti-lynching organizations. Jacqueline Dowd Hall's *Revolt Against Chivalry* examines Aimes's challenge to the Ku Klux Klan's racist and sexist ideology.¹³

¹² Patricia Bernstein, *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP* (Texas A&M Press, 2005).

¹³ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York Columbia University Press 1979).

Texas's mild climate, ports, and increasing political presence on a national level led to the establishment of military bases in Texas during World War I. Southern states required segregated bases, and local residents expected African American soldiers to obey segregation laws. Black soldiers stationed in Houston objected to the segregation restrictions and to the police's treatment of the resident African American population. Riots broke out, resulting in the dishonorable discharge of 160 African American soldiers.¹⁴

South Texas Tejano residents experienced harassment at the hands of the Texas Rangers during this time period. Refugees from the Mexican Revolution increased the Hispanic population in South Texas. In 1915, a law enforcement officer discovered the Plan of San Diego in a prisoner's pocket. The Plan of San Diego, an uprising in 1915 of ethnic Mexicans raiding Anglo-American ranches and railroads under a independent republic flag, called for disadvantaged minorities in Texas to declare war on the white population in the "lost territories" of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California and establish a new nation. Rangers harassed the Tejano population relentlessly, accusing them of joining or harboring Plan of San Diego adherents. In 1918, José Tomas Canales, a state representative from South Texas, listed eighteen complaints against the Texas Rangers to the state legislature. The legislature limited the Rangers' number and power. Southern Methodist University historian Benjamin Heber Johnson's *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* details the Plan and argues that rather than join the Plan's adherents, the Mexican American community founded the League of United Latin

¹⁴ Robert V. Haynes, *A Night of Violence: The Houston Riot of 1917* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

American Citizens (LULAC) to champion their rights. *Revolution in Texas* successfully examines the effect of the Mexican Revolution of the Texas border, the animosity Anglos felt towards allegations of anarchy or socialism in the ethnic Mexican community, as well as simple racism within the guise of terror created by the Plan of San Diego's aftermath.¹⁵

After its inception, LULAC won its first major school segregation case in 1930 with *Salvatierra v. Del Rio*. Arnaldo De León of Angelo State University authored *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900*, published in 1983, a psycho-historical analysis of Anglo encounters with Tejanos and a study of the racism within the Texas Rangers, the Texas politicians, and individual Anglos who interacted with Mexican Americans.¹⁶ His later work, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900*, presents an analysis of Tejano identity, which he calls “a process of biculturalation – that is, a transformation in which a matured Mexican culture evolved into one that was simultaneously both American and Mexican.”¹⁷ The historian also specifically examined the Tejano community in Houston, Texas, in his 1989 *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican Americans in Houston*.¹⁸ De León's work serves as a credible update to such early and dated works as Walter Prescott Webb's *The Texas Rangers*, which virtually ignores the Tejano culture and glosses over the Rangers' unbridled racism.¹⁹

¹⁵ Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Arnaldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

¹⁷ Arnaldo De León, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Arnaldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican Americans in Houston* (Houston: Mexican American Studies Program, University of Houston, 1989).

¹⁹ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Defense* (Austin: University of Texas, 1935).

Neil Foley expands on Texas's triracial nature in his 1997 *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*. Foley examines the early twentieth century trend moving away from antebellum concepts of white equality to establishing class structures based on race, occupation, and income. Texas differed from other southern states in the first decades of the twentieth century in its treatment of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. When Mexicans left Texas and settled in other states, they were generally considered "white," could vote, and were given a social status above that of black workers. In Texas, state officials encouraged Mexican immigration to Texas in order to build railroads and pick cotton. The heavy influx of Mexican laborers created employment competition between previously established Mexican American workers, blacks, and poor whites for sharecropping and tenant farming jobs. Employment shortage and wage competition resulted in antagonism between the competing workers, and fostered disdain for the lower classes among the wealthiest, landed, and usually white, population. Foley provides a detailed analysis of immigration, labor, and racism in the first four decades of the twentieth century. He examines racial conflict between Anglos and Mexicans, between blacks and Anglos, between Tejanos and Mexicans, and among Tejanos, blacks, and Mexicans. Foley also studies the frequently overlooked history of women as low-income earners and family participants. *The White Scourge* presents a number of new theories and successfully traces the history of contemporary racism in 1900 to Depression era United States.²⁰

In response to increasing racial hostilities, the Niagara Movement, an organization begun by prominent black intellectuals, led to the formal creation of the National

²⁰ Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. El Paso residents established a chapter in 1915, and Houston quickly followed suit. Soon, Texas cities hosted over one hundred NAACP chapters. These chapters sought educational reforms, equal access, and an end to police and judicial brutality.

The second Ku Klux Klan re-exerted its presence in Texas during the 1920s; a Dallas dentist even served as the Grand Dragon. The Klan actively campaigned for political hopefuls, ran its own candidates, and harassed black Texans. Klan-supported candidates, or Klandidates, like Felix Robertson and Earle Mayfield, boasted of the organization's backing. Norman Brown argues in *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug* that conservative white Democrats rejected Al Smith's presidential candidacy more because of African Americans' support of his candidacy and his wife's invitation of an African American Congressman to dinner, than because of Smith's Catholic heritage.²¹

Under the influence of the Klan and the Democratic Party, a conservative 1920s state legislature voted to formalize the white primary in 1923. The next year, a black dentist named Lawrence Aaron Nixon filed suit against the state. In *Nixon v. Hendon*, the 1927 Supreme Court decision declared the state law requiring white primaries illegal but structured the decision so that the Democratic Party, as a private organization, could require a white primary. The Texas Democratic Party's executive committee voted to mandate all white primaries in Texas. Nixon filed a second suit. The Supreme Court again found the white primary unconstitutional in *Nixon v. Conlon* (1932) but only because the executive committee, not a state convention, made the decision to exclude Texas Democrats from due process. In 1933, the Democratic state convention voted to

²¹ Norman D. Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug: Texas Politics, 1921-1928* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1984).

require white primaries. The next year, attorney general and gubernatorial hopeful James Allred applauded their decision.

Without the national NAACP's approval and over the loud protests of the Dallas and San Antonio branches, *Houston Informer* editor Carter Wesley and Houston barber Richard Randolph Grovey decided to challenge the 1933 Democratic convention's decision. In 1935, the Supreme Court found in favor of the state convention. *Grovey v. Townsend* found that private organizations like the Texas Democratic Party could legally establish white primaries.

The NAACP's 1940 national convention detailed a multi-pronged plan to attack segregation, including lawsuits to challenge educational segregation and voting restrictions. The organization first attacked voting. In 1942, only 35,000 black Texans voted. Lonnie Smith, a Houston dentist, agreed to challenge the white primary. In *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), the Supreme Court decided that although the state Democratic Party was a private organization, the white primary infringed on Smith's constitutional rights to due process. Two years later, in 1946, 75,000 black Texans voted.

LULAC also used court cases to challenge established segregation laws. In *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD*, the Supreme Court decided in 1948 that Texas could not legally segregate the Mexican American community without the "scientific basis" of language differences. Even segregation on the basis of language could only occur for one school year. In 1949, Dr. Hector Garcia of Corpus Christi founded the American G.I. Forum, an organization that demanded rights for Latino veterans. The Tejano community also claimed a victory in the early 1950s when a Three Rivers funeral home refused to bury Felix Longoria, a Latino resident of Three Rivers who died in the Korean War. President

Dwight Eisenhower contacted the family and had Longoria's body shipped to Washington, D.C., where he was buried in Arlington Cemetery. LULAC's most famous legal victory occurred in 1954 in *Hernandez v. Texas*. The Supreme Court found that Texas could not use the basis of race to exclude Mexican Americans from serving as jurors.

The NAACP filed several cases in Texas during the 1940s and 1950s. Utilizing a strategy articulated in the organization's 1940 convention, NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorneys planned to first attack segregation in graduate schools. Mailman Heman Sweatt agreed to attempt to enroll in the University of Texas's law school. When UT denied him entrance on the basis of race, the NAACP filed suit. University authorities and Texas officials scrambled to create a law school for African Americans in order to avoid a Supreme Court desegregation order. The Supreme Court found the university's hastily constructed Texas Southern University Law School, which in reality consisted of a few lawyers teaching night classes in the basement of the Texas capital, unequal to the prestigious reputation enjoyed by the University of Texas Law School. Sam Kinch, an apologist for Texas Governor Allan Shivers, writes in *Pied Piper of Texas*, that Shivers intended to construct a law school for African Americans equal to that of the University of Texas, but that Sweatt impatiently sued the school.²² In 1950, *Sweatt v. Painter* decided in the plaintiff's favor. The same year, *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* required the University of Oklahoma to desegregate its education graduate program as well. During the early 1950s, Texas resembled Border South states, like Kansas and Oklahoma, rather than Deep South states with its relatively bloodless integration.

According to *Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at*

²² Sam Kinch, *Allan Shivers: The Pied Piper of Texas Politics* (Austin: Shoal Creek Publishing, 1978).

Mansfield High author Robyn Ladino, “Because some cities and towns in the Border South integrated earlier with less resistance, the slowness of overall change, even in these states, has sometimes been ignored.”²³

However, the 1954 *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision mobilized Texas segregationists. Governor Shivers and his attorney general, John Ben Sheppard claimed interposition²⁴ in response to the *Brown* decision. When a federal court ordered Mansfield High School to desegregate in *Jackson v. Rawdon*, Allan Shivers sent the Texas Rangers to prevent integration. President Eisenhower, facing an election year, refused to intervene with the man who led a host of Texas Democrats, called Shivercrats, to vote against the Democratic presidential candidate in favor of Eisenhower. Robin Ladino’s *Desegregating Texas Schools* details the battle in Mansfield, the two days of burning and rioting that Shivers called “organized protest,” and the bus ride to Fort Worth and twenty-block walk that Mansfield’s African American high students made every school day until 1965, when Mansfield High School finally integrated. Her work describes Shivers in a less-laudatory fashion than does Kinch’s *The Pied Piper of Texas*.

Shivers and Sheppard attempted to reassert the control of conservative Democrats over Texas in 1956, when they filed an injunction against the NAACP for violating the state’s barratry laws.²⁵ Michael Gillette’s 1981 dissertation, “The NAACP in Texas,” reveals that other southern governors contacted Shivers, congratulated him, and hoped for

²³ Robyn Duff Ladino, *Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), ix.

²⁴ The 1790s Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions introduced the statue that states could nullify federal laws that abridged states’ rights or that states’ deemed unconstitutional.

²⁵ Barratry laws are “the offence of frequently exciting and stirring up quarrels and suits, either at law or otherwise.” Bouvier, John, *Bouvier's Law Dictionary* (Boston: The Boston Book Company, 1897), 2 volumes.

a Shivers victory. The court found Texas's claims groundless, allowing the NAACP to resume activities in Texas.²⁶

Senator Lyndon Johnson and Representative Samuel Rayburn intervened in the Texas Democratic split, hoping to assert their control over Texas Democrats and realign them with the national party. Although Texas senator Price Daniel signed the Southern Manifesto, Rayburn and Johnson believed they could negotiate a deal with Daniel to allow civil rights legislation and school integration in Texas in exchange for Johnson and Rayburn's support of Daniel's gubernatorial campaign. Johnson and Rayburn rejected the true liberal candidate, Ralph Yarborough, and supported Daniel in hopes of mending Texas Democratic fences. Daniel grudgingly agreed to not impede desegregation. With Johnson and Rayburn's reassertion of control over Texas Democrats, and what Amilcar Shabazz called 'a triracial environment' that eased integration, each Texas city faced federal desegregation orders without forceful gubernatorial support or interference once Shivers left office.²⁷

In the 1950s and 1960s, Houston and San Antonio experienced sit-in demonstrations, lawsuits concerning golf courses, and controversial swimming pool desegregation cases. One San Antonio desegregation case revealed deeply entrenched paranoia about swimming pool desegregation. San Antonio's Catholic schools desegregated before the *Brown* decision, San Antonio enjoyed Shabazz's calming triracial demography, and white liberals supported integration, but the swimming pool issue proved combative. One city council memo resisting desegregation revealed white

²⁶ *State of Texas v. NAACP, et. al.*, 1957.

²⁷ Amilcar Shabazz, *Advancing Democracy: African Americans and the Struggle for Access and Equity in Higher Education in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

paranoia by using words like “partially clad bodies” and “sexual.” In “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965,” published in 1983, Robert Goldberg explores the triracial aspect of San Antonio’s demography and argues that Mexican Americans served a pivotal role in San Antonio’s desegregation because Mexican Americans “blurred the ‘us-them’ perception of racial conflict, weakened a strict segregationist orientation based on color inferiority, and deflected prejudice and attention away from blacks.” Although San Antonio served as the first large Southern city to desegregate, it did so with some reservations.²⁸

President Johnson’s administration boosted integration in the rest of Texas. The 1965 passage of the Civil Rights Act gave the federal government the power to enforce civil rights legislation. The next year, the 24th Amendment abolished the poll tax. In 1966, 400,000 black Texans voted. Many of those voting black Texans sent the first African American since 1892 to the Texas legislature. The eloquent and popular Barbara Jordan of Harris County served eight years in the Texas legislature until her 1972 election to the United States House of Representatives.

Despite these advances, Texas school officials still avoided school integration. After publication of the 1930 census, Mexican Americans objected to their classification as “nonwhite,” arguing that it made them vulnerable to Jim Crow restrictions in the South. Texas segregationists used this classification to their advantage and integrated public schools that had large Mexican American populations with segregated black schools, thus claiming a racial balance. In 1970, LULAC and the American GI Forum filed suit. *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi ISD* recognized “Mexican American” as a separate

²⁸ Robert A. Goldberg, “Racial Change on the Southern Periphery: The Case of San Antonio, Texas, 1960-1965,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 49 (August 1983), 352.

ethnic identity, preventing school districts from claiming that they had “integrated” schools by mixing African American and Latino students but leaving white schools alone.

Several works either mention or directly address minority education in Texas before the *Brown* decision but few address school integration in local communities. Despite the general scarcity of studies of school desegregation in Texas, notable exceptions to the rule exist. Yvonne Frear’s work “Juanita Craft and the Struggle to End Segregation in Dallas, 1945-1955,” published in *Major Problems in Texas History*, and her forthcoming dissertation analyze the battle for equal access in Dallas and the NAACP’s participation in that fight.²⁹ Glenn M. Linden’s 1995 *Desegregating Schools in Dallas* studies the painstaking process of Dallas’s integration, replete with tokenism and a resistant federal court.³⁰ As a large city in a triracial state, Dallas integration seems unique; Latinos and African Americans both battled the Dallas school board. Despite a once cohesive front in the battle for equal rights, Linden finds that busing severed the unity once enjoyed by the biracial platform of African Americans and Tejanos. Some graduate students presented master’s theses on Dallas’s early integration. In “Some Aspects of Desegregation in Dallas, Texas, 1956-1957,” completed in 1958, Helen Harlan Wulf of Southern Methodist University presents a fascinating study of the Dallas School Board’s efforts to avoid integration while University of Texas at Arlington’s James Alan Swan reviews court-ordered integration in his 1983 “A Study of Policy

²⁹ Yvonne Davis Frear, “Juanita Craft and the Struggle to End Segregation in Dallas, 1945-1955,” *Major Problems in Texas History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002).

³⁰ Glenn M. Linden, *Desegregating Schools in Dallas: Four Decades in the Federal Courts* (Dallas: Three Forks Press, 1995).

Implementation: Desegregation of the Dallas Independent School District.”³¹ Paulinda A. Krug of North Texas State University approaches the topic from a different angle in her 1978 “A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Resistance: Desegregation of the Dallas Independent School District During the 1975-1976 School Year.”³²

Other works cover desegregation in Texas’s largest city of Houston. William Henry Kellar’s *Make Haste More Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston* is a three-part study of the development of a racially segregated public school system, the fight for desegregation, and the roles that members of the community played in the battle for equal access. Kellar presents a novel approach in his work through his connection between the Communist-wary city officials and school board members intent on combating integration. Through his study of Houston Independent School District, the largest segregated school district in the nation, Kellar portrays Houston as a Jim Crow city that balked at the *Brown* decision, dragged its feet, but eventually desegregated, and did so peacefully. Both Merline Pitre’s 1999 *In Struggle Against Jim Crow: Lulu B. White and the NAACP, 1900-1957* and Cary Wintz’s edited collaboration with Howard Beeth titled *Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston*, published in 1992, explore Houston’s African American communities. James SoRelle contributed an essay to *Black Dixie* titled “Race Relations in Heavenly Houston, 1917-1945” and continued his investigation of racism in Texas

³¹ Helen Harlan Wulf, “Some Aspects of Desegregation in Dallas, Texas,” 1956-1957 (M.A. thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1958); James Alan Swan, “A Study of Policy Implementation: Desegregation of the Dallas Independent School District” (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 1983).

³² Paulinda A. Krug, “A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Resistance: Desegregation of the Dallas Independent School District During the 1975-1976 School Year” (M.S. thesis, North Texas State University, 1978); James Alan Swan, “A Study of Policy Implementation: Desegregation of the Dallas Independent School District” (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 1983); Helen Harlan Wulf, “Some Aspects of Desegregation in Dallas, Texas, 1956-1957” (M.A. thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1958).

with the *Houston Review*'s 1979 "An De Po Cullud Man Is In De Wuss Fix Uv Awl': Black Occupational Status in Houston, Texas, 1910-1940." Other studies of Houston's integration process approach the topic from the tri-racial angle. Anthony Quiroz, author of *Claiming Citizenship: Mexican-Americans in Victoria, Texas*, presented the impact of federal court-ordered desegregation in a 2003 *Journal of Southern History* article titled "Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston."³³

While Fort Worth, Texas, piques historians' interest with its unique "Cowtown" identity, few researchers have broached the city's racial dynamics. Texas A&M International University's Carlos Cuellar's book *Stories from the Barrio: A History of Mexican Fort Worth* presents a long-needed glimpse into one aspect of Fort Worth's tri-racial history.³⁴ Sam Houston State University's Ty Cashion's historical overview of Fort Worth, *The New Frontier: A Contemporary History of Fort Worth & Tarrant County*, touches on the city's racial heritage and Ku Klux Klan violence.³⁵

Fort Worth's school desegregation involved years of busing and the ensuing "white flight" into surrounding communities or private schools. Although no authors have written about these topics in relation to Fort Worth, several have written about busing and white flight in other major cities. Ronald P. Formisano's seminal work *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s*, published in 1991, provides a fascinating look at the court-ordered integration of Boston's lower class

³³ William Henry Kellar, *Make Haste More Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1999); Merline Pitre, *In Struggle Against Jim Crow: Lulu B. White and the NAACP, 1900-1957* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1999); Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, eds. *Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992); Anthony Quiroz "Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston," , *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 69, 2003.

³⁴ Carlos Cuellar, *Stories from the Barrio: A History of Mexican Fort Worth* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2003).

³⁵ Ty Cashion, *The New Frontier: A Contemporary History of Fort Worth & Tarrant County* (San Antonio: Historical Publishing Network, 2003).

Irish Catholic white community with a low-income African American population.³⁶ Formisano found that instead of racism alone, class conflict also factored into Boston's violent response to busing. Social scientist David Armor's 1995 *Forced Justice: School Desegregation and the Law* also examines busing and its ramifications.³⁷ Armor designed integration plans and testified as an expert in desegregation court cases. *Forced Justice's* merits come not only from its empirical data, but also reveals the limitations of relying strictly on empiricism rather than conclusions drawn from interactions with parents, students, teachers, and community leaders. Armor's work also broaches the topic of white flight and its impact on integration goals. An edited compilation of works, *School Desegregation in the 21st Century*, edited by Christine H. Rossell, David J. Armor, and Herbert Walberg, evaluates the history, effectiveness of, and response to court-ordered integration.³⁸ Their works, and especially William A. V. Clark's contribution "School Desegregation and Demographic Change," study the causes for and impact of white flight. Kevin M. Kruse's 2005 *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* and Matthew D. Lassister's *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* both effectively examine white flight in specific regions.³⁹

In order to rectify the absence of research on such issues in Fort Worth, Texas, this dissertation explores the city's segregationist history, early black activism, and responses to the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision. It also examines the impact of the *Swann v.*

³⁶ Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

³⁷ David J. Armor, *Forced Justice: School Desegregation and the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

³⁸ Christine H. Rossell, David J. Armor, and Herbert J. Walberg, eds., *School Desegregation in the 21st Century* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002).

³⁹ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matthew D. Lassister, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's approval of busing to meet integration goals and the application of this judgment to Fort Worth schools and other public spaces. Chapter one explores the establishment of Fort Worth's school system. Because Fort Worth identified itself as "western" rather than Southern, it prided itself on providing "equal" educational opportunities. Although Fort Worth schools were a marked improvement over Deep South schools, they were by no means "equal." Despite the city's claim to a western heritage, it had roots in the South, especially in the realm of race relations.

Chapter Two explores a concerted African American effort to combat segregation and injustice in Fort Worth before the *Brown* decision. While the *Brown* decision and the subsequent *Flax* case brought the most visible and cohesive activism in Fort Worth's black community, local African Americans made their voices heard in Fort Worth years before the *Brown* decision, particularly through NAACP membership and activism.

Once the Supreme Court decided *Brown*, Fort Worth citizens publicly voiced their opinions on the decision. Chapter Three explores white Fort Worth residents' responses to the *Brown* decision, responses that reveal the depths of racism and self-denial regarding the decision's implementation in the minds of many Fort Worth white residents.

Although the Supreme Court decided *Brown* in 1954, Fort Worth school officials made little noise and no movement towards integration. When members of Fort Worth's African American community filed suit to desegregate the public school system in 1959, school leaders' shocked responses reveal segregation's deep entrenchment in Cowtown's cultural identity. Chapter Four examines the early impact of the *Flax v. Potts* case and the school board members' responses to the case's filing.

A federal judge found for the plaintiffs in the *Flax* case and ordered the school board to submit an integration plan to the court. Chapter Five proves that school desegregation propelled a fight to integrate public spaces, which in turn spurred demands for increased integration in public schools. *Brown* served as the impetus for a more aggressive and concentrated push for equal access to all public spaces in Fort Worth. After the *Brown* decision and the subsequent *Flax* filing, local black leaders demanded the integration of public areas, such as parks, golf courses, and swimming pools, and equal access to public spaces, such as restaurants and movie theaters. Fearing the notoriety that accompanied sit-in demonstrations, Fort Worth leaders negotiated with white business owners and African American leaders to integrate quietly and without publicity.

A demand for better access to public spaces also fueled an increased effort by African Americans to integrate the public schools. Fort Worth's school desegregation history serves as a microcosm of the impact of Supreme Court decisions on southern cities. After a federal judge ordered the school board to submit an integration plan, Fort Worth Independent School District underwent substantial changes in attempts to create an integrated school system. After the Supreme Court's decision in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg*, Fort Worth Independent School District began busing its students. Chapter Six addresses the district's fresh attempts to create a truly integrated school district as defined by *Swann*, and the new issues the changes introduced.

Busing served as the primary catalyst for white flight in Fort Worth and was a contentious issue within the African American community. Chapter Seven reviews efforts by local education leaders, and even the federal judge presiding over the case, to

find avenues to address integration demands and stem the flow of white flight into private schools and suburban areas. By 1980, Fort Worth established several magnet schools to attract white pupils back to the public schools and to create integrated campuses.

One may apply Dr. King's concern about white moderates and their quest for order to the Fort Worth Independent School District in the years following the 1954 *Brown* decision. As in other progressive cities, "order" served as the watchword of all the city's integration activities. Although a change in school district leadership meant a commitment, if at times a reluctant commitment, to upholding and applying federal court orders, Fort Worth leaders valued a calm stability in the school district and within the business community. Although Fort Worth's unique western yet southern identity created a dueling and inconsistent heritage, historians have yet to examine the impact of this dual identity on the Civil Rights Movement in Fort Worth, particularly the battle to integrate the schools.

In view of this gap in historiography, this dissertation presents the battle to integrate the schools in Fort Worth. When members of the African American community filed a suit against the school district in 1959, the subsequent court case, *Flax v. Potts*, made Fort Worth a petri dish for experimenting with the implementation of Supreme Court cases. Because of the importance of the *Flax* case, this dissertation ends with the final judgment on *Flax* in 1994. Despite civil rights historians' differing definitions of "desegregation" and "integration," this dissertation mimics the rhetoric of the *Flax* case in using these two terms interchangeably. Extensive use of the Fort Worth school district's documents, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram's* files, and the NAACP's records presents a glimpse of Fort Worth's dual identity and its impact on the battle for equal

access in schools. In using white-owned sources like the *Star-Telegram* and the records of an initially all-white school board, the author has both knowingly and unknowingly presented a white point-of-view. Members of Cowtown's African American community deserve to have their recollections of the integration battles recorded; despite this obvious need, this dissertation focuses more on the recorded public reactions to *Brown, Swann*, and busing. One hopes that historians will address the need for an oral history of Fort Worth's civil rights battles. This dissertation is a narrative of the battle for equal access to Fort Worth's public schools, but it is also the story of a city and its startled response when confronted with the jarring reality that its self-identity differs dramatically from the perception of those who live on its racial, cultural, and economic periphery.

Chapter 1 Public School Education in Fort Worth from Its Inception to 1954

“Texas never put any legislation on her statue-books withholding the blessings of the schools from the Negro, for the reason, doubtless, that she banished all free persons of color, and worked her slaves so hard that they had no hunger for books when night came.”

-- William Washington Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880*

Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836 and joined the United States in 1845. A troop of United States cavalrymen established a camp on the Trinity River in 1849 and named it Fort Worth in honor of the recently deceased United States Army General William Jenkins Worth, a hero of the Mexican-American War. At its establishment in 1850, Tarrant County had 599 white residents and sixty-five African American slave inhabitants. Although initially plagued by Indian attacks, the army abandoned the fort in 1853 in order to build more forts farther west. Despite the army's relocation, the town survived and became incorporated by the state of Texas in 1873.¹

When Texas entered the Union in 1845, elected representatives drafted its first state constitution. Provisions allowed for the establishment of free schools and an annual fund to support them. An 1854 state law further regulated the school system by mandating common schools and outlining the Permanent School Fund, which used land proceeds to fund education.² Despite these provisions, Fort Worth made no serious effort to establish a system of public education for almost thirty years. In this regard, Fort Worth resembled most of the other Texas towns and the rest of the South. This is not say

¹ Robert H. Talbert, *Cowtown Metropolis: Case Study of a City's Growth and Structure* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1956), 1.

² Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Education," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/EE/kde2.html> (accessed September 27, 2008); Carl H. Moneyhon, "Public Education and Reconstruction Politics, 1871 – 1874," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 92 (July 1988 – April 1989).

that Fort Worth's citizens disdained education in general; one historian has argued that "the early settlers of Fort Worth were men and women of refinement – many were university graduates – and their first thoughts were of ways and means of educating their children."³

Despite a desire to instruct their offspring, residents were unprepared to support a public school system with tax dollars. Fort Worth resident John Peter Smith opened the city's first private school in 1854. Smith charged parents five dollars for a month's tuition. Parents also supplemented the tuition by providing for the teacher's room and board.

Although Smith's school survived only three years, others provided limited private schooling until the Civil War, when all formal private school education in Fort Worth ceased. Before its cessation, Smith's school sporadically enrolled students before their instructors, Professor J.T. Turner, Professor Hudson, and John Peter Smith, one by one each enlisted in the Confederate States Army, leaving the Fort Worth children to private tutors, education by parents, or no schooling.⁴ After the war, Fort Worth residents donated seventy-five dollars, with which they bought flour, traded the flour for lumber, and repaired the Masonic Hall for use as a quasi-public school, hiring a Confederate veteran to teach the students while relying on tuition and some public funds to operate the school.⁵

Following the conclusion of the Civil War, local residents opened, closed, and reopened several schools, including that of a Campbellite minister named Addison Clark

³ Anne Lenore Goerte, "Some Phases of the Development of the Fort Worth, Texas School System, 1854-1930" (M.A. thesis, University of Colorado, 1934), iv.

⁴ Goerte, "Some Phases of the Development," 4.

⁵ Talbert, *Cowtown Metropolis*, 242-3.

who relocated a preexisting school to his church in 1869 with his brother and sister Randolph and Ida Clark. The school eventually settled in Fort Worth, became Add-Ran College, and later, Texas Christian University.⁶

Reconstruction introduced changes to Texas' school system. The Republican state legislature passed and Governor Edmund J. Davis signed a bill formalizing the state's public school system, which allowed for the appointment of a state superintendent of schools and the formation of a school board.⁷ Despite the legislature's actions, Fort Worthians debated the ethics and legality of a state-supported school system. Many felt that the duty of educating children belonged to churches and parents, not to the state. In addition to the small school built with money from the sale of flour, private schooling continued to grow as Fort Worth residents opened schools for girls in the city, including Mrs. E.S. Scribner and Miss Alfred's schools in 1871.⁸

Only two years later, Fort Worth Mayor Dr. W.F. Burts, the city's first mayor, approved the use of the upper story of city hall for the first public school in the city. The same year, the state legislature gave Tarrant County ten cents a year per child between the ages of six and fourteen to use for educational purposes, and the city council appointed John Peter Smith to establish a state-funded public school.⁹

The 1874-75 school year began in October and required four months' formal education for students. The Fifth Annual Report for Tarrant County estimated a total school-aged population of 3,556 pupils, 208 them African Americans. Only 1,650 of that

⁶ Goerte, "Some Phases of the Development," 12; Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Texas Christian University," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/TT/kbt7.html> (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁷ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Education," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/EE/kde2.html> (accessed September 27, 2008).

⁸ Goerte, "Some Phases of the Development," 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-5.

total enrolled in schools that year.¹⁰ The students attended school for eighty-eight days, receiving instruction from a predominately male teaching population paid \$50 a month.¹¹

Following the end of Reconstruction in Texas, Democrats regained control of the state legislature and in 1876 adopted a new state constitution. The constitution stipulated that public land sales as well as a fraction of the poll tax, a small tax on citizens, would subsidize Texas's public school fund.¹² The constitution called for the formation of segregated schools for black and white children in a community school system and stipulated a local tax for the school fund.

Despite the opposition of several Fort Worth citizens, who charged that public schooling violated familial and ecclesiastical obligations to educate children, the city conducted its first school tax election in 1877. Although the electorate favored establishing a public school system, critics charged that less than two-thirds of the area's eligible voters failed to participate in the election. The city held another election the same year, and again voters favored the creation of a public school system. The city passed ordinances in August of 1878 establishing free schools and opened the doors to six rented buildings for students. By 1878, residents opened a semi-private high school that operated using state funds supplemented by parent-paid tuition. The city council paid \$2.25 for students unable to afford the tuition.¹³ The same year, Fort Worth

¹⁰ "The Fifth Annual Report for Tarrant County, 1874-75," (Fort Worth, Texas, 1875), Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; Leon Mitchell, "Comments on Early African American Public Schools in Tarrant County, Texas, Based on Materials in the Billy W. Sills Center for Archives," November 1998, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

¹¹ Leon Mitchell, "Comments on Early African American Public Schools in Tarrant County, Texas Based on Materials in the Billy W. Sills Center for Archives," November 1998, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

¹² Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Education," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/EE/kde2.html> (accessed September 27, 2008).

¹³ Talbert, *Cowtown Metropolis*, 242-3.

Ordinance 168 placed public schools under the exclusive control and direction of the city council as well as allowed the creation of a municipal school board.¹⁴

Despite a temporary suspension of local funding for public schools while residents battled the issue of taxation to the Texas State Supreme Court in *City of Fort Worth vs. Wm. H. Davis et. Al.*, where those opposing school taxation won on a technicality, another election in 1880 decided for the creation of the schools, which was again held invalid.¹⁵ After continued debates with public school opponents, in 1882 residents voted again, finalizing the conclusion of the local tax debate, and the city council appointed a school board of trustees, which included Dr. Carroll M. Peak as president, and R. E. Beckham, J.M. Brown, S.M. Fry and John Peter Smith as school board members.¹⁶ The board nominated Alexander Hogg superintendent and approved \$3,906 to the City School Fund with the promise of making more funds available later.¹⁷ In most cases, the creation of a public school system converted many small private schools into public schools, paying the hosting church a monthly rent. Captain Ephraim Merrill Daggett gave a portion of his property to the city for the construction of a Third Ward Public School Building on 9 September 1882.¹⁸ Roughly a week after Daggett's donation, new Superintendent Hogg and another teacher conducted teacher certification

¹⁴ Goerte, "Some Phases of Development," 25.

¹⁵ Billy Sills, "James E. Guinn," Material composed by Billy W. Sills for black pupils," 2000, Folder "James E. Guinn," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

¹⁶ Talbert, *Cowtown Metropolis*, 242-3.

¹⁷ Minute Book D., p. 39; Minutes Book D., Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 51-52; "Some Dates, 1882-1883 in Fort Worth School History," Folder "1882-1883," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

¹⁸ Tarrant County Deed Book 26, 412-413, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; Leon Mitchell, "Some Dates, 1882-1883, in Fort Worth School History," Folder "Fort Worth School History," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 2.

tests for twenty-seven white applicants.¹⁹ Examinations later included testing in Reading, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, Drawing, and Vocal Music, as well as such novelties as “Stewart & Gee’s Experimental Physics,” “Caesar’s Commentaries, First and Fourth Books,” “Mills’ Realm of Nature,” and “Horace, the Odes.”²⁰ Of the twenty-seven applicants, the board offered teaching positions to sixteen white and four African American teachers, including I. M. Terrell, principal of the private school for African American children based in and funded by the Colored Baptist Church.²¹

In October of 1882, the City of Fort Worth officially opened five public schools for white and two schools for African American children.²² According to the *Galveston Daily News*, the Fort Worth school system attracted six hundred and forty students the first week of school.²³ A month later, the newspaper reported a peak enrollment of 764 students attending Fort Worth schools.²⁴

Over the 1883 summer, the City Council authorized the appointment of a new board of school trustees as well as the construction of new schools. The board included such prominent Fort Worth leaders as Major John Peter Smith, C.B. Daggett, Jr., Dr. Carroll M. Peak, and K.M. Van Zandt. Some Fort Worth schools still bear the name of these first board members. Although the city provided a seemingly matched school for African American children in terms of viewing the comparable costs of construction and

¹⁹ Leon Mitchell, “Some Dates, 1882-1883, in Fort Worth School History,” Folder “Fort Worth School History,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 2.

²⁰ “Regulations Concerning Qualifications of Teachers in the City Public Schools,” Fort Worth, Texas 1895, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²¹ Leon Mitchell, “Some Dates, 1882-1883, in Fort Worth School History,” B.W. Sills Archive, Folder “Fort Worth School History,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 2.

²² Minute Book D., p. 39, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; “Some Dates, 1882-1883 in Fort Worth School History,” Folder “1882-1883,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²³ *Galveston Daily News*, 12 October 1882.

²⁴ *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, 23 October 1882, 6; *Galveston Daily News*, 5 November 1882, 1.

furnishings, the city council failed to appoint an African American representative to the school board. This trend of excluding African Americans from the Fort Worth School Board continued for ninety-one years.

The school board continued construction projects over the next several years, creating an all-white high school in 1884 with an enrollment of forty-five students. The city proudly opened the Fort Worth High School on 23 March 1891. The building boasted twelve rooms, a library, and an auditorium, which seated 500 people. The school board opened another white high school in 1909.²⁵

If public education was slow in coming for white Fort Worthians, it was even slower for African Americans. Revealing local suspicions of northerners and northern Republican ideals, white Fort Worth residents bristled at some of the changes that Reconstruction presented, such as state-supported schools and education of black children. African American schools in Fort Worth existed as private schools located in churches until the 1882 beginning of Fort Worth's state and locally funded public school system.

As early as 1875, local freedmen formed schools for Fort Worth's black children. One early twentieth century researcher, Ann Lenore Goerte, manifested lingering reservations about radical Reconstructionists' goals in her treatment of African American education systems in Fort Worth. A private school operated by African Americans before 1882 closed, Goerte mused, because "the negro [sic] . . . did not know how to

²⁵ Leon Mitchell, "Some Dates in Fort Worth's Secondary Education," Folder "Some Dates in Fort Worth's Secondary Education," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

direct his own activities.” Control of the school shifted from the initial small, racially mixed board to the all-white school board’s authority in 1882.²⁶

The *Fort Worth Standard* presented a glimpse of African American education that, although demonstrative of the racial prejudice of the time, reveals the commitment of the black community to education. A contributor condescendingly observed the beginning of classes in African American Henry Butler’s school, mocking the principal and teacher “giving orders like a military chief,” and lining the students in rows by gender: the boys and the “ebony sisters.” The reporter chuckled at this recollection, but admitted, “it shows that the teacher has some idea of discipline, and moreover that the freed blacks have some interest in education, which is most important for them now they are fellow citizens.”²⁷

By 1882, newspapers and the city records recorded that two churches, the Missionary Baptist Colored School located at Thirteenth and James Street, and the Methodist Colored School at Fifth and Crump Street, provided educations for Fort Worth’s African American children.²⁸ The school board elected four black teachers to teach at the schools.²⁹ On October 2, 1882, the City of Fort Worth opened seven public schools, five for white children and two for African Americans.³⁰ The schools for black

²⁶ Goerte, “Some Phases of the Development,” 21-3.

²⁷ *Fort Worth Standard*, 16 March 1876.

²⁸ Goerte, “Some Phases of the Development,” 16-7.

²⁹ “Some Dates, 1882-1883, in Fort Worth School History,” Folder “1882-1883,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³⁰ *Galveston Daily News*, 4 October 1882, 1.

students existed within a four-mile square, divided into wards.³¹ The board first rented the facilities in which private schools had operated.³²

Principal and teacher Henry Butler first taught at the Baptist church on First and Elm Streets. Born a slave, Butler's history demonstrates a commitment to education that he shared with his students.³³ According to a Federal Writer's Project interview, Butler lived on a slave plantation in Virginia until the Civil War, when the plantation owners sent him and his family to Arkansas to avoid their capture by Union troops. Butler escaped confinement in Arkansas and joined the federal army. He fought in several battles, including the Battle of Pine Bluff, with the Union. He enrolled in school after the Civil War and graduated from Washburn College in Topeka, Kansas. Butler moved to Sherman, Texas and taught black schoolchildren until he moved to Fort Worth and educated Fort Worth's African American children first in the private schools then as a private school teacher.³⁴

The school board also hired Isaiah M. Terrell, a renowned African American educator and later legend in the black Fort Worth community. Born in Anderson, Texas, Terrell attended a private preparatory school before graduating from Straight University

³¹ Billy Sills, "James E. Guinn," Folder "Guinn, James E.," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³² Billy Sills, "James E. Guinn," Material composed by Billy W. Sills for Black pupils," 2000, Folder "James E. Guinn," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; Despite the opening of schools for black children, historians found that "African American education during the early 1900s was usually conducted in churches, shacks and cabins. These facilities typically had no amenities, and their upkeep was dependent almost entirely on the limited resources of the principal, students and community members;" "Building Legacies: Rosenwald Schools Shaped Texas; Rural African American Communities," Texas Historical Commission: *Medallion* (January/February 2004), 6.

³³ Billy Sills, "James E. Guinn," Folder "James E. Guinn," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³⁴ "Henry H. Butler," Federal Writer's Project, Vol. 60, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

in New Orleans, Louisiana. He received a bachelor's and a master's degree from Straight, now Dillard, University.³⁵

During the 1883-84 academic year, the Negro Baptist Church temporarily hosted a school for African Americans with Isaiah M. Terrell as its first principal.³⁶ A few years later, in 1885, the city of Fort Worth opened the Ninth Street Colored School, a four-room schoolhouse built at Ninth and Terry Streets. African American high school students attended classes at the Ninth Street Colored School with elementary-aged students. Only three years after its inception, the segregated high school department graduated one male and six female students in 1884. The school graduated six African American males in 1893, and began annually producing African American high school graduates in 1896, the same year that the United States Supreme Court decided the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision that established the doctrine of "separate but equal." By 1910, the Ninth Street Colored School expanded to become the Fort Worth Colored High School. Isaiah Terrell worked for years as principal and teacher at the Missionary Baptist School, then at Ninth Street School, and finally at Fort Worth Colored High School.

Principal Terrell educated Fort Worth's African American students and monitored the segregated schools in Tarrant County for twenty-four years. He left Fort Worth for a position as president of Prairie View A&M College in 1915.³⁷ Terrell next moved to Houston for a new career as the president of Houston Baptist Academy, also known as Houston College, an educational facility for African Americans. He also served the

³⁵ "I.M. Terrell High School," Folder "I.M. Terrell," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³⁶ Goerte, "Some Phases of the Development," 30.

³⁷ "'Alexander Terrell (1834-1901)," *Texas Trailblazer*, The Houston Place Preservation Association of Houston, Texas (April 1994).

African American community there, organizing the first Houston hospital for African Americans.³⁸

As a result of Terrell's selfless efforts, Alice Carlson, the first female Fort Worth school board member, moved in 1921 that the board rename the newly constructed Colored High School "I.M. Terrell High School," after its illustrious principal.³⁹ The Fort Worth architectural firm Waller, Shaw and Field designed the new 414 feet by 255 feet structure built for \$36,325 on East Twelfth and Steadman Streets.⁴⁰ The building, which *The Fort Worth Record* called "an ornament to our city," existed as the largest public school building in Fort Worth until the high school for white pupils finished.⁴¹ The school again moved locations in 1938 into a former white elementary school. The school board opened another African American school in the former I.M. Terrell building.⁴² The school eventually served as the host high school for African American students from Mansfield, Moser Valley, Hurst and Weatherford.⁴³ I.M. Terrell functioned as the largest all-black high school in Tarrant County until its closing in 1973 by federal court order.⁴⁴

Isaiah Terrell's school enjoyed a favored status with the school board, as evidenced by the relatively large number of teachers hired to teach at Colored High

³⁸ "Terrell was early black school leader," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 2002.

³⁹ Leon Mitchell, "Some Dates in Fort Worth's Secondary Education," Folder "Some Dates in Fort Worth's Secondary Education," FWISD B.W. Sills Archive.

⁴⁰ School Board Minutes, Vol. 1907 – 1916, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁴¹ The Fort Worth Record, 11 August 1909, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁴² Leon Mitchell, "I.M. Terrell High School," Folder "I.M. Terrell," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; This structure served as the George Washington Carver Elementary and Junior High School until 1943, when it became Carver-Hamilton Elementary School in honor of Principal Lottie Hamilton.

⁴³ Goerte, "Some Phases of the Development," 31-2.

⁴⁴ Leon Mitchell, "Opening and Closing of African-American Public Schools in What Became the Fort Worth Independent School District," November 1988, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

School and the board's decision to allocate funds to the construction of the new high school. Other schools for black children failed to experience the benefits Terrell enjoyed. African American residents living south of the Texas and Pacific railroad station had no school and petitioned the city council for a school in 1894, even offering free use of a building but the board ignored their request for a year.⁴⁵

Although the city council seemed to drag its legislative feet about improving other schools for African Americans, school board minutes from June 10, 1907 revealed the council's intention to hire five teachers at the newly formed South Side Colored School for the upcoming school year.⁴⁶ African American educator James Guinn served as the school's first principal.⁴⁷

African Americans living in a small community outside of Fort Worth's city limits organized schools from 1914 to 1922. The Como area began in 1889 when a Denver development company began transformation of the natural water feature, which investors dubbed "Lake Como" after the elegant Italian community near Milan, into a resort outside of Fort Worth. The investment company built a streetcar line from downtown to Lake Como, stopping at the glamorous Arlington Inn. A fire destroyed Arlington Inn in 1893 and the company's bankruptcy led to abandonment of the pavilion, theater, and fun house.⁴⁸ More of the Fort Worth's upper crust moved into an area known as Westover Hills, and their domestic servants found the undeveloped area around the former vacation spot affordable and streetcar transportation convenient transportation

⁴⁵ City Council Minutes, 31 July 1894, Book L, 394, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁴⁶ Minutes, 10 June 1908, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁴⁷ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 14 September 1917.

⁴⁸ "Story of the Como Community," *Fort Worth Como Weekly*, 24th Anniversary Supplement, 1940 – 1964; Lake Como today: the glamour is gone, Around the Corner," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Clippings "Como," Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Files, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

to Westover Hills. The secluded Lake Como resort became the Como neighborhood within the Arlington Heights community. Residents and the Arlington Heights town officials began a school in 1914 and the single-teacher facility admitted eleven students but closed two years later. The community opened another school in 1917 and became part of the city of Fort Worth in 1922.⁴⁹

The total school population had increased consistently since the 1882 beginning of public schools in Fort Worth. A 1907 census reports a scholastic population of 7,829 eight to thirteen year old children in Fort Worth, 1,690 African American and 6,139 white.⁵⁰ The same year, Fort Worth Colored High School employed fourteen African American teachers who instructed classes first through eleventh grade. James Guinn and five teachers served students at the South Side Colored School, which instructed children in first through sixth grades, making the schools the largest African American schools in Tarrant County.⁵¹

Spending patterns by the city council during the years between 1900 and 1920 reflect a disregard for improving African American schools. The I.M. Terrell school building cost \$36,325 and included a heating and plumbing contract of \$3,756.⁵² The expenses incurred in I.M. Terrell's construction reveal the construction of a well-made and modern facility. However, spending patterns demonstrate a neglect of the same facilities for the segregated younger grades. The Tarrant County Deed Book showed that

⁴⁹ "Brief History Como Schools From 1914," *Como Monitor*, 31 January 1976, Black Historical and Genealogical Files, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

⁵⁰ "Scholastic Census for Fort Worth in 1907," Fort Worth City Directory, 1907-8, 4, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁵¹ "African American Teachers in the City Public Schools, Fort Worth, Texas, 1907-1908," Folder "1907-1908," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁵² Leon Mitchell, "Public Schools for Blacks in Fort Worth, Texas, 1909 - 1912," B.W. Sills Archive, Folder "1909 - 1910," 9, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

the city council provided only \$185.10 for lumber for construction of a new segregated school building in the 1912 autumn semester. The board also paid Principal Terrell \$239.15 for “moving school buildings from the 12th St to Rosen Heights.”⁵³ Most all-black schools, excepting I.M. Terrell and James E. Guinn, employed only one or two teachers. African American pupils crowded into one-room frame buildings or attended elementary and high school classes at I.M. Terrell, where the city council expected thirty-three teachers to instruct students in only twenty classrooms. Salaries paid to principals reveal other evidence of prejudicial neglect. Principals at the largest all-white schools, such as Fort Worth High School, which later became Pascal High School, and Circle Park School received \$1,850 and \$1,600 a year, as well as employing a \$1,000 a year assistant principal. Principals at the white elementary schools received an average of \$1,680 a year. The city officials paid I.M. Terrell \$1,200 a year, while principals at the all-black lower schools received \$420 to \$1,020 a year salary.⁵⁴

The Progressive Era, the period roughly between 1900 through the 1920s, saw numerous reforms and introduced new changes to the Fort Worth school system. The 1920 Better Schools Amendment, a Texas referendum passed by voters, allowed an increase in taxation to fund local schools and converted the community school system into a larger, organized school district. Rural schools near urban areas now enjoyed the funds available to their urban neighbors. Progressives also hoped to create an efficient

⁵³ Tarrant County Deed Book 403, 328; Leon Mitchell, “Public Schools for Blacks in Fort Worth, Texas, 1909 - 1912,” B.W. Sills Archive, Folder “1909 – 1910,” 9, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁵⁴ *Minutes*, June 12, 1909, 120-124; *Minutes*, 5 July 1909, 129; 2 August 1909 131, 133; Leon Mitchell, “Fort Worth Public Schools, 1909-1910,” Folder “1909 – 1910,” 9, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

labor force by providing trade schools.⁵⁵ The city of Fort Worth constructed another whites-only high school in 1924 as a technical school. Fort Worth Vocational High School provided training in cabinetry, drafting, and later auto mechanics, welding and craft construction.⁵⁶

During the 1920s, Sears and Roebuck President Julius Rosenwald established a fund to help educate African American children in the South. As head of the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, Rosenwald built over five thousand schools for African Americans throughout the South, including the Fort Worth Sagamore Hill Negro School built around 1925, which later became the Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School.⁵⁷

Keeping with progressives' reliance on scientific study and a quest for improved efficiency, in 1930 the Board of Education of Fort Worth hired the Division of Field Studies of the Institute of Educational Research at the Columbia University's Teachers College to survey Fort Worth's public schools.⁵⁸ George Stayer, a Columbia faculty member, headed the project. Several faculty members and graduate students also aided in investigating and evaluating the public schools. Stayer and his team members submitted a dense report to the school board in 1931 that comments on the organization, administration, curriculum, and projected future of Fort Worth schools. Stayer noted that "as many other progressive cities have done," Fort Worth provided public school students

⁵⁵ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Education,"

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/EE/kde2.html> (accessed September 27, 2008).

⁵⁶ "The History of Trimble Technical high School," Folder "Green B. Trimble Technical," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; . Green B. Trimble served as the school's principal when it voluntarily integrated in 1965, two years before the other white Fort Worth high schools. The board renamed the school Trimble Technical High School in 1967

⁵⁷ McLeod, Gerald E., "Day Trips," *The Austin Chronicle* (February 2004); Kline, Susan Allen, "Eight Decades of School Construction: Historic Resources of the Fort Worth Independent School District, 1892-1961," City of Fort Worth Report (September 2003), 7.

⁵⁸ George Strayer, "Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas," Made by Institute of Educational Research Division of Field Studies, (Teachers College, Columbia University, Teachers College, Columbia University), 1931, v.

a three-tiered program: elementary schools which housed kindergarten through fifth grade students; a junior high for sixth, seventh and eighth graders; and high schools for ninth through eleventh grades. Strayer specifically noted the segregated school system and informed the board that Fort Worth provided “white children” with thirty-seven elementary schools, six middle schools, five high schools, and one vocational school. In contrast, the district provided “colored children” one high school, which housed both middle and upper schools, as well as nine elementary schools, although some fourth and fifth graders also attended the one high school because “there is not room in the elementary schools near where they live.” Strayer addressed the discrepancy between the schools for white children and for black children by stating, “during the first semester of 1930-1931, there were thirteen schools with one or more temporary buildings with a total of sixty classrooms in use in the schools for white children and twenty-five in the schools for colored children. Some of the buildings originally provided for the colored school children are not even as good as the temporary ones.”⁵⁹ Maps of the school locations demonstrated an expansive grid for white students, while schools for African-American children tended to be located in central Fort Worth, excepting Clinton Avenue and Sagamore.⁶⁰

African Americans were not the only Fort Worth residents who endured the indignities of segregation. Following the violence of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Latino population in Fort Worth rose significantly. A large portion of the population lived in “Hell’s Half Acre,” an area in the southeast region of downtown Fort Worth.

⁵⁹ Strayer, “Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,” 110-1.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 107-115; The board founded Clinton Avenue to absorb a number of small African American schools in 1921 but the school burned down in 1923. Folder “Clinton Avenue,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

They worked for the railroads and steel mills as well as in other industries.⁶¹ The school board formed a committee to provide a school for Latino children in 1927 after a petition from the Hispanic community. The first classes aimed specifically at educating Mexican American children met in a Presbyterian church and were taught by a teacher hired by the school board.⁶² The board resolved to provide a school for grades one through three. Many Mexican American children enrolled in San José school, a Catholic school providing a sense of community in a new environment.⁶³

The Strayer report provided additional insight into the Latino schools. Strayer estimated the number of Mexican American children in Fort Worth, defending his guess by stating, “Enumeration is complicated by the extreme mobility of the Mexican population.” He found that seventy-eight students registered at the “Mexican School” but only thirty-five attended by the end of the first month of the school year. Strayer concluded that an economic livelihood of agricultural work prevented many Latino children from attending or continuing in classes at school. To address this decline, he suggested beginning a program for any four-year-old child who spoke Spanish as a first language, “while he is still too young to be of great economic value to his family.” This practice would combat “the waste of two years in what is already too short an educational period” so Mexican American children could enroll in the first grade with an adequate knowledge of the English language. According to the report, the school board enrolled a fourteen-year-old boy in first grade and eighteen-year-old boys in the second and three grades; Strayer believed, “To place them with first grade pupils makes them appear

⁶¹ Carlos Cuellar, *Stories from the Barrios* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2003).

⁶² “Mexicans Ask School,” *Record-Telegram*, 29 June 1927.

⁶³ “Untold Stories,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 October 1998.

ludicrous and defeats the school's purpose."⁶⁴ The report repeatedly mentioned the "Mexican School," but failed to elaborate on why Mexican Americans required a school separated from the white children. Presumably, the language difference served as the only barrier, but many regions in Texas segregated Mexican Americans from Anglos based on ethnicity alone.⁶⁵

As noted previously, Fort Worth school founders prided themselves on the quality of education for all Fort Worth public school students. However, Strayer and his colleagues condemned the school board for the condition of segregated schools. He wrote, "The facilities for housing the colored children of Fort Worth have been so meager that they make one wonder that they have developed and maintained the interest they have in their schools. Probably the worst housing conditions exist in the Ninth Ward, Valley View, Cooper Street, and Lake Como schools. These buildings schools should certainly be abandoned as soon as possible and more adequate housing provided."⁶⁶

Strayer and his colleagues organized their report by district but included a supplemental section evaluating "The Schools for Colored Children." The report noted that most African American Fort Worthians lived between Mansfield and Main Roads. Others lived north of Twenty-Fifth Street, in the Como area, and near the current Texas and Pacific station near Henderson Street. One of Strayer's charts, labeled "Table 32," recommended changes to most schools, including significant additions and modifications to the schools designated for African American children. Interestingly, the Strayer Report contained another chart labeled "Table 37, Current Expense of Each School

⁶⁴ Strayer, "Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas," 283, 285-7.

⁶⁵ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Delgado v. Bastrop ISD," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/DD/jrd1.html> (accessed 26 January 2009).

⁶⁶ Strayer, "Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas," 120.

Building for White Children Analyzed on the Basis of Average Daily Attendance and Average Monthly Salary of Teachers by Building – Fort Worth, School Year Ending June 30, 1930.” Stayer used an auditor’s report from the 1920-30 school year to evaluate overall and itemized expense per pupil. The researcher submitted another chart, “Table 45: Current Expense of Each Elementary and High School Building for Colored Children, Analyzed and Average Monthly Salary of Teachers By Building, Fort Worth School, Year Ending June 30, 1930.” “Table 37” provided information on six high schools for white children: Diamond Hill, Handley, North Side, Stripling (a combined middle and upper school), Polytechnic and Central. The Strayer team estimated an average daily attendance of 697 students. The school district averaged \$92.71 per student spent on instruction, \$1.66 on maintenance, \$6.93 on operation, \$0.51 on instructional supplies, \$3.67 on miscellany items, and an average total current expense of \$106.38. High school teachers at the white-only public schools received an average monthly salary of \$201.⁶⁷

The Strayer Report’s “Table 45” also relied on the 1929-30 academic year auditor report for its findings. I.M. Terrell, the only Fort Worth public high school for African Americans, averaged a daily attendance of 488 pupils, on which the district spent \$51.26 per student on instruction, \$0.88 on maintenance, \$5.00 on operation, \$0.32 on instructional supplies, \$3.63 on miscellaneous items, and submitted a total current expense of \$61.09. Teachers received an average monthly pay of \$136 at I.M. Terrell.⁶⁸

Expenditure gaps between the African American and the white elementary schools varied more than the high school discrepancies. Whites-only junior highs

⁶⁷ Ibid., 152-3, 166-7, 181-2.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 198.

averaged 788 students and spent \$70.62 on instruction per student on an average. Their teachers earned an average of \$170 a month. Elementary school teachers at white-only schools earned an average of \$156 a month, with schools spending an average of \$53.45 a month on instruction. Peter Smith Elementary School spent \$70.45 per student in average daily attendance. Oakhurst Elementary School paid the least amount of money for instruction per pupil, averaging \$38.32 for each student in average daily attendance.⁶⁹

In contrast, the Fort Worth Independent School District paid an average of \$27.26 per student at the elementary schools for African American children. Arlington Heights Elementary School averaged \$22.56 per student on instruction, while Valley View Elementary paid the most per student at \$37.00, still below the lowest expenditure of the white schools. Teachers at African American-only elementary schools earned an average of \$104 a year.⁷⁰ At the time of Goerte's report in 1934, Fort Worth Independent School District offered one high school and nine elementary schools to African American pupils.⁷¹

Compiled in roughly the same period as the Strayer report, a Texas Christian University graduate student also examined the public school system and its allocated spending. The student, M.H. Moore, evaluated the safety and accessibility of the Fort Worth Independent School District's public school buildings. The report presented a "study of the present plant of the Fort Worth Public Schools [which] will include the buildings, equipment, sites and the mechanical conveniences; heat, ventilation, light, and sanitation."⁷² In addition to Moore's independent research, the school's business

⁶⁹ Ibid., 181 - 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 198.

⁷¹ Goerte, "Some Phases of the Development," 65.

⁷² Moore, "A School Building Program," 3.

manager, H.C. Sanders, and three assistant school superintendents, J.O. Andrews, W.B. Dobson, and W.M. Green, served on a committee that appraised the buildings. In order to assess the buildings, Moore created an evaluation scale where 1,000 points indicated “a perfect school building.” A satisfactory building scored 700 to 900 points while a score of 500 to 700 points indicated a need to repair or make additions to the buildings. Moore found that of the 33,332 pupils in the public school system in the 1928-29 academic year, the 29,388 white students attended school in thirty-seven elementary school facilities, five middle school buildings, and six high school facilities. The 3,944 black children attended school in seven “frame” elementary school facilities as well as in the two-room Riverside School building, the James E. Guinn building, and the nineteen-room I.M. Terrell High School building. Like Stayer, Moore and the committee integrated separate scorecards for white and “colored” schools. Moore’s report also included an evaluation of the “Mexican” school, categorized in the “white schools” grouping. Central High School received the highest scoring in the white category with the score of 948. Brooklyn Heights School held the lowest score in the white category with a score of 324. The white schools averaged a 658, indicating a need to repair or make additions to existing buildings. White high schools scored higher on an average than elementary schools, with an average of 765. The Mexican school scored a 463. The high school for African Americans, I.M. Terrell, merited a score of 509. The “colored schools” averaged a 417, with the new Guinn School scoring a 666 and the Ninth Ward School warranting a very low sixty-three total points.⁷³

⁷³ M. H. Moore, “A School Building Program, Fort Worth, Texas” (M.A. thesis Education, Texas Christian University), 1930, 1-3, 6-12; Fort Worth established other schools for African American students, including, but not limited to Carver-Hamilton Elementary School, Como Elementary-Junior High, Dunbar

Moore's study also examined the size and price per pupil of each school. He found "that generally in Fort Worth the elementary schools with small enrollments are the most expensive. The school for white children which has the highest cost per pupil in average daily attendances and the school which has the highest average daily attendance is in the group of schools which has the lowest per capita cost." According to the report, in the 1929-30 academic year, "the average elementary school in Fort Worth has an average daily attendance of 434 pupils. The average daily attendance varies from 88 in the Forest Hill School to 1,064 in the Carroll Peak School." I.M. Terrell High School reported 780 students enrolled and the Guinn school enrolled 906 pupils. The other six schools for African American students averaged an enrollment of 215 pupils. Despite Moore's assertion that schools with smaller numbers of enrolled pupils cost the school district more money than larger schools, Moore's study showed that schools for African American students generally averaged a smaller square foot in building size, with a significantly smaller amount of square feet of property covered by buildings. Although Moore proposed that schools with smaller numbers of students cost the district a larger percentage of their funds than schools with larger populations, the fact that the low-attendance African American school buildings scored an average of 240 points lower than the white schools with a higher number of attendances seems incongruous. The report demonstrated that I.M. Terrell, the largest facility for African American children, housed eighteen regular classrooms as well as hosted six temporary rooms. Moore's report specifically examined the 1928-9 academic year, during which 618 high school and 288 elementary students attended I.M. Terrell. Regarding I.M. Terrell, Moore found

Elementary-Junior High, James Guinn School, Kirkpatrick Elementary, Amanda McCoy Elementary, Ninth Ward Elementary and Rosedale Elementary.

that “geographically, from the standpoint of the colored children, this school is very well located, although it is true that the better class of colored homes are not located in this section, every available space is in constant use in the present high school building.” Although I.M. Terrell scored the highest amount of points on Moore’s Fort Worth ISD scorecard, Moore found that I.M. Terrell enrolled “more [students] than the building can accommodate.” Additionally, Moore discovered that the Gay Street School educated its 511 students in eight rooms, functioning in such cramped quarters only by utilizing a half-day schedule. The report concluded that Gay Street was “always over-crowded.” Further, Moore “recommended that all elementary children who attend the I.M. Terrell and the Gay Street schools be concentrated in the I.M. Terrell School and that a new and modern high school for colored children be erected on a site adjacent to the Gay Street site, so that the present Gay Street building can be utilized for shops, domestic science laboratories and cafeteria.” The new building, Moore proposed, “would require twenty-four rooms.” In addition to requiring additional classrooms, the report recommended some minimal improvements, such as “adequate cafeteria and plumbing facilities” and enlarging the Cooper Street School, which housed “three two-room buildings, only one of which is fit for human habitation.” Examining the interior state of African American school buildings provided by the Fort Worth Independent School District, Moore noticed that the “Ninth Ward Colored School has an enrollment of 90 pupils in a two-room shack unfit for human habitation.”⁷⁴

Although obvious inequality existed between black and white schools in Fort Worth before the 1954 *Brown* decision, many I.M. Terrell graduates recollect their academic training with a mixture of anger and pride. I.M. Terrell High School, which

⁷⁴ Ibid., 15, 35-6, 137-41.

added a twelfth grade in the 1940s, “often got the leftovers from white schools,” recalled one student who remembered erasing the names of white students from the worn textbooks issued to her on the first day of school. However, many students noted the academic prowess of their teachers, an indirect result of a Jim Crow society. Black Fort Worth residents attended segregated schools then moved north to enroll in colleges such as Columbia and Northwestern. Many returned to Fort Worth and discovered that their employment options were limited to “teaching or the pulpit” in Fort Worth’s Jim Crow society, and chose to teach school at I.M. Terrell High School rather than pursue a career in the ministry or return to the North.⁷⁵

Fort Worth school board members revealed their biases against black students in their response to the Strayer and Moore reports. Despite the fact that Fort Worth’s schools for white students surpassed facilities for African American students as a whole, school building and planning projects during the Great Depression primarily benefited white students alone. In 1933 Texas Governor Miriam Ferguson established the Texas Relief Commission (TRC), which enabled Texans to join the Work Projects Administration. The TRC made Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) funds accessible to cities and school boards for construction projects. The Fort Worth school board received FERA funds of over twelve million dollars and granted contracts to several architects. Although the board approved additions to or construction of twenty-four schools during this time period, only one of the WPA-assisted schools serviced

⁷⁵ “To Them Terrell is a Close Friend,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 22 July 1982; “A Lifelong Bond,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 30 August 1980; Bud Kennedy, “Hughes recalls days of excellence at old I.M. Terrell,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 August 1998.

African American students.⁷⁶ Moore and Strayer's reports demonstrated that African American students as a whole scored the lowest in the district for building maintenance and satisfaction, yet only one of those schools benefited from the WPA's assistance. This shows that while Fort Worth's white leaders did not ignore the needs of the city's African American residents altogether, white citizens' needs took precedence, a theme consistently demonstrated in the next several decades of Fort Worth school district's history.

Difficulties presented by a significant population boom in Texas following the conclusion of World War II served as the impetus for the formation of a legislative committee to explore possible reforms of Texas's educational system, increase opportunities for children, and promote bureaucratic efficiency. Senator A.M. Aikin and Representative Claud Gilmer headed the committee formed in 1947, which became known as the Gilmer-Aikin Committee. Two years after its formation, the committee shared its suggestions with the Texas State Legislature. The legislature adopted a significant portion of the committee's proposals. The Gilmer-Aikin Laws established accepted attendance requirements by creating a statewide standard of school days and classroom hours. The bills raised teacher salaries, allowed for the hiring of supplemental faculty, and increased the size of the State Board of Education. The Gilmer-Aikin Laws outlined a statewide standard for state and locally funded public school curriculum and teacher competency, changed board memberships from appointive to elective, and restricted some districts' practice of allowing parochial schools to use public schools'

⁷⁶ "Work Projects Administration," Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Education," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/EE/kde2.html> (accessed September 27, 2008); John Busby McClung, "The Fort Worth Public Schools Under the PWA and the WPA (1933-1940)" (M.A. Thesis, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, 1965), 12-15; 17-22.

facilities and modes to transportation.⁷⁷ The legislature standardized school accreditation requirements and sought to make teaching methods more uniform across the state. Later, Texas legislators, the attorney general, and the governor would use the Gilmer-Aiken Law's directives for state and local funding for education to challenge the Supreme Court mandate in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

Although the first Fort Worth residents seemed to value education, they disagreed on the best means for educating their children. Some argued that the state and the community should fund a public school system; others believed that the church and families should bear the responsibility for instructing their offspring. Despite the halting and unsteady progress towards forming a public school system, once a system was created, white Fort Worth leaders unanimously decided on establishing the schools on a segregated basis. Although I.M. Terrell High School benefited from some of the district's wealth available to the school board, most of the schools for African American students operated at a level significantly beneath the white schools' rank. Some progressives in Texas intended to improve schools for African Americans, but by the time of the 1954 *Brown* decision, the schools for African Americans remained separate and inferior in physical structure, student to teacher ratio, and funding allocation. African Americans living in Fort Worth sought to address that inequality as well as to demand their equal rights in other areas.

⁷⁷ Rae Files Still, *The Gilmer-Aikin Bills*, (Austin: Steck, 1950).

Chapter 2 Black Activism in Fort Worth Before 1954

“The meeting was so joyous, so uplifting, and so full of real enthusiasm; the ministers and all so agreeable, we feel safe in stating that once in the historic life of this City, we have met forgetting “isms” as it were, laying aside petty differences, and united in one solid phalanx in a movement for the uplift of humanity.”

-- Minutes from an 9 April 1918 Fort Worth NAACP Meeting

Regardless of white Fort Worth leaders’ and school board members’ evaluations of the merits of African American education in the district, several members of Cowtown’s African American community undertook the responsibility of instructing children themselves. In addition to bearing the responsibility of educating its children, Fort Worth had a long history of activism among its African American community. Black Fort Worthians began testing ways of challenging Jim Crow, actions that prepared later generations to fight future civil rights battles and to function as part of a larger network of African Americans who demanded equal access.

A multiracial group of activists in Niagara Falls, New York formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 to “ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of all citizens; To achieve equality of rights and eliminate race prejudice among the citizens of the United States; To remove all barriers of racial discrimination through democratic processes; To seek enactment and enforcement of federal, state, and local laws securing civil rights; and To inform the public of the adverse effects of racial discrimination and to seek its elimination.”¹ El Paso residents established the first Texas branch of the NAACP in 1915. Four other cities, including Fort Worth, applied for charters in 1918. The following year, a violent

¹ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, <http://www.naacp.org/about/mission/index.htm>, accessed 22 May 2008.

race riot occurred in Longview, Texas. Governor William P. Hobby and the state attorney general blamed the NAACP for the burned homes and businesses in Longview's African American community; the Texas attorney general then subpoenaed one branch's records, challenging the NAACP's right to operate in Texas.² NAACP national secretary John Shillady traveled to Texas to combat the state's efforts only to experience a severe beating in the state's capital at the hands of a white mob that included some local officials.³ The state's investigation of the NAACP as well as Ku Klux Klan harassment hampered the organization's success in Fort Worth.

Before the increased violence and the state's harassment, several Fort Worth African Americans actively pursued NAACP membership. On April 20, 1918, J. Gentry Horace, who identified himself as the secretary of the Fort Worth NAACP branch, wrote John Shillady on National Alliance of Postal Employers stationary. Horace sent Shillady an application for a charter along with a money order for \$119. Horace informed Shillady that charter signers elected a provisional local branch government, including president G.N.T. Gray, a railway postal clerk; vice-president Rev. F. Rivers Barnwell, a minister; treasurer H.H. Cochran, a postal employee; and Horace as secretary. Horace joked, "Among the Pharisees I am the Scribe." Horace shared his passion for the NAACP with Shillady: "I have nothing to say for myself except that I have a heart ablaze with the desire to help my struggling people."⁴ Charter members numbered over one hundred,

² Michael Gillette, "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/NN/ven1.html> (accessed September 25, 2008).

³ Michael L. Gillette, "The NAACP in Texas, 1937-1957" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1984).

⁴ J. Horace to John Shillady, 20 April 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

who each paid one dollar in dues.⁵ Members listed their occupations as teachers, mechanics, ministers, barbers, porters, lawyers, in addition to one poet, a school principal, and a physician as well as an eleven-year-old named George Gray.

Minutes from an April 9, 1918, meeting further reveal a commitment to combat racism. Secretary Horace's notes record that "the meeting was so joyous, so uplifting, and so full of real enthusiasm; the ministers and all so agreeable, we feel safe in stating that once in the historic life of this City, we have met forgetting 'isms' as it were, laying aside petty differences, and united in one solid phalanx in a movement for the uplift of humanity."⁶ The secretary shared his, as well as others', continued enthusiasm for the NAACP in a letter to Shillady in June 1918. He stated, "Interest in the Association is at a high pitch, and I am doing all in my power to make it a success."⁷ Months later, the Fort Worth branch added forty-two new members.⁸

In July, a woman in Dallas wrote the national officers to inform them of a discriminatory arrest.⁹ Although Dallas already hosted an NAACP branch, Shillady replied to the woman's request for assistance and recommended that she contact the Fort Worth branch for aid.¹⁰ The national secretary's suggestion reveals his confidence in the vigor of the Fort Worth branch. The national office further demonstrated its faith in this branch. In September, then assistant secretary Walter White wrote a letter to Horace

⁵ Application for Charter of Fort Worth, Texas Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶ Minutes from an April 9, 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP files.

⁷ Letter from Horace to Shillady, June 6, 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C..

⁸ Membership Report from Black for Fort Worth, October 2, 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁹ Miss B. Drummond, to National Office, stamped 10 July 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰ John Shillady to Miss B. Drummond, 19 July 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

asking the local secretary for his advice on establishing another Dallas branch.¹¹ The Fort Worth branch president responded to White's question by affirming the second Dallas group's fitness and noting that he recently had visited the city to assist with the false arrest case Drummond mentioned.¹²

The Fort Worth NAACP branch's activism continued into 1919. A *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* article from March 30, 1919, informed the public that the local NAACP circulated a petition protesting a showing of "Birth of a Nation." Horace submitted the petition, "signed by hundreds of colored citizens," to Fort Worth's Mayor Davis who responded by having the film censored.¹³ Unfortunately, the reporter failed to identify the offending part or parts that the mayor removed from the film before its showing.

Divisions, however, existed in Fort Worth's African American population. Black resident William "Gooseneck Bill" McDonald achieved national fame through his political activism and substantial wealth. Predominant in the "black-and-tan" wing of the Republican Party before disfranchisement, he was active in black fraternal organizations and started the Fraternal Bank and Trust Company in Fort Worth. The son of a slave, McDonald accumulated a million dollars, making him one of the wealthiest men in Texas, and built the McDonald Hotel in downtown Fort Worth.¹⁴ Local NAACP secretary Horace voiced his complaints against McDonald in a 1919 letter to Shillady. Horace called McDonald a member of "a certain money faction" and lamented that "McDonald has nothing good to say for the Association because there is no money in it

¹¹ Walter White to J. Horace, 26 September 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹² President G.N.T. Gray to Walter White, October 2, 1918, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹³ "Extra! Mayor Davis Answers Committee," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 30 March 1919, I G 202 Folder "11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ "Remembering "Gooseneck Bill," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 February 1984.

for him.” Horace continued, “He has never been to a meeting until Sunday and only came then because his monkey was going to ‘Dance.’” According to Horace, Rev. M.H. Spencer, the accused “monkey,” told members of the crowd that thus far they failed to grasp their full potential and that “the Negro does not respect his own women how can you expect white people to do so.” Foreshadowing later protests, Spencer’s speech also addressed black participation in World War I. Horace reported, “He said the Negro was a fool for going to war for he had no business there. What did he gain? He said if the Negro would go to war he should have had an understanding of what he should get if he goes, not wait til the fight was over and then begin crying and whining as the N.A.A.C.P. is now doing.”¹⁵ The national office declined to become intimately involved in the dispute, but revealed the more conservative nature of the early NAACP by stating, “We think it would be best not to take steps publicly to spread the word that he [Spencer] had attacked the Negroes going into war because of possible legal action.”¹⁶

Despite its enthusiastic and successful beginning, local branch membership faltered, largely owing to the Longview race riots, Shillady’s attacks, and the Klan’s intimidation tactics. Historian Michael Gillette found that “these cycles of activism and dormancy continued through the organization's first twenty-five years.”¹⁷ Fort Worth’s branch membership declined during the Ku Klux Klan’s peak in the early 1920s, gained a slight momentum in the late 1920s, and decreased during the Great Depression.

¹⁵ J. Horace to John Shillady, 5 May 1919, I G 202 Folder “11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶ NAACP National Office to J. Gentry Horace, 21 May 1919, I G 202 Folder “11 Fort Worth, Tex. 1917 - 1919,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷ Michael Gillette, “National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,” Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “,” <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/NN/ven1.html> (accessed September 25, 2008).

During the early 1920s, many white Fort Worth citizens joined white supremacists across the South and ordered a branch of the Ku Klux Klan. By 1923, “the Klan dominated Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. In Texas, the Klan controlled the state government and the legislature and was a major influence in the large cities and most of the counties. Dallas and Fort Worth were completely dominated by these masked knights,”¹⁸ Klansmen established Klavern No. 101 in Fort Worth.¹⁹ Fort Worth attorney W. A. Hanger became head of the Fort Worth klavern in 1921. According to the *Star-Telegram*, the Klan intended that “the decent citizenship of Tarrant County is not to stand for lawlessness. . . . You have bragged that the law could not touch you. But the hand of the Klansman can!”²⁰ Later, Hanger claimed that 1,000 of Fort Worth’s white male residents also belonged to the local Klan.²¹ Eighteen hundred north Texas Klansmen staged a parade in downtown Fort Worth in 1922, a year after the establishment of Klavern No. 101.²² A *Fort Worth Record-Telegram* article referred to the Klan as “well organized and have several thousand members representing one of the strongest Klans in the country.”²³ Fort Worth’s Klan became so strong that in 1924 lawyers for the Alliance Insurance Company sought a change of venue in its lawsuit against Fort Worth Grain and Elevator Company because they believed their clients were not guaranteed a fair trial with Klansmen serving as the grain company’s counsel and on the jury.²⁴

A 1921 lynching also terrorized Fort Worth’s African American community. Union members picketed a meatpacking plant that December, and black resident Fred

¹⁸ Charles M. Christian, *Black Saga: African American Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995), 334.

¹⁹ Ty Cashion, *The Contemporary Frontier*, 65.

²⁰ “Victim Requests Others’ Be Taken,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 July 1921.

²¹ “Power of Klan in County is Made Issue in Trial,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 December 1923.

²² Cashion, *The Contemporary Frontier*, 65.

²³ “Man Whipped by Ku Klux Friday Night,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 2 November 1924.

²⁴ “Suit Ended by Ku Klux Says U.S. Official,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 2 November 1924.

Rouse crossed picket lines to work at the plant. Strikers beat Rouse, who drew a gun and injured two white strike sympathizers, Tom Maclin and his brother Tracy. The crowd beat Rouse and, believing him dead, left him at the plant. Police officers took Rouse to the hospital where doctors diagnosed him as having a fractured skull. A large group of men located Rouse at the hospital, demanded that hospital officials turn the injured man over to them, and forced him into a vehicle. According to newspaper accounts, “Twenty minutes later his body was found dangling from a tree by Chief of Police Harry Hamilton.” The mob hanged Rouse from a tree in town where another mob lynched a man, presumably white, for killing a policeman the year before.²⁵

A criminal case reveals the extent of the Klan’s influence, as well as indirectly demonstrating the organization’s ability to thwart black activism in Fort Worth. Police arrested First Baptist Church Pastor J. Frank Norris in July 1927 for shooting D.E. Chipp in the church’s study in front of three witnesses. Prosecutors worried about a biased trial when they discovered two Klansmen, T.H. Tumey and Leo Caldwell, on the jury. The jury ruled that Norris acted in self-defense and acquitted him of murder. While unable to prove Norris’s membership in the Klan, historians found evidence of his sympathy for the organization.²⁶

Although police attempted to present a semblance of “law and order,” six years after the Rouse lynching and during the Norris criminal trial, H.S. Garrett, another white man and a relative of one the jury members, was allegedly shot by an African American. According to a *Fort Worth Record-Telegram* article, two black men robbed Garrett at

²⁵ “Negro Injured in Fort Worth Strike Riot Is Lynched,” *Houston Texas Post*, 12 December 1921; “Negro Lynched by Packing Strikers,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 12 December 1921; “Negro Who Shot Strike Pickets Is Taken From Hospital Cot, Lynched,” *The Shreveport News*, 12 December 1921.

²⁶ Barry Hankin, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris & the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 165.

gunpoint then shot him.²⁷ The man survived and shared his story with the police, who arrested twenty African American men, although Garrett claimed only two robbed him.²⁸ Although the organization apparently enjoyed a large membership in Fort Worth, the Klan's popularity waned by the end of the 1920s; the first meeting hall on North Main was burned by firebomb in 1924 and the second vandalized in 1927.²⁹

Despite the Klan's threatening presence in Cowtown, African American residents still championed black rights. In 1925, James I. Jackson of the Fort Worth Metropolitan Club Committee drafted a letter to NAACP Secretary James Weldon Johnson voicing Cowtown's African American community members' complaints and presenting suggestions for resolving those grievances. The letter read, "Dear Sir: We have here in Fort Worth, Texas, about twenty-thousand colored people, and forty per cent of them are property owners and tax payers. There are a number of conditions that are wholly unsatisfactory and we wish to organize a civil society for the purpose of bettering these conditions. A Branch of N.A.A.C.P., established here, or re-established would be the kind of organization we desire. Will you furnish us the information and requirements necessary for this organization affiliated with the N.A.A.C.P.?"³⁰

Further proof of these "wholly unsatisfactory" conditions existed in a letter from a Fort Worth county jail inmate named Erven Bolden who wrote to the national office asking for its assistance. Bolden claimed that Tarrant County officers arrested him for "murdering a white man unknown to anyone." Bolden said that his distant association

²⁷ "Norris Juror's Kin Attacked," *Fort Worth Record-Telegram*, 13 January 1927.

²⁸ "3 Negroes Held In Store Holdup," *Fort Worth-Record Telegram*, 14 January 1927.

²⁹ "Threat Made to Dynamite Hall of Klan: Heavy Metal Slug Thrown Window While Organization Is Meeting," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 August 1927.

³⁰ James I. Jackson to James Weldon Johnson, 9 July 1925, I G Folder 12 "Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

with “some boys that had a bad reputation” led to his arrest and possible death sentence. Bolden begged NAACP assistance “that I may get something like justice, for I feel I want [sic] get justice without your aid.”³¹

Jackson’s petition to the NAACP’s national office and Bolden’s plea for help renewed the national organization’s interest in forming a branch in Fort Worth. Additionally, a chance encounter further piqued the national office’s attention. William Pickens, a NAACP field secretary, wrote a letter to the Reverend T.S. Boone of Fort Worth’s Mount Gilead Baptist Church regarding the formation of a NAACP branch in Fort Worth. Pickens met an African American Fort Worth resident named R.S. Harris, a Pulman porter while on a train. Harris, a member of Boone’s congregation, informed the field secretary of Fort Worth’s African American community’s activities and provided Pickens with Boone’s name and contact information.³² Less than five years after Jackson’s appeal, Boone helped establish a Fort Worth branch.³³ Pickens responded to Boone’s efforts by writing NAACP employee Miss Black and submitting forty memberships from Fort Worth and attached an application for charter membership. He also informed Black that Dr. Boone, whom he called a “live man,” would serve as the branch’s temporary president.³⁴

Boone and other Fort Worth residents completed an application for charter on July 9, 1934. Fifty-five Cowtown residents signed the application, including the new officers: Branch President T.S. Boone, Vice-President A.B. Borders, Secretary G. D.

³¹ Erven Bolden to NAACP, February 1934, I G 201 Folder “26 Dallas, Tex. 1933-36,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³² William Pickens to Rev. Boone, 21 May 1934, I G 202 Folder “12 Fort Worth, Tex. 1920-1936,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³³ William Pickens to Rev. Boone, 29 May 1934, I G 202 Folder “12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁴ William Pickens to Miss Black, 25 June 1934, I G 202 Folder “12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Flemmings and Treasurer G.W. Munchus.³⁵ They received their charter by August. African American dentist Dr. George D. Flemings served as secretary of the local branch.³⁶ Fort Worth's NAACP chapter quickly began marshalling its forces to address oppression in their area. Field Secretary Pickens toured the city in 1935, hoping to "arouse sufficient interest to get a good branch started there."³⁷

Harris, Boone, and Pickens's success in organizing a branch of the NAACP in Fort Worth indicates Cowtown's African Americans' enthusiasm for challenging racism in the city. Further proof of activism appeared in January of 1936, when Boone informed the national office of five local black jury members' dismissal from service without reason. Boone explained his need for information and guidance: "Negroes were notified to appear for jury service and were dismissed from the jury panel without being examined so as to have it determined whether they could qualify for jury service. I took exception to the exclusion of these five men from the jury panel and made a motion to quash the entire panel for the week of January 20, 1936. The court over-ruled the motion to quash but instead had the five Negro men brought into court and examined for jury service. The names of these men were drawn but were stricken from the list by the opposing counsel without being examined. This made the entire jury white."³⁸

North Texas proved a center of black activism and NAACP membership. The local branch president asked for information on the infamous Scottsboro boys' case in

³⁵ "Application for Charter of Fort Worth, Texas Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," I G 202 Folder "12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁶ Department of Branches to G.D. Flemmings, 28 August 1934, I G 202 Folder "12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁷ Secretary to Dr. Boone, 28 January 1936, I G 202 Folder "12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

³⁸ T.S. Boone to Walter White, 24 January 1936, I G 202 Folder "12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Secretary to Dr. Boone, 28 January 1936, I G 202 Folder "12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Alabama so that “it will enable me to make a stubborn fight for Negro recognition.”³⁹

The secretary responded by suggesting that Boone contact the West Publishing Company and ask for the United States Supreme Court’s decision on *Norris vs. Alabama* and *Patterson vs. Alabama*.⁴⁰ White also enclosed a memorandum by noted NAACP lawyer Charles Houston “on the proper procedure for attack on the exclusion of Negroes from juries.”⁴¹

Fort Worth’s Jim Crow environment provided the African American community with other opportunities to combat injustices. In March 1936, a white female Fort Worth resident claimed that she had been assaulted in a poorly lit vacant lot. Although the woman first stated that her assailant, a “bright-mexican milano [sic] looking man” wearing a brown suit, she later changed her story to an African American man in a blue coat and khaki pants.⁴² Despite the inconsistencies, the Fort Worth police arrested African American Ernest McCarty. A jury convicted McCarty and a judge sentenced him to death. McCarty wrote letters to boxer Joe Lewis and to the NAACP national office asking for help, claiming that he failed to receive a fair trial.⁴³

Through a series of poignant letters, McCarty and his mother both begged for legal assistance. Assistant Secretary Roy Wilkins replied to McCarty’s first petition by informing him that “because of the fact that our Legal Defense Fund is exhausted, we

³⁹ T.S. Boone to Walter White, 24 January 1936, I G 202 Folder “12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁰ Secretary to T.S. Boone, 28 January 1936, I G 202 Folder “12 Fort Worth, TEX. 1920-1936,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; The Supreme Court found in *Patterson v. Alabama* and in *Norris v. Alabama* that African Americans’ systematic exclusion from participating in Alabama from juries impeded the Scottsboro boys’ right to due process and equal protection.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Mrs. McCarty to National Office, 30 August 1936, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴³ Ernest McCarty to National Office, May 1937, I G 202 Folder 13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

regret that we will not be able to accept any more cases at this time.”⁴⁴ Wilkins then asked Reverend Boone of the Fort Worth NAACP branch to “go to the jail and talk to this man and make an investigation of his conviction and report on whether or not from the facts you have discovered you believe that this case is one which the Association could be active in.”⁴⁵ Boone agreed to visit McCarty and investigate his case.⁴⁶ The local president later reported details from his visit to Walter White in May 1937. He informed White that McCarty appealed his case to the Court of Criminal Appeals. Boone hoped to have the sentence commuted to life imprisonment before McCarty’s scheduled June 11, 1937, execution.⁴⁷ Then Assistant Special Counsel Thurgood Marshall responded to Boone’s letter asking for “the approximate cost of applying for commutation of sentence, the amount of money you expect to raise in your campaign, and also give us an idea of how you will go about applying for the commutation of sentence.”⁴⁸ The local leader replied that the \$2,750 could likely secure McCarty’s commutation, \$250 of that sum would secure legal representation. Boone estimated that the local branch could raise \$1,500 and hoped to receive the remaining money from the national office. He also visited the Houston branch in the hopes of receiving aid. The

⁴⁴ Assistant Secretary Roy Wilkins to Ernest McCarty, 3 September 1936, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁵ Assistant Secretary Roy Wilkins to Rev. Boone, 3 September 1936, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁶ T.S. Boone to Roy Wilkins, 23 September 1936, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁷ T.S. Boone to Walter White, 17 May 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁸ Walter White to T.S. Boone, 26 May 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

president explained the exorbitant sum by informing Marshall “this matter has reached the point where nothing but politics, pure and simple, will save McCarty’s life.”⁴⁹

Officers in the national office exchanged a series of letters debating the merits of the case and the value of their involvement. Roy Wilkins informed Thurgood Marshall of some of the details of the case on June 1, 1937. He called the \$2,500 “outrageous but . . . typical of the chiseling that occurs in some of the southern states.” Wilkins’s “advice is to drop the whole matter with the very valid excuse that we cannot raise this amount of money.”⁵⁰ Handwritten notes on the corner, presumably written by Marshall, advised, “Drop it. Sorry for the man but we don’t have this kind of money to put into commutation of a case we did not handle, unless *under the most extraordinary circumstances*.”⁵¹ After Marshall informed Boone of the NAACP’s decision, Boone replied with a tragic summary of the events: “McCarty, in all probability, will die June 11th because we lack funds with which to have his sentence commuted If we do not raise the money, I am sure McCarty will die.”⁵²

Boone made a last-ditch attempt to raise the funds on June 13, 1937, with a mass meeting at the Allen Chapel of the A.M. E. Church. A flyer circulated informing people of the meeting held “under the Auspices of the Fort Worth Branch N.A.A.C.P. and the Ernest McCarty Defense Committee.” The flyer continued, “Everyone is expected to be

⁴⁹ T.S. Boone to Thurgood Marshall, 28 May 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁰ Roy Wilkins to Thurgood Marshall, 1 June 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵¹ Note on letter from Roy Wilkins to Thurgood Marshall, 1 June 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵² T.S. Boone to Thurgood Marshall, 4 June 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Roy Wilkins to Thurgood Marshall, 1 June 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

present at this meeting, where plans will be laid to save the life of McCarty.”⁵³

According to Boone, McCarty received a thirty-day reprieve from Governor James V. Allred.⁵⁴ NAACP records and the *Star-Telegram* ceased mentioning the case or its conclusion so McCarty’s fate remains unknown.⁵⁵ However, the case reveals the troubles black Fort Worthians experienced at the hands of white law enforcement officers as well as the nascent power of the African American community’s organization.

Despite the Fort Worth NAACP branch’s activity with McCarty in 1936 and 1937, a September 1939 letter from Coordinator of Branches E. Fredric Morrow to Boone defined the branch as “inactive.”⁵⁶ Boone responded by hosting a membership drive that resulted in over 200 new members.⁵⁷ By the end of the year, Fort Worth NAACP members contributed \$291 in dues.⁵⁸ Four years later, the branch boasted 539 members.⁵⁹

Other Fort Worth residents also exhibited a renewed interest in the NAACP during this period. *The St. John’s Arrow*, a periodical of the local white Saint John’s Evangelical Church, submitted a stewardship notice that listed an unspecified donation to

⁵³ “Ernest McCarty Defense,” Flyer, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Roy Wilkins to Thurgood Marshall, 1 June 1937, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁴ T.S. Boone to Roy Wilkins, 15 June 1939, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁵ Dr. Ken Stevens of Texas Christian University searched for further information on McCarty and discovered a notation with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) concerning Ernest McCarty. The TDCJ’s website lists electrocutions from 1923-1973. Stevens found that an “Earnest [sic] McCarty,” somehow listed as “white,” was electrocuted on 9 July 1937; <http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/stat/prefurman/electrocutions.htm> (accessed 30 March 2009.)

⁵⁶ E. Fredric Morrow Letter to T.S. Boone, 8 September 1939, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁷ T.S. Boone to E. Fredric Morrow, 3 September 1939, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files; Membership Report, 6 December 1939, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁸ “Financial Statement for the Year Ending December 31, 1939,” I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁹ “Report of Branch Activities – 1942 For NAACP National Report,” II C 276 Folder “4 Branch Files Annual Activities Reports, Texas, 1941-55, Fort Worth - Lee County,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

the NAACP, calling it, “A National and State organization of highest reputation working for the Christian relationship among races.”⁶⁰ Despite the St. John’s Evangelical Church’s professed commitment to combating racism, Fort Worth’s African American community still experienced injustice. A 1943 report to the NAACP national office mentioned police brutality and “bombing of negro houses.”⁶¹

Although the *St. John’s Arrow* revealed that some white citizens approved of a growing demand for black civil rights, many residents opposed the movement. Some Fort Worthians reacted with hesitation to the *Smith v. Allwright* ruling, others with outright defiance. The Supreme Court decided in *Smith* that all eligible Texans could vote in the Democratic primary election.⁶² The white Junior Chamber of Commerce members met in Fort Worth, where they heard an address from Sidney L. Samuels, a white attorney. Samuels argued that *Smith v. Allwright* “Was not a class suit, nor did it purport to such, but consisted purely in a suit on behalf of the individual himself to recover money damage because of the ‘deprivation’ in having his asserted right to share in the primary denied to him because of his African birth. In my opinion, there could be no contempt on the part of election judges in refusing all other negroes the right to vote, provided Lonnie Smith is permitted to do so.”⁶³ Samuels to be proved wrong and the Supreme Court did issue legislation approving “other Negroes the right to vote.” The argument foreshadowed later Supreme Court decisions and their interpretations by Texans who hoped to exclude their communities from the decision’s ramifications.

⁶⁰ *St. John’s Arrow*, Volume II, 29 October 1939, I G 202 Folder “13 Fort Worth, Texas, 1937-1940,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶¹ “Report of Branch Activities – 1942 For NAACP National Report,” II C 276 Folder “4 Branch Files Annual Activities Reports, Texas, 1941-55, Fort Worth - Lee County,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶² Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “Smith, Lonnie E.,” <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/fsm60.html> (accessed September 29, 2008).

⁶³ “No Need Seen for Election Plan Change,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 May 1944.

In the aftermath of the *Smith v. Allright* decision, the Tarrant County Democratic Party gradually awoke to the inevitability of African American citizens' access to the ballot. As evidence, a Democratic precinct chairman reacted to the *Smith* decision differently than Samuels and his proposed avoidance policy. The precinct chairman suggested that the Democratic county chairman remind African American voters that by voting in the Democratic primary, they pledged themselves to support the Democratic ticket. Also, he stated, "If they [African American voters] come in and present a poll tax receipt and ask to vote, I suggest that you hand them a ballot, let them retire to a different part of the room and let them vote If they come in and sit gentlemanly and ladylike - - if there happen to be any colored women voters - I'd let them vote."⁶⁴

Like blacks in other major cities in the South, Fort Worth's African American population became increasingly vocal and organized with the conclusion of World War II. Local African American dentist Dr. George D. Flemmings, first elected president of the Fort Worth branch in 1939, oversaw the renewed member campaigns.⁶⁵ In 1947, NAACP national offices actively debated establishing a regional office of the organization for the states of Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.⁶⁶ The national officers agreed to establish the Southwest Regional Branch of the NAACP in Dallas, Texas, and employed Donald Jones as the first coordinator. Jones retained attorney U. Simpson Tate to serve as counsel for the office.⁶⁷ Less than a year later, Fort Worth's NAACP branch demonstrated its determination to aid in the organization's battle

⁶⁴ "Negro Voting here Left Up to Chairmen of Precincts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 19 June 1944.

⁶⁵ L. Costes-Terry to Walter White, 7 December 1939, IG 202 Folder "13 Fort Worth, Texas 1937-1940," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁶ "Notes on Establishing Southwest Regional Office," 13 May 1947, II C 25 Southwest Regional Counsel Folder 2, "Southwest Regional Office Correspondence, 1947, May to September," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁷ "Southwest Regional Office Correspondence, 1948, July to October," II C 226 Southwest Regional Counsel Folder "1," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

to gain equal rights when the branch's NAACP secretary, George Flemmings, accepted the nomination to serve as Texas' Membership Drive Chairman.⁶⁸ Minutes from the Southwest Regional Conference of the NAACP in March of 1948 listed George Washington of Fort Worth's NAACP branch as the association's Area Supervisor for Public Housing Authority. The appointment meant that Washington's office oversaw the NAACP's review of public housing in the Southwest.⁶⁹ Washington's appointment to a national position reveals the growing importance of the Fort Worth NAACP branch.

The new office wasted little time addressing issues concerning African Americans in the area. Smaller communities around Fort Worth generally provided an elementary school for African Americans, then sent the children by bus to Fort Worth to attend a segregated high school, usually I.M. Terrell. One North Texas community, Mosier Valley, neglected to open a school for its thirty-five school aged African American children. The African American parents formed an NAACP branch in their town, traveled to the Mosier Valley white school en masse, and attempted to enroll their children there. The school officials informed them that the district required the students to travel by bus to Fort Worth's I.M. Terrell, rejecting the African American citizens' demands for a local black junior and high school facility. The forty black parents involved refused and began a private school at a local church. They raised \$500 and took their case to federal court. Judge Dooley ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and ordered the

⁶⁸ "Southwest Regional Office Correspondence 1949, April to June," II C 226 Southwest Regional Counsel Folder "4," NAACP.

⁶⁹ "Minutes of the Southwest Regional Conference of the NAACP, Southwest Regional Office Reports 1947-49," 13 March 1948, II C Folder "1 Southwest Regional Office," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

school board to open an equal school for the black children “even if the Fort Worth schools were admittedly superior to anything the Euless District could provide.”⁷⁰

The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* also recorded evidence of increasing black direct action. A 1952 article reveals an organized and articulate African American community. NAACP president and local dentist George D. Flemmings shared the community’s complaints with a *Star-Telegram* reporter and its intentions to “seek a bigger share of the city services and facilities.” Flemmings provided details of the complaints: “The City Council has refused to provide us a fair share of street improvements, garbage service and other facilities and has refused to appoint Negro policemen.” The local NAACP, represented by Flemmings, promised a concerted effort between the NAACP’s national office and Cowtown’s African American community if the city council failed to address the aforementioned issues. The group also voiced concern when Fort Worth’s Mayor Edwards’ recent appointment of an all-white group to address housing and sanitation concerns failed to adequately serve the black community.⁷¹

Some Fort Worth municipal employees acknowledged the existence of racial inequality in the city. In 1951, Mayor J. R. Edwards proposed the formation of a committee to study civic improvements for predominantly African American residential neighborhoods. “Failure to meet Negro requests for a golf course, and more adequate park facilities,” a *Star-Telegram* article shared, “was pointed out by [Councilman] Baker as a matter that should be given attention along with means of providing better streets and

⁷⁰ “For Immediate Release,” 15 October 1949, II C 234 Folder “5 Southwest Regional Office Newsletters, 1949-1950,” II C 234 Folder “5 Southwest Regional Office Newsletters, 1949-1950,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

“Newsletter, Southwest Region NAACP,” 15 September 1950, II C 234 Folder 5 “Southwest Regional Office Newsletters, 1949-1950,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷¹ “Negroes Plan Appeal If Council Says ‘No,’” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 5 May 1952.

sanitation facilities in certain negro areas.”⁷² Shortly after the mayor’s announcement, city health officials informed a landlord that the two toilets she provided to the seven separate units she rented to African American families failed to meet basic health requirements. Rather than obey the health department’s admonition to install toilets for each unit, she threatened to evict her tenants. The health department responded that “they were informing landlords that eviction of tenants was the property owner’s business.”⁷³ Fire Chief P.C. Fontaine investigated housing zones and found that some areas dominated by African Americans proved dangerous because of poor construction and inferior material. He advocated a “minimum livable building standard” and an active social committee capable of introducing change in order “to erase Negro slums and hazardous living conditions.” In a later article, Fontaine said, ““More modern housing will save lives and our pocketbooks, too.”⁷⁴ Despite the obvious need for improved housing, white home developer Garland Ellis had difficulty acquiring property to develop for African American residences.⁷⁵

Several events reported in the *Star-Telegram* illustrate that many white Fort Worth residents viewed the prospect of sharing their neighborhoods with African Americans negatively. Whites created a civic league in 1938 to combat a plan to build homes for African Americans in the Chambers Hills area.⁷⁶ White Rosedale residents asked that the city reject a proposed \$ 2,000,000 rental property construction in 1950 because the builders intended for African Americans to have access to the property.⁷⁷ In

⁷² “Mayor Says Negro Study to Get Action,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 May 1951.

⁷³ “More Evictions Threatened Because of Health Ruling,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 May 1951.

⁷⁴ “Fontaine Says Better Housing Would Remove Fire Threats in Negro Areas,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 22 May 1954.

⁷⁵ “Home Sites for Negroes Hard to Get,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 May 1951.

⁷⁶ “Plan League to Combat Negro Encroaching,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 November 1938.

⁷⁷ “Negro Ban Is Asked for Housing Plan,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 June 1950.

Mistletoe Heights, another white neighborhood, citizens raised \$2,000 to battle a proposed construction project that would make the community accessible to African Americans. One African American church congregation hoped to buy to the Missouri Methodist Church facilities in the white East Van Zandt neighborhood in 1950.

Residents of the white East Van Zandt neighborhood opposed the sale, but the pastor of Missouri Methodist refused to allow white non-church member neighbors whom he termed “outsiders,” to attend the meeting.⁷⁸ One “outsider,” Vernon Seals, served as president of the Home and Business Protective League, an organization formed to improve the neighborhood and to block African American home buying in the area. Vernon said, “We mean to meet there [at Missouri Methodist Church] even if we have to meet in the yard. We don’t want to make a scene but we do want to voice our protests against the contemplated sale.”⁷⁹

During the summer of 1953, white Riverside residents noticed African Americans buying homes in the area. They formed a group to “send representatives before the Fort Worth Real Estate Board in an effort to get white real estate operators to stop trying to attract Negroes to the area,” as well as to adopt “a series of resistance measures aimed at stopping the ‘encroachment.’” According to the group’s chairman, George Seaman, “a white family in the same block that is planning to sell to Negroes had a hired armed man guarding their home Monday night. . . . Presumably the family feared trouble from other white residents in the area who did not want to sell.”⁸⁰ The group “has asked all white residents in a big area there to put signs in their yards saying, ‘This Home Not for Sale to Negroes.’” One white Riverside resident supported selling homes in Riverside to African

⁷⁸ “1,813 Raised To Oppose Duplex Plan,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 June 1950.

⁷⁹ “Area Residents to Protest Sale of Church to Negroes,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 1950.

⁸⁰ “Riverside Group Settles on Steps to Ban Negroes,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 August 1953.

Americans, but for less noble reasons than community harmony and racial friendships. The resident believed “property values in his neighborhood were dropping and that he and others there could not expect to retrieve their investment unless they sold their homes to Negroes.” The man told the *Star-Telegram*, “It’s going to be a Negro neighborhood eventually. We just want to get our money out of the property.”⁸¹

Seaman’s group urged the African American family planning a move to Riverside “to move out if they can recover their down payment on the house they purchased.”⁸² The family sold their home instead of moving into Riverside. Cognizant of racial tensions and the potential violence the strife posed, black, white, and Mexican American citizens organized the interracial Community Relations Council. The attendees elected three white and three black representatives to head the committee, and hoped to address racial strife made visible in the Riverside controversy.⁸³

After a few false starts, Fort Worth’s black population formed an NAACP branch and became increasingly organized, active, and involved in a national struggle to combat Jim Crow. Black Fort Worth residents bravely joined the NAACP despite the obvious power of the Klan in Fort Worth. African Americans challenged residential segregation by purchasing homes in predominately white neighborhoods and demanded public improvements in black communities. When they met opposition, they relied on their communities, their churches, and the NAACP to combat injustices. Their actions prepared them for new challenges presented during the 1950s and 60s civil rights movement.

⁸¹ “White Man Favors Sales to Negroes,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 27 August 1953.

⁸² “Negro Family Prepared to Leave Disputed Area,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 26 August 1953.

⁸³ “Group Formed to Improve Race Relations: Whites, Negroes, and Latin Americans Back New Goodwill Move,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 September 1953.

Chapter 3 Responses to the *Brown* Decision

“At present the Fort Worth Independent School District has no plans for integration Actually, it is doing nothing but marking time.”

-- Report of U. Simpson Tate, NAACP Southwest Regional Counsel, August 1955

Fort Worth residents reacted to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in myriad ways. As in other Southern cities, many white residents responded with alarm and the formation of racist organizations. Others reacted with a sense of resignation, assuming that the decision meant federal assurance of segregation’s end. Few openly applauded the decision. Regardless of local citizens’ responses, leading representatives of the state of Texas responded with anger and determination to combat enforcement of the decision. In fact, the 1954 *Brown* decision mobilized Texas segregationists.

Rather than respond to the *Brown* decision with overt defiance, as did many Southern states, Texas, led by Governor Allan Shivers and Attorney General John Ben Shepperd, attempted to circumvent the Court’s ruling. Relying on white racial prejudice and suspicions of Communism, the governor “played on Southern conservative racist sentiments and made racism and integration the centerpiece of his gubernatorial campaign of 1954.”¹ Shivers heralded himself as Texans’ savior from “organized labor northern liberal Democrats, communists, and the NAACP” while labeling his opponent, liberal Democrat Ralph Yarborough, the hero of the NAACP and the proponent of social integration.²

¹ Brian R. Farmer, *American Conservatism: History, Theory, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005), 271.

² Ricky Dobbs, *Yellow Dogs And Republicans: Allan Shivers And Texas Two-Party Politics* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); George Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979); Farmer, *American Conservatism*, 271.

The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* ran an editorial originally published in the *Houston Post* and the *Dallas Morning News* concerning the impact of the *Brown* decision on the Texas governor's race. The editor pitted contemporary governor Shivers against the more liberal Ralph Yarborough. The article stated, "In the wake of the opinion by the court, Gov. Allan Shivers defined the position of his administration on three points. These included traditional preference for segregation, unwillingness to sacrifice public schooling (the plan toward which South Carolina and Georgia have tentatively turned), and insistence that the future must be worked out at the local level." The *Houston Post* editor revealed his partiality for Shivers by connecting Yarborough with the NAACP, an organization largely unpopular with white residents. Concerning integration, the editor wrote, "Ralph Yarborough was notably silent on the subject, a fact which apparently made him a candidate preferred by the NAACP." Although Yarborough announced his support for continued segregation, the editor found that "this was comparatively late in the race."³

Attorney General Shepperd also opposed the *Brown* decision and in 1955 stated, "I am of the very definite and firm opinion that the state laws of Texas still call for segregated schools. Our Texas laws were not passed on by the U.S. Supreme Court in the recent (desegregation) cases, and until the Supreme Court specifically states otherwise, segregation remains the law in Texas."⁴

³ Separate Schools Urged By Negro College Heads: Editorial Comment," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 5 July 1954.

⁴ "Segregation Remains Law for Present, Says Shepperd," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 20, 1955; Shepperd's statement came as part of his written response to a letter from Director of Texas Commission of Race Relations, Thomas W. Sutherland. Sutherland wrote Shepperd that he thought "efforts of Citizens Councils to maintain segregation in public schools are an evasion of the law." Sutherland specifically informed Shepperd of Citizens Councils activities in Marshall, Dallas and Fort Worth.

Texas governor Allen Shivers commissioned a state advisory committee on segregation, chaired by Hall E. Timanus.⁵ Shivers appointed the committee on July 27, 1955, to examine “three major problems” introduced by the *Brown* decision. These problems included “1) The prevention of forced integration, 2) The achievement of maximum decentralization of school authority, and 3) The ways in which the State government may best assist the local school districts in solving their problems.” Shivers also instructed the committee to study the doctrine of interposition, which he defined as “a one-word description of the lawful and constitutional protest by the State and its people against the invasion of its reserved rights under the Constitution, including but not limited to the right to govern and operate its public free schools.”⁶ The committee submitted its report on November 20, 1956, and concluded, “While there has been some divergence of opinion as regards the matter contained in this Report, it represents the considered judgment of a substantial majority of the statewide Committee, not only as evidenced by the vote taken at a meeting in Austin, on September 27, 1956, but also by various expressions of approval subsequently received from members of the Committee who were not present on that occasion.”⁷ As expected, the committee found the Supreme Court’s decision judicially unsound, overstepping federal powers, and logistically impossible to implement. Although Shivers stopped short of threatening to close schools if integrated, the committee recognized a comradery with the other Southern states, finding, “The pattern in each State varies, as it must, in order to represent the trend of

⁵ Senator A.M. Akin, Jr., Mrs. Joe Fisher J.V. Hammett, Charles Howell, and Will Crews Morris served on the committee as well.

⁶ Report of the Legal and Legislative Subcommittee of the Texas Advisory Board on Segregation in the Public Schools, 1 September 1956, Texas State Archives, Austin, 3, 11.

⁷ Will Crews Morris to Governor Shivers, November 20, 1956, “Report of the Legal and Legislative Subcommittee of the Texas Advisory Board on Segregation in the Public Schools, 1 September 1956, Texas State Archives, Austin.

thought in the respective States involved, but all plans have one thing in common: the dual school system shall be maintained, or the entire public school system will be in jeopardy.”⁸

Another aspect of the report portended the Fort Worth School Board’s actions. The committee asked, “If a white school in which one Negro is enrolled, or vice versa, automatically becomes an integrated school, how are allotments then determined? Are they determined on the basis of the number of students of the predominant race or on the basis of total enrollment, both Negro and white?” Instead of closing public schools or abolishing compulsory education, the committee recommended a tuition grant program or transfer system.⁹

Shivers’s most creative challenge to the *Brown* decision included referenda on the 1956 Texas Democratic primary ballots. Texans overwhelmingly supported a ban on interracial marriages, non-compulsory attendance at integrated schools, and approval of interposition.¹⁰ Shivers, Shepperd, and their team resurrected the concept of interposition from the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798. The Virginia Resolution read,

That this Assembly doth explicitly and peremptorily declare, that it views the powers of the federal government, as resulting from the compact, to which the states are parties; as limited but the plain sense and intention of the instrument constituting the compact; as no further void that they are authorized by the grants enumerated in that compact; and that in case of a deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of other powers, not granted by the said compact, the states who are parties thereto, have the right and are in duty bound to interpose for arresting to progress of the evil, and for maintaining within their respective limits, the authorities, rights, and liberties appertaining to them.”¹¹

⁸ “Report of the Legal and Legislative Subcommittee of the Texas Advisory Board on Segregation in the Public Schools,” 4-7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15, 8-19.

¹⁰ Farmer, *American Conservatism*, 272.

¹¹ Virginia Resolution of 1798.

Relying on the popularity of state referenda, the 1957 Texas legislature passed a recommendation that school districts that desegregated without a district-wide vote would forfeit state education funds.¹² In a gesture of more visible defiance, the legislature also allowed a district to close public schools if federal troops forced them to integrate.¹³

Some school districts planned to integrate immediately. While the San Antonio School Board vacillated on immediate integration, two other Bexar County schools announced plans to desegregate for the immediate school year. Bexar County School Superintendent Clyde Smith announced that the East Central and Southside school boards voted to integrate their schools, possibly closing the segregated Rock Springs and Midway schools. The district paid tuition for African American students to attend classes outside of the district; once the board decided to end segregation in their district, only those wishing to attend a non-integrated school outside of the district had to pay tuition.¹⁴

Meanwhile, a suit filed in Big Spring, *McKinney v. Blankenship*, threatened to delay integration in Texas. Big Spring's school district promised to integrate in the immediate school year but the segregationist Texas Citizens Council demanded that the Texas State Board of Education withhold funds from Big Spring's schools under the Gilmer-Aiken Law if Big Spring integrated.¹⁵ The Texas Citizens Council, a group committed to maintaining segregation, represented in Big Spring by Dallas and Big Spring residents, also had branches in Kilgore, Dallas, and Fort Worth. Despite the state board of education's unanimous July 4 decision to allocate funds to both desegregated and segregated schools, the Texas Citizens Council sued for an injunction to stop

¹² Farmer, *American Conservatism*, 272.

¹³ Ibid.; "Segregation Bills Signed by Governor," *Dallas Morning News*, 12 December 1957.

¹⁴ "2 Bexar County Districts Okay Racial Integration," *San Antonio Express*, 4 August 1955, IC.

¹⁵ "Texas Case Due to Delay Meet on Integration," *San Antonio Express*, 18 August 1955, 12A.

integration in Big Spring and to prohibit the state from allocating funds to integrated schools.¹⁶ The Big Spring School Board filed an answer to the Texas Citizens Council's claims, arguing that if desegregation "is contrary to Texas law . . . then the state law is in violation of and contrary to the law of the land."¹⁷

Despite the integration controversy in Big Spring, some San Antonio school districts planned to continue integrating. Superintendent of Edgewood Schools Edi Arnaud told the *San Antonio Express*, "We feel that the Supreme Court decision supercedes Texas law."¹⁸ A federal judge in El Paso entered his judgment in "which he intended to void all sections of the state constitution and statues requiring or sanctioning racial separation in the school system."¹⁹ Shepperd challenged the judge's opinion, claiming that if the judge nullified those elements of the Texas constitution, than no laws concerning funding would exist. Judge Charles Sullivan of the Eleventh District Court, who planned to hear the big Spring case, told the *Express*, "I thought we were getting along alright with our N---rs," and, ironically, after his racial slur, later claimed, "I haven't done or said anything that would cause anyone to make predictions as to my verdict."²⁰

Surprisingly, Judge Sullivan defied the Texas Citizens Council's request for an injunction and ruled, "Texas public schools can desegregate immediately if they want and still collect state aid."²¹ San Antonio district schools agreed on a gradual integration plan, called the San Antonio Plan, beginning in the fall of 1955. The plan allowed

¹⁶ "Full Integration Issue Clouded," *San Antonio Express*, 21 August 1955, 9A.

¹⁷ "Integration Curbs Claimed Void Now," *San Antonio Express*, 24 August 1955, 1.

¹⁸ "S.A. Integration Delayed, Governor to Await Ruling Before Calling Legislature: Some Districts to Move Ahead with Programs," *San Antonio Express*, 22 August 1955, 1.

¹⁹ "Special Session Talked," *San Antonio Express*, 21 August 1955, 8B.

²⁰ "Anti-Integration Law in Texas to Undergo Test in Court Today," *San Antonio Express*, 23 August 1955, 1.

²¹ "Decision Frees State Funds for Desegregation," *San Antonio Express*, 27 August 1955, 1.

integration at ten schools in first, second, seventh, and tenth grades.²² San Antonio's Edgewood High School registered African American students before Sullivan's decision; South San Antonio and Harlandale also announced their intention to desegregate once Sullivan delivered his decision.²³ Fort Worth, however, made no move towards integrating after the *McKinney* decision.

North Texas officials responded to the *Brown* ruling in various ways. State Representative Jim Wright of Weatherford vehemently opposed a bill to force schools to desegregate in order to qualify for construction funds. Wright announced to the Texas House, "The amendment's supporters are whistling in the dark if they believe Southern schools will induce more rapid integration in exchange for the federal funds." He continued, "Such an attempt would surely be viewed by many Southerners as a sort of shabby bribe to forsake their traditions and their own best judgment of the local situation."²⁴

White Fort Worth residents responded with both overt hostility and with subtle evasion. Their behavior paralleled the reactions of many state officials. Instead of complying with the Supreme Court's decision, the Fort Worth school board sought to improve the existing African American schools, attempting to finally establish "separate but equal" school facilities. The Accreditation Reports issued in the years following the 1954 *Brown* decision revealed attempts to improve the segregated schools and acknowledged that "computations are to be made separately for white and Negro

²² Fredrick Burton, "Desegregation in San Antonio," (M.A. thesis, Trinity University, 1971), 69.

²³ "Alamo Heights Opens Door to Negro Students," *San Antonio Express*, 28 August 1955, 1.

²⁴ "Wright Lashes Out Strongly Against Integration Proposal," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 4, 1956.

population.”²⁵ In general, the district leaders improved the student-to-teacher ratio to roughly thirty students per teacher, although one school, designated “Negro” on the form, proved an exception in 1960 with thirty-five students per one teacher.²⁶ Other forms indicated that the FWISD board hired teachers and staff for the 1960 to 1961 school year and required that each African American employee held a college diploma and experience in their hired field.²⁷

Fort Worth’s residents reacted with anger, avoidance, and occasionally resignation. Rather than embrace the fiery rhetoric articulated by Governors Tallmadge, Fabus, and Wallace, segregationists espoused Shivers’s political and legislative strategy of avoiding the *Brown* decision without incurring the federal government’s wrath.

The *Star-Telegram*’s “Letters to the Editor” reveal varied responses to the Supreme Court’s decision. E.H. Gardner of Fort Worth blamed “the North” for the decision, argued that the Supreme Court failed to understand the state of affairs in the South, and ended his letter with “Three cheers for the cleanest of all military characters produced in America – Gen. Robert E. Lee!”²⁸ Another letter writer worried about “amalgamation” and the creation of a “mongrel race.”²⁹ One subscriber foresaw integration as a disaster that “will be far more serious and injurious than a war, an epidemic, or a depression.” According to the author, J.O. Bean, “There is no discrimination between the whites and blacks in this part of the country, and it is not a

²⁵ “FWISD Accreditation Report, 1956-7,” FWISD Accreditation Report, 1956-7 Folder, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 2.

²⁶ FWISD Accreditation Report, 1960-1, FWISD Accreditation Report, 1960-1 Folder, “Carroll Peak” Evaluation, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 1.

²⁷ J.P. Moore to Members of the Board of Education of Fort Worth Public Schools, 8 March 1961, Folder “Board of Education Agenda and Business, 1960-1,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²⁸ “Letters from the People: Negro Not Ill-Treated,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 June 1954.

²⁹ “Letters from the People: On Segregation,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 14 November 1954, 6.

question as to whether or not the whites are better than blacks.”³⁰ On May 30, 1954, a white Fort Worth resident wrote a letter to the editor of the *Dallas Morning News* bordering on hysteria and titled “Tyrannical U.S.A.” The author, R.V. Heed, believed that the *Brown* decision revealed, “We are living under a government of unlimited powers. If they can do this, they can do anything. They can seize private property for any reason or for no reason at all. No one who lives under the laws of the United States has the least bit of security any more.”³¹

The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* published two editorials days after the *Brown* decision. One noted that the *Brown* decision came as no surprise and lauded the decision’s delayed implementation. With impressive foresight, the editor noted, “It is possible to imagine a flood of litigation in the lower federal courts in the 16 other states practicing or permitting segregation and which are not directly affected by the Supreme Court’s ruling.” He provided an overview of desegregation cases in the Supreme Court and acknowledged the historic importance of the decision. The author concluded by sharing his opinion of the *Brown* decision, “It happens that we do not think much of it either. We have long supported objectives which we believe in the negro’s best interests and which would better his housing, his economic condition, and his education. We cannot believe that separate education is necessarily poorer education, as the court’s opinion dramatically states, nor can we believe that what the Supreme Court is now undertaking will make any improvement in educational opportunity.” Rather than improving African Americans’ conditions, the author believed that desegregation impaired education for all: “On the contrary, we believe that public education in the

³⁰ “Letter from the People: Crux of Problem,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 September 1955.

³¹ *Dallas Morning News*, 30 May 1954, Section Part III, 12.

South will be thrown into confusion, that rancor and strife will arise, and that the end result will be poorer education, for white and Negroes alike.” Utilizing Lost Cause rhetoric, the editorialist lamented that the *Brown* decision “presages almost revolutionary change in an entire people’s way of life, wrenches its history, and violates its concepts both of the sovereignty of the states and the right of a race to stand apart in the upbringing of its children, not in disdain, or arrogance, or injustice, but in the simple association of kind with kind.”³²

Another editorial appeared the same day in the *Star-Telegram*. It sarcastically referred to the “conspicuous magnanimity” of Chief Justice Earl Warren and informed the public, “In passing, we would deplore the neglect of the rights and views of the minority Southern and border states in this controversy where a racial minority, of political potency in many states, has been upheld.”³³ However, the author believed, “We would remind [the court] of traditional principle of earlier courts that ‘Separate but equal’ facilities for all races is within the purview of the Constitution. We confess bafflement over the novel doctrine enunciated by Justice Warren that ‘Separate but equal’ facilities are ‘inherently unequal.’” With the *Brown* decision, “The court has afforded a ‘cooling off’ period, so to speak, for an orderly approach to the actual task of desegregation. The process may not be extensive in many places, such as Fort Worth, where Negro districts have been provided educational facilities, including competent colored staffs, that are on par with those for white children.” Defending its segregationist party line, the editor continued, “The *Star-Telegram* has favored adequate schools, housing, and other advantages for negroes, but questions directions by the Supreme Court for dealing with a

³² “The Segregation Ruling,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 19 May 1954.

³³ “Supreme Court Orders Radical Change,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (evening), 19 May 1954.

most difficult problem. Premature change is the spirit of precipitate social reformers who come and go with the times.”³⁴

Religious beliefs also factored into people’s opinions on the *Brown* decision. Some citizens wrote in with their interpretation of the biblical story of Ham leaving Noah’s family, claiming that Africans descended from Ham and thus bore God’s curse for Ham’s sin. The author of one letter, signed “A Reader,” believed that integration countered biblical teachings because “everyone, including the people who would integrate the races, knows that the eventual outcome will be a mongrel race that will lower the average intelligence of the United States Surely God will punish any nation that breaks His laws and defiles the body which is in His own image.”³⁵

Others planned to leave the public schools in favor of all-white parochial schools. The *Star-Telegram* printed an article detailing fifteen Baptist churches’ plans to open a private school for kindergarteners through high school students. Although the interviewees informed reporters that bible teaching, and not integration, functioned as the primary concern, the committee emphasized, “Any white child would be eligible to attend.”³⁶

Other residents referenced their religious convictions in their arguments for integrating the school system. Letter-writer Sylvia Flynn believed that God created different races, but rather than create them for conflict with one another, “the reason our Heavenly Father created us white and black was to see how generous we are with the one

³⁴ “Supreme Court Orders Radical Change,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* (evening), 19 May 1954.

³⁵ “Letters from the People: Trying to Wreck Nation,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 January 1856, 6.

³⁶ “Baptist Church Group Plans Segregated Schools,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 5 June 1954.

command He gave us in order to live with Him eventually in heaven – love.” She asked, “Where, then, does prejudice or hate find its place in race, religion or creed?”³⁷

One writer responded to Christian segregationists with sarcasm. C.W. Duncan summarized the segregationists’ arguments by saying, “With almost no exception the letters to the editor here have in some way claimed God began this segregation mess himself.” Duncan recapitulated their arguments, countered them with biblical teaching, and chided Christian segregationists: “It seems to me that Christians must accept God as Father, and therefore all men as brethren. It is bordering on blasphemy to blame God for prejudice and segregation.” Rather than trace racism to a nebulous interpretation of the Old Testament, Duncan advised a candid response: “If we are going to be prejudiced and keep the Negro in his place, let’s say we are doing it and it is our decision alone. Let’s be man enough that we don’t have to excuse our hates by saying they are God’s will.”³⁸

Another contributor combined the spiritual and the practical in a 1955 letter. John J. Johnson, the donor, referenced others’ letters with a tongue-in-cheek contribution. Responding to previous letters, he agreed, “The best way to help the Negro is to return him to his own country; the best way to help the oriental is to return him to his own country.” He added, “The best way to help the white man is to return him to his own country, and the best way to help the red man is to restore his own country to him.” Johnson, presumably a white man, countered this simplistic argument, stating, “Naturally, my personal preference is to remain in this country where I was born, but unfortunately I haven’t a drop of Indian blood in me.” He concluded with a plan for

³⁷ “Letters From the people on Topics of the Day: Right to Freedom,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 June 1954, 6.

³⁸ “Letters from the People: Let’s Not Blame God,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 November 1955, 6.

universal acceptance, proposing, “God, who ‘Hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth’ (Acts 17:26), bless and lead us all.”³⁹

Animosity over the *Brown* decision reached a boiling point in 1955, when the Southwest Regional Branch of the NAACP reinforced its pressure on Texas’s government to support integration. U. Simpson Tate of the Southwest Regional Counsel visited Fort Worth on 22 August 1955 and met with FWISD’s superintendent.⁴⁰

According to Tate, “The Superintendent made it very clear that the Fort Worth Board has no intention of desegregating this fall; that his board has instructed him to begin a study to determine boundaries; the areas where Negroes are most heavily concentrated, and the like and that no definite date has been set for his report.” Tate perceptively summarized the meeting by stating, “The sum and substance of the meeting was a clear expression that at present the Fort Worth Independent School District has no plans for integration Actually, it is doing nothing but marking time.” The attorney correctly foresaw the future of Fort Worth’s integration by concluding, “It is very likely that suit will have to be filed against this board very soon.”⁴¹

Only two months later, members of the local NAACP and African American residents of Mansfield, Texas, filed an integration suit in Fort Worth challenging school segregation.⁴² When a federal court ordered Mansfield High School to desegregate in *Jackson v. Rawdon*, Allan Shivers sent the Texas Rangers to prevent integration.

President Eisenhower, facing an election year, refused to intervene with the man who led

³⁹ “Letters From the People: Who’d Do Returning,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 9 October 1955, 6.

⁴⁰ “Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region,” August 1955, II C 232 Folder 6, “Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1955,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² “Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region,” October 1955, II C 232 Folder 6, “Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1955,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

a host of Texas Democrats, called Shivercrats, to vote against the Democratic presidential candidate in favor of Eisenhower. Robin Ladino's *Desegregating Texas Schools* details the bus ride to Fort Worth and twenty-block walk that Mansfield's African American high students made every school day, the battle in Mansfield, and the two days of burning and rioting that Shivers called an "organized protest," until Mansfield High School finally integrated in 1965.⁴³

Some Fort Worth residents reacted to the court-ordered integration in Mansfield with equal vehemence. Mansfield residents hanged an effigy of an African American man on the high school's property; Fort Worth police found one hanging in Fort Worth's Trinity Park. The vandals stuffed men's clothing with paper and cardboard and then hanged the effigy with a hangman's noose.⁴⁴

Partially responding to the Mansfield crisis, Shivers and Sheppard attempted to reassert conservative Democrat control over Texas in September of 1956, when they filed an injunction against the NAACP for violating the state's barratry laws. Other Southern governors contacted Shivers, congratulated him, and hoped for a Shivers victory.⁴⁵

A Dallas editorialist, Lynn Landrum, wrote a *Thinking Out Loud* piece titled "Their Right of Petition." The article summarized her opinion that "Persecution of members of NAACP does not appeal to the Columntator as a fair or profitable fashion in which to oppose the program of that organization." Although the article seemed to begrudgingly admit that though "the column has no use for NAACP, to be sure, it is the National Association for the Agitation of the Colored People. To be sure, it gathers up

⁴³ Robin Ladino, *Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High*, (NetLibrary, Incorporated, 1996).

⁴⁴ "Second Negro Effigy Hanged in City Area in 24 Hours," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 August 1956.

⁴⁵ Michael Gillette, "The NAACP in Texas, 1937 – 1957" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1984).

money in the North to spend it in the South on proposals that have no observance either in the North or the South, [but] we have to keep reminding ourselves that colored people have the right of petition that same as have other people, it is vital to democratic government that minorities shall always be allowed to criticize, to grumble and to demand. NAACP has the right to ask. And if it does ask, it should not be penalized for asking.”⁴⁶ Landrum’s article described many white Texans’ negative perceptions of the NAACP and the court battles against it. But while many white Texans opposed the organization, at least some supported its right to freely operate.

NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins responded to the column in a letter to the *Dallas Morning News*. He denied the timeworn allegations that the NAACP was subversive and had Communist ties. Wilkins wrote, “Unhappily, by one vote, the Texas legislature has passed a bill requiring the filing of membership lists by the NAACP. . . . We hoped that the Texas tradition of hard, but fair, play would have caused your great state to join Florida and North Carolina in reversing a foolish trend.”⁴⁷

On May 8, 1957, at 2 p.m., Judge Otis T. Dunagan found the case against the NAACP groundless, allowing the NAACP to resume activities in Texas. Judge Dunagan decided that his “judgment does not prevent the NAACP, its branches and members from employing lawyers and filing lawsuits in which they have a direct interest, or to aid an indigent person whose constitutional rights are being violated, providing the NAACP and its members do not solicit the filing of such suit.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Lynn Landrum, “Thinking Out Loud: Their Right of Petition,” *Dallas Morning News*, NAACP III A 260 General Office File: “Publications: *Dallas Morning News*,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁷ Roy Wilkins to the *Dallas Morning News*, December 12, 1957, NAACP III A 260 General Office File: “Publications: *Dallas Morning News*,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁸ NAACP III, I II Folder “Newsletters, Southwest Region, 1957-1964,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The *Dallas Morning News* and the NAACP national office continued their disputes for years. Southwest Regional Field Secretary Clarence Laws wrote Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins that the *Dallas Morning News* “editorials plainly show the NAACP in particular and Negroes in general are the paper’s chief whipping boy. The editorials attack one or both about twice a week.”⁴⁹ The articles Laws mailed to Wilkins outlined Dallas officials’ plans to control every step of integration. One mentioned, “The Citizens Council, composed of all of the city’s top business executives, has not pressured any business on the desegregation question.” Also, a desegregation effort of forty public retail establishments occurred with “carefully chosen Negro couples.”⁵⁰

The *Brown* decision inflamed previously existing racial tensions in Fort Worth as well. Local branch president Flemmings requested assistance from the NAACP when police arrested W.W. Winn, a young African American accused of raping a white woman.⁵¹ The case concluded with a mistrial when “one of the jurors heard the complaining witness, who had allegedly identified the accused, ask one of the police officers involved, which one of the three brothers was the accused. The juror reported this to the court and a mis-trial was declared and as far as we [the Southwest Regional Counsel] know the accused has been released without charge.”⁵² \

Friction in racial issues continued through the early 1950s. In August 1953, an African American man bought a home in a previously all-white Fort Worth residential community. Local white residents threatened the new homeowner, which later led to a

⁴⁹ Clarence Laws to Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins, 3 March 1960, III C 148, Folder “Dallas, Texas Branch,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1960-2.

⁵⁰ “Dallas States Move Towards Peaceful Desegregation,” *Dallas Morning News*, 6 August 1961.

⁵¹ “Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region,” April 1953, II C 232 Folder 5, “Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1953-4,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵² “Report of the Regional Special Counsel,” June 1951, IIC 232, Folder 4 “Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1951-52,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 2.

car's firebombing.⁵³ "This came about, it seems, because this young man [an African American teacher] who lives on the extreme West side of the City, had negotiated the purchase of a house in what is called the Riverside Section of the City – extreme East side – for his parents," the *Star-Telegram* reported.⁵⁴ Southwest Regional Counsel Tate also reported "the porch of the home of a Negro real estate man has been damaged by explosives."⁵⁵

Racial tension continued in Fort Worth after the Riverside controversy. Less than a year later, Fort Worth police shot "a 28 year old Negro veteran."⁵⁶ The report to the national office described the event as beginning with a domestic dispute call:

The officers came and found Leonard Morrison trying to enter a home there to contact his common law wife. The officers arrested Morrison ; He refused [to give his wife a key from his pocket] ; And one of the officers attempted to put his hand in Morrison's pocket to get the key when Morrison slapped the officer's hand away ; The officer tried to strike him with his night stick ; the other officer tried to strike Morrison with a flash light and Morrison took that; then pushed his way out of the Patrol Car. In so doing he pushed one of the officers to his knees, stepped over him and started around the car when the other officer shot him in the back.

The regional counsel took witness statements and demanded that the district attorney present his information to the grand jury. Tate planned to contact the FBI if the district attorney neglected to contact the grand jury.⁵⁷

⁵³ "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region," August 1953, II C 232 Folder 6, "Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1953-4," NAACP Files; "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region," October and November 1954, II C 232 Folder 6, "Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1953-4," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁴ "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region," August and September 1954, II C 232 Folder 6, "Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1953-4," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁵ "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region," October and November 1954, II C 232 Folder 6 "Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1953-4," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁶ "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region," April 1954, II C 232 Folder 6 "Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1953-4," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

After the Supreme Court's second ruling on *Brown*, Texas and joined with border state officials in attempting to avoid or postpone the Court's decision, unlike the open hostility towards *Brown* shown in Deep South states. A 1955 *U.S. News and World Report* article correctly predicted, "Several Southern States see chances for years of delay."⁵⁸ While covering a statewide Texas school officials meeting in Fort Worth in June 1955, a *Dallas Morning News* article called *Brown II* a "Do-It-Yourself Plan."⁵⁹ Richard Morehead, the investigating journalist, interviewed Fort Worth attorney and state board of education member Cecil A. Morgan about the decision.⁶⁰ Morehead's article serves as a metaphor for a response to *Brown* by Texas and local officials. The reporter's rhetoric reveals his interpretation of the Court's decision; he stated, "The court dumped the problem squarely on the local – not state – administrators." The reporter used phrases like "tools for delay" and "there is strong sentiment for keeping white and Negro students apart just as long as possible." Morehead revealed his faith in the delay tactics by quoting University of North Carolina's researcher James C.N. Paul, who believed "any reasonable, good faith approach in the racial education problem will be acceptable to the courts." The reporter noted, "For one thing, the cases will be tried before local U.S. district judges who will be informed on local conditions and likely in sympathy with local

⁵⁷ "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. Southwest Region," April 1954, II C 232 Folder 6 "Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1953-4," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁸ "What Your School Board has to Do Now: Start to End Segregation – But No Deadline," *US News and World Report*, 10 June 1955.

⁵⁹ "Court's Integration Decision Called 'Do-It-Yourself Plan': The Segregation Story – 1," *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 19 June 1955.

⁶⁰ Letter to All Superintendents of Schools from J.W. Edgar, Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency, 7 June 1955, Folder "Integration," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

attitudes.” Although the NAACP hoped for a September 1, 1956, integration, the Supreme Court “refused to set that deadline. In fact, it set no time limit at all.”⁶¹

Texas Board of Education member and later attorney for Fort Worth ISD Cecil Morgan told the East Side Lions Club in June of 1954, “Fort Worth probably will have an easier time adjusting to the end of segregation in schools than any other major city in Texas.” Despite his perceived ease of integration, the Texas Board of education planned to continue on a segregated basis. Integration, Morgan cautioned, “is not a problem to be settled with a fiery cross, loud talk or bloodshed, but a problem to be worked out calmly over a long period of time.” Morgan added, “its time that Texans quit any loose, unsubstantiated talk about communists in the schools.”⁶²

One unnamed Fort Worth resident informed the *Star-Telegram* that the school district could possibly “end segregation in the city schools over a three-year period,” beginning in September 1956. The anonymous advisor recommended first integrating first grade, because “the higher the grade, the more friction may arise in the desegregation process.”⁶³ Apparently board members discussed the same concept of beginning “the first grades of all city schools without a color bar.” The proponents of integrating believed that desegregating the first grade would “start on the way up a generation of school children who accept as normal two races in one classroom [and] ease the school of across-the-board integration.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ “Court’s Integration Decision Called ‘Do-It-Yourself Plan’: The Segregation Story – 1,” *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 19 June 1955.

⁶² “City Adjusted to Ending Segregation, Speaker Says,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 June 1954.

⁶³ “Mixed Schools May Start in ’56 With Lower Grades to Try Plan First Year,” *The Fort Worth Press*, 4 December 1955

⁶⁴ “First Grade Integration Is Talked,” *The Fort Worth Press*, 13 July 1956.

Despite the alleged ease of integration in Fort Worth, the school board voted to continue the segregated system in 1956. The board noted that “the interests of all concerned would be best served and the orderly and lawful operation of schools of the district would be best accomplished by continuing the present policy.” The board also blamed “the rapid increase in scholastic population in recent years, the critical shortages of school buildings, and the \$20,000,000 building program now under way” for preventing immediate school integration. Board member Atwood McDonald believed, “The transfer of large numbers of students from one school to another, which would accompany a termination of racial segregation at this time, would immensely aggravate and increase the problems by the local conditions.”⁶⁵

NAACP leaders, particularly Dr. Flemmings, countered the board’s rationale. The school board “is violating the law and they’ll find out – very soon, I hope,” Flemmings told the *Star-Telegram*. Expressing the NAACP’s intentions, Flemmings continued by saying, “We don’t plan to take a back seat. We don’t want to be obnoxious but we intend to press forward.”⁶⁶

Members of the African American community also expressed their viewpoints to the local newspapers. On July 15, 1955, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* printed an article titled “NAACP Leader Approves of City Integration Delay.” According to the article, Dr. George D. Flemmings “said Thursday he approved of the board of education’s decision to continue schools on a segregation basis this fall.”⁶⁷ The article continued by

⁶⁵ “Integration Ruled Out for Present: Board of Education Cities Many Problems Facing City Schools,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 9 August 1956.

⁶⁶ “Says Board Ruling Is Violation,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 9 August 1956.

⁶⁷ “NAACP Leader Approves of City Integration Delays,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 15 June 1955.

stating that neither Dr. Flemmings “nor his group expected desegregation overnight in a city the size of Fort Worth.”⁶⁸

Later articles and letters fail to provide insight into Flemmings’s intentions and original statements; perhaps he hoped to maintain negotiations with the school board rather than overtly counter the board’s inevitable decision to delay integration. However, only two days before the publication of the article, eleven Fort Worth citizens, including Flemmings, submitted a letter to the superintendent and members of the school board that stated, “Implementing desegregation in public schools, to us means that the time for action is now.” Contrary to Flemmings’s statements recorded by the *Star-Telegram*, the NAACP president and the other ten petitioners insisted, “We are interested and concerned in the procedures by which our School Board proposes immediately to begin the processes necessary to effect full compliance with the Supreme Court decision at the earliest possible date.” Despite the authors’ support of immediate integration, they stated, “We recognize the difficulty confronting you in this situation with which you are to comply, and please rest assured of our willingness to serve in any way we can to aid you in dealing with this matter.”⁶⁹ While Flemmings’s intentions remain mysterious, the *Star-Telegram* article prompted angry responses from the local African American community as well as the NAACP’s national office.

A local branch of the United Packinghouse Workers of America and Congress of Industrial Organizations (UPWA-CIO) also noted Flemmings’s statements to the *Star-*

⁶⁸ “Court’s Integration Decision Called ‘Do-It-Yourself Plan’: The Segregation Story – 1,” *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 19 June 1955.

⁶⁹ George Flemmings, Rev. S.T. Alexander, Rev. J.S. C. Grattan, Mrs. Myrtle Hawkins, Dr. R.A. Ransom, Dorsey Adams, Dr. Marion Brooks, Mrs. Veda Felder, Mrs. H.R. Hopkins, Mrs. Dorothy Furlow, and Miss Joan Carrington to Mr. Superintendent and Members of the Board of Education, 13 July 1955, Group II, Box A 228, Desegregation: Schools Branch Action - TX, 1955, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Telegram and took objection to them. The Fort Worth NAACP office received at least one donation from the local branch of the UPWA-CIO.⁷⁰ Dave Nelson served as the financial secretary of the UPWA-CIO. After the *Star-Telegram* printed the article with Flemmings's comments, Nelson wrote the NAACP president on August 3, condemning Flemmings's comments. He also refused to continue the UPWA-CIO's contributions to the NAACP. Nelson wrote, "Local 54 cannot condone your actions as expressed in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* on July 15, 1955, approving the Board of Education's decision to continue schools on a segregated basis this fall." Nelson chided Flemmings for his leadership, stating, "As president of the Local Chapter of the NAACP, your actions have in all probability set back any constructive move that the members of your organization and the members of our organization had fought for and hoped to put into effect this fall."⁷¹

The UPWA-CIO financial secretary also wrote NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins regarding Flemmings's comments. Nelson informed Wilkins, "We [the UPWA-CIO] had hoped that the desegregation of all schools would take place this fall in Fort Worth, similar to that of other cities in the state of Texas. This hope has been eliminated through the appearance of Dr. Flemmings before the Fort Worth Board of Education with an aim in desegregating schools in the future rather than this fall. In his capacity as president of the NAACP Chapter, he has dealt us a blow below the belt-one that it will take quite some time to recover from."⁷²

⁷⁰ George Flemmings to Dave Nelson, Letter of receipt for \$100 contribution, 23 July 1955, Group II, Box A 228, Desegregation: Schools Branch Action - TX, 1955, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷¹ Dave Nelson to Dr. Flemmings, 3 August 1955, Group II, Box A 228, "Desegregation: Schools Branch Action - TX, 1955," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷² Ibid.

The national branch of the NAACP responded by sending U. Simpson Tate, the Southwest Regional Counsel of the NAACP, to Fort Worth. Tate investigated Flemmings's actions and informed the national office that a delegation of local NAACP members visited Superintendent J.P. Moore petitioning a move towards immediate integration. Tate painted Flemmings as an unknowing pawn in a plan to maintain segregated Fort Worth schools. He informed Wilkins that Flemmings belatedly saw the Board's resolution, stating "[It] would take at least two years for the Fort Worth School Board to even approach the problem of desegregating its schools. Seeing this, he was much disturbed and expressed his disappointment to the Superintendent." Tate continued his defense of Flemmings by concluding, "The Fort Worth Branch, under Dr. Flemmings leadership, is and has been, one of the very dependable branches in Texas. That Dr. Flemmings did, or might at some time in the future, make a human error distresses us very little . . . ; it seems that we must conclude that at most Dr. Flemmings was caught off balance and made a statement that is at variance with our program."⁷³ Despite Flemmings's "error," Tate concluded that he still respected Flemmings's leadership in the Fort Worth branch.

The 1956-57 academic school year in *Fort Worth* opened segregated as usual. Sixty schools provided educations for white students while ten educated African American pupils. That year, the white junior high schools enrolled 10,644 pupils and employed 379 teachers. The junior high schools for African American pupils enrolled 887 and employed 35 teachers. The senior high schools served 6,113 white and 856 black students, employing 232 white and thirty-five black teachers. Schools that

⁷³ U. Simpson Tate to Roy Wilkins, 17 August 1955, Group II, Box A 228, Desegregation: Schools Branch Action - TX, 1955, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

provided both junior and senior high school classes, which taught 1,624 and 1,395 white and black pupils respectively, also employed roughly fifty teachers each.⁷⁴

The Fort Worth Independent School District board revealed its intention of avoiding immediate integration by equalizing its school system. In 1956, the board submitted an expensive plan to improve segregated schools. Board members planned to add an auditorium to the existing Kirkpatrick structure, an auditorium to Dunbar and Como Junior-Senior High, as well as a new building of sixteen classrooms, art room, kindergarten, library, auditorium, cafeteria, and an office suite to Rosedale Park.⁷⁵ The board closed a middle school, East Van Zandt, for the 1955 academic year and reopened it in 1956 for African American middle schoolers.⁷⁶ According to Superintendent Joe Moore, “The school was ordered closed by the board June 27 [1956] because of lack of white enrollment.”⁷⁷ Only sixty-seven children attended East Van Zandt during the 1954-55 academic year, and officials expected the number to drop for the next scholastic year. In a move that paralleled Houston’s later “token integration,” the presence of Mexican Americans, legally classified as “white” in 1948 by the *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District* decision, presented an opportunity for the school board to take advantage of the “white” classification to create an integrated school. According to school officials, “The school could become the first mixed Negro-white school in the city if some of the white children remaining, mostly Latin-Americans, insist on going to the

⁷⁴ “School Calendar, Fort Worth Public Schools, 1955-6,” “Plan of Organization, 1944-58,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁷⁵ “School Building Needs, continued,” FWISD Folder “GW Carver,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 132.

⁷⁶ “White Elementary Schools, Fall 1957-58,” File Folder # 36, FWISD Folder “1956-7,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁷⁷ “Negro School Plan Prepared,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 July 1956.

old school.”⁷⁸ Additionally, Moore stated that he received petitions from the black community asking that the school be converted into one that served African Americans. The board approved a \$106,700 improvement to “add 6 classrooms, stairs, and toilets, and enlarge cafeteria . . . [to be] completed not later than September 1, 1957, if possible.” They also approved a \$163,200 “addition of 8 classrooms and an auditorium to seat 500 pupils.” The plan called for a substantial improvement to Kirkpatrick Elementary School, totaling \$472,800, to purchase a new site for the campus separate from the Kirkpatrick Elementary-Junior-Senior High School. Improvements to Como Junior-Senior High School totaled \$163,200 to add eight classrooms and an auditorium, with the construction of another addition to address problems with this “school . . . becoming crowded.”⁷⁹

Following the *Brown* decision, the board also approved massive expenditures to improve existing schools for African Americans. By January 1955, the board began consideration of school officials’ recommendation to allocate \$894,175 of school funds to improving African America schools. Possibilities for improvements included converting I.M. Terrell High School into a junior-senior high school, making Carver an elementary school only. The proposed fourteen-classroom addition would cost roughly \$543,500. The officials also proposed a \$350,675 expansion of twelve classrooms, a cafeteria, and an auditorium at Gay Street and Carver elementary schools, connecting the two previously separate facilities.⁸⁰ In 1957, the board approved \$5,000 to benefit the

⁷⁸ “Van Zandt to Admit Negroes,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 July 1956.

⁷⁹ Fort Worth Public Schools 1956 Building Program,” Folder “FWISD Building Programs,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth. No. 275, 5, 8.

⁸⁰ “School Board to Study Work on Negro Units: Officials to Recommend \$ 894,175 Be Spent to Increase Facilities,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 January 1955.

Kirkpatrick Junior and Senior High School gymnasium and \$ 86,400 to improve the Dunbar Junior-Senior High School gymnasium.⁸¹

The board also initiated a pattern of closing white schools and reopened them as African American educational facilities. It closed white Carroll Peak in 1956 and reopened the school for black students in 1957; it also closed Morningside elementary and middle schools in May 1961 and reopened them as black schools in September 1961. Vickery Elementary School followed suit in 1962, reopening in September 1963.⁸² However, federal officials agreed that the South could delay integration only so long. United States Attorney General Herbert Brownell appeared on television and announced, "The government will file a number of lawsuits in the next year to enforce integration." In fact, Burnell stated, "Segregated schools could expect the federal government to file 'quite a volume' of cases."⁸³

The local NAACP branch responded by mailing a letter to parents of African American children, urging parents to enroll their children in "the best school and the school nearest their homes and most convenient to them." Flemmings, the letter's author, informed parents "in the event any qualified student is denied enrollment at any public school in Fort Worth, please call and report details."⁸⁴

In 1956 some members of Fort Worth's African American community attempted to test the application of the *Brown* decision in Fort Worth. Herbert Teal, an African American, brought two of his children to Peter Smith Elementary School and attempted

⁸¹ "\$ 7,000,000 School Work is Planned," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Folder "1957-8," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁸² "White Elementary Schools, Fall 1957-58," File Folder # 36, Folder "1956-7," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁸³ "Integration Showdown Due," *Fort Worth Press*, 6 June 1956.

⁸⁴ "Education Board Stands By Segregation Ruling," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 August 1956

to enroll them there rather than in the all-black Carver Elementary-Junior High School for the 1956-57 scholastic year. Principal James Bell refused to register the girls. African American mother Lois Kneeland attempted to enroll her children in Carroll Peak Elementary instead of James E. Guinn Elementary-Junior High School. Although she lived a half block away from the Carroll Peak Elementary School, Principal Hubert Brown sent Kneeland and her sons Donald, ten, and Charles, nine, and Glenn, seven, to the segregated school they attended the year before.⁸⁵ By September, 1956, the school board began preparations for a legal battle.⁸⁶

Again, in 1957, the school board announced its decision to keep Fort Worth's schools segregated. The Texas legislature required that the city's district vote on integration before the school board could move ahead with the program. The district risked losing state funds if it integrated without a citywide vote.⁸⁷

Segregationists in Fort Worth expressed themselves in Citizens Council meetings, at school board assemblies, and in newspaper editorials. One resident wrote the *Star-Telegram*, complaining about federal action in Little Rock, Arkansas. He cited comments printed in an unnamed "national magazine" concerning crime and poverty rates among African American communities in the North. The author used the statistics as justification for racism, claiming, "The only difference is that the facts are familiar, but we of the South are tolerant rather than accusing toward this people. Because we would not point up their weaknesses we neither pry nor publicize. If we suddenly required the Negro population to measure up to the standards set for ourselves every jail south of the Mason-Dixon line would burst its seams." The author continued his racist paternalism

⁸⁵ "Children Turned Black, Sent to '55 Classrooms," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 4 September 1956.

⁸⁶ "School Board Plans Defense If Suit Filed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 September 1956.

⁸⁷ "Fort Worth, Tarrant Schools To Be Segregated in 1958-59," *Fort Worth Press*, 23 June 1958.

with a further argument against integration, saying, “To handpick a small number and force them into a school today is like pulling one plug out of a dam that brings destruction tomorrow. We sympathize with the reporter, and deplore the ‘do-gooders’ who have snatched away the veil of our kindly tolerance and forced the revelation of ‘hard facts.’”⁸⁸

In addition to the presence of the Citizens Council in Fort Worth, the *Dallas Times Herald* reported “The Ku Klux Klan has made substantial gains in its memberships in the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. . . . Texas [has] 400 members in 4 Klaverns, a gain of 100.”⁸⁹ A February 1957 guest speaker at the Citizens Council of Tarrant County urged the residents to support segregationist legislative measures in the state senate. J. Evetts Haley of Canyon, one of the state’s leading segregationists, challenged Citizens Council members to move actively to support the proposals.⁹⁰

As the civil rights movement progressed in other areas of the country, wary white Fort Worth residents wondered about a “Black Supremacy Cult Here?” Fort Worth police officers told the *Star-Telegram* that they knew of a Nation of Islam adherent living within Cowtown’s borders. According to the reporter, detectives shared that “The 39-year-old Negro has an extensive police record, showing arrests for burglary, dope, car prowling and engaging confidence games They said he wears a fez and uses the name Mahniq Khalil Dejzgomah. He is better known to local police as Charlie Harris.” Flemmings disagreed with the police, admitting that “he has never even heard of

⁸⁸ “Letters From The People,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 30 October 1957.

⁸⁹ *The Dallas Times Herald*, 28 January 1967; “Monthly Report of Richard R. Dockery, Regional Director, Region VI Office, NAACP, January 16 to February 15, 1967, IV C 37 “Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1966-71,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁹⁰ “Push Segregation Measures or See Them Die, Haley Says,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 8 February 1957.

such a group” as the Nation of Islam and remained firmly convinced that no Black Muslims lived in Fort Worth. “Such a group wouldn’t last as long as a snowball in hell and you can quote me on that. They couldn’t get enough support to scare a crow off a perch,” the NAACP president believed.⁹¹ None of the persons interviewed explained the enigmatic “confidence games,” or the reasons for their illegality.

Ambiguous theories, the local NAACP’s school desegregation demands, the Nation of Islam, and perhaps even the intangible “confidence games” prompted a *Star-Telegram* editorial by Harry Golden attempting to answer, “What Does the Negro Want?” Displaying elements of progressive ideology somewhat surprising in a large Southern periodical, Golden asked the question: what do African Americans hope to achieve through current activism, particularly in Fort Worth? Writing cynically, Golden stated, “Every white man is an expert. The Negro wants ‘social equality’ and he wants to go to bed with white women.” Golden even mocked himself as a white man and thus no expert on African Americans, writing, “The question itself is presumptuous, because the negro does not want anything that is not coming to him as a citizen, and as a matter of law.” In contrast to the inflated fears of sexual promiscuity, “we find that what the negro ‘wants’ is directly opposite to what many of the white men fear he ‘wants.’ Instead, Golden believed, what the black man wants “is acceptance. He is not interested in the ‘integration’ as a race – he is interested in acceptance as a man. The Negro is not interested in going to the white man’s school as much as he is interested in sending his children to a school that will give them the maximum education that tax-supported facilities provide.”⁹²

⁹¹ “Black Supremacy Cult Here?” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 August 1959.

⁹² Only in America: Just What Does the Negro Want?” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 April 1959.

Despite the seeming change in public opinion towards reluctant acceptance integration, a 1962 letter to the NAACP's national office from a Fort Worth resident reveals many local whites' continued hesitation towards the prospect of integrating Fort Worth schools. The author, a Mrs. W.B. Pickett, attached an article concerning African American pastor W.R. Fairley, who claimed to know Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett, who opposed the NAACP and who believed total integration to be an impossibility. She condemned the NAACP's fund raising campaign and suggested, "Why not take the money NAACP [sic] has and start factories as he suggests – schools – urban renewals. You don't want to improve the negro's [sic] lot – you want to make a tool of him as you did James Meredith." Pickett summarized many white residents' thoughts on the *Brown* decision by stating, "Why not keep & further the dignity & welfare of the negro as a race, separate and distinctive as a whole?" She criticized the NAACP for not "understanding the Southerner," and condescended, "When you integrate with whites you lose your identity. You caused the burning of churches – the loss of life, the loss of jobs – the renewal of strife – you fostered hate, resentment, violence and set the negro back fifty years."⁹³

Recognizing that the federal government's actions in other states had implications for Fort Worth's segregated school system, many segregationists paid close attention to the national news. When the courts ordered integration of Dade County, Florida, the *Star-Telegram* printed an editorial condemning the action and the Florida NAACP's effort to compel all students to attend integrated schools. The editor responded, "The NAACP would recognize, if it would hush long enough to think, that any such order

⁹³ Mrs. W.B. Pickett to NAACP National Office, 14 October 1962, III C 149, "Fort Worth, Texas, 1958-62," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

would not accomplish the integration of the school. The parents of the white pupils would simply move elsewhere. The NAACP then, of course, would do exactly the contrary of what it is demanded in the Chard Villa matter – insist that the school board haul the Negro pupils in buses to schools in other residential areas so as to make sure they are integrated.”⁹⁴

Despite the obvious attempts by the school board to avoid integration, Fort Worth’s African American citizens maintained their quest for equality. An African American weekly newspaper, *The Fort Worth Mind*, printed information about the Fort Worth’s NAACP’s Freedom Drive in 1959. That same year, the *Fort Worth Mind* encouraged residents to attend a speech by civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.⁹⁵ *The Fort Worth Mind* continued its coverage of King’s visit in an article titled “Dr. King Electrifies Audience: Ruth Charity Club And Upper Room Temple Praised for Dr. K’s Presence.” King spoke at the Majestic Theatre in Fort Worth, “sprinkling a the truer message ever been told about the Negro’s freedom plight, and how the USA white man is trying thwart same.” The *Fort Worth Mind*’s reporter criticized the local African American community, claiming, “Fort Worth’s Negroes did not rally to hear Dr. King in not too large numbers, maybe due to jealousy of the sponsors of his appearance, who brought him here first, notwithstanding it was the leadership and the organizational genius represented; also reportedly unfavorable remarks some blabber-mouths minister made about Dr. Kings’ [sic] October 22nd date here.” The author lauded King’s successes and then noted, “But when this same man who made it better for Negroes everywhere, including Fort Worth, [came and spoke here] local Negroes failed in a patriotic and civic

⁹⁴ “One-Sided Demand,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 October 1959.

⁹⁵ “Do Not Make Excuses, See and Hear Dr. King Here Thursday Nite,” *The Fort Worth Mind*, 14 October 1959.

way to hear him, numerically speaking.” King arrived in Fort Worth, thanks partially to the efforts of Watchman Kirby Holmes, the Upper Temple, the Ruth Charity Club, and Fort Worth resident Fanny Williams, according to the editor. He admonished Fort Worth’s African American population, stating, “Until Negroes here realize their duty, quit thinking they are too smart to learn and expose themselves to learning and to tried and proven leadership – setbacks will follow. Some of us are contributing a major part to such slowness here.”⁹⁶

Fort Worth’s NAACP branch remained active throughout the 1960s. A 1964 newsletter reported that although the national office set a quota of 1,500 Fort Worth members, the local branch exceeded that allocation, the first major branch in the southwest region to do so. In May 1964, Fort Worth NAACP president George Flemmings reported that 1,672 people applied for membership in the Fort Worth NAACP branch. An article detailing the excess membership also listed the four church congregations leading the membership drive. Those include Reverend S.T. Alexander’s Mount Zion Baptist Church, C.A. Holliday of St. James Baptist Church, Mount Gilead Baptist Church and Shiloh Baptist Church, guided by C.C. Harper and A.E. Chew respectively.⁹⁷ The local NAACP and the powerful church leadership would prove indispensable in the fight for civil rights in Fort Worth during the 1960s through the 1990s.

Although Fort Worthians reacted differently to the *Brown* decision than did their Deep South counterparts by rejecting the burning crosses, fiery rhetoric, and direct

⁹⁶ “Dr. King Electrifies Audience: Ruth Charity Club And Upper Room Temple Praised for Dr. K’s Presence,” *The Fort Worth Mind*, 5 November 1959.

⁹⁷ “News from NAACP, May 2, 1964,” NAACP III, I II Folder Newsletters, Southwest Region, 1957-1964, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

confrontations common in places like Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, white residents nonetheless viewed the *Brown* decision as an encroachment on states' rights and on Southern mores. While assuming what they considered to be a moderate response to the growing civil rights movement, they still wanted to maintain separate schools, public facilities, entertainment venues, and neighborhoods. In spite of their disdain for both integration and for angry confrontation, white Fort Worthians would experience a direct challenge to their way of life by 1959.

Chapter 4
Flax v. Potts Filed

“I don’t think the Supreme Court decisions call for mingling. I think it calls for no discrimination and we do not discriminate in Fort Worth.”

-- School Board President William Sears Potts

In 1948, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981, effectively desegregating the armed forces of the United States. Full compliance with the order, however, would take years, and few schools on military bases began integrating before the *Brown* decision.¹ One beneficiary of Truman’s order, Technical Sergeant Weirleis Flax, Sr., lived on Carswell Air Force base in Fort Worth, where he raised his children, including his youngest daughter, Arlene. Flax had moved to Fort Worth from Wichita Falls, where his children had attended integrated schools on base; Carswell lacked a school for servicemen’s families, so they sent their children to local Fort Worth schools. On September 8, 1959, Flax escorted six-year-old Arlene to nearby Burton Hill Elementary, a white school that her friends living on base attended, and attempted to enroll her there. The principal denied her entry to Burton Hill, informing Flax that under Fort Worth’s segregated school system, Arlene would ride the bus to all-black Como Elementary, roughly twice the distance from Carswell than to Burton Hill. The same day, Herbert Teal, a father of six, attempted to register his children at all-white Peter Smith Elementary School, only to meet with rejection by the school’s principal.² Flax, who surely found his new life in a Jim Crow environment insulting, met with Teal, a local activist who had attempted to enroll his children in white schools two times before his 1959 attempt. Both men filed a class action suit against the school board on behalf of

¹ “Plan to End Segregation In Base Schools Told,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1 February 1954.

² “School Board Seeks Dismissal of Suit Asking Integration,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1959, Fort Worth Black Geological Society clippings, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

their children and all other African American children in Fort Worth. Confronted with the *Brown I* and *Brown II* decisions and then with the 1959 lawsuit filed by Flax and Teal, the school board and local officials responded with surprise; their comments and actions reveal not only racist segregationist notions, but also a willful obfuscation of the realities that the recent court case decisions imposed.

According to a 1959 “Public Schools in Fort Worth” handout, the district clearly defined “Who May Attend School?” The district specified that “Pupils six years of age and not more than twenty years of age on or before September 1 whose parents, or legal guardian, reside within the Fort Worth Independent School District may attend school free.” The outline also stated, “A pupil is expected to attend school in the district in which he resides.” The district additionally required a birth certificate, proof of vaccination, and a negative diphtheria test.³ Although the children met the outlined requirements, the principals at both schools refused them admission. The two fathers, both African American, worked in conjunction with the local NAACP to challenge *de jure* segregation existing in Fort Worth, arguing that the district’s refusal to integrate the public schools violated their children’s constitutional rights as defined in *Brown*. In response, the local NAACP, represented by Fort Worth attorney L. Clifford Davis, filed suit against the district in November.⁴

Both Mansfield, twenty miles southeast of Fort Worth, and Dallas experienced situations similar to Fort Worth’s attempted delay of integration and subsequent lawsuits. In January 1955, attorney L. Clifford Davis moved from Arkansas, where he practiced “equalization lawsuits,” to Texas, where he served as lead counsel on civil rights cases in

³ “Public Schools in Fort Worth,” pamphlet, 1959-1960, Folder “1959-1960,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁴ “Error Is Corrected in School Integration Suit,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 30 November 1959.

Fort Worth and Mansfield. The Mansfield school district provided segregated elementary schools but sent middle and high school students nearly twenty miles to James Guinn Junior and I.M. Terrell Senior High Schools in Fort Worth. Rather than purchasing buses for the students, Mansfield ISD issued passes for public transportation, which picked the students up in Mansfield and deposited them in downtown Fort Worth, twenty blocks from their respective schools. If the children chose to participate in after-school activities, they sometimes reached their homes at nine o'clock in the evening. Three male African American students, Floyd Moody, Nathaniel Jackson, and Charles Moody, attempted to enroll at Mansfield High School for the 1954-55 academic year. The school denied them admission, and their parents filed suit against the Mansfield Independent School District. T.M. Moody, president of the Mansfield branch of the NAACP, John F. Lawson, Southwest Regional Counsel U. Simpson Tate, and W.J. Durham, NAACP Texas state special counsel, represented the plaintiffs, and J.A. Gooch of Fort Worth represented the defendants. The group also asked newly arrived L. Clifford Davis to assist with the case. Davis filed a class-action suit on October 7, 1955 in Fort Worth's federal district court. School board president O.C. Rawdon, Secretary Ira Gibson, Billy Arbor, Herbert Beard, Horace Howard, C.H. Wilshire, J.R. Lewis, Superintendent R.L. Huffman, and Mansfield ISD as a corporate entity all served as defendants.⁵ The case, *Jackson, a minor, et al. vs. O.C. Rawdon, et al.*, served as a catalyst for divisions within the Mansfield community.

Typically in 1940s and 1950s civil rights violation cases, many leaders of the white community blamed "outside agitators" for instigating discontent within a supposedly placated and content African American population. On October 25, 1955,

⁵ "Mansfield May Appeal Federal Court Decree," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 27 August 1956.

many of Mansfield's white residents gathered for a town hall meeting. The same year, disgruntled white residents began forming Citizens Councils, organizations committed to maintaining segregation through all legal means, in Texas. Citizens Councils began in Texas when retired Kilgore Junior College President B.F. Masters started a branch. According to the NAACP, "Emulating the pattern of Mississippi, some zealots have begun the organization of Citizens' Councils in Texas. This move has just been announced and actually we are not greatly impressed by it. It most certainly has not altered our plans to press vigorously for integration in public education in this section."⁶ During the meeting, the attendants established a white Citizens Council. Howard H. Beard, an office supply salesman claiming to be the president of Fort Worth's Citizens Council, apparently attended the meeting as well. Mansfield's new Citizens Council members elected Bud West as president and Lon T. Hubbard as vice-chairman. The 125 new members unanimously voted to oppose integration. The Mansfield Citizens Council met for the second time just four days before the *Jackson v. Rawdon* case began on November 3, 1955. Despite the precedence set by *McKinney v. Blankenship*, Judge Estes decided for the defendants on November 21, 1955. Clifford Davis appealed Estes's decision in the spring of 1956 in the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court, and on June 28, 1956, the judge decided for the plaintiffs. On August 27, 1956, the federal district court ordered Mansfield ISD to desegregate or surrender federal education funds to Fort Worth ISD. Mansfield High School opened for registration on Thursday, August 30, 1955. Students arrived at Mansfield to a full-blown riot, including an effigy hanging from the flagpole. By Friday, two more effigies appeared. According to a *Star-Telegram* article, "The

⁶ "Citizen's Council," II C Folder 6, Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1955, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

crowd displayed a mood almost like holiday-makers gathered around a country ball field, a departure from that which swarmed over the grounds Thursday morning. At that time, the crowd expressed its disapproval; some of it bordering on violent, of a federal decree which makes Mansfield the first Tarrant County community to be ordered to open the doors to its white schools to Negroes.”⁷ Davis appealed for aid to Governor Shivers, who sent Texas Rangers days later “to keep the peace.” Mansfield Superintendent R.L. Huffman told Texas Ranger Captain Bob Crowder that “any Negroes who attempt to enroll in Mansfield’s all-white high school will be transferred immediately to another school district.”⁸

A Fort Worth assistant district attorney, two other attorneys, and a photographer traveled to Mansfield to view the turmoil. The crowd broke the photographer’s camera, jostled the men, and cursed at them. Despite the incident, the Fort Worth District Attorney’s office filed no charges.⁹ Another Fort Worth resident, Reverend D. W. Clark, a vicar of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, called the Mansfield mob’s riot counter to “God’s law and the law of the land.”¹⁰ He continued his objections, stating, “There are Christians in the community who need leadership. They are acting like barbarians.”¹¹ No African Americans registered at Mansfield High School, which, despite the court’s order, finally admitted its first black students in 1965.

Dallas Independent School District also experienced a desegregation lawsuit. Judge Atwell of Dallas decided a 1955 lawsuit, *Bell v. Rippy*, later *Brown v. Rippy* and *Borders v. Rippy*, initially dismissing the case, which the plaintiffs appealed to the Fifth

⁷ “TV Camera is Smashed During Melee,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 31 August 1956.

⁸ “Mansfield Mob Routs Minister,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 4 September 1956.

⁹ “TV Camera is Smashed During Melee,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 31 August 1956.

¹⁰ “Mansfield Mob Routs Minister,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 4 September 1956.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Circuit Court of Appeals.¹² The appellate court directed the district to enter an order for the school district to desegregate the schools “with all deliberate speed.”¹³ The Court of Appeals gave “specific directions to accord the school authorities a reasonable further opportunity promptly to meet their primary responsibility in the premises, and then if the plaintiffs, or others similarly situated, should claim that the school authorities have failed in any respect to perform their duty, there should be a full and fair hearing in which evidence may be offered by any and all parties, and further that the Court should retain jurisdiction to require compliance with its judgment.”¹⁴

Despite the confrontations in Mansfield, the Associated Press found that of the two million children enrolled in Texas schools in 1956, 500,000 attended desegregated schools. The schools, all west of Mansfield and containing smaller percentages of African Americans than in East Texas counties, integrated without major incident. San Antonio’s public schools served as the state’s test case in order for Texans to view changes in the public school system in the integrated South.¹⁵ Dallas ISD officials submitted a plan, which the Court approved, that called for a “twelve-year, ‘stair-step’ plan of desegregation starting with the first grade in September 1961, and proceeding by the desegregation of one additional grade a year until all twelve grades in all public schools have been desegregated.”¹⁶

¹² *Boson v. Rippy*, 285 F.2d 43, AltLaw, Glenn M. Linden, *Desegregating Schools in Dallas: Four Decades in the Federal Courts* (Dallas : Three Forks Press, 1995).

¹³ *Brown v. Rippy*, 233 F.2d 796 (C.A. 5th, 1956), *Boson v. Rippy*, 285 F.2d 43, AltLaw.

¹⁴ *Boson v. Rippy*, 285 F.2d 43, AltLaw, “NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., Summer Reports, June – July - August 1956,” NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Reports, 1956-64, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁵ “300,000 In Integrated Classes As School Resumes in Texas,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 9 September 1956.

¹⁶ *Boson v. Rippy*, 285 F.2d 43, AltLaw, Part 4.

Texans elected U.S. Senator Price Daniel to the Texas governor's office in 1956. Price demonstrated his commitment to defending segregation by signing the Southern Manifesto, continued Shivers's fight against implementation of the Brown decision in Texas. Voters approved referendums banning interracial marriage, supporting interposition, and opposing compulsory attendance at integrated schools. In 1957, the state legislature required that districts hold local elections on desegregation before integrating public schools and promised to close public schools where the state or federal government stationed troops.¹⁷ A district that integrated before an at-large election approving school desegregation became ineligible to receive public school education funds from the state government.

Fort Worth's integration case began after Mansfield and Dallas both faced a judicial threat to their dual school system. Davis, Lawton, Moody, Durham, and Tate filed on behalf of Teal and Flax. School superintendent William Sears Potts and the board members, including Atwood McDonald, functioned as the defendants. McDonald served as an appellate judge in Fort Worth in the 1950s before his election to the school board.¹⁸ Prior to his career as school superintendent, Potts worked as a reporter for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. On November 19, 1959, Fort Worth ISD filed a motion to dismiss the *Flax* case. The motion claimed, "A disruption of this program during the school year is not and could not be in the best interest of either the white or colored children involved and their educational needs could not best be served by such

¹⁷ T.R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and Texans* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 684; Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "Segregation," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/pks1.html> (accessed October 8, 2008).

¹⁸ "Obituaries: Atwood McDonald, lawyer, appellate judge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1 August 1989, 13.

disruption.”¹⁹ The motion continued, “For the court to enforce integration en masse as proposed by the plaintiffs in the middle of the school year is unsound educationally, and positively unthinkable.” The document also alleged a vague claim that “the board of education and the administration have been considering the possible result of integrating the school system since before the Supreme court [sic] integration decision in 1954.”²⁰ Utilizing nuanced conundrums and apparently confusing the *Brown* decision with *Plessy*, Fort Worth ISD attorney Cecil Morgan “explained the condition by saying that the Supreme Court ruling did not say there must be integration, merely that there must not be discrimination.”²¹

Another *Star-Telegram* article, titled, “Integration Suit Has NAACP Aid,” cited interviews with both Weirleis Flax and Herbert Teal about the NAACP’s involvement. Flax informed the reporter that he asked Fort Worth branch president George Flemmings for the NAACP’s assistance in the case. Weirleis Flax and FWISD attorney Morgan argued about the validity of Texas’s placement laws, to which Morgan replied, “Don’t you realize that without an election the schools would lose their accreditation, state finances and [make] board members subject to punishment.” Flax responded, “I am an American citizen. My children are American citizens. I do not think my children, especially my baby, should have to go to school and wait 1 hour and 10 minutes, unsupervised, for a bus to pick her up. God knows what might happen to her She

¹⁹ “Need for State High Court Ruling Is Cited,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, November 19, 1959; “School Board Seeks Dismissal of Suit Asking Integration,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1959, Fort Worth Black Geological Society, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

²⁰ “School Board Seeks Dismissal of Suit Asking Integration,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1959, Fort Worth Black Geological Society, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

²¹ “Need for State High Court Ruling Is Cited,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, November 19, 1959.

should go to school with her playmates.”²² Flax denied that the NAACP manipulated him and Herbert Teal, informing the *Star-Telegram*, “It certainly was [my decision]. No one has suggested it. I’m not affiliated with any organization except the U.S. Air Force.”²³

The NAACP lawyers and the Fort Worth plaintiffs faced formidable opponents. The Fort Worth Independent School District employed several superintendents and managers. Joe P. Moore served as school superintendent, James M. Bailey as administrative assistant, Glyde Bunnell as assistant manager, Elden Busby, Harold Graves, Eugene Hightower, and Noble Norman as assistant superintendents.²⁴ David K. Sellars worked as curriculum coordinator, and Roy Stone as assistant superintendent of senior high schools. Julius Truelson served as assistant superintendent of the junior high division.²⁵ A Fort Worth ISD Information Handbook released during the March 2nd, Texas Annual Public Schools Week claimed that 28,855 and 28,954 male and female white students respectively lived in the Fort Worth school district.²⁶ The district enrolled 70,265 students during the 1959-60 academic school year. The attendance reached 95.4% of the total students enrolled. The district consisted of 106 school buildings, with eighty elementary schools, fourteen junior high schools, five junior-senior high schools, and seven high schools. The school grounds totaled 148 square miles.²⁷ Additionally, on

²² “Integration Suit Has NAACP Aid,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1959, Fort Worth Black Genealogical Society clippings, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

²³ “School Board Seeks Dismissal of Suit Asking Integration,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1959, Fort Worth Black Genealogical Society clippings, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

²⁴ “Directory: Fort Worth Public Schools, 1960-61,” FWISD Folder, “Personnel Documents, 1950-59.”

²⁵ “Plan of Organization, Fort Worth Public Schools, 1956-57,” Fort Worth ISD Folder “1955-56,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²⁶ “Texas Annual Public Schools Week, Fort Worth ISD Information Handbook, 1959-60,” Folder “1959-60,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²⁷ “Education, 1959-60,” Folder “1959-60,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 1.

January 19, 1959, Fort Worth ISD annexed a block of Benbrook and portions of White Settlement, Little, and John T. White districts.²⁸

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Fort Worth Division, heard the case brought by Flax and Teal. Judge T. Whitfield Davidson presided over the case, known as *Arlene Flax, et al. vs. W.S. Potts, et al.* The district's attorney, Cecil Morgan, responded on December 15, 1959, with a motion to dismiss the lawsuit, alleging that the suit was not "a good faith proceeding to transfer the seven children involved from one school to another. . . . [And that the suit was] inspired by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to admit en masse all of the colored children of Fort Worth into the white schools of Fort Worth without regard to the law, the qualifications and educational needs of the children involved."²⁹ Morgan served on the Texas Board of Education until he resigned in 1959 to represent Fort Worth ISD in their fight against integration. He served as lead counsel from 1959 to 1975. On Tuesday, 9 February 1960, the *Star-Telegram* printed a summary of Morgan's deposition of Teal conducted on the previous day. Morgan insinuated that Teal's children were illegitimate and implied that Teal's children might not be his, disqualifying Teal from filing a suit on their behalf, perhaps to have the case dismissed on a technicality, or to intimidate Teal with the revelation that public trials meant that participants' personal history might be of interest to the press.³⁰

²⁸ "Important Dates in Fort Worth Public School History," Folder "1959-60," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²⁹ "FW Integration Suit Studied," Scrapbook Fort Worth Retired Teachers Association, 1961-2, 9 April 1961, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; "Schools Declared Integrated," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 September 1989.

³⁰ "Negro Father's Petition in Integration Suit Questioned," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 9 February 1960, Fort Worth Black Genealogical Society clippings, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

Cecil Morgan petitioned for a postponement of the trial in April 1961. Morgan informed the court, represented by 83-year-old Judge Davidson, that due to Joe D. Moore's illness, the superintendent could not testify in court. The attorney claimed that the "superintendent is the only one who knows what has been accomplished in the way of a [desegregation] plan."³¹ Clifford Davis responded that he opposed a delay, that Moore's statement could be admitted in the form of a written deposition, and that Moore "had an abundance of assistants . . . Besides that, Mr. Moore is a hired employee and not a policy maker, Moore only carries out the administrative policy of the board."³² However, Davidson granted the postponement.

A later *Time Magazine* article criticized Davidson, categorizing him as a "Robe Dragging" judge. The article specifically chided Davidson as a judge "not so able to resist community pressure or go beyond long-held beliefs [and among] . . . many Southern district judges [who] dragged their feet, their robes, their dignity and anything else that came to hand in an effort to slow or reverse the course of integration." The author sneered, "In Dallas in 1960, for example, Judge T. Whitfield Davidson, then 83, ruled that a plan promising complete desegregation by 1973 was unacceptable – because the school board was moving too fast." *Time* summarized the busing conflict of lower and higher courts' standoffs, stating, "Higher courts reverse rulings in the case at least five times, not an unusual rate for laggard Southern judges, some of whom are still serving as glacially as ever."³³

³¹ "School Integration Suit Here Delayed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 10 April 1961.

³² "Desegregation Order Presents Problems," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society clippings Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

³³ "The Busing Judges," *Time Magazine*, Monday, 3 May 1971.

By November 1961, Morgan and the school board could not delay the lawsuit any longer. Judge Leo Brewster replaced the aging Davidson as federal judge. Brewster decided that Joe P. Moore's assistants could testify for the indisposed superintendent.³⁴

On December 14, 1961, Judge Brewster, citing the *Brown* decision, declared Fort Worth's dual school system unconstitutional. Brewster implicitly acknowledged that Fort Worth intended to "avoid the rule in *Brown v. Board of Education*."³⁵ Two weeks later, he further ordered the district to submit an integration plan within thirty days of his judgment. In addition to ordering the schools to desegregate, the district court retained jurisdiction over the case in order to oversee the plan.³⁶ School Board President William Sears Potts responded to Brewster's decision by stating, "I don't think the Supreme Court decisions call for mingling. I think it calls for no discrimination and we do not discriminate in Fort Worth."³⁷ The board objected to his decision and the board's attorney Cecil Morgan filed a motion for a new trial.³⁸

A *Star-Telegram* editorial acknowledged that the "present decision may be appealed, it is difficult to see how more than delay can be gained in that direction." The editor admitted, "We do not believe that the cause of education in Fort Worth has been advanced by the current order, which calls for the presentation of a plan for 'effectuating a transition in a racially nondiscriminatory school system to begin at the 1963 school term and to proceed with all deliberate speed.' Neither do we believe that it can contribute to better racial relations." Again revealing a distaste for the court's decision

³⁴ "Schools Ready for Race Trial," Scrapbook Fort Worth Retired Teachers Association, 1961-2, 6 November 1961, Billy W. Sils Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³⁵ *Arlene v. W.S. Potts*, Civil Action No. CA 4-4205-E, filed 17 June 1983, 1; "The Integration Order and Fort Worth's Schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Saturday Morning, 11 November 1961.

³⁶ *Arlene v. W.S. Potts*, Civil Action No. CA 4-4205-E, filed 17 June 1983, 1.

³⁷ "Schools Declared Integrated," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 September 1989.

³⁸ A 236 "NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund cases, Docket Reports, 1964," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

and the impending integration, the editor declared, “Despite the fact that the lawsuit culminating in the integration order was brought by Negro plaintiffs and supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the outcome hardly represents the wishes of the majority of Fort Worth people or indeed perhaps even a majority of the Negro population.” He longingly remembered the district’s successful avoidance policy, noting, “The city is confronted with a situation it did not seek and which had it escaped since the seven years, which have elapsed since the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court.” After affirming his disdain the author resigned himself: “Yet it presumably must be lived with as best as possible.” Falling back on the original attempts to avoid *Brown* by suddenly adhering to *Plessy*, the editor wrote, “The Board of Education has not ignored the needs of Negro education in Fort Worth. The present Negro schools are good – modern and substantial and well staffed. In large measure Fort Worth’s Negro communities are accommodated by the situation of schools in their vicinity.” Again regurgitating time-worn arguments, the article continued, “It may be presumed that despite the prospective demise of the dual system of schools many Negro families will prefer the schools with which their children are familiar.”³⁹

Such views appear to square with the attitudes of FWISD’s school board, which, in spite of the federal court’s decision, refused to fully face reality. Even after Brewster’s 1961 order to submit an integration plan, school officials, including Board President W.S. Potts and Vice-President Atwood McDonald continued to “question whether their school board will begin now to prepare an integration plan, so it will not be rushed if the ruling is upheld, or whether it will delay making such a plan in hope the case will be reversed.”

³⁹ “The Integration Order and Fort Worth’s Schools,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Saturday Morning, 11 November 1961.

McDonald, like Potts and Busby, remained impervious to the significance of the *Brown* decision and of Brewster's integration order. He relied on the board's now defunct equalization attempts, assuming that conversion of previously white school buildings into facilities for African American students absolved the district from complying with the integration order. McDonald repeated Potts's philosophy that because Fort Worth provided decent facilities for black students, *Brown's* integration order could not apply to Fort Worth; he told the *Star-Telegram* that "Potts's view – it may be an argument unique in such suit – is that Fort Worth's dual school system is believed to be better than any other, and hence is not discriminatory." Newly promoted Deputy Superintendent of Schools Elden D. Busby, a future board president, agreed with Potts. Busby testified in court that the district improved "Negro schools" and raised teacher salaries within the past few years.⁴⁰

The board members existed in a state of willful oblivion following the *Brown* decision. Like the famous Topeka, Kansas, schools, Fort Worth provided facilities for black students that differed greatly from the notorious one-room shacks provided by districts in South Carolina and Mississippi. Also like Topeka, Fort Worth residents viewed themselves as Westerners, rather than distinctively Southern. Neither city had a reputation for poor race relations and both portrayed themselves as moderate rather than extremist. However, like their Southern counterparts, Topeka and Fort Worth both functioned under Jim Crow restrictions. The Fort Worth School Board prided itself on its history of providing a relatively adequate educational system for its black population, allowing the 1963 board members to continue functioning in a state of denial, believing that although "Fort Worth's dual school system is . . . better than any other," the federal

⁴⁰ "Board to Discuss Integration Order," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Morning, 10 November 1961.

court applied *Brown's* "separate but equal is inherently unequal" mandate to the district. Local leaders' shock at Brewster's decision shows not only the paternalistic pride the board felt about the quality of black schools in Cowtown but also the level of entrenchment that segregation held on the local society. The district should provide decent facilities for African American students, many believed, but equal educational access suggested an equality that few white Fort Worthians seemed ready to accept.

Editors of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* echoed Potts's and Busby's opposition to the desegregation order but recognized the inevitability of *Brown's* implications on Fort Worth schools. In an article titled "The Integration Order and Ft. Worth's Schools," the editor conceded that "the order laid by Federal District Judge Leo Brewster upon the Fort Worth Board of Education for racial integration of its schools should occasion no real surprise." The authors stated, "Our hope is that the school system as it is integrated can be so operated so that education for both races will not be too seriously impaired, nor racial relations, which have been exceptionally good in Fort Worth, notably damaged."⁴¹

Another editorial of the same time period expanded on the editors' perceptions of the integration order's "problems." The article cited Dallas's state-federal conflict; that city had held at-large elections in which the voters defeated integration, a meaningless exercise in light of the federal desegregation order. Recognizing the futility of the voters' actions, the writer admitted that "a referendum would be difficult, owing to the large number of names required upon a petition for such an election and it would have no real bearing upon whether or not the school desegregates."⁴²

⁴¹ "The Integration Order and Ft. Worth's Schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 November 1961.

⁴² "Desegregation Order Presents Problems," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society clippings, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

According to this editorial, the state funds, totaling roughly \$5.6 million annually, added up to one-fourth of Fort Worth ISD's total operating costs. If the district complied with Brewster's decision without holding a referendum, it risked being disqualified from receiving state funds. As mentioned in chapter three, the 1957 Texas legislature had passed a recommendation that school districts that desegregated without a district-wide vote would forfeit state education funds. In theory, if upheld, this ruling meant that the city would have to institute a substantial local tax increase to cover the lost funds. The author lamented, "The board thus is faced with problems in carrying out a court order which by all the signs it cannot avoid much longer. . . . Fort Worth now, however, faces the very definite prospect of having to desegregate its schools. We hope that if that time comes as expected the job will be done as peacefully and as orderly as possible."⁴³

After the long lamentations vocalized by the school board, the NAACP's reports on the original *Flax* victory seemed terse. The NAACP's national office summarized the case more succinctly in a docket report from 1962. The report listed the *Flax* case and read, "Suit to desegregate Fort Worth schools. Case heard on November 8, 1961. Judgment was rendered on December 14, 1961, ordering defendants to desegregate the schools and to submit a plan to that effect within thirty days. Court retained jurisdiction to effectuate the judgment. On March 1, 1962, an order was entertained overruling defendant's motion for a new trial. Defendants have filed on appeal with the Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit."⁴⁴

⁴³ "Desegregation Order Presents Problems," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society clippings, Central Public Library, Fort Worth.

⁴⁴ III A 236 NAACP Administration 1956-65: General Office File: "NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund cases, Docket reports, 1961-62," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The district underwent significant personnel changes in the 1962-63 academic year but the changes in no way altered the board's traditionally segregationist notions. Dr. Elden B. Busby, who already displayed his segregationist proclivities, served as deputy superintendent in 1961 and became superintendent in December 1962, effective in September 1963. Busby attended Fort Worth's public schools, received a B.A. from Abilene Christian University, an M.A. from Texas Christian University, and an Ed.D. from Stanford University before returning to Fort Worth, working as a principal in several high schools, and serving as superintendent of Fort Worth's school district in 1963.⁴⁵

That same year, district voters placed Reverend John R. Leatherbury on the school board. Leatherbury worked as the pastor of St. John's Episcopal Church, the same church that decades earlier had contributed funds to the NAACP and championed equal rights in the *St. John's Arrow*. The new board member, however, held different views than those of his predecessors at St. John's. The pastor served for twelve years as a school board member and then president, proving himself to be a controversial presence on the board. In a memoir written ten years after the end of his term, Leatherbury revealed his animosity towards the Supreme Court's and the district court's decisions when he said, "Many hours were spent with federal budgets and federal interference in the daily running of schools." Leatherbury's reflections reveal his stunning blindness to the reality of education in a post-*Brown* world; he expressed his frustrations with the government by stating, "The federal government had insisted [in 1962] that we integrate at once which meant a new outlook in education." Leatherbury resigned from the board

⁴⁵ Fort Worth ISD "Pursuit of Excellence," \ February 1966, Folder "School History, Part 2," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 13.

in 1974 and claimed that “The problem of integration was met head on and was completed *before* I left the board in 1974.”⁴⁶ The federal court disagreed with Leatherbury’s assertions that “the problem of integration” ended before 1974; instead, Fort Worth remained under court supervision in the *Flax* case until 1992.

The pastor’s disapproval of “integration at once” parallels protests of other opponents to “immediate integration.” Critics articulated their self-deceptions in their arguments against the federal court’s repeated affirmations of integration orders and seemingly neglected to realize that the 1954 *Brown* decision overruled *Plessy* (which defined the principle of “separate but equal”). Leatherbury criticized the “liberal Supreme Court” for calling for integration in 1974, exactly twenty years after the *Brown* decision, a timeframe that fits few people’s definition of “immediate.”

As part of this timeframe, in 1963, President John Kennedy passed a measure extending federal law to private business. Texas Governor John Connally critiqued John and Robert Kennedy’s plans, claiming, “The voice of reason must be raised – clearly, strongly – to reflect the feeling of the vast majority of Texans. The issue of civil rights is too vital to be left to the discordant, divisive elements of the extreme left or the extreme right.” Attempting to strike a delicate balance between pro- and anti-segregationist positions, Connally stated, “The voices of irresponsible demagogues are loud and demanding on what the individual states should do. Some would have the state used as an instrument and a force of oppressive action against the whites; other equally militant voices, against the Negroes. I vigorously reject both approaches as wholly distasteful and unacceptable to reasonable, responsible Texans.”⁴⁷ The same year, Connally prevented a

⁴⁶ “In Old Fort Worth: The Day They Integrated the Schools,” *Fort Worth News-Tribune*, 20 July 1984, 18.

⁴⁷ “Texans Progress Pledged to Civil Rights Goals,” *Austin American Statesman*, 21 June 1963.

planned Indignant White Citizens Council parade in Austin.⁴⁸ He did, in contrast, allow for a sit-in demonstration for Jobs and Freedom, but said that he believed in “co-operation rather than coercion in obtaining equal rights for citizens of race, creed, or color.”⁴⁹

Criticism of the board’s thinly veiled delay attempts came from surprising sources. Fort Worth’s Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary hosted a meeting on race relations. During the conference, titled “The Role of Christian Leadership in Communities Facing School Desegregation,” the group “had urged that the Fort Worth School Board discard evasive tactics and adopt a definite plan to integrate local schools.” School Board President Potts replied angrily, foreshadowing Martin Luther King’s comment concerning segregation in churches on Sundays by asking, “Where are some Tarrant County Baptist churches which have led the way for integrating?” The superintendent said that the Baptist ministers should initiate integration efforts in Fort Worth by integrating their congregations before “throwing rocks at a school board responsible for the welfare of all the community’s school children.” Truelson reiterated his support of the school board’s appeal of the recent integration order that mandated Fort Worth ISD’s integration by the approaching fall semester. Reverend H. Guy Moore, Potts’s pastor at Broadway Baptist Church, attended the Southwest Baptist meeting and admitted that he felt the school board should present a viable and detailed integration plan.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “Connally Asked Halt of Whites March,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 27 August 1963.

⁴⁹ “Texans Progress Pledged to Civil Rights Goals,” *Austin American Statesman*, 21 June 1963.

⁵⁰ “Potts Fires Hot Retort At Baptists: School Board Policy On Race Question Defended as Proper.” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, B.W. Sills Archive, Folder “Desegregation,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

Other Fort Worth ministers concurred with the Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary's position. Reverend Jack H. Pritchard of Hemphill Presbyterian Church supported integration in churches, stating, "Christ did, and his church should, include all races and all cultures." Pritchard hoped that neighborhood integration would lead to church integration, so that the church "reflects the inclusiveness, compassionate spirit of Christ."⁵¹

Regardless of Fort Worth citizens' opinions, the city's school district could no longer avoid federally mandated integration. The same year that George Wallace shouted, "Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever," and despite the Interposition Plan, Texas Pupil Placement Acts, and the delay tactics of the school board, the District Court adopted a modified comprehensive desegregation plan on 3 May 1963.⁵² Like the Dallas ISD, the Fort Worth board submitted a "stair-step" integration plan, intending to integrate one grade a year, beginning with the first grade.⁵³ The 1963 approved plan read, "Each first grade student, regardless of race or color, shall be permitted to go to the elementary school of the school district in which he resides." The stair-step plan also called for the immediate integration of adult education.⁵⁴ The first grade and adult education classes integrated in the fall of 1963.

The month before the 1963-64 school year began, the *Star-Telegram* printed an article written by reporter Gene Ormsby titled "Schools Equality Stressed." Despite the school board's claims of equalized schools, Ormsby interviewed dissatisfied Fort Worth

⁵¹ "Minister Here Urges Church Desegregation," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 September 1963.

⁵² *Flax. vs. Potts*, Civil Action No. CA 4-4205-E.

⁵³ "Plan of Organization: Fort Worth Public Schools, 1956-7," Folder "1956-7," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁵⁴ "Order on Plan for Desegregation Issued by United States District of Texas," 8 May 1963, B Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 1.

inhabitants who knew otherwise. A “leading white clergyman,” believed, “Separate but equal facilities exist in theory only.”⁵⁵ “A Prominent Negro,” was quoted as saying, “Generally speaking, Negro schools are not up to par with white schools. You have only to visit those schools to see that this is true.” Such views obviously contradicted the board’s opinions. Board member Mrs. Ronald Smith claimed, “I have visited all 114 schools of the Fort Worth Independent School District during the last year, and I can state unequivocally that I feel the school facilities in Fort Worth for Negro children are equal in all respects to those provided for white children. In the outlying, less congested areas, I feel they are better than those provided for white children.”⁵⁶

Despite citizens’ objections and rejections, the *Fort Worth Press* reported peaceful integration at seven Fort Worth elementary schools on September 3, 1963. Lilly B. Clayton, Washington Height School, Charles E. Nash, Oakhurst, Sagamore Hill, and M.G. Ellis, Fort Worth district’s formerly all-white elementary schools, enrolled twenty African American first-graders. Five African American students living at Carswell Air Force Base also enrolled in formerly all-white Theodore Willis School after attending an integrated kindergarten operated on base the year before.⁵⁷ According to reporters, integration occurred without “a noticeable tremor” and “without a hitch . . . a comment . . . or a raised eyebrow.”⁵⁸ Despite the success of the day’s easy integration, Fort Worth had enrolled only 3.8 percent of the total number of African American first graders in

⁵⁵ Ormsby, Gene, “Responsible Transition – VI: Schools Equality Stressed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 5 August 1963.

⁵⁶ “Texans Progress Pledged to Civil Rights Goals,” *Austin American Statesman*, 21 June 1963.

⁵⁷ “Integration of Schools Here Without Incident,” *The Fort Worth Press*, 4 September 1963.

⁵⁸ “Integration Day Goes Routinely,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 5 September 1963. “Integration of Schools Here Without Incident,” *The Fort Worth Press*, 4 September 1963.

formerly all white schools, leaving 1,432 African American first graders in all black schools.⁵⁹ Integration continued on a small level during the next academic year, as well.

During the 1964-65 academic year, the district integrated the second grades of fourteen elementary schools, enrolling 117 African American pupils in predominantly white schools and four white children in predominantly African American schools.⁶⁰ On 5 September 1964, the NAACP filed a complaint that the plan was not comprehensive enough. Brewster rejected the complaint. Along with second graders, the 1964-65 academic year brought the voluntary integration of two grades in the Technical High School; the absence of a technical school for African Americans previously caused discord between the two communities.⁶¹ “The policy adopted by the board of education on August 27, 1964, regarding Technical High School will permit Negro pupils in grades ten through twelve who are unable to secure desired vocational courses at I.M. Terrell High School to apply for admission at the Technical High School,” a Fort Worth ISD Plan of Organization informed parents.⁶² Although the board initially authorized integration of all elementary school grades for the 1965-66 school year and junior high grades in 1966-67 academic year; the next year, the district integrated all senior high grades.⁶³

According to a Fort Worth ISD scrapbook from the 1966-67 academic year, Charles E. Nash, a previously all-white school, enrolled 518 Anglo and thirty-five

⁵⁹ “Integration of Schools Here Without Incident,” *The Fort Worth Press*, 4 September 1963.

⁶⁰ “Order on Plan for Desegregation Issued by United States District of Texas,” 8 May 1963, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 2.

⁶¹ “Training Gets Criticism,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 August 1963.

⁶² “Plan of Organization: Fort Worth Public Schools, 1956-7,” Folder 1956-7,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 1.

⁶³ *Flax vs. Potts*, Civil Action No. CA 4-4205-E.

⁶³ “Plan of Organization: Fort Worth Public Schools, 1956-7,” Folder 1956-7, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

African American students; Diamond Hill, 492 white and fifty-nine black; Washington Heights 292 white and ninety-three black; S.S. Dillow 193 white and 433 black; Glencrest 308 white and fifty-two black; Carter Park 703 white and 137 black; and Eastland 195 white and 245 black students. W.M. Green enrolled 248 white and fifty-three black; Theodore Willis 652 white and seventy-four black; W. Huffman, a special education school, enrolled sixty-five white and twenty-four black; Parker Junior High 703 white and 90 black; and William James Junior High School 722 white and 125 black students.⁶⁴ These figures reflect partial desegregation, which allowed activists to demand that the board institute a program to more quickly integrate schools. Proponents of the ambitious plan hoped that “with the school year 1967-68, the Fort Worth Independent School District [would become] a completely desegregated school district.”⁶⁵

Some school districts allowed white parents to use transfer policies to withdraw their children from integrated schools and enroll them in all-white schools. The Fort Worth school district differed from those districts by specifically blocking transfer policy abuses through a clearly stated definition of such policies. A 1967 “Opening of Schools: A Bulletin to All Principals” detailed the district’s transfer policies, buttressing the board’s integration claims. Desegregation goals and transfer allowances both appeared classified under the same Roman numeral titled “Desegregation of Schools, Regular Transfer Policy, and School Attendance Districts for the School Year 1967-68.” The “Regular Transfer Policy” explained, “A pupil is expected to attend school in the district

⁶⁴ Fort Worth ISD Scrapbook, December 1967 through July 1967, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 September 1967.

⁶⁵ “Plan of Organization: Fort Worth Public Schools, 1956-7,” Folder “1956-7,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 2.

in which he resides. Race or color, whim, dislike for a teacher or a principal, and the like, will not be considered to be valid reasons for a transfer, however, a transfer to another school may be granted for any one of the following reasons: 1) It is in the best interests of the individual pupil; 2) transportation problems are involved; 3) convenience to employment is a factor; 4) care of child before and/or after school is necessary; 5) desired subjects are not available in the home school; or 6) for such other valid reasons that the principal may determine are applicable to the pupil or the school.”⁶⁶ School districts in the South used transfer policies to allow white students to transfer out of integrated schools. The board’s definition of the transfer policy would potentially prevent students from avoiding integration by fleeing to all-white schools.

Part of the change in the board’s policy of accelerating integration and limiting transfers occurred with a change in administration. Governor John Connally named School Board President Loyd L. Turner to a committee of fifteen to study Texas schools.⁶⁷ Former assistant superintendent Julius Truelson assumed the position of superintendent of schools on August 1, 1967.⁶⁸ Truelson graduated from Texas Christian University in 1938 and joined the Fort Worth Independent School District as a teacher. He served in the navy during World War II then returned to Fort Worth to work as a school principal.⁶⁹ Unlike his predecessors, Truelson recognized the inevitability of school integration, and instead of dedicating his administration to combating court orders,

⁶⁶ Fort Worth Independent School District, Office of the Superintendent, “Opening of Schools: A Bulletin to All Principals,” Bulletin Number One, 23 August 1967, Folder “1967-8,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 11.

⁶⁷ Fort Worth ISD “Pursuit of Excellence,” February 1966, Folder “School History, Part 2,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 12.

⁶⁸ Fort Worth Public Schools handout, March 1968, Folder “1967-8,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 3.

⁶⁹ Fort Worth Independent School District, Office of the Superintendent, “Opening of Schools: A Bulletin to All Principals,” Bulletin Number One, August 23, 1967, Folder “1967-8,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 11.

he attempted to integrate Fort Worth's schools with as little conflict and upheaval as possible.

The *Flax* case overturned legal segregation in Fort Worth in 1961 and “stair-step” integration began in 1963. Responses to the *Flax* verdict reveal two facets of Fort Worth's leaders' notions on school integration. First, their visible surprise at the integration order and its implications demonstrate that segregation became such an ineradicable part of life for whites in Fort Worth. Second, repeated arguments that *Brown* failed to apply to Fort Worth because “Fort Worth's dual school system is believed to be better than any other, and hence is not discriminatory,” shows the district leaders' inability to come to terms with *Brown* and the subsequent federal court order. Not only did the school board oppose desegregation, but its members lived in willful ignorance of the reality that the court decision imposed. Subsequent judgments decided by the U.S. Supreme Court would again challenge the Fort Worth public school system after the initial 1963 desegregation plan. Although many members of the school board assumed the district's “stair-step” plan effectively met requirements outlined in *Brown*, the case spawned several integration plans, including “stair-step” integration, cluster programs, busing, and magnet schools. *Flax v. Potts* also serves as a metaphor for school desegregation attempts in Border South states. Ironically, Weirleis Flax's daughter Arlene never attended an integrated Fort Worth school, as the Air Force transferred Flax to Thule, Greenland, in 1962, far from the turmoil surrounding the final years of Jim Crow Texas.

Chapter 5 Desegregating Fort Worth's Institutions and Public Places

All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation, as defined in this section, without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin.

-- Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title II – Injunctive Relief Against Discrimination in Places of Public Accommodation, Sec. 201. (a)

Although “*Brown* broke the back of American Apartheid,” battles over the integration of residential areas and public schools continued through the 1960s, and as it continued, it grew into a fight for equal access to all public spaces.¹ Although Fort Worth never experienced a series of violent confrontations at lunch counters, in the streets, and in the schoolhouse doors, the city’s black community actively pursued equal access to public parks, golf courses, zoos, and restaurants. School desegregation paved the way for integration in other areas and on the national level; Fort Worth serves as a microcosm of the changes initiated by the *Brown* decision.

African Americans in Fort Worth experienced the indignities of Jim Crow whenever they ventured beyond their black neighborhoods through the 1950s. Official segregation began in Fort Worth with a 1905 city code. The ordinance mandated segregation on streetcars and defined “the term ‘negro’” to include “every person of African decent [sic] as the same is defined by the statutes of the State of Texas.”² Even as early as 1905, Cowtown’s African Americans vocalized their objections to Jim Crow; Robert Houston, Jr., of Fort Worth told the *Dallas Morning News*, “I believe that I speak the sentiment of the negroes of Fort Worth when I say that they deprecate the passage of

¹ Theodore M. Shaw, “Beyond What Bill Cosby Said,” *Washington Post*, 27 May 2004, A31.

² Ord. 944, 2 October 1905, Ordinance Book E, Section 1 and 2, Senior Customer Service Representative, City Secretary Office, Fort Worth City Council.

the separate street car [sic] ordinance. The colored people of Fort Worth have always labored for the upbuilding of this city and they feel that it will be no easy matter hereafter to get colored meetings to hold their sessions in this city.”³ Decades later, the principles outlined by the 1905 code still remained in place.

The public schools remained segregated for nine years after the *Brown* decision, white residents violently fought black “encroachment,” stores and restaurants kept strict color lines, and segregation prevented equal access to public spaces. City officials allowed for limited access to public facilities, including the Fort Worth tradition of opening the city zoo and other parks to African Americans on June 19th, or Juneteenth, only. The black community’s unified public protests served to heighten awareness of the racism and inequality. Rather than quietly accept the limited Juneteenth access to public facilities, the Baptist Ministers Union and the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance urged the African American community to boycott the zoo and Forest Park on June 19, 1953. The organizations objected to the limited entrée provided to African American residents, demanding access to areas that their tax-dollars helped maintain. The committees issued a public protest, which stated, “The time has gone forever when one group of citizens can say to another group of citizens ‘We must have 364 days every year to enjoy the rights of citizenship and another group one day.’ Our boys are fighting and dying today in Korea, because of practices of this kind.” Paralleling civil rights arguments across the country, the protest continued, by saying, “American soldiers of every race have fought for democracy and its freedom against Hitlerism, communism, and every other ‘ism’ that attempts to destroy the democratic freedom of individuals and

³ “Negro on Separate Seats: Says Race Has Worked for Upbuilding of the City,” *Dallas Morning News*, 4 October 1905.

nations.”⁴ Despite the call for a citywide boycott, apparently many members of the Fort Worth’s black community utilized the public spaces on Juneteenth. According to Zoo Superintendent Brown, “the turnout compared favorably with that of other years B.B. – Before the Boycott.”⁵

A 1955 Juneteenth celebration sparked more integration controversy. The owner of Danceland, a white “night spot,” rented his facilities to African Americans for an Emancipation Day dance. One local white resident, D. M. Reaves, protested to the City Council, informing the governing body, “I’m not prejudiced but they’re [African Americans] around there until 2 o’clock in the morning Something’s got to be done.”⁶ The conflict continued until James Clemons, who represented those renting the facility for Juneteenth festivities, informed the board, “We understand a petition is being circulated in the neighborhood. We want to save the council trouble and embarrassment. We will not go there anymore.” Mayor J.R. Edwards informed Clemons that he felt the response to be “very kind” and that he would like to help find Clemons other accommodations.⁷

Demands for better municipal services accompanied increased demands for improved, if not equal, access to public works. Fort Worth’s African American residents demanded admission to the city’s golf courses. Lawrence B. Sanders, secretary of the Fort Worth Negro Golf Association, wrote a letter to the city council asking about a possible move towards providing access to the courses. In a famous Texas case, *Beal v.*

⁴ “Negro Minister Group Urges Race to Boycott Public Parks June 19,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 June 1953.

⁵ “Negroes Turn Out at Zoo Despite Pleas of Ministers,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 19 June 1953.

⁶ “South Side Resident Protests Negro Dances at White Night Spot,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 2 June 1951.

⁷ “Negroes Volunteer to End Disputed Dances,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 June 1951.

Holcombe, in 1950, five black Houstonians filed a suit against the city for equal admittance to the Municipal Golf Course and won. This court case and black victory appeared to be on the Fort Worth Negro Golf Association members' minds when they wrote, "Consequently we are withholding any action until such time as we may hear from the facilities (park and recreation board) named."⁸ After a special closed conference, the City Council approved access to one of the city's four golf courses for Juneteenth and continued "the park board's policy of permitting supervised Negro groups to visit Forest Park Zoo and Botanic gardens at all times, have access to concession rides at the park and to have use of a picnic area at Lake Worth."⁹ The recreation board's policies highlighted both Jim Crow's injustices and its absurdities. The board required that park employees, presumably white, "supervise" African American visitors on their visits to the zoo and assumed that black golfers could improve their handicaps by playing one day a year on the public courses.

By the summer of 1952, a recent federal court case concerning the Miami Springs Country Club decided that the city would have to open city courses to African Americans if an equal facility were not provided to them. Fort Worth's planning board announced its intention to develop a plot of land as a golf course, but the proposed nine-hole course for African Americans did not compare in size or quality to the other 18-hole courses.¹⁰ The new golf course debate continued for years; the city promised to purchase land, but

⁸ "Council Authorizes Inquiry on Golf Facilities for Negroes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 22 November 1950.

⁹ "Baker to Demand Action on Negro Citizen Group," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 14 June 1951; "Botanic Garden, Rides, Zoo Opened to Negro Children," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 June 1951; "Negro Golfers Play Tuesday at Worth Hills," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 16 June 1951.

¹⁰ "Court Ruling May Hasten Negro Golf Course Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 May 1953.

refused to make allocating necessary funds or locating landowners a priority.¹¹ The court ruling required equal facilities, so park officials attempted to construct an eighteen-hole rather than a nine-hole course in 1952.¹² Rather than open public venues to all of Fort Worth's citizens, the city constructed a \$200,000 recreation and golf center near I.M. Terrell High School.¹³

Fort Worth's unequal public works gained some national notoriety. According to a *Virginia Law Review* article, "It is common knowledge that, where segregation is the standard, there is almost invariably a substantial difference in what is available to Negroes as to local parks, golf courses, swimming pools, tennis courts, auditoriums, and libraries." A study of representative Southern cities, completed in early 1953 by the Southern Regional Council, confirmed this conclusion. The cities included Atlanta, Charleston, Fort Worth, New Orleans, and Washington. The proportion of negroes in the total population, according to 1950 United States Census figures, ranged from 13.34% (Fort Worth) to 44 % (Charleston)."¹⁴

Again a white Riverside group organized to oppose black admission to white-only areas. The group elected E.G. Brown to spearhead its argument against granting African Americans admission to city golf courses.¹⁵ However, on June 21, 1955, six African American residents attempted to play golf at the Z. Boaz golf course but were refused and filed a suit against the city. The plaintiffs included Henry Fleming, M. Whitaker, James Clemons, Henry Martin, Willie Thompson, J.W. Parker, Thomas Tussell, and Eldon

¹¹ "Land Trouble Delays Start on Golf Links," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 16 June 1952; "Negro Golf Course here Near Construction State," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 February 1952.

¹² "Park Officials Study Proposal for 18-Hole Negro Golf Course," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 March 1952.

¹³ "Negro Center, Golf Course, Opens Sunday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 June 1954.

¹⁴ Robert B. McKay, "Segregation and Public Recreation," *Virginia Law Review*, 1954.

¹⁵ "Organization to Fight Against Negro Park Use," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 June 1954.

Harris. U. Simpson Tate, Harold B. Jones, and Ollice Maloy, Jr., filed to represent the plaintiffs.¹⁶

As with battles over school integration, the debate on integration of public spaces took place on a national level. On November 7, 1955, the Supreme Court decided the *Holmes v. City of Atlanta* case. The city had barred African Americans from using public golf courses. In the case, the Supreme Court decided, “Refusing to allow plaintiffs and others similarly situated because they are Negroes, to make use, on a substantially equal basis with white citizens of municipal facilities for playing golf is to practice a forbidden discrimination.”¹⁷

The *Holmes* decision impacted U.S. District Court Judge Estes’s November 10, 1955, ruling on the Fort Worth public golf courses case. The golf course decision demolished the city council’s objections to integrating the golf courses. Estes found in favor of the plaintiffs, also referencing the Miami Spring Country Club case, “which outlawed segregation in tax-supported recreational facilities such as golf links, swimming pools, and parks.”¹⁸

Estes’s ruling introduced a possible integration battle that caused more rancor than the golf course debate. A *Star-Telegram* editorial explored the ramifications of the *Holmes* decision, Estes’s decision, and the city of Fort Worth’s possible means of addressing the decision. The editorialist challenged plans to provide more segregated swimming pools, instead stating, “We do not think the suggested construction of more

¹⁶ “8 Negro Golfers File Federal Suit,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 August 1955; “Hearing Set for Negroes Barred from Golf Course,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 October 1955.

¹⁷ *Holmes v. City of Atlanta*, 1955.

¹⁸ “8 Negro Golfers Play at Rockwood,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 November 1955; “Desegregation Ordered Effective Immediately,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10; November 1955; Marvin P. Dawkins and Graham Charles Kinloch *African American Golfers During the Jim Crow Era*, 140.

municipal swimming pools, in the pious hope that Negroes will be content to use them and stay out of those in use by white persons, is a very practical solution in Fort Worth for the problem raised by Monday's U.S. Supreme Court hearing." The author continued to challenge the city council's plans for avoiding integration by explaining his view that "to suppose that Negroes will be content to accept a sort of voluntary segregation in the use of parks, golf links, and swimming pools and bathing beaches is to engage in wishful thinking." Instead of opening parks to African Americans, the city council could sell recreational facilities, allowing them to continue operating on a segregated basis. Parks could be opened to all citizens, the editorial continued, but "we do not see how swimming pools can. Racially mixed bathing is not likely to be accepted generally, and the patronage at the pools would drop and revenues would plummet if it were attempted." The editorial applied the same rationale to golf courses because of shared shower and locker rooms. Revealing the avenue that the city council would soon elect to follow, the author comforted readers wary of the integration ruling, saying, "While the Supreme Court's decision may be regretted as a severe injury in public recreation, there nevertheless is no compelling reason for cities or states to engage in those phases of it. They can divest themselves of this responsibility and perhaps put the equivalent tax revenue to good, or better, use elsewhere."¹⁹

In May 1956, only months after the NAACP golf course victory, the most contentious portion of the legal debate to allow equal access to public swimming pools began. The Fort Worth City Council attempted to respond to the Supreme Court's ruling with the weak threat that "they would not vote to build swimming pools in Negro residential areas unless given the promise that Negroes would not try to use white pools."

¹⁹ "Close the Pool?" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 November 1955.

Representing the NAACP, George Flemmings revealed his knowledge of the case and its implications and “promised a court fight if segregation bars aren’t removed from municipal swimming pools by next spring.” He reiterated his threat by saying, “Come next spring if any Negro child is denied the right to swim in any pool in Fort Worth then open up the courthouse because we are coming.” Councilman Owen retorted, “We might as well get these Negroes on the line and let them know what is what.”²⁰

Dorsey Adams and R.J. Diamond, representatives of the Fort Worth chapter of the NAACP, and attorney L. Clifford Davis appealed to the recreation board, asking the agency to open public pools for the summer of 1956 on a non-segregated basis. Upon learning of the NAACP’s proposed appeal, recreation board member Roland McGinnis told a *Star-Telegram* reporter, “I hope we can do something peacefully. I don’t think all the Negroes want to use the pools. I’m going to listen to the colored boys and see what happens.” On the other hand, recreation board member J.J. Lyles told the *Star-Telegram* that he would offer a motion to either sell or close all the city’s public swimming pools if the courts forced them to open the pools on a non-segregated basis. Recreation board member Mrs. J. Warren Day mimicked *Gone with the Wind* actress Vivian Leigh, telling the reporter, “I’d rather not think about it.” She continued, saying, “I think the majority of the Negroes will continue as they have in the past. There are more of those than those who are demanding.”²¹

The public pool proposal inflamed already existing racial tensions. Many of Fort Worth’s white residents half-heartedly opposed desegregating the golf courses but vehemently objected to integrating the pools. The recreation board responded to the

²⁰ “Swim Pool Court Move Is Threatened by NAACP,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 15 December 1955.

²¹ “Negroes’ Bid Due Today,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 May 1956.

NAACP's request for equal access to public pools by voting to leave the pools closed to all users past the intended June 2 opening date. Board members and city council representatives made a counter proposal to the NAACP, promising to build a pool in the African American-dominated Como neighborhood if the NAACP repealed its request. City Councilman Holland estimated that the Como pool would cost \$45,000 and receive funds from the recreation and parks department and from the city. Holland intended the Como pool to provide "separate but equal" facilities, claiming, "I feel like if we built this pool it would be a positive step to preserving our other pools as they have been in the past." At the board meeting, Lyles asked the NAACP representatives why they petitioned for access to all public pools when the segregated pool for African Americans, ironically named the Dixie Pool, failed to meet its operating expenses the previous year. Davis responded that African Americans wanted to swim in the pools nearest their homes. Lyles asked the representatives, "Do you believe a majority of the colored people want to go in our pools and mix with us? I don't."²²

Lyles' obvious distaste for integrated pools mirrored a similar sentiment but with less veiled racism than that of two men protesting the NAACP's request in front of the board. Jack L. LeMond and James F. Dew both challenged Davis's request. LeMond told the board "that he is paying taxes and should be entitled to have a private place for his children to go swimming." Dew supplemented LeMond's argument with evidence of white supremacist ideology among some Fort Worth residents, informing the board that "Negroes are diseased and shouldn't be allowed in the same pool with whites."²³

²² "Negro Move to End Segregation Backfires," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 May 1956.

²³ *Ibid.*

Even seemingly progressive cities manifested overt hostility against the notion of integrating the municipal pools. Reasons for the static color line in swimming pools date to the foundation of public pools in 1920s and 1930s resorts.²⁴ During that time period, swimming suits shrank in size, revealing more of the human body. White men demanded segregation in resort pools because they did not want black men to interact with white women visually and possibly physically in a romantic resort beach setting. Swimming pool integration, called “More Sensitive than Schools,” is visible in a Baltimore case filed after the *Brown* decision concerning segregation at the Clifton Park municipal swimming pool. The NAACP filed suit for access to the all-white school, to which the city attorney Edwin Harlan responded, “There must be segregation in fields of intimate contact or else there may be trouble.” The attorney also “predicted that whites would riot if black men were permitted to swim with white women.”²⁵ Although the NAACP filed the Baltimore pool case a month after the 1954 *Brown* decision, Judge Roszel Thomsen agreed with Harlan, defining the act of integrated public bathing to be “more sensitive than schools” because of the visual and physical intimacy that accompanied their use.”²⁶ The plaintiffs appealed the decision and the U.S. Court of Appeals, which agreed with the NAACP, but Harlan’s argument and Thomsen’s decision demonstrate the reasoning for white Fort Worth residents’ heavy resistance to integrating the pools.

City Councilman Hollard echoed the Baltimore attorney and judge’s misinterpretations of *Brown* with his views on integrating Fort Worth’s pools for the 1956 summer. The city councilman told the *Star-Telegram* that he expected “that few

²⁴ Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 91; “Like Fort Worth and Dallas, several other southern cities, like Atlanta and New Orleans, opened segregated pools for black citizens in the 1920s.”

²⁵ Wiltse, *Contested Waters*, 156.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Negroes would use the pools now reserved for whites if they had a really nice pool of their own.” Rather than accept the responsibility for opening the pools to black taxpayers or refusing to allow them access to the pools and risk a lawsuit, the recreation board instead chose a third option: closing the pools entirely. The council further attempted to shift the blame for the pools’ closing onto the NAACP. Attempting to add to the NAACP’s burden of guilt, the recreation board claimed that “the decision to leave municipal swimming pools closed this year will result in needless drowning.”²⁷ Instead of swimming in pools with the supervision of a lifeguard, children instead would swim in natural waterways, which would increase the risk of drowning. Rather than leave the pools closed, Holland argued, the city should build a pool in the Como area.

Davis’s request for integrated swimming pools spurred the city council to “get the ball rolling” towards constructing a pool in the Como area. The previous summer, 1955, a group of Como residents had petitioned the council for a pool in their neighborhood but the board had wavered on and then ignored this request until the NAACP attorney demanded integration of all public pools. The board allowed the pools to remain closed nearly a month later than the intended opening date and admitted “fearing the NAACP would go to court and force integration if the pools were opened on the usual segregated basis.”²⁸ The local NAACP abandoned the battle for desegregated swimming pools for years. Like other large Texas cities, white citizens clung to segregation in pools, residential areas, and schools more desperately than they did to segregated golf courses, parks, and other public facilities. Instead fighting over integrated pools, the NAACP in Fort Worth narrowed its focus to the *Flax* case.

²⁷ “Holland Warns of Drowning,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 16 May 1956.

²⁸ “Early Action Suggested on Pool for Como Area,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 June 1956.

Despite some councilmen's bold talk of building a separate facility in the Como neighborhood, the proposal received only whispers and empty promises in 1957. One businessman in Fort Worth suggested that the council purchase land near a Como baseball diamond for the pool in February 1957, but the board first began construction on swimming pools for African Americans in 1960.²⁹ By April 1960, the city broke ground at the Ralph Bunche Park near Rosedale and planned swimming pools for African American citizens in Hillside, Lincoln Park, and Kellis Park near the Southwest Side.³⁰ These actions apparently delayed the battle over integrating public pools. The local NAACP seemed to exercise the adage of picking its battles when it came to complete integration of public places. Even though the attorneys threatened a lawsuit, the segregated swimming pools remained largely unchallenged until 1964. Mayor Tom McCann complimented Fort Worth's population, claiming that the "good race relations" in the city prevented "ugly incidents experienced in other cities recently."³¹

Integration of residential areas seemed as contentious, if not more so, as school integration and the swimming pool debates. Lloyd G. Austin, an African American, bought a house on Judkins Avenue in September 1956 in the predominately white Morningside neighborhood and experienced threats and a riot outside his newly purchased home. Morningside residents attended a meeting of the neighborhood improvement group, the Southwest Side Civic League, at the South Fort Worth Baptist Church, contributing a \$1 admission fee. Membership in the group reached 300 when 168 new members attended the 1 October 1956 meeting. The league planned to form

²⁹ "Progress Being Made At Como, Says Editor," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 February 1957; "Ralph Bunche Park Pool Due Start; Negro Citizens Praised," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 23 April 1960.

³⁰ Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

³¹ "Ralph Bunche Park Pool Due Start; Negro Citizens Praised," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 23 April 1960.

watchdog committees to “watch non-league [real estate agents] who would sell to negroes.” A group formed to push black families out of another white neighborhood, the Riverside Merchants and Homeowners Association, had members in the Morningside meeting crowd. Members R. C. Owensby and E.G. Brown addressed a meeting, advocating “mob protest” rather than overt violence. “Mob protest” consisted of gathering angry white residents “who would make the Negro who would move into a white neighborhood feel unwanted” and “run them off.”³² *Star-Telegram* reporters visited the home and noted, “Signs of the disturbance were evident. Upper panes in the two front windows were smashed. A screen on one of the front windows was torn and broken.” Austin said the protesters also threw rocks on the roof of the house.³³

One family in the neighborhood posted a “For Sale” sign in front of their house in response to Austin’s move into the neighborhood. The reporter interviewed the homeowners, who lived across the street from the Austins. The wife in the family, Mrs. J.F. Alexander, blamed President Dwight Eisenhower for the racial conflict. She asked, “Why don’t they move a porter into Eisenhower’s bedroom? He moved them (Negroes) in here with us.”³⁴

African American attorney Clifford Davis, who represented the NAACP in the Mansfield and *Flax* cases, supported Austin to a *Star-Telegram* reporter. Although acknowledging that “violence isn’t the answer,” Davis warned the rioters that Austin, and other African Americans, had the right to defend themselves. After the police arrived to disperse “an angry, yelling crowd of about 200 white adults and teen-agers, many of them

³² “Protest Plan Urged to Keep Negroes Out,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 2 October 1956.

³³ “Negro Blames ‘Outsiders’ for Near Riot, but Neighbors Aren’t Happy,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 September 1956.

³⁴ “Negro Blames ‘Outsiders’ for Near Riot, but Neighbors Aren’t Happy,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 September 1956.

[having] driven from sections of town several miles away,” Austin fired a bullet in the general direction of the protesting crowd. The bullet hit the car belonging to teenager Steven Scott Shoemaker, who vowed, “The n----rs will pay for this.”³⁵

The situation became so volatile that police cars stationed themselves outside Austin’s home after protestors subjected the Austin family to a “crowd which jeered, threw rocks, and was in turn shot at Sunday night.”³⁶ A committee of seven white and three black Fort Worth residents meet on 12 November 1956 “to discuss Negroes moving into previously all-white blocks – particularly in the Riverside area.” In addition to the committee, members of the Riverside Merchants and Homeowners Association again attended the Morningside meeting, boasting that their group had “fought the Negro ‘encroachment’ in Riverside for years.”³⁷

During the month of October, a mailman and neighbors noticed an African American couple painting and cleaning a vacant house on Redford Lane in White Settlement, an aptly named small community on the borders of west Fort Worth. Residents called Police Chief Ben Curbo because they “noticed a Negro couple at the house.” As it turned out, the white homeowners had merely hired the African American couple to clean and paint the house for its next tenants. According to Curbo, “Some people got pretty excited. We got a lot of telephone calls about it.”³⁸

Part of the responsibility for the “good race relations” to which McCann referred belonged to the voluntary integration actions of many Fort Worth citizens. A prominent example of such voluntary action occurred in the Leonard Department Store. Marvin

³⁵ “Warning Issued After Near-Riot,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 September 1956.

³⁶ “Police Guarding Home of Negro in Riverside,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 4 September 1956.

³⁷ “Biracial Committee Talks ‘Encroachment’ in Secret,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 November 1956.

³⁸ “Police Squelch Negro Rumor at Settlement,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 19 October 1959.

Leonard founded the Leonard Bros. Department Store in Fort Worth. Leonard served as an example of the Fort Worth business community's later enlightened self-interest. Rather than isolate his predominately African American customer base, the department store owner integrated the rest rooms, lunch counters, and water fountains by 1956 or 1957. One must estimate these dates because the "Leonards followed a very low-key approach to desegregation, so low-key that there are no records and no clear memories of exactly when the transformation took place."³⁹ According to an African American man employed in Leonards' maintenance department, the owner's attorney asked him to remove the "Colored" signs from the restrooms and water fountains; the next day, white managers asked their black staff members to eat lunch in the cafeteria.⁴⁰ After the sit-in movement began in 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina, Leonard and his attorney Jenkins Garrett forestalled similar protests at Leonards by informing would-be demonstrators that the store had integrated the cafeteria several years earlier.

Other voluntary integration in Fort Worth occurred after the 1960 sit-in movement began. Fearing the negative publicity of sit-ins and picketing, some merchants integrated on their own initiative. Additionally, some Texas districts, including districts in Fort Worth, elected integrationists to the Texas legislature. In 1959, Fort Worth voters sent Representative Don Gladden to serve nearly ten years in the state senate. When a San Antonio lawmaker proposed a February 1963 bill to repeal the earlier 1957 segregationist bills passed by the legislature and at the same time prohibit discrimination by public agencies, Gladden signed the bill.⁴¹

³⁹ Victoria Buenger and Walter L. Buenger, *Texas Merchant: Marvin Leonard & Fort Worth* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1998), 144-45.

⁴⁰ "Signs of Change," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 5 October 2002.

⁴¹ "Fight Likely Over Repealing Racial Discrimination Laws," *Dallas Morning News*, 3 February 1963.

An increased focus on overcoming segregation also took place on a national scale. President John F. Kennedy's June 11, 1963, speech broached some of the Jim Crow restrictions African Americans faced in the South and promised to support a civil rights bill; when an assassin's bullet killed Kennedy on November 22, 1963, the day after his visit to Fort Worth, Vice-President Lyndon Johnson made Kennedy's civil rights platform a major part of his presidential policy. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, loosely based on Kennedy's remarks, prohibited discrimination in public facilities on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, race, and religion.⁴²

Within this integration-friendly local and national context, many retailers decided to avoid negative publicity and the possibility of fines or lawsuits and integrate before the Civil Rights Act's July 2, 1964, passage. At the same time, Fort Worth's city council took preemptive actions to avoid the notoriety of places like Selma and Birmingham, Alabama. The city council had formed a biracial group of prominent businessmen and leaders, called the Fort Worth Citizens' Council, after the 1956 residential housing riots. This group presumably worked quietly, meeting with members of the black and white communities in order to avoid the negative publicity that riots and sit-in demonstrations presented. On Monday, June 24, 1963, the major's biracial community relations committee announced its findings that most Fort Worth businessmen favored integration. Most restaurants opened their doors to African Americans, foreshadowing the quiet, if token, integration of the public schools, which would take place only two short months later.⁴³ The same month (June 1963) that George Wallace physically blocked the entrance to the University of Alabama, all movie theaters in Fort Worth quietly

⁴² Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title II and III.

⁴³ "Fort Worth: Cafes Tried Out by Few Negroes," *Dallas Morning News*, 25 June 1963.

integrated.⁴⁴ While other facilities remained segregated for a period after Leonards' voluntary integration, most Fort Worth restaurants had integrated by the end of 1963. Unfortunately for researchers, the *Star-Telegram* contains few if any exact dates for the desegregation of specific venues. Like other Texas cities, the Fort Worth council probably issued a "gag rule," forbidding newspapers from publishing integration accounts.⁴⁵ Rather than result in immediately visible results, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 exposed an already crumbling Jim Crow system in Fort Worth.

In the months before the Civil Rights Act's passage, citizens were hard at work attacking the old system. Local civil rights leader Marion Brooks led a group of one hundred African American activists to the state capital in Austin, Texas, to protest state-mandated public accommodation laws. Lenora Rolla, a long-time Fort Worth activist and founder of the Black Historical and Genealogical Society, reflected on her involvement in Alabama and Mississippi demonstrations, but claimed, "We had our little movements right here in Fort Worth." According to Rolla, "We had sit-ins at the bus station because they wouldn't let black people eat there. They refused to serve us, so we sat there." A spouse of a TCU Brite Divinity School professor remembered Operation Fellowship, a group of women who prayed about integrating TCU. She also recollected protesting at Buddies Grocery, a deli located in a predominately black area but refused to hire an African American butcher.⁴⁶

Successful, though limited, integration of schools, restaurants, and movie theaters prompted demands for integration of other venues. In April of 1964, a representative of

⁴⁴ "Mood of Integration in Texas: Integration in Silence," *Dallas Morning News*, 30 June 1963.

⁴⁵ William Brophy, "Active Acceptance, Active Containment: The Dallas Story," in Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn, eds., *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982), 137-50

⁴⁶ "We walked against the wind carrying signs," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 November 1989.

the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) petitioned the Fort Worth City Council to allow equal access to all municipal public places. A local integrationist, Reverend Marshall E. Hodge, supported nonviolence and informed the city council, “Gentlemen, that great moment of history has come. You should pass a city ordinance with teeth in it for public accommodations.” Representing a large segment of the African American community in Fort Worth, Hodge presented the council with a list of demands that called for representation of African Americans on “every policy-making board within the framework of our government”; for fair representative employment; for addressing illiteracy in Tarrant County; for a city agency to replace the Human Relations Committee; and for the “passage of a public accommodation ordinance by Fort Worth.” Hodge informed the board that he and his group “are firmly opposed to segregation in any form that it takes and are pledged to work unrelentingly to rid every vestige of its scars from our city through non-violent means.”⁴⁷

Some small desegregation hiring had begun before the SCLC’s petition for equal access and fair representation. In 1959, the Fort Worth district attorney’s office hired the city’s first African American assistant district attorney, Ollice Maloy. In 1963, the district attorney later hired two African American women to work in the office as a receptionist and a switchboard operator.⁴⁸ In March of 1964, the city hired its first “Negro ‘White Collar’ Help.” Vera Jenkins worked as a typist in the corporation court office while Ethel Ethelia Hall typed and filed for the Warrant Division.⁴⁹ Both Jenkins and Hall graduated from I.M. Terrell High School of Fort Worth. Although the hirings failed to mark the end of discrimination in all city policies, Jenkins and Hall worked in a

⁴⁷ “City Asked to Pass Ordinance On Public Accusations,” *Fort Worth Press*, 13 April 1964.

⁴⁸ “Tarrant DA Hired Negro Staff Workers,” *Dallas Morning News*, 15 May 1963.

⁴⁹ “City Hired Negro ‘White Collar’ Help,” *Fort Worth Press*, 2 April 1964.

now desegregated office space; previous black employees had worked with other African Americans as after-hours janitors or as officers policing all-black neighborhoods.

In light of these recent successes, Fort Worth's NAACP still actively participated in championing local civil rights. By May 1964, Fort Worth NAACP members had contributed \$1,000 to the NAACP's Freedom Fund. The four churches leading the drive included Mount Zion Baptist Church, St. James Baptist Church, Mount Gilead Baptist Church, and Shiloh Baptist Church.⁵⁰ Two years later, the Fort Worth NAACP branch again reached its goal of \$1,005 for the Freedom Fund. The article mentioned "request[s] made and briefs filed in the U.S. District Court to step-up school integration in the public schools of Ft. Worth to include the 12th grade – teachers and athletic department." Addressing problems in other areas of African Americans' lives, the local branch continued to promote equal employment opportunities and pursue "complaints about treatment received from law enforcement officers."⁵¹

In spite of the city of Fort Worth's limited hiring of "Negro 'White Collar' Help," public leaders reacted to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in various and conflicted ways. The *Fort Worth Press* recorded several local leaders' responses to the bill. Fort Worth Mayor Baynard Friedman felt that the act would have little impact on Fort Worth's citizens. Friedman stated, "Our public facilities have been desegregated for some time. With the exception of one restaurant, I know of none which have been segregated in the last year."⁵²

⁵⁰ "NAACP Branch Tops Quota," *News from the NAACP*, Southwest Region, May 2, 1960, III 1 11 Folder "Newsletters: Southwest Region, 1957-64," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1.

⁵¹ "Fort Worth NAACP News," *NAACP News Recorder*, September-October, 1966, I 6 C 31 Texas State Conferences, 1966-67, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁵² "Reaction Mixed to Rights Bill Here," *Fort Worth Press*, 2 July 1964.

Such responses to the Civil Rights Act reveal still-existing confrontations among local residents. District Attorney Doug Crouch emphatically agreed with the bill and its constitutionality. County Commissioner Bryan Henderson disagreed with the act; “The Constitution,” he said, “already guarantees civil rights. I was definitely against certain portions of the bill. It will tend to make our central government, which is already too powerful, more powerful.” Congressman Jim Wright, to his later regret, voted against the bill, eliciting criticism from Fort Worth’s African American population.⁵³

Unsurprisingly, Judge T. Whitfield Davidson, who presided over the Dallas school integration cases, found the act was “an infringement on the state courts” and will “tend to reduce the status of state courts, and further centralize the government in Washington.”⁵⁴

Conflicting reactions to the passage of the Civil Rights Act occurred not only among public officials but also within the quasi-official realm of the press. Racial prejudice in the newspapers continued to impact integration plans. Many I.M. Terrell graduates still bitterly remember slights by the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Robert Hughes coached I.M. Terrell’s basketball teams from 1958 through the 1960s, technically after integration began in the district, but Terrell never enrolled a white student before its 1973 court-ordered closing. Under Hughes’s guidance, the Panthers’ basketball team won Prairie View Interscholastic League state titles in 1963, 1965, and 1967. The Panthers beat the best all-black schools from Austin, Dallas, and Waco, but the *Star-Telegram* only printed minute notices of their wins in the Sports section, if it printed the news at all, a pattern a later article described as “the *Star-Telegram*’s sins of Jim Crow

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “State’s Negro Leaders Hail Civil Rights Law,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 July 1964.

[that] were as much those of omission as commission.”⁵⁵ The Kirkpatrick Wildcats experienced a similar slight when they won a state football championship in 1963.⁵⁶

Star-Telegram journalists admitted to the paper’s racist slant in the decades before Fort Worth’s school integration began. Reporter Jack Butler became an editor in 1962, and many reporters later attributed to his leadership the change to a more enlightened philosophy. In 1968, Butler hired Cecil Johnson, the first black reporter at a white-owned Texas newspaper, and his hiring was soon followed by those of Bob Ray Sanders and Charles Jackson. All these African American reporters graduated from I.M. Terrell.⁵⁷ Under Butler’s leadership, the school integration battles and the civil rights movement received a much fairer treatment from the media.

The *Star-Telegram*’s change in leadership, and thus change in philosophy, paralleled a new perspective in religious higher education. As in other cities, the religious community often helped to muster support for integration. Fort Worth’s Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, like most schools in the South, operated on a segregated basis, but the school had admitted African Americans to night classes in the early 1940s under President Eldred Douglas Head’s administration, long before the 1950 *Sweatt v. Painter* decision. In 1950, the same year as the *Sweatt* decision, the trustees voted to admit African Americans to day classes.⁵⁸ In 1955, Southwestern graduated its first group of white and African American students. The next year, the school opened its housing to African Americans.⁵⁹ Later, the seminary hosted a seminar on “The Role of

⁵⁵ “The Color of Hate: Our Own Sins,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 October 2002, 15 E.

⁵⁶ Bud Kennedy, “Segregation kept victory off the books,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 December 2001.

⁵⁷ “The Color of Hate: Our Own Sins,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 October 2002, 15 E.

⁵⁸ Robert A. Baker, *Tell the Generations Following: a History of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary 1908-1983* (Nashville: Broadman Publishing, 1983).

⁵⁹ Joe Franklin Morrow, “Life and Ministry and Ministry of Eldred Douglas Head,” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995).

Christian Leadership in Communities Facing School Desegregation,” and offered a “Black Church History” class for the 1969-70 academic year with the goal of developing “a knowledge and awareness of the importance of the black church and help white churchmen relate to black churchmen.” The course’s professor, Leon McBeth, explained, “I have seen a better relationship of white and black churchmen as leading to a better relationship between white and black in general.” Admitting that “the system of Jim Crow segregation was as much a creation of the white churches as any other institution,” he acknowledged that “In the churches the black man has developed his self image as an oppressed people on a exodus to freedom. And it is in the church that he has developed his leadership. I don’t know of anything that has the significance to the Negro community that the church has.” The professor admitted the impediments to his objectivity, stating, “I take most of my notes in pencil, as a white historian’s interpretation of a black church has to be tentative” while sharing his intent to recruit guests of color to speak to the mixed race class.⁶⁰

Integration of other local institutions of higher learning followed, if belatedly, he example set by Southwestern Baptist. Texas Christian University admitted its first African American students in fall of 1964 after the university’s board of trustees voted for complete integration in January 1963.⁶¹ TCU integrated as the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s demolished legal segregation in public spaces. The private university enrolled two African Americans as transfer students in evening classes.⁶² In 1965, a student from

⁶⁰ “Seminary Offers Course in Black Church History,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Evening, 28 November 1969.

⁶¹ “TCU Enrolls No Negro Undergrads,” *Dallas Morning News*, 28 January 1963.

⁶² “Monthly Report from the Southwest Regional Office,” January 14 to February 13, 1964, III C 177 Folder “Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1964,” NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; “Negroes Approved for Entry in TCU,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 January 1963.

I.M. Terrell became TCU's first fulltime African American student. James Cash played basketball for I.M. Terrell and enjoyed the recruiting attempts of basketball greats like the University of Michigan. Texas Christian University also recruited Cash, and the basketball star accepted, becoming the first black basketball player in the Southwest Conference. Cash, an All-American Academic Basketball team member and math major, remembers a TCU professor discouraging his choice of a career in mathematics, telling him, "You know your people are not very good at that subject."⁶³ After experiencing police escorts to the University of Arkansas gym, Cash graduated from TCU, earned a master's degree and a Ph.D. from Purdue University, and became the first black tenured professor at the Harvard Business School.⁶⁴

Integration meant increased, if limited, representation in politics. In 1967, Dr. Edward Guinn, a long-time champion for black rights in Fort Worth, successfully ran for city council for District 6. Fort Worth's city council has included an African American elected member since Guinn's victory. In 1975, constituents elected African American Reby Cary to the school board, where he served as board secretary.⁶⁵

If certain segments of the white community eventually came around to progressive positions on black rights, many successes still must be attributed to a well-organized and effective African American population. As NAACP Southwest Regional leader Clarence Laws noted in 1965, "the Fort Worth Branch under the leadership of Dr. George Flemmings will continue to be one of the largest and most productive branches in

⁶³ Robert V. Camuto, "2 Sides of 1 School," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 August 1990.

⁶⁴ "FW Man Is First Black Professor at Harvard Business School," Black History, 5 July 1985, Folder "Cash, James," Black Historical and Genealogical Society, Central Public Library.

⁶⁵ Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Education, 12 March 1975, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

the state.”⁶⁶ The close geographical proximity to Dallas and the Southwest Regional Counsel probably encouraged Fort Worth’s NAACP members to continue their agitation and legal action on multiple civil rights fronts.

The *Brown* decision served as the catalyst for an integration battle that progressed into a fight to dismantle all facets of the Jim Crow system. As the struggle against segregation in the public sphere escalated through protests and federal legislation, judicial decisions also fueled the fight to integrate public schools. Until the 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* decision, the judicial system allowed Fort Worth to move slowly in integrating its public schools and places; historian Michael Phillips efficiently states that the Fort Worth school board “slouched toward partial integration beginning in 1962.”⁶⁷ The *Swann* decision served as the catalyst for dramatic change in the Fort Worth school system, sparking debates over the merits of the changes that existed into the new millennium.

⁶⁶ “Monthly Report Southwest Regional Counsel, Clarence Laws to NAACP National Office,” April 15 – May 15, 1965, C III 178 Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1965, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁷ Michael Phillips, “Two Sides of an Ugly Coin: Are racial politics really that much different in Dallas and Fort Worth?” *Fort Worth Weekly*, 12 July 2006.

Chapter 6 Busing Begins

“Not unlike the metamorphosis of animals taught to students in the biology classes of the schools involved, the transformations of the original plan have, on occasion, represented clear departures from all prior plans.”

-- *Flax vs. Potts*, CA 4-4205-E, Filed June 17, 1983, 1-2.

Desegregation of public places followed the September 1963 integration of public schools. The next year proved pivotal in Fort Worth’s integration history. Many of Fort Worth’s African American residents viewed “stair-step” integration as too slow to address the district’s desegregation needs. The federal courts eventually agreed, and Fort Worth’s school system underwent a series of changes over the next several years that paralleled national debates on how to define “integration” and how to create districts in compliance with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

On behalf of the local NAACP, George Flemmings in 1964 submitted a request to Board of Education President Atwood McDonald asking for a complete integration of all school grades for the 1964-65 school year. Under the stair-step plan, only kindergarten and first grade would integrate that year. If the district rejected total integration for that year, Flemmings proposed, then the NAACP would accept total integration of elementary schools. McDonald attempted to deny that Flemmings made a formal request to the board, but the NAACP leader confirmed the formality of his request.¹

Teachers, parents, and school employees reacted to integration in myriad ways. After the formerly all-white A.M. Pate Elementary School integrated, at least one teacher chose to transfer away from the rapidly integrating school. A letter of reference revealed a glimpse into the racial conflict at Pate. The letter, recommending an unnamed white teacher, explained, “The student body changed from 57% Negro to more than 80% Negro

¹ “Full School Integration In City is Asked By NAACP,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 16, 1964.

during the school year. The teachers of this school without exception have made definite progress in their ability to understand and work with culturally deprived youth.

Furthermore, they have been diligent in attempting to adjust to problems relating to integration.”² Although smoothly worded, this letter essentially appears to be a thinly veiled justification for the abandonment by white teachers of schools with a high percentage of minority students. In spite of this sort of condescension – for example, identifying African American pupils as “culturally deprived” – in 1965 the all-white Fort Worth Classroom Teachers Association voted overwhelmingly, 114 to one, to admit African American teachers as members.³

Almost three years after the district began stair-step integration, Judge Leo Brewster approved a new plan to end segregation altogether. Announced on May 4, 1965, the plan presented an accelerated timetable to end school segregation by 1967: “1) Kindergarten through sixth grades this September, 2) Junior High – grades 7 through 9 - September 1966, 3) high school – grades 10-12 – September 1967.”⁴ Trimble Tech High School integrated voluntarily in 1964. Trimble Tech alumni and parents found that the athletic accomplishments of black students and the accompanying positive publicity made integration an easier adjustment. African American student Willie Black gained local fame when he ran track for Trimble Tech from 1964 to 1967. Black never lost a

² “Letter to Whom It May Concern from B.W. Walker, Principal of A.M. Tate Elementary,” 25 March 1966, Fort Worth ISD Folder “Personal Documents, 1960-69,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³ “White Teachers Vote 114-1 for Integration,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 5 February 1965.

⁴ “Monthly Report Southwest Regional Counsel, Clarence Laws to NAACP National Office,” April 15 – May 15, 1965, C III 178 Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1965, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

district race and won the district 100-yard-dash each year he participated for Trimble Tech.⁵

Despite these small successes, in 1966 the NAACP officially filed a complaint that the current stair-step plan failed to meet the district's needs for a comprehensive desegregation plan and that integration was still occurring too slowly. An NAACP newsletter expounded on NAACP President George Flemmings's request. The newsletter listed two critical points, the first that "wherever Negroes reside closer to so called white schools than so called Negro schools, they should be permitted to attend the former." Flemmings also asked, "That the Technical High School should be opened to all students in the public school system so that Negro students might enroll at the school on the same basis as whites." In another bold move, the Fort Worth NAACP branch sent an open letter to local school children's parents "offering the services of the Association in helping their children enroll in integrated classes."⁶ On September 15, 1966, Judge Brewster rejected the NAACP's complaint.

Although the Fort Worth Independent School District underwent a degree of integration beginning in 1963, it initially kept the athletic program segregated, where white and black athletes neither played on the same teams nor on the same fields. By 1967, the school board had amplified stair-step integration so that that all grades of Fort Worth ISD had technically desegregated; despite this improvement, most schools remained heavily dominated by one race so the athletic teams remained segregated in reality if not by law. A Fifth Circuit Court decision in 1967 ordered that the all-white and

⁵ "Out in front for black and white," *Fort Worth-Star-Telegram*, 6 March 1998.

⁶ "Offers Help in School Integration," *News from the NAACP*, Southwest Region, August 22, 1964, III 1 11 Folder "Newsletters: Southwest Region, 1957-64," NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1.

all-black football teams would no longer be kept separate, but should play each other in order to achieve “substantially more student integration.”⁷

Fort Worth ISD had undergone other substantial changes since the beginnings of integration in 1963. Dr. Elden Busby served as superintendent from 1963 to 1967 and then left his position in Fort Worth to work as the executive director of the Region XI Education Service Center operating under the direction of the Texas State Board of Education.⁸ Busby began his service the first year that Fort Worth began stair-step integration. He served on a school board that hesitantly and begrudgingly began stair-step integration.

Unlike, Busby, the new superintendent, Julius Truelson, recognized the inevitability of integration. Instead of fighting the impeding legislation, he committed himself and the school board to integrating the schools with as little parental friction as possible. Truelson received his appointment as Superintendent of FWISD from the Board of Education on August 1, 1967. He graduated from Texas Christian University and then worked for Riverside Junior-Senior High School beginning in 1936. Truelson taught mathematics. He returned to TCU for a master’s in education before his service in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He was appointed assistant superintendent in 1966.⁹ Remembered repeatedly as “the calm, logical, and just [voice] that would prevail,” he was “tough but genial . . . [and] all these attributes proved beneficial as the school district

⁷ “Monthly Report of Richard R. Dockery, Regional Director, Region VI Office, NAACP, January 16 to February 15, 1967, IV C 37 Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1966-71, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁸ “New Superintendent Takes The Helm,” *The Beacon, The Teacher: A Beacon of Light*, October 1967, Volume 3, No. 1, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁹ Ibid.

faced some of its toughest challenges.”¹⁰ Under Truelson’s guidance, the Fort Worth school district initiated new integration programs as well as beginning a bilingual education system.

As Fort Worth schools gradually desegregated, subsequent Supreme Court cases expanded on the *Brown* decision. Arguably, *Brown* defined “desegregation” as merely abolishing laws that denied African American students access to white-only schools on the basis of race. Later U.S. Supreme Court decisions, such as *Green v. County Board* and *Swann v. Charlotte–Mecklenburg* went beyond *Brown* to define “integration.” “Integration,” as the district court and the Fifth Circuit Court came to define it, meant that each school’s demographic makeup should reflect that of the entire Fort Worth school district, roughly seventy-five percent white and twenty-five percent African American in 1970. Besides the *Brown* decision, *Swann* made the biggest impact on the Fort Worth school district to date.

The *Swann* decision’s profound impact on education across the nation, including Fort Worth, began in 1970. James Swann, a six-year-old African American boy living in North Carolina, attended a predominantly black school in central Charlotte. The NAACP represented Swann, and other African American school children, against the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. Even seventeen years after the *Brown* decision, the public school system manifested little progress in desegregating their schools. Because of the lawsuit brought before the Supreme Court, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District of North Carolina became a visible symbol of *Brown*’s failure to enforce integration. According to the case, approximately 14,000 black students attended schools

¹⁰ “Julius Truelson: The former superintendent was a strong man who was right for the times,” Folder “Julius Truelson,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

that were either totally black or more than 99 percent black. An appellate court judge, James B. McMillan, decided for the plaintiffs. Although he personally opposed busing, McMillan found busing the only means by which to meet the constitutional requirement of desegregation. After the submission and rejection of several plans, McMillan finally approved a plan dividing the district into pie-shaped wedges, which bused center-city African Americans to the all-white outlying high schools. The school board appealed McMillan's decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court agreed to hear the case on October 12, 1970, and upheld McMillan's ruling on April 20, 1971. The ruling strengthened a 1968 decision, *Green v. County School Board*, which had determined that local school boards must eliminate all vestiges of discrimination "root and branch."¹¹ The Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, decided unanimously for the plaintiffs in *Swann*. The opinion, written by Chief Justice Burger, highlighted the catch phrase from *Green* in making his argument. As Burger wrote,

The objective today remains to eliminate from the public schools all vestiges of state-imposed segregation. Segregation was the evil struck down by *Brown I* as contrary to the equal protection guarantees of the Constitution. That was the violation sought to be corrected by the remedial measures of *Brown II*. That was the basis for the holding in *Green* that school authorities are "clearly charged with the affirmative duty to take whatever steps might be necessary to convert to a unitary system in which racial discrimination would be eliminated root and branch."¹²

"Removing all vestiges of segregation, root and branch" could be accomplished, the Court decided, by combining several plans into one. A court-appointed expert supported the school board's rezoning plan but modified it to include additional African American

¹¹ *Green v. School Bd. of New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968), available from <http://www.enfacto.com/case/U.S./391/430/>, accessed 11 October 2008.

¹² *Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals, Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Education*, 402 U.S. 1 (1971), available from http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0402_0001_ZS.html, accessed 11 October 2008.

students by utilizing the district's transportation services. He also recommended grouping elementary schools, particularly several all- or nearly all-white schools with one all- or nearly all-black school. The elementary schools would then feed into one junior high and high school.¹³

The *Swann* decision directly affected Fort Worth's schools. The board completed the final step in the 1963 "stair-step" integration plan by 1967 and began a new program to increase integration that year. In 1970, the Fort Worth NAACP again petitioned the court, opposing the proposed construction of Morningside High School. The NAACP claimed the school would foster segregation, because the district planned the construction in a predominantly black neighborhood. Again, the NAACP and the district's attorneys returned to court. The board countered the NAACP's argument by saying that "it has no constitutional obligation to dismantle these all-black schools because their racial composition occurred as a result of shifting residential patterns since the district's establishment in 1967 of what it maintained was a unitary school system."¹⁴ On August 20, 1970, only weeks before the Supreme Court decided *Swann*, District Judge Leo Brewster again ruled in favor of the district, deciding that the district operated a constitutional school system and allowed it to proceed as planned with Morningside's construction, even though the plan placed the school in a predominantly black community.

Further impetus for integrating Fort Worth's schools again came from the federal government. William Wayne Justice, Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Texas, handed down "one of the most extensive school desegregation

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Flax v. Potts*, 464 F.2d 865 (1972), 14.

decisions on record” in November 1970.¹⁵ Originating in an East Texas district, *United States vs. Texas*, later know as Civil Order 5381, Justice’s decision, affirmed by the Fifth Circuit, ordered the Texas Education Agency to assume desegregation responsibilities, which included thwarting pupil placement abuses and discrimination in extracurricular activities in addition to reviewing schools annually.¹⁶ Because a U.S. District judge already oversaw Fort Worth’s integration plans, the appeals court removed Fort Worth ISD from Justice’s jurisdiction. Despite that removal, Texas school boards, including Fort Worth’s, felt the pressure that *U.S. v. Texas* placed on their integration plans.¹⁷

Following its August 1970 defeat, the Fort Worth NAACP appealed to Judge Brewster with Civil Order 5381 and *Swann v. Mecklenburg* in mind.¹⁸ The branch of the Fort Worth NAACP appealed Leo Brewster’s decision by “Pointing out that this decision did not produce an acceptable level of desegregation of the school system.”¹⁹ The plaintiffs appealed Brewster’s opinion, and in June 1971, less than two months after the *Swann* decision, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed Brewster’s decision, ordering the district to present an inclusive plan to add staff integration to that of students. They also challenged Morningside’s construction. The Fifth Circuit Court remanded the case to Brewster and the district court with directions to compose a “student assignment Plan and a faculty Assignment Plan that complies with the Principles

¹⁵ Jim Walsh, Frank Kemerer, and Laurie Maniotis, *The Educator’s Guide to Texas School Law* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 54.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54-5.

¹⁷ Richard L. Scott, *School Desegregation in Texas: The Implementation of United States v. Texas* (Policy Research Report 51, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin, 1982).

¹⁸ *Flax v. Potts*, 450 F.2D 118, 118-19 (5th circuit, 1971); *Flax v. Potts*, “Facts and Prior Proceedings,” *Arlene Flax v. W.S. Potts*, 864 F.2D 1157 (5th Circuit, 1989).

¹⁹ “Monthly Report of Richard L. Dockery, Southwest Regional Director,” September 15 to October 15, 1971, IV C 37 NAACP Southwest Regional Office Reports, 1966-71, NAACP Files, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

established in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*.²⁰ Because the court decided that the school district's plan failed to meet guidelines defined in the recent *Swann* decision, the school board submitted a plan to increase faculty integration and retain its concept of neighborhood schools.²¹

The district court approved the new plan on July 17, 1971, and it went into effect on August 30, 1971. In order for federal court supervision to end, a judge had to declare the district "unitary," meaning that "individual faculties must be integrated on a ratio equivalent to the racial makeup of the total faculty, that the pupil ratio in the schools have the same racial balance as the total school population." In accordance with the circuit court's rulings, the board abandoned plans for Morningside High School's construction and planned to further integrate the staff and faculty. The court also approved a new plan to propel integration in the district.

Following the court's ruling, the school board attempted to address the limited integration that the stair-step plan provided by creating a new system. The plan, which would include busing to achieve the court-ordered objectives, passed the board by a four-three vote. School board members Bill Elliot, Bobby Bruner, and Jim Harris voted against the plan. Board Secretary Green B. Trimble, former principal and the namesake of Trimble High School, voted for the plan with reservations. He opposed the busing element of the plan but called it "the lesser of two evils." Steve Harrell also voted for the plan, despite his distaste for busing, a part of the "very clear cut mandate from the

²⁰ *Flax v. Potts*, 450 F.2D 118, 118-9 (5th Cir. 1971).

²¹ "Letter for All Principals from Julius Truelson, Subject: Integration Plan – 1971," Folder "Julius Truelson," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

court.”²²

The new plan, called the Cluster Plan, involved twenty-seven of the seventy-eight elementary schools in Fort Worth ISD. Each cluster contained three to seven schools, with white and African American students distributed among the schools to the ratio of race within the district. The plan called for an exchange program, where the district bused second graders who attended the twenty-seven predominantly white schools to six all-black schools. Students of the all-black schools rode buses to the white schools for third through fifth grades.²³ The cluster plan involved busing in an attempt to address the “12,000 of the 21,000 black students in sixteen virtually all-black schools.”²⁴ Additionally, the plan called for the integration of faculty to approximately seventy percent white and thirty percent black.²⁵ The cluster integration plan began with the 1971-72 school year.

Before the 1971-72 school year, Truelson shared with all school principals an information packet explaining the “Cluster Plan” in detail. The packet included “Highlights of the Overall Plan,” which stipulated a majority-to-minority school transfer program, where “a pupil may transfer from his school where his race is in the majority to a school where his race is in the minority with bus transportation provided”; an integrated faculty of seventy-eight percent white and twenty-two percent African American; and the closing of all-black schools: Como High School, Terrell Middle School, and Kirkpatrick Middle School. All schools had to have a white majority, reflecting the current

²² “Judge will Weigh FW Mixing Plan,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 July 1971.

²³ “Three Judges Hear Integration Appeal,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, February 1972, Vol. 5, No. 6, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²⁴ *Flax v. Potts*, “Facts and Prior Proceedings,” *Arlene Flax v. W.S. Potts*, 864 F.2D 1157 (5th Circuit, 1989).

²⁵ “Schools to Open With Cluster Integration Plan,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, September 1971, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

population demographic. Additionally, each elementary school would offer kindergarten and first grade, but only the previously all-black school included in the cluster would offer second grade classes, and students could not transfer out of their cluster schools.²⁶

The clusters included the North Cluster of Kirkpatrick, Sam Rosen, and W.J. Turner; the East Cluster of Atwood McDonald, Eastern Handley, Eastern Hills, Rosedale Park, and West Handley; the Southeast Cluster of D. McRae, Glen Park, Oaklawn, and Sunrise; the South Cluster of Daggett, De Zavala, James E. Guinn, and Stephen F. Austin; the West Cluster of Arlington Heights, Como, Mary Louise Phillips, Ridglea Hills, Ridglea West, South Hi Mount, and Tanglewood; the Riverside Cluster of Oak Knoll, Oakhurst, Riverside, and Versia L. Williams. Students could transfer to any school their race attended as a minority, a plan called the majority-to-minority program.²⁷

Superintendent Truelson shared an information packet explaining the Cluster Plan in detail with all principals before the beginning of the 1971-72 school year. Truelson wisely added a section titled “The Rationale Behind the Cluster Plan” that delicately placed responsibility for the clusters and busing on the court, stating, “this is what the New Orleans Court ordered based on recent Supreme Court decisions.”²⁸ He also wrote, “The second grade was chosen [for transfers to the predominantly black school in each cluster] because these younger children, yet to develop prejudice, will accept each other for what they are, not the color of their skin.” He also hoped that integration among

²⁶ “Letter for All Principals from Julius Truelson, Subject: Integration Plan – 1971,” Folder “Cluster Plan,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.; “Plan of Organizing, 1973-74 The Opening of School,” Bulletin Number One, Fort Worth: Fort Worth Independent School District, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²⁷ “Schools to Open With Cluster Integration Plan,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, September 1971, Vol. 5, No. 1, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

²⁸ “Letter for All Principals from Julius Truelson, Subject: Integration Plan – 1971,” Folder “Cluster Plan,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

young children would prevent the violence sometimes experienced when districts desegregated older grades. Truelson also believed that “Second graders will be easier to bus, in fact, they will enjoy the experience.”²⁹ He additionally argued that the Cluster Plan would maintain neighborhood identification.

In an interview with a *Star-Telegram* reporter, Truelson defended the plan’s limitation to twenty-seven elementary schools, saying it would spare taxpayers the economic burden of extensive busing and minimize children’s travel time. While expressing his agreement with Fort Worth’s previous plan, he proudly noted that as far as he knew, no other city had a plan like this one, and he expressed confidence that “the Fort Worth cluster plan will be a model for other cities to follow.” Exhibiting the optimism for which he became known, Truelson concluded, “The possibilities are fantastic We think it is the best plan any city has devised I didn’t make the laws but I must obey them and obey them without subterfuge Even though we may not like it, let’s make it work and at the end we’ll have a better education program.”³⁰

Julius Truelson attempted to engage Fort Worth parents in a dialogue and keep them abreast of the changing situation in Fort Worth. He authored a “Greetings from the Superintendent” letter at the beginning of every monthly newsletter published by Fort Worth Independent School District. Truelson began his letter by acknowledging, “The past summer months have produced several well publicized problems. I am sure you have recognized for some time that these problems surrounding integration would ultimately come to Fort Worth.” The letter shared the Fifth Circuit Court’s order requiring that the board integrate all schools’ faculties, that the student bodies at each

²⁹ “Letter for All Principals from Julius Truelson, Subject: Integration Plan – 1971,” Folder “Cluster Plan,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³⁰ Dual System Wiped Out, Cluster Plan Explained,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 July 1971.

school reflect the district's racial composition, and that as *Green* initiated, "all vestiges of the dual system be removed."³¹

Unfortunately for Truelson, many parents disagreed with his belief that students enjoyed the bus rides and that the plan maintained a neighborhood feel. According to the Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter of October 1971, only "Sixty-seven percent of the anticipated second grade enrollment in the six cluster schools had reported to the school by the end of the second week."³² Even before the school year began, portents of parental dissatisfaction became more visible. The school board held a meeting in July, after the court handed down its verdict. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reporter covering the meeting titled the article, "Intense Emotions Displayed before School Board," and stated, "A cross section of the Fort Worth population came before the school board yesterday, pleading their belief for or against student busing, laying their emotions bare in an intense moment of community dispute." One objector to the plan, Mrs. W.L. Dilworth, informed the board that she helped form the "Concerned Citizens Against Busing" organization, and changed the group's name to "Stop Clusters."³³ She claimed that over one hundred people attended the first meeting.

Tempers also rose when Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick of the Fort Worth Council of Churches accused the board of discrimination in the past reminded the board of its responsibility for helping "to obtain for all our children a quality education based on social justice." Truelson quickly rejected Kirkpatrick's allegations of racism and retorted, "When 28 per cent of all the people who attend your churches are black, then

³¹ "Greetings From the Superintendent," Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, September 1971, Vol. 5, No. 1, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³² *Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter*, Vol. 5, No. 2, October 1971, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

³³ "Intense Emotions Displayed Before School Board," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 13, 1971.

you can come down here and lecture [us] about what we should be doing in the schools.” He later apologized, but added, “the moment of greatest segregation in this city happens every Sunday at 11 o’clock, and don’t you ever forget it.” Another angry citizen spoke at the meeting, claiming, “The federal judge and a representative of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) are dictating” the changes. He continued, “I worked hard to buy a home where I now live and my children can go to the school of their choice, in their neighborhood. Now I think the school system in the United States is being ruined.”³⁴

Many Fort Worth residents reacted with outrage to the appellate court’s decision. In fact, the *Star-Telegram* hosted a series of letters to the editors concerning busing. One reader objected to the expense of increased school transportation, particularly challenging Superintendent Julius Truelson. The author, W.B. Kozy, referenced a comment made by Truelson, assuring Fort Worth parents that the federal government, not the city, would pay for the transportation increase. As Kozy wrote, Truelson “recently stated that because we would be receiving federal aid for the busing program, the local taxpayers would not be burdened with any additional costs for such service. Where does he think the federal aid come from, Santa Claus?” He continued, “It is a sad situation, the children had no part in the decision, yet they will be the ones to suffer the most.”³⁵ Two high school students wrote letters complaining about the possibility of riding a bus to a school rather than walking to the nearest school. One student compared the court’s decision to Communist Russia and the other student included the veiled threat, saying, “I can’t wait till morning when the boys at City Hall find their garbage hasn’t been collected

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Readers Speak Out on Busing to Achieve Racial Balance,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 9 August 1971.

because one of the neighborhood stray dogs ripped their plastic bags to pieces and spread garbage all over the lawn.”³⁶ Another reader called unnamed education leaders “God haters” who “are about to destroy all appearance of local control.” The author planned an educational revolution, writing, “So let us get rid of our current schools and system and destroy the control of the American haters and freedom haters. Then let us set up a system again that will honor God and country as it is intended to do. A school that will teach honesty, loyalty, how to read and write, etc.”³⁷

A second series of letters to the editors continued to reveal heightened emotions four days after the first series of letters. One Azle resident stated, “The same Supreme Court that brought about this ‘busing’ is simply dividing the people of this country more and more after it has already been divided by Johnson’s war in Vietnam.”³⁸ Another subscriber found more sentimental reasons to oppose busing. “If our teens today are disturbed, confused, maladjusted, turning to drugs for a feeling of love, security, and meaningfulness,” she wrote, “what will happen to these children who are treated like political bouncing balls and robbed of the secure feeling of familiar surroundings and neighborhood living?” She further urged, “This insecurity, the added expense, the inconvenience, added to the fact that we do not choose this for our children, should be reasons enough to halt this unreasonable busing.”³⁹

Fort Worth parents concerned about the cluster plan attended a series of school board meetings beginning on August 9, 1971. Among these parents were members of the

³⁶ Cecil Champenos and Kirk Fillmore, “Readers Speak Out on Busing to Achieve Racial Balance,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 9 August 1971.

³⁷ “Readers Speak Out on Busing to Achieve Racial Balance,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 9 August 1971.

³⁸ Howard, Edgar E. “Diving Nation, Letters From Readers: Government Control Gobbling Freedom,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 August 1971.

³⁹ Rogers, Mrs. Everett. “Reasons Against: Letters From Readers: Government Control Gobbling Freedom,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 August 1971.

African American community who met separately with Fort Worth Assistant Superintendent Frank Kudlaty. The four members asked for three additions to the public schools' curriculum: an introduction to black history in elementary schools, an African American humanities course offered to high school students, and the addition of Swahili classes to the foreign language departments. The school board held a meeting the next day on Wednesday, August 10, to inform parents of the court's decision and discuss the approaching academic year.⁴⁰

The next evening, the school board held an open meeting. School Board President Father John R. Leatherbury led the meeting and Superintendent Truelson attended. Approximately 350 people attended the meeting; 175 of those attendees objected to the new busing policies. Apparently, attendees maintained strongly differing views on the busing situation. Father Leatherbury complained about disruptions at the meeting and "said if future disturbances occur at board meetings he believes the persons responsible will be charged with disturbing the peace in a public place, a misdemeanor." Ironically, after all the complaints about court-infringed civil liberties in recent judicial decisions, Leatherbury threatened to have police arrest "black militants" who spoke to the board for longer than five minutes and refused to sit down. Leatherbury contacted Police Chief T.S. Walls in order to "check these people out, because I just want to know who they are."⁴¹

The Concerned Citizens for Neighborhood Schools, an anti-busing group in the Riverside neighborhood, held a conference the day after the school board meeting. The members discussed the meeting, determining that "the disruption had hardened their

⁴⁰ Arrest of Disrupters Seen by Leatherbury," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 August 1971.

⁴¹ Ibid.

resolve not to let their children be used.” The group’s executive board members, Jerry Jackson and Martin Kinney, advocated a boycott of the schools as “a means for us to stress our point to the local, state, and federal officials.” Jackson confided his strategy to the *Star-Telegram*, saying, “If we do not send our children they know we mean business.” The members also collected over 160 signatures to protest the increased busing.⁴²

An editorialist complimented the board’s handling of the situation while condemning “the disruptive tactics of a black activist group.” The editor expanded on his condemnation of the “adolescent black militants.” The author believed, “This band of noisemakers seeks to shout and jeer its way to changes in school curricula.”⁴³ Revealing obvious partiality, the editor wrote, “Between the adolescent black militants on the one hand and the white anti-busing spokesmen – who stated their case in orderly fashion – on the other, the school trustees had an exceedingly tense situation on their hands.” Referring to Leatherbury’s guidelines restricting comments to the board, the editor wrote, “Father Leatherbury announced reasonable “ground rules” – no demonstrations or profanity or cheering, with each speaker limited to five minutes.” The editorialist continued a condemnation of the objectors, writing, “These rules were promptly and scornfully broken by the black activists, whose mission obviously was to provoke a disorderly confrontation.”⁴⁴

Leatherbury’s rules gained notoriety as a “get tough” policy, a nonclementure he probably enjoyed. A *Star-Telegram* reporter interviewed other board members about

⁴² “Citizen Meeting: CCNS Worried Over Disruptions,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 August 1971.

⁴³ “Editorials: Board Due Praise In Tough Situation,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 August 1971; “Bruner: ‘Get tough - - last resort,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 August 1971.

⁴⁴ “Editorials: Board Due Praise In Tough Situation,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 August 1971.

Leatherbury's new rules. Secretary Green Trimble favored the policy, though he believed the demonstrators "just want the noise [not] to cause violence." Bobby Bruner, whom the *Star-Telegram* referred to as "The most viciously attacked member of the Fort Worth School Board," indicated that he supported the "get tough" policy only "as a last resort."⁴⁵

Like angry Fort Worth parents, both black and white, many national politicians also opposed forced busing. On February 25, 1972, the U.S. Senate passed the Griffin Amendment, named for Republican Senator Robert Griffin. The amendment sought to limit, or eliminate, the judicial system's ability to force busing in schools for the purpose of creating a racially balanced environment.⁴⁶ The repeal passed by a small margin even though the Senate recanted days later on 29 February. President Nixon noted the general antipathy towards busing; during his 1972 campaigning, he told crowds, "Forced busing is wrong and I don't care if it sounds like demagoguery – I want to say so loud and clear. The courts don't understand the folks."⁴⁷

The *Swann* decision countered President Richard Nixon's "Go Slow" policy. Nixon announced through his White House press secretary in August 1971 that "the administration is opposed to school segregation but does not favor compulsory transportation to remedy it." Press Secretary Ron Zeigler carefully termed mandatory busing "the law of the courts," consciously differentiating the Nixon administration's domestic policy from the Supreme Court's recent rulings. A *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* editorial applauded Nixon's policy, arguing, "But some of the pressure and threat of

⁴⁵ "Bruner: 'Get tough - - last resort,'" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 August 1971.

⁴⁶ "Senate Backs Plan to Bar Court Power Over Busing: Civil Rights Forces Dealt Major Defeat," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 26 February 1972.

⁴⁷ James Reichley, *Conservatives in an Age of Change* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1981).

pressure will blow off. The administration has blown hot and cool on the manner of school integration. It will help in a fevered situation if as the President seems determined, it continues to blow cool.”⁴⁸

The latest incarnation of the Cluster Plan made the district more attractive to the federal government as a successfully desegregating area. In order to further stimulate desegregation, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare provided the district with a \$400,000 grant “to aid in school desegregation.” Troy Sparks served as Associate Assistant Superintendent for intercultural relations and, aided by biracial committees, sponsored teacher training programs at ten school centers, adult education and vocation courses, and pupil tutoring at formerly all-black schools.⁴⁹ The grant funded interracial human relations training and piloted higher development courses.⁵⁰

Board officials and Superintendent Truelson noted that many Fort Worth residents resented busing. In January 1972, as part of a “New Year’s Greeting From the Superintendent,” Truelson acknowledged, “The school year has been a trying one for many – from the youngest school child to the seasoned administrator.” Students and parents encountered the Cluster Integration Plan, and “more than 900 faculty members saw themselves reassigned immediately prior to the opening of school in order to conform to the court order.” Hoping to make the district and the new policies more attractive, Truelson complimented the interracial human relations training courses, noting that the workshops “have helped each of us to achieve a better understanding of our fellow workers, no matter what their race. When teachers and administrators find the

⁴⁸ “‘Court Law’ Limits Nixon Busing Policy,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 August 1971.

⁴⁹ “For Desegregation: Schools Get \$ 400,000 HEW Grant, Try Sparks Named Administrator,” *Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletters*, November 1971, Vol. 6, No. 3, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁵⁰ “School Board to Eye Different Proposals,” *The Fort Worth Press*, 10 January 1972.

understanding of themselves and of each other – giving each individual person the professional respect that is his due – they are better human beings.”⁵¹

Despite the federal government’s recent praise of Fort Worth ISD’s desegregation efforts, the NAACP appealed Brewster’s July 1971 approval of the revised Cluster Plan to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals on the grounds that the plan failed to meet integration demands of the district. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals held a hearing on January 10, 1972, to consider an appeal made by the NAACP on behalf of the plaintiffs. During the hearing, the judges revealed their uncertainty that the Cluster Plan effectively met the qualifications determined by the *Green* and *Swann* decisions.⁵² The Fifth Circuit heard the case after the *Swann* verdict and reversed the district court’s verdict on July 14, 1972. The appellate court, like the Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare, complimented the school board members for “their dedication to their heavy responsibilities and their good faith voluntary efforts to desegregate and eliminate inequality in the school system.” The court also praised their cooperation with the district court and their formation of a biracial committee to study to the school integration process. However, the appellate court determined that “the record effectively shows that the plan has not yet fully established a unitary school system.”⁵³

In keeping with other findings of the time period, the court noted ratios of blacks to whites in the district and included in the study an examination of Mexican-American children as newly distinct minority group. Despite a general population growth in Fort Worth, 88,313 students attended Fort Worth schools for the 1970-71 school year; that

⁵¹ “New Year’s Greeting From the Superintendent,” *Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletters*, January 1972, Vol. 5, No. 5, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁵² “Three Judges Hear Integration Appeal,” *Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletters*, February 1972, Vol. 5, No. 6, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁵³ *Flax v. Potts*, 464 F.2d 865 (1972).

number decreased to 84,311 total students the following year. In addition to a decreasing total population, the proportion of white students decreased from sixty-four to sixty-one percent, African Americans consisted of twenty-nine percent of the total student body, and Mexican-American students comprised nine and a half percent. According to the appellate court's interpretation, the Supreme Court's decision in "*Swann* teaches that the continued existence of one-race schools in a school system with a history of state-supported segregation is presumptively discriminatory and places upon school authorities the obligation of showing that such schools are 'genuinely nondiscriminatory.'" The decision continued, "There has never been a constitutionally adequate compliance by the district with its affirmative duty to create a truly unitary school system. Before and after 1967, nine of the eleven elementary schools were and are now virtually all-black schools; those included A.M. Pate, Carroll Peak, Carver, Dillow, Dunbar, Eastland, East Van Zandt, McCoy, Mitchell, and R. Vickery. The vestiges of state-imposed segregation had in no significant manner been eliminated when it came to the assignment of elementary school students. "Likewise, the all-black middle and high schools further reflected, and continue to reflect, adversely on the existence of a unitary school system."⁵⁴

The appellate court remanded the case to Brewster with instructions for the district to submit a new plan of integration. According to the Fifth Circuit Court, the plan must espouse the mandate articulated in the *Swann* decision that "all vestiges of state-imposed segregation be eliminated from the public schools."⁵⁵ Despite the nine years of "stair-step" integration, the court noted that 21,000 black students attended Fort Worth

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Flax v. Potts*, 869 F. 2D 1157 (5th Cir. 1989),

schools. Of that total, 12,000 attended sixteen all-black schools, including eleven all-black elementary schools.⁵⁶

Despite the initial desegregation efforts, the appellate court believed that “Because . . . of marked residential separation of races in Fort Worth, little integration was accomplished by this revision in student assignment.” Acknowledging the board’s good faith argument, the court found that forty percent of the high-school-aged black students in Fort Worth attended I.M. Terrell and Dunbar High Schools, both all-black. Additionally, over fifty percent of the district’s elementary-school-aged African Americans attended three all-black elementary schools: Como, Dunbar and Morningside. The summary presented several suggestions for expanding the cluster program: first, to combine all-black and all-white schools into the same cluster; second, a majority-to-minority transfer system; and, third, faculty assignments reflective of the district’s racial ratio.⁵⁷

Originally, the New Orleans Fifth Circuit Court set the fall of 1972 as the deadline for the plan’s application but extended the deadline upon appeal.⁵⁸ Clifford Davis, still representing the plaintiffs as NAACP counsel, vocalized his begrudging agreement to delay until fall 1973. He told the *Star-Telegram* that he believed the Fort Worth ISD attempted to delay the case until the Supreme Court ruled on integration cases

⁵⁶ *Flax v. Potts*, 464 F.2d 856,866 (5th Circuit), Cert. Denied, 409 U.S. 1007, 93 S.Ct. 433, 34 L.Ed. 2D 299 (1972).

⁵⁷ *Flax v. Potts*, 464 F.2d 865 (1972).

⁵⁸ “Schools Seek Supreme Court Hearing,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, September 1972, Vol. 6, No. 1, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

in Denver, Colorado, and Richmond, Virginia. “The board,” Davis noted, “does not have the attitude to come up with an effective plan.”⁵⁹

At this juncture, Fort Worth ISD attorney Cecil Morgan petitioned the United States Supreme Court to hear the *Flax v. Potts* case and overturn the Fifth Circuit’s judgment. The Supreme Court refused to hear the case on November 13, 1972. Two days later, Morgan informed the board that it had exhausted all legal means and must create yet another plan. Superintendent Truelson ordered that the revised plan incorporate first graders into its cluster program; the plan originally included only second through fifth graders. Additionally, and in accordance with the Fifth Circuit’s orders, Truelson ordered that sixteen predominantly black schools integrate in January 1973 after the Christmas break.⁶⁰

The board of education submitted the new plan to Judge Brewster, who had been remanded to review all plans with the Fifth Circuit’s instructions to rectify the current black-to-white ratios existing in the schools during the 1971-72 scholastic year. On December 18, 1972, the school board submitted to Brewster a proposed plan – dense and full of technical jargon – comparable to the Austin Plan, which “allows for the basic neighborhood school concept to remain in operation while at the same time attempting to achieve racial balance in a program that is not only educationally sound but economically feasible.” Under the Austin Plan, “The individual child arrives at his regular neighborhood school and meets with his regular class. During this time, routine

⁵⁹ “Conditional Delay in Busing May Be OK with NAACP,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 26 January 1973; The Supreme Court ruled against a school-merger plan in the Richmond case; The Supreme Court ruled in *Keyes v. Denver* that the school board bore the burden of maintaining integrated schools.

⁶⁰ “New Integration Plan Expected I December,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, December 1972, vol. 6., No. 4, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; “City School System Submits New Plan For Desegregation,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, January 1973, vol. 6., No. 5; Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

procedures may be taken care of such as: class attendance, collecting lunch money, and other preparations for the day. The child then boards a school bus along with his class and teacher and travels to the Learning Center of another school.” The other school or Learning Center consists of “an ethnically mixed instruction group.” At the end of the school day, the child boards a bus and returns to the neighborhood school.⁶¹

In the midst of the increasing busing controversy, the Mexican American community became more vocal about racial injustice in Texas’s public school system. Many cities, including Fort Worth, created “Mexican” schools in the decades before World War II. Although Latino students in Fort Worth enrolled in white schools before *Brown*, Tejanos also faced discrimination in Cowtown’s public school system. Like those in other cities, Latinos in Fort Worth, represented by the Mexican-American Education Advisory Committee, sought relief through the judicial system. Fort Worth resident Rufino Mendoza, his college-aged son Rufino Mendoza, Jr., and University of Texas at Arlington Professor Eddy Herrera scheduled a meeting in 1971 at the All Saints Catholic Church. They formed the Mexican American Educational Advisory Committee (MAEAC) to assert Latino children’s educational rights in the district.⁶² Some Texas cities attempted to fulfill racial quotas outlined by the courts by enrolling black and Latino students in a school, labeling it “integrated,” and allowing Anglo schools to stand alone.⁶³ The Mexican American Education Advisory Committee filed a “complaint in intervention” on December 27, 1972. The organization claimed discrimination against

⁶¹ “Plan of Integration Designed To Comply With the Requirements Stated in the Order By the Fifth Court of Appeals,” 1972, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 17-8.

⁶² Carlos Cuellar, *Stories from the Barrio: A History of Mexican Fort Worth* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2003), 193.

⁶³ *Ross v. Eckels*; *Ross v. Houston*.

Mexican Americans in the school system. MAEAC and the school board reached an agreement when the board promised to increase the number of Latino teachers hired by the district.

In addition to these concessions, the school board's amended proposal provided definitions of usable terms and detailed explanations of children's school days. For example, "elementary satellite center" referred to "those schools which contain their neighborhood kindergarten and second grade pupils and will receive second grade pupils from the feeder schools." Grades first, third, fourth, and fifth would attend class at schools other than the elementary satellite center. A "feeder school" would send second grade students to a satellite center but would provide kindergarten, first, third, fourth, and fifth grade classes. The board added ten elementary satellite centers to the existing six in the 1971 plan; the 1972 plan added first grade to the previously existing cluster program. Teachers accompanied their pupils, thereby maintaining a black-to-white ratio that reflected district demographics.⁶⁴ The district bused about 3,000 students in the 1971-72 school year. According to the December 1972 amended plan, the elementary division of the plan would begin in August of 1973.⁶⁵

In order to enact these changes, the board proposed the creation of new clusters for elementary schools. The Riverside cluster, according to the *Star-Telegram*, would

⁶⁴ "Plan of Integration Designed To Comply With the Requirements Stated in the Order By the Fifth Court of Appeals," 1972, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 3; Carter Park, Glencrest, W.M. Green and Washington Heights met demographic ratio requirements, leaving them free from the cluster program. According to the plan, the board clustered Daggett, Morningside, and Wedgwood middle Schools with Morningside as the satellite center; Dunbar served as the satellite center for Handley, Meacham and Meadowbrook; "City School System Submits New Plan For Desegregation," Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, January 1973, vol. 6., No. 5, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁶⁵ "Plan of Integration Designed To Comply With the Requirements Stated in the Order By the Fifth Court of Appeals," 1972, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 5.

include four elementary schools. Riverside would enroll a 97 percent white population and Oak Knoll a 100 percent white study body. Versia Williams Elementary, also in the Riverside cluster, would educate an all-black student body. The new cluster program would bus students across the Riverside cluster area to create student bodies at each elementary that reflected the district's racial demographics.⁶⁶ The Southeast cluster would involve four schools, including D. McRae, Glen Park, Oaklawn, and Sunrise Elementary. D. McRae, Glen Park, and Oaklawn each enrolled 99 to 100 percent white populations the previous school year while Sunrise had educated an all-black student body. The new plan called for the schools to enroll a twenty percent black student body.⁶⁷ The Northside cluster, the smallest in the district, included two all-white and one all-black school.⁶⁸

The proposal contained further suggestions for increased integration of middle schools. "Middle school satellite centers" would retain their own sixth grade and receive sixth graders from other schools. Middle school feeder schools would host their own seventh and eight grade pupils while sending their sixth grade students to a satellite center. As the plan dictated, "Pupils will attend the assigned 'center' or 'feeder' school for the entire day and entire school year."⁶⁹

The proposed 1972 plan also attempted to address integration at the secondary school level by pairing minority and Anglo high schools. Campus I consisted of Dunbar and Eastern Hills High Schools. Campus II consisted of Southwest and I.M. Terrell High

⁶⁶ "Riverside Cluster Has Four Schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 27 July 1971, 4-A.

⁶⁷ "Southwest Cluster to Involve Four Schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 July 1971.

⁶⁸ "3 North Side Schools Smallest of Clusters," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Clippings Folder "Clusters," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁶⁹ "Plan of Integration Designed To Comply With the Requirements Stated in the Order By the Fifth Court of Appeals," 1972, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 1-2.

Schools. Campus I and II's ninth and twelfth graders would attend one term at Dunbar. Tenth and eleventh graders attended classes for one term at Eastern Hills. According to this program, "each pupil will be required to attend both campuses for at least two years of their high school program." Because of overcrowded parking lots, the district required that students utilize school transportation rather than drive to school.⁷⁰

The school board announced these additional changes to the school system in a December 1972, "Highlights from the Board of Education" newsletter. The plan of integration included the addition of "ten elementary clusters for a total of sixteen," the creation of two middle school clusters, the closing of Como Middle School, and the pairing of Dunbar and I.M. Terrell High Schools with two predominantly white schools. The board would assign every student a required class at the appropriate school each semester.⁷¹ Of the district's total of 9,259 African American elementary school students, the new cluster plan directly involved 2,797 of them.⁷² If the plan functioned as intended, Truelson hoped, Fort Worth would no longer offer all-white or all-black public schools.

Judge Brewster reviewed the revised plan on April 24, 1973, months before its planned implementation. The district originally wanted to excuse first graders from the busing program, a proposal Brewster overturned, and the NAACP applauded Brewster's ruling. Brewster also removed the high school Campus I and II proposals and instead determined that "the schools in question should shift gradually into racial balance." In

⁷⁰ Ibid., 5; "Lawyer-Client Privacy Planned" Board Calls Busing Huddle," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 14 November 1972.

⁷¹ "Highlights from the Board of Education Meeting Vol. 4, No. 7," Fort Worth Public Schools, 12 December 1972, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁷² *Flax v. Potts*, 464 F.2d 865 (1972).

order to accelerate the “gradual shift,” Brewster proposed revising neighborhood boundaries to create more naturally integrated schools. The revision would apply to the freshman year class beginning in the 1973-74 scholastic year. Previously, many students could choose one high school from several options.⁷³ Now the district required them to attend their neighborhood school.

The NAACP again filed in Brewster’s court, seeking increased busing to implement the Supreme Court’s decision to “eliminate all vestiges of discrimination.” Brewster ordered the district to modify its plan on August 23, 1973, days before school was scheduled to begin. In order to comply with *Green*’s “remove all vestiges of segregation,” ruling, the district had to adopt a more aggressive transportation plan. Implementation of Brewster’s decision involved a substantial change in the district’s transportation system. The new busing plan involved twenty-seven elementary and six middle schools.

Additionally, Brewster proposed closing I.M. Terrell High School and reopening the all-black school as the I.M. Terrell Skill Center, an adult vocational school. Como Middle School, Brewster determined, should close to reopen as Como Occupational Orientation School for special education pupils. Finally, combining Dunbar Middle and Senior High Schools into the Dunbar Complex made the facility available for adult classes in the evenings, hopefully negating some area poverty and school vandalism by creating jobs and raising the area’s socioeconomic status through educational

⁷³ “Judge Brewster Approves Revised Integration Plan,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, May 1973, Vol. 6, no. 9, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

advancements.⁷⁴ Ideally, Brewster noted, the Dunbar Complex should function as a community school for students of all ages.⁷⁵

Parents of elementary school aged children strongly objected to the latest changes. According to the 1973 plan, a school bus picked up a child at his or her home and then delivered the pupil to his or her neighborhood, or “feeder,” school. After the child made general preparations for the day at the neighborhood school, the child again boarded a school bus for the satellite center. Bus rides from children’s homes to their neighborhood schools took approximately twenty-five minutes and trips to the satellite centers averaged twenty minutes. Children repeated this process on their return trip as well. A first grader’s parents could expect their child to spend at least one and a half hours on a school bus daily.⁷⁶

These conscious efforts to boost integration in the public schools served as impetus for an integrated faculty, staff, and, in 1974, school board. University of Texas at Arlington Dean of Student Life Reby Cary, an African American, ran for the school board in 1974. He opposed incumbent Bobby Bruner for Place 1 on the board. Fort Worth voters elected Cary to a six-year term in April 1974, with 5,781 votes to Bruner’s 4,666.⁷⁷ Two of the other positions became part of a run-off election.⁷⁸ Tarrant County elected the district’s first black legislator, A. Lyn Gregory, in 1976.⁷⁹ The school board soon reflected Fort Worth’s triracial identity in 1978, when voters elected Mexican

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “Change to Highlight New School Year,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, September 1973, Vol. 7, No. 1, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁷⁶ “Plan of Integration Designed To Comply With the Requirements Stated in the Order By the Fifth Court of Appeals,” 1972, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 3-4.

⁷⁷ “First Black Elected to School Board; Cary, Harris Win Elections; Runoffs Scheduled in Two of Races,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 7 April 1974.

⁷⁸ “Teacher Takeover Feared: Leatherbury Backs 2 in Runoff,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 April 1974.

⁷⁹ “Tarrant elects first black legislator,” *Dallas Morning News*, 3 November 1976.

American community leader Carlos Puente to the Fort Worth ISD board of trustees.⁸⁰

The city followed the integrated path Cary's election took when, in 1983, the Fort Worth Mayor Hugh Parmer appointed African American attorney Maryellen Hicks "the first black municipal judge and then later the first black chief municipal judge."⁸¹

The new members, part of the first racially integrated board in Fort Worth's history, oversaw a contentious meeting in August 1974. Members of the Mexican-American community approached the board regarding the Mexican American Education Study, a report prepared by the district's research team. The researchers discovered that "academic achievement of Mexican-American students as a group is low in the public schools and that the employment of Mexican-American faculty and personnel is below the ideal." A Mexican American community representative appealed to the board for increased bilingual programs, a renewed focus on academics for Latinos, and the board's identification of Mexican-Americans as a separate ethnic identity. Deputy Superintendent Gerald Ward informed the group that he and his staff were in the process of developing an affirmative action plan for Mexican Americans.⁸²

A March 1975 *Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter* addressed some of the issues introduced by the Mexican American petitioners. Julius Truelson, who retired in 1975, worked as superintendent when the district adopted a bilingual education program. Under Truelson's authority, bilingual education extended from kindergarten to seventh grade. According to the Fort Worth ISD newsletter, Fort Worth served as the first school district in Texas to offer bilingual education in the middle schools rather than strictly

⁸⁰ Cuellar, *Stories from the Barrio*, 197.

⁸¹ "Sturns' Appointment Challenged by Blacks," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 17 January 1983.

⁸² "Sparks of Racial Issues Fly at Board Session," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 29 August 1974; "Truelson Years Reflect Needed Change," *Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter*, May 1975, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

confining it to elementary schools.⁸³ Truelson expressed his disagreement with the Mexican-American Education Authority, informing the public in one of his “Greetings,” that Fort Worth had “set an example for the rest of the nation by expanding bilingual education into the sixth grade level at Elder and Rosemont middle schools” and that “curriculum writers are preparing for further extension into the seventh grade next year.”⁸⁴

Truelson continued his defense of the program a year later, stating, “I feel that the Fort Worth Schools are doing a good job in meeting the needs of Mexican American community. Our percentage of Mexican American employees is increasing each year due largely to the special efforts of our personnel department. More high school age Mexican American pupils are staying in school and taking advantage of the many innovative courses.” In addition to the recent hirings, Truelson confided, “I am proud of our bilingual program. The central staff, principals and teachers are tireless in their efforts to help our Mexican American pupils. They are all due special commendation for their leadership in the field of bilingualism, for Fort Worth ranks number one in the state for the quality and extent of its instructional programs for Mexican American pupils.”⁸⁵

Fort Worth fourth grade schoolteacher Eunice Lopez complimented the district on its bilingual program. Recognizing the advantages of foreign language study, Lopez told the Fort Worth Public Schools *Newsletter*, “The bilingual program is actually providing for the middle class and low economic child what has been in the United States for the

⁸³ “Truelson Years Reflect Needed Change,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, May 1975, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁸⁴ “Bilingual Education Reaches Middle School,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, November 1974, Vol. 8, No. 3, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁸⁵ “Greetings from the Superintendent,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, March 1975, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

rich and elite only – an opportunity of obtaining proficiency in more than one language.” During the 1975-76 academic year, “Approximately 4,950 pupils receive bilingual instruction in 20 elementary schools, grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The progress is in its second year in three middle schools.” The district also set aside funds to train school assistants and teachers in Spanish to aid the bilingual program.⁸⁶

Besides the bilingual program, the 1976 school board planned new courses reflecting the area’s ethnic diversity. “In addition to bilingual education for foreign language speaking pupils (Mexican American for the most part),” a Fort Worth Public Schools *Newsletter* shared, “the social studies department is offering many new courses to introduce pupils to new cultures or long-ignored cultures in America; Negro American Studies, African Studies, and Mexican American Studies are offered as individual courses conveying more realistic pictures.” The unnamed author hoped, “Perhaps each small step will take us closer to mutual understanding and farther from petty prejudices that can only serve to drag us backward.”⁸⁷

The year 1975 proved a seminal year in Fort Worth school district’s history. School Superintendent Truelson retired after serving in that position since 1968. In January 1975, President Jim Harris announced the school board’s choice for superintendent: former teacher Dr. Gerald Ward.⁸⁸ Long-term NAACP president George Flemmings died the same year. Also, Judge Eldon Mahon assumed control of *Flax v. Potts* in 1975. Mahon approved negotiations between the NAACP, whose 2,500

⁸⁶ “Bilingual education: bonus to all,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, October 1976, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁸⁷ “American Heritages Are Varied” Melting Pit Idea Mythical Notion,” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, March 1976, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁸⁸ “School Board Releases Long Awaited Decision.” Fort Worth Public Schools Newsletter, March 1975, Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

residents were now led by local branch president Ray Bell, and the school board team of Bill Elliott and Richard O'Neal. The negotiations lasted over a year and attempted to resolve disputes between the two groups. The groups' representatives attended a closed meeting with Mahon on October 16, 1979. The negotiations and final, mediated conference resulted in several compromises: an increase in African American hiring to reflect a seventy percent white and thirty percent black ratio, including an immediate hiring of a black top official, and the construction of a new Dunbar Middle School which would house a magnet program. Additionally, the board agreed to redraw boundary lines to include a section of the mostly white Eastern Hills area in Dunbar's district.

Reflecting changing trends in philosophy and education, the NAACP wrote, "The parties recognize the students' need to have substantial number of teachers and administrators and support personnel of their own race who understand their cultural background and with whom they can identify." The groups also agreed to form or maintain the magnet programs at Polytechnic High, William James Middle, Handley Middle, Meadowbrook Middle and the new Dunbar Middle School.¹

The *Swann* decision instituted a substantial change in Fort Worth's school system. While many whites considered Fort Worth integrated in 1967, with the conclusion of the stair-step plan, African Americans dissented and, with the help of the federal courts and the precedent set by *Swann*, secured the implementation of busing to achieve a racial balance in all public schools that reflected the demographics of the entire district. Integration of faculty and staff, and the creation of a more multicultural curriculum, accompanied these changes. Busing, however, proved controversial in Fort Worth and led to divisions among school board members, between public officials and their

constituents, and even within the African American community. From the mid-1970s forward, school officials would continue to seek ways to create racially balanced schools, improve academic excellence, and stem the increasing flow of white flight in the district. As the citizens of Fort Worth would discover, the civil rights movement – far from being over – was merely entering a new, and in some ways even more challenging, phase.

Chapter 7 Fort Worth ISD Declared “Unitary”

“I think busing was a legitimate tool in desegregating America’s schools but I think other things are more important now.”
-- Superintendent Don Roberts, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 8 December 1987.

Busing for integration purposes precipitated dramatic demographic transformations within the district. The court-ordered closure of traditionally black high schools in an attempt to adequately “eliminate all vestiges of discrimination” pitted a large portion of the African American community against the NAACP. Forced busing hastened white flight to surrounding neighboring communities free from federal court mandated integration and boosted the formation of, and increased enrollment in, private schools. Fearing the economic impact of white flight and noting many parents’ dissatisfaction with the district, the Fort Worth School Board pushed Judge Eldon Mahon to end busing.

A possible 1977 bond election soon became another disruptive community issue. The conflicts began when the school board met and proposed forming a committee to study and possibly fund magnet programs within the school district.¹ Another purpose of the meeting was to address physical improvements to the existing schools. The board intended to install central heat and air-conditioning in the schools. Fort Worth ISD School Board member Reby Cary and other black leaders opposed the bond, arguing that it discriminated against African American children because it neglected to include provisions for construction of a new and integrated Dunbar Middle School, an all-black

¹ “School bond vote likely to be delayed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 12 June 1975

school that met in a dilapidated building in need of extensive repairs.² The bond called for improvements to Dunbar, but many others felt that the district should authorize construction of a new school building. African American leaders opposed the bond and instead demanded construction of a new, integrated school.³ Black leaders appeared before the board, petitioning for the addition of construction costs for the proposed new school.⁴ Despite their pleas, the school board approved a bond election to improve existing schools rather than to build a new Dunbar. Cary campaigned against the March 8 bond, calling extraneous construction changes, such as adding air conditioning to schools and improving physical education structures, “fat” and neglectful of individual schools’ needs. In addition he argued that the failure to fund a new Dunbar Middle School would “[proliferate] segregation.”⁵ Many African Americans attended a February school board meeting to protest the bond and distribute pamphlets that read, “Our children deserve the best too. A bucket of paint just won’t do. No sub-standard addition. Vote No.”⁶

One *Star-Telegram* editorialist understood the dilemma that the Dunbar Middle School issue presented to the school board. Black leaders wanted construction of a new Dunbar outside the school’s present attendance zones, assuring integration at the new school. White parents feared that redrawing Dunbar’s zone might lead to increased busing. Angering either group would likely lead to the bond’s overall defeat. The editor

² “76 per cent favor school improvements: Bonds approved in record vote,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 9 March 1977; “School board member to visit school: Dilemma over Dunbar delayed,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 22 Jan 1977.

³ “Cary says Dunbar issue pivotal,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 9 March 1977.

⁴ “Controversy turns issue into integration battle,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 11 February 1977.

⁵ “Cary takes slice at ‘fat’ of school bond proposal,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 23 February 1977; “Many Como blacks hope school bonds defeated,” Folder “1977 Bond Election,” FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁶ “Dunbar Request Rejected,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 February 1977.

summarized the options by saying, “Whatever decision the board made could, therefore, be viewed as a vote either for desegregation of Dunbar Middle School or for its remaining perpetually segregated If the board chooses the seemingly integrationist alternative, there could be negative repercussions among many white voters.”⁷ African American leaders formed the Committee to Defeat the Bond Election and elicited help from the Mexican American community, which protested the bond’s failure to improve bilingual programs and address Latino schoolchildren’s needs.⁸ Despite the heavy objections, the school board continued its original plans for the bond to improve, not rebuild, Dunbar Middle School.

The program passed by a three-to-one margin. Although many black leaders opposed the bond, some African Americans voted in favor of it, hoping to improve schools already existing in their neighborhoods, according to the *Star-Telegram*’s unofficial polling results. These parents, and those of white children, viewed the bond as a means of gaining improvements to their local schools, such as the installment of air conditioning.⁹

In 1977, when the state legislature directed Texas school districts to revise the electoral structure of school boards, African American protestors again appeared before the Fort Worth ISD board. Previously, the district elected all board members to at-large positions. Objectors petitioned the Fort Worth School Board when it announced plans to create single member districts, totaling seven zones represented by one member each, and two at-large districts. Many black leaders believed that the election changes “diluted the

⁷ “Editorials: Whole board should visit Dunbar,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 30 January 1977

⁸ “Cary urges bond boycott if black demands not met,” Folder “FW Clippings,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁹ “Parent backlash ensured win,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 18 March 1977.

minority voice” by including the two at-large positions in the new plan rather than creating nine single member districts, and challenged the new plan in federal court.¹⁰ In spite of these protests, the board approved the new election plan on October 20, 1977. Within days, the court found for the defendants and allowed the district to elect seven single member districts and two at-large positions. The new electoral changes included the creation of minority-majority districts: District 1, serving North Side and a large Mexican American population; District 3, serving Dunbar and Stop Six, which represented an area with a fifty-three percent African American population; and District 4, Central East, also representing a fifty percent black population.¹¹

Despite their court defeat in the fall of 1977, and smarting from the passage of the bond to improve rather than rebuild Dunbar Middle School, the NAACP and the Mexican-American Education Advisory Committee returned to court in 1980, arguing that the school district’s student and faculty structure still failed to adequately reflect the school district’s demography. Mahon responded to their complaints about the school district’s structure on May 7, 1980, and made additional modifications. Mahon agreed that the district’s faculty should reflect the thirty percent African American student body in the schools. He also ordered that the district fill thirty percent of its administrative positions with African American personnel. The school board asked for a “clarification session” to discuss Mahon’s proposed changes rather than to appeal the case to the circuit court. Additionally, Mahon ordered the construction of a new Dunbar Middle School and the establishment of magnet schools in Fort Worth.

¹⁰ “Board Seeking Ideas on Districting Plan,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 July 1977.

¹¹ “School board hails districting plan,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 October 1977.

The school board had petitioned Mahon to end, or curtail, busing in favor of implementing the newest trend in integrating and improving school systems – the formation of “magnet schools.” Mahon’s 1980 ruling called for the limited use of “magnet” schools to accelerate racial integration. A magnet school offered a specialized curriculum designed to draw high-achieving students to that school “like a magnet,” in hopes of creating a naturally occurring integrated system. Despite his faith in the magnet school concept, Mahon approved magnet programs only for Fort Worth high schools and refused to substitute magnet programs for busing at three middle schools.

The board found Mahon’s teacher assignment plans, and his refusal to end busing, both stringent and unworkable. The board asked Mahon to grant a time extension to implement his changes. School officials complained that the resulting plan, an outcome of cooperation between the NAACP and the school board, implemented the NAACP’s changes but neglected the school board’s requests. As Board President Richard O’Neal grumbled to the *Star-Telegram*, “I’m not pleased with the order. We entered an agreement [with the NAACP] . . . and the judge altered it.”

Shortly after Mahon’s May 1980 decision, Fort Worth ISD hired a University of Kansas professor, I. Carl Candoli, as district superintendent. Candoli began his career as superintendent on July 1, 1980. In one of his first acts, the new superintendent accepted Cecil Morgan’s resignation as the school district’s attorney, privately indicating that he supported transferring handling of the *Flax* case to another firm. Morgan worked for the district until his resignation in 1980 amid criticism for the way he represented the district

in the *Flax* case. Several minority residents harshly criticized the eighty-year-old retiring attorney for telling a joke to reporters in which he repeatedly used racial epithets.¹²

The 1980-81 school year, Candoli's first as superintendent, brought several changes in the district. Principals at newly developed magnet schools embraced their new roles. The board bestowed magnet school status on Dunbar High and Polytechnic High Schools for the 1980-81 scholastic year. It established the magnet schools to address segregation issues, bequeathing responsibility to the principals "to make their schools, situated in predominately black areas of the school [district's] East Side, appealing to white students and parents." Before the schools' magnet designation, Dunbar Middle and High School functioned as an all-black educational center, while Polytechnic enrolled only a small number of white students.¹³ While the concept of magnet schools appealed to both black and white parents, the district's school enrollment still showed a decline in the number of white students.

In order to address the issue of the declining white student population, to limit or end busing, and to provide an academically sound district, the school board created a multi-racial committee in October of 1982. School district officials nominated education experts and minority leaders to the newly created Citizens Advisory Committee of Quality and Demography Board. Ray Bell, the new NAACP president, represented the African American community on the new committee. Joe Avila, Barry Bailey, Howard Caver, Jim Harris, Yvonne Johnson, and Melina Vance served on the school board and on the Citizens Advisory Committee. Rufino Mendoza, Jr., represented the Mexican American Educational Advisory Committee. Joe Brumley and Nan Dearen served as

¹² "NAACP says it'll fight," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 May 1980.

¹³ Early birds get head start on magnet school planning," *Dallas Morning News* 25 January 1981.

chair and vice-chair respectively. On January 17, 1983, the committee submitted to the school board a Fort Worth ISD demography report and suggestions for improving the district. In order to “Meet Integration Requirements,” the committee recommended forming new clusters, with Pate, Como, Walton, Williams, Carroll Peak, Van Zandt-Guinn, Morningside, and McRae Elementary Schools serving as satellite centers. Rather than continue busing students to high minority schools, such as Worth Heights, Nash, Circle Park, Denver Avenue, Washington Heights, Dillow, Mitchell Boulevard, and Eastland, the committee recommended diverting funds earmarked for busing to a program designed to facilitate “quality features” at the schools, including the magnet program. The committee voted to discontinue clusters at Daggett and Morningside Middle Schools in favor of establishing magnet programs at the schools. They also planned to establish Daggett, McRae-William James, Morningside, North Side, and Wyatt as magnet schools. The proposal called for redistricting certain portions of predominately white areas into high minority population school zones “to enhance natural integration and create a ‘pyramid’ feeder system where possible.” The committee defined naturally integrated schools as those that reflected the district’s demographic composition of roughly seventy percent white, twenty percent black, and ten percent Latino. These schools, the committee decided, could “stand-alone,” a term that meant the school required neither busing nor magnet programs to integrate the student body.¹⁴

¹⁴ “Citizens Advisory Committee of Quality Education and Demography, Demography Report,” FWISD Folder FWISD Advisory Committees,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 3; By the late 1980s, magnet schools in Fort Worth included: Como Montessori, Daggett Montessori, International School of Language, Morningside Preparatory School of Science and Mathematics, Daggett Middle School Montessori, Middle School of Math, Science and Communications at Dunbar, J.P. Elder Academy of Math and Science, William James College Readiness Academy, Morningside Pre-International Baccalaureate, High School for Science and Engineering Professions at Dunbar, High School for Medical Professions at North Side, High School for Financial Professions at Polytechnic, and International Baccalaureate at O.D. Wyatt High School, “Welcome to Fort Worth Magnet

The committee's proposed "Objective 3" reflected many Fort Worth parents' objections to the school system with the succinct title: "Reduce Busing." The committee proposed a plan to significantly reduce the number of children bused from 7,068 to 1,726 per year by "re-clustering" areas, busing only two elementary school grades, and releasing middle schools from the busing mandate. "Re-clustering" also involved reducing the number of the total schools clustered from sixty-nine to twenty-one. Minority and majority students would equally bear the burden of busing, the committee argued, so it proposed busing majority, or white students, to minority schools for second grade, and minority children to predominately white schools for third grade.¹⁵

The heavy reduction in busing allowed a greater capacity for financial improvement in predominately minority, or "left alone," schools. This emphasis on greater funding for minority schools became known as funding "quality education." The committee's recommendation to close nine low-attendance schools also contributed to the potential for available funds. Quality education required structural and cosmetic improvements to high-minority schools and a lower teacher-to-student ratio through increased teacher employment. Perceiving demographic changes in residential areas, the committee recommended annual evaluations of schools' integration levels. It also required yearly monitoring of magnet schools for achievement levels. Additionally, the board would monitor pupil achievement at the "left alone" schools. The committee recommended long-term ideas as well, including improving facilities and adding

Schools" newsletter, Director, Magnet Planning, B.W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

¹⁵ Ibid.

buildings to Carter-Riverside. Upon receipt of the committee's proposal, each of the seven board members nominated a representative from his or her district.¹⁶

The committee met with residents, teachers, and opponents and then presented another report to the board on March 4, 1983.¹⁷ In addition to the other proposals, the plan called for neighborhood school boundary changes in secondary schools. A memo to district heads revealed a plan for an expansion of the Como, Daggett, Dunbar, Handley, Leonard, McLean, Meadowbrook, Monnig/Arlington Heights, Pascal, and Wedgewood/Southwest areas, Edler/Meacham, Nash/Riverside, Phillips, Williams/Riverside, and Van Zandt neighborhood boundaries. It also expanded Carter Park, Morningside, Vickery, Eastland, Hubbard, and Clarke/Rosemont boundaries. In direct contrast to the notorious Texas Pupil Placement Program, this plan limited transfers to students "on a space-available basis, within goals for appropriate ethnic mix, providing that any individual transfer does not jeopardize the ethnic mix of the sending or receiving schools." Another part of the plan stipulated that "no transfers will be permitted out of the second and third grades at cluster schools unless those transfers are to magnet schools. Majority-to-minority transfers would still be allowed under the above conditions."¹⁸

These amendments presented perhaps the most controversial aspects of the new plan. The board called for state-sponsored busing within a two-mile zone and stipulated that busing "will be provided where ordered by the Court as necessary to implement the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Letter to all school principals from I. Carl Candoli Re: Report of Board of Education action regarding recommendations of Citizens Advisory Committee on Quality Education and Demography," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

¹⁸ "Assessments of the Desegregation Plan of the Fort Worth Independent School District," August 1983, Folder "Clusters," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 4-6, 8.

desegregation plan.” In order to address changing residential patterns, the revised plan called for a consistent monitoring of local demographics. The board foresaw continued demographic changes and stipulated, “Integration monitoring will be carried out annually to insure long-term adequacy of integration and permit timely adjustments when necessary. The results of such monitoring will be shared with the parties and the Court.” It also called for an “achievement monitoring,” which demanded a “careful monitoring of pupil achievement [that] will be carried out with special attention given to: 1) Minority-majority gap in each school and district-wide; 2) Pupil achievement in busing schools involved, 3) Pupil achievement in high minority schools receiving the ‘40% quality package,’ 4) Pupil achievement in high schools receiving the ‘20% quality package,’ [and] 5) pupil achievement in magnet schools.”¹⁹

Through this plan, the district could establish thirty “stand-alone” schools. The committee defined “stand alone” schools as “naturally integrated without the necessity of busing, by virtue of the demographics of their neighborhood attendance areas. Boundary changes and the closing of some schools contribute to such natural integration.”²⁰

The school board adopted most of the committee’s recommendations on April 26, 1983, and then the district’s new attorney David Chappell submitted the changes to Judge Mahon.²¹ Mahon approved the new desegregation plan on June 17. Candoli shared a news release with the *Texas School Business Magazine*, informing the public of the new changes. The news release prominently featured the most welcomed portions of the plan,

¹⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

²⁰ The “stand-alone” schools included Burton Hills, Carter Park, Clarke, Clayton, Daggett, De Zavala, Diamond Hill, East Hadley, Eastern Hills, Forest Hill, Glen Park, Green, Greenbriar, Helbring, Howell, Hubbard, Logan, Meadowbrook, M.H. Moore, North Hi Mount, Oakhurst, Oaklawn, Rosen, Sellars, Springdale, South Fort Worth, South Hi Mount, Sunrise, Turner, and Westcliff Elementary Schools; Ibid., 2.

²¹ “Minutes of the Fort Worth Board of Education,” 13 September 1983, “Folder, ““Agendas, 1983-84.” FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth

“which will reduce bussing by seventy-five percent and will enable the district to move \$1.5 million from transportation and maintenance to instruction.”²² In response, Judge Mahon ordered the closing of three South Side elementary schools. Newly elected School Trustee Suzanne Lasko, representative of the South Side region, objected to the recommended closings of Bluebonnet, Carlson, and Carroll Elementary Schools, but many of her constituents blamed her for the closings, even warning her “that she couldn’t be elected witch or dog catcher.”²³

A declining white student enrollment in the school district factored into integration debates. According to the school district, “Research shows that there appears to be a slight decline in the number of white students enrolled in the district. At the same time, the number of Hispanic students in Fort Worth apparently is on the rise.”²⁴ Ed Dorn, Deputy Director of Research at the Washington Joint Center for Political Studies, disputed the current thoughts on white flight as a result of integration and busing. Dorn argued, “A lot of people have attributed the changing composition of the school district to ‘white flight’ – the abandonment of the public school system to avoid compliance with desegregation. In fact, white flight began long before desegregation. It began in response to the highway and home building programs and low-interest mortgage programs in the 1940s and ‘50s.”²⁵ Whatever the cause of white flight, it impacted the racial dynamics of Fort Worth schools.

²² “Special to *Texas School Business Magazine*,” Fort Worth ISD, 8 July 1983, FWISD FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, Folder “News Releases, 1982-3,” Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, 1.

²³ “School closings open fight: Board member Lasko regrets pain and anger,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 2 May 1983.

²⁴ “Parents supported in bid to seek end of busing,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 9 May 1984.

²⁵ “*Brown v. Board*: Impact felt late,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 May 1984.

Some school district officials, including Dan Powell, Assistant Superintendent for Non-Instructional Services, blamed busing for the perceived “white flight” in Fort Worth. Associate Superintendent Tommy Taylor argued that busing hurt Fort Worth’s economy. He told the board, “I have personally looked at houses in suburban areas (in different parts of the county). Without fail in each case I have been informed you don’t want to go to Fort Worth, or if you do move into Fort Worth, your children will have to be bused.” He continued his argument against busing, stating, “Many people, both whites and blacks, are against busing simply because they don’t want their children transported from their neighborhoods. Some whites are concerned the integration of students has lowered the standards of education and that many above-average students are being ignored because there are more students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who need attention.”²⁶

Concerns about white flight prompted the school board to elicit expert opinions on the causes and impacts of white student population decline. According to Powell, who, in December 1987, presented findings from a study of the issues, the district experienced a decline of 30,000 white students from the overall school population from 1968 until 1987. According to the assistant superintendent, the most dramatic decreases in white enrollment occurred in 1971 when court-ordered busing began; that year 4,500 white pupils left the district. Again a larger portion of what Powell termed an “exodus of white students,” roughly 4,000, occurred in 1973, when Brewster ordered an increase in busing. Powell noted that forty-three percent of first graders left Fort Worth’s public schools for other districts or private schools. Powell informed the district court that the overall population decreased from 86,572 students in 1968 to 67,347 students in 1987.

²⁶ “Newcomers told children will be bused if in a FW school,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 August 1977

Despite the overall decline in student population, white enrollment declined disproportionately, from roughly sixty-three percent to thirty-six percent for the same time period.²⁷ Additionally, Powell shared his observations that Mexican-American enrollment increased from eight percent in 1968 to twenty-five percent in 1987.

NAACP attorney Leon Haley questioned Powell, asking if racism had precipitated the exodus: “Are you telling us that the white citizens of Fort Worth don’t want their children to go to school with black children? Is it your opinion that they want to get away from us?” Powell declined to testify as to motives, outside of objections to busing’s inconvenience.²⁸ Some administrators believed that “white flight” and busing’s negative image resulted in potential business owners’ and homebuyers’ decisions to move to surrounding communities, such as Aledo, Crowley, and White Settlement. Others disagreed that busing detracted from Fort Worth’s appeal.²⁹

While some white parents moved their children to Aledo, Crowley, and White Settlement, others enrolled their children in private schools. The number of private schools in the South increased after the 1954 *Brown* decision. One *Dallas Morning News* reporter attributed the growth to “the segregation-desegregation issue; some to the enhanced economic status of families with school-age children; and some to dissatisfaction in some areas with public schools.”³⁰

As in the rest of the South, private education became increasingly available after the 1954 *Brown* decision. The four largest private schools in Fort Worth at the time of busing’s peak student involvement included All Saints’ Episcopal School, Fort Worth

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ “Realty chamber official say busing not a business factor,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 1988.

³⁰ “Growth of Private Schools Attributed to Racial Issue,” *The Dallas Morning News*, 12 November 1959.

Country Day School, Nolan Catholic School, and Trinity Valley School. Of the four largest private schools, one enrolled students in 1951 and the other three opened in the years immediately following the 1954 *Brown* decision. The development of these schools occurred as follows:

- 1) The All Saints' Episcopal Church voted to establish a private preschool in 1951. All Saints' opened an elementary school in the years following the *Brown* decision and began an upper school in 1986, the year white enrollment plummeted to twenty-five percent of Fort Worth ISD's total student body.³¹
- 2) Fort Worth Country Day School (FWCD) opened in 1962 as a private school and admitted students in 1963, the same year that court-ordered integration began in Fort Worth. FWCD enrolled 210 students during the first year that the school offered first through ninth grades. By 1966, Country Day offered a kindergarten through twelfth grade education. By 1980, enrollment reached 860 pupils. Busing increased the next year and FWCD's student body population rose by twenty pupils.³²
- 3) Texas Boys Choir founder Stephen Seleny, a Hungarian singing instructor, opened the Trinity Valley School for boys in 1959. Although the school began with an enrollment of fewer than ten students, in 1962, the year before court-ordered "stair-step" integration began, the school enrolled 120 boys in third through ninth grade. The school admitted female pupils in 1971 and enrolled a

³¹ "All Saints' Episcopal School: History," <http://www.asesftw.org/podium/default.aspx?t=110362>, accessed 3 October 2008.

³² Fort Worth Country Day Admission Associate Yolanda Esinoza of Fort Worth, email to Tina Cannon, 7 October 2008.

total number of 284 students, the same school year Fort Worth began busing students.³³

- 4) Fort Worth Catholic churches supported the opening of Catholic schools in the city; the first, Saint Andrew School, opened in September 1954. The Saint Andrew Catholic Church built a convent for the nuns who taught at Saint Andrew in 1956.³⁴ Fort Worth's Catholic St. George School opened in 1951 and enrolled 513 students in 1960, before splitting into two schools.³⁵ Nolan Catholic School opened in 1961 under the Roman Catholic Diocese.³⁶ Nolan serves as one of the four largest private high schools in Fort Worth.

Just as the busing sparked negative reactions among many members of the white community, it also caused conflict among members of the African American community. Some people adamantly opposed the reduction in busing, fearing that its decrease would lead to resegregation in the district.³⁷ Others felt that their children bore the burden of busing and preferred a redirection of funds into local schools rather than attempting to create an integrated student population at each school.³⁸ The district bused 1,220 students in the spring semester of 1985. Fifty-six percent of those bused were African American, thirty-nine percent were white, and five percent were Mexican-American children.³⁹ The *Star-Telegram* interviewed parents whose children experienced busing in Fort Worth. One mother, Michelle Smith, an African American resident of the

³³ "Trinity Valley School: The TVS Story,"

<http://www.trinityvalleyschool.org/podium/default.aspx?t=48658>, accessed 3 October 2008.

³⁴ "Saint Andrew Catholic School: History of SAS," <http://www.standrewsch.org/History.asp>, accessed 3 October 2008.

³⁵ "St. George School: History," <http://www.stgeorgecatholic.org/HTML/History.html>, accessed 3 October 2008.

³⁶ Nolan High School: History," <http://www.nolancatholicchs.org/About/History>, accessed 3 October 2008.

³⁷ "Schools want to end busing in Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 31 July 1985.

³⁸ "Busing proposal a risk to school harmony," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 4 August 1985.

³⁹ "Trustees plan vote on busing," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 1 August 1985.

Meadowbrook neighborhood, transferred her seven-year-old daughter Trenna to Meadowbrook Christian School when the board informed her that it required Trenna to ride the bus away from her neighborhood school. Smith and her husband lived in a low-income, predominately black neighborhood until they could afford a move to Meadowbrook, where they bought a house across the street from the area's elementary school. Trenna's Meadowbrook neighborhood elementary, Atwood McDonald, functioned as a naturally integrated school; the district required Trenna to ride the bus to predominately black Maudrie M. Walton Elementary School.⁴⁰ Rather than bus her daughter, a minority, from an integrated elementary to a minority-majority school, Smith choose to enroll her in private school instead of submitting to the required second grade busing, informing the reporter, "I don't have anything against Walton; I just believe if a minority student already attends an integrated school you should leave them alone." Other parents followed suit, the *Star-Telegram* discovered.

Poor performances at some minority-majority schools fostered increasing conflict over the "quality education" fund versus busing debate. The *Star-Telegram* found that, in 1986, predominately black O.D. Wyatt High School revealed a failure rate of fifty-two percent.⁴¹ African American spokesperson Opal Lee felt that the low achievement statistics proved that busing "is the only way black students are going to have the same opportunities as white." Leon Ray agreed: "We can't get quality education without some integration. We need busing as the cultural exchange it offers students. Our children need to know each other."⁴² Racial tensions continued when NAACP branch president Ray Bell objected to the decision by some Fort Worth high schools to use the

⁴⁰ "Integrated elementary tests NAACP's intentions," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 31 July 1985.

⁴¹ "Minority failure rates high," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 16 February 1986.

⁴² "Black parents stress quality education," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 27 February 1986.

Confederate flag to display school spirit. Bell argued, “The flag symbolizes entrenched racism and is blatant insensitively to blacks.”⁴³

Other conflicts arose over community leadership. Ray Bell had functioned as NAACP President since George Flemmings’s death in 1975. Flemmings had served as president for thirty years, and then Bell remained an uncontested candidate since his election in 1975. Robert Starr worked as an investigator for Dallas’s Equal Employment Opportunity Commission when he challenged Bell’s presidency.⁴⁴ Bell won the election and championed the segment of the population that opposed busing reductions. The still ongoing *Flax* case lost an ardent champion when NAACP attorney Clifford Davis was appointed judge of the Criminal District Court No. 2 in Fort Worth in 1983, won reelection in 1984, and for two decades would serve as a substitute judge.⁴⁵ President Reagan’s administration sought to end court-ordered busing in December of 1985. The Justice Department filed a brief in a Norfolk, Virginia, busing case, that held the school district unaccountable for segregation due to residential patterns. Bell felt the Justice Department set a poor precedent, arguing, “You might as well do away with everything we’ve been doing with court-ordered busing.”⁴⁶ Fissures within the local black community’s leadership continued, as did Starr’s involvement with local activism. In 1985, the school board nominated him and Reverend Nehemiah Davis to the newly formed Citizens Advisory Committee on School Desegregation. Other Fort Worth residents also served on the multi-racial committee.⁴⁷

⁴³ “NAACP faction se,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 December 1986.

⁴⁴ “NAACP presidency has first context in 40 years,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, 6 December 1984.

⁴⁵ “Political Pioneers Reflect on Progress,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 28 February 2008.

⁴⁶ “Courts Urged to free schools of busing plans,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 7 December 1984.

⁴⁷ “Highlights form the FWISD,” 11 September 198, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth; the committee included Janie Randall, Roy Griffin, David Houseman, Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger, and Elaine Klos.

Superintendent Candoli announced the school district's intention to end busing on July 31, 1985. Candoli met with Ray Bell and African American school board secretary T.A. Sims concerning the board's proposal. Bell opposed Candoli's suggestion and articulated his intention to fight the decision should the board approve it.⁴⁸ "It [busing] just started to work. It [ending busing] would be like going back to segregation, and I'm not willing to do that," Bell told the *Star-Telegram*.⁴⁹ Mexican-American Educational Advisory Committee Representative Mendoza avoided commenting on Candoli's proposal, but he reminded the *Star-Telegram* that his organization had no history of supporting or opposing busing. Instead, Mendoza argued, "What we are concerned about is quality education for all youngsters, whether they are black, brown or poor whites."⁵⁰

The board voted five to three to ask Mahon for court approval to end busing on August 6, 1985. African American trustees T.A. Sims and Maudrie Walton and Mexican American Arturo Pena voted against appealing to end busing. If Mahon approved the board's appeal, twenty elementary schools would become "stand-alone" facilities; schools with a minority population of twenty to thirty percent qualified as a "stand-alone" school. The district planned to shift \$500,000 to the "quality fund" established after the decrease in busing.⁵¹ Dan Powell, now Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, estimated that ending busing would leave the twelve predominately white schools with a ten to thirty-five percent minority student body. However, the eight predominately black schools would enroll a white student population of less than eight percent.⁵² The day

⁴⁸ "Schools want to end busing in Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 31 July 1985.

⁴⁹ "Busing proposal a risk to school harmony," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* 4 August 1985.

⁵⁰ "Schools want to end busing in Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 31 July 1985.

⁵¹ "Vote 5-3 to seek an end to busing," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 August 1985.

⁵² "FW may end busing at elementary schools," *Dallas Morning News*, 5 August 1985.

after the board voted to petition Mahon to end busing by September 1985, a group of African Americans formed the Concerned Citizens for Quality Education.⁵³

On August 14, just before the 1985-86 scholastic year, Judge Mahon heard and denied the board's petition but set a later hearing date for November 25, 1985. Mahon scheduled the November date to allow all parties time to prepare arguments and "not to act in haste."⁵⁴ Leon Haley, counsel for the NAACP, lauded the judge's decision to set a later hearing date. As Haley told *The Dallas Morning News*, "It has given everyone breathing room. 'Busing' is a dirty word whether you're black or white, but the interest of the children has got to be protected."⁵⁵

Weeks after the school board filed its request to Mahon to end busing, the NAACP filed a five-page motion asking that Mahon institute busing at Dunbar, Polytechnic, and Wyatt High Schools. In the motion, the NAACP claimed that the schools enrolled only a small percentage of white students. The motion referred to the decrease in the percentage of white pupils as "retrogressing."⁵⁶ Additionally, changing Fort Worth politics complicated the matter as minority voting steadily affected election outcomes. A 1986 city council race demonstrated the minority voting bloc power when Latinos and African Americans helped elect to city council Steve Murrin, a man they felt empathized with both groups' needs.⁵⁷

The day before Mahon's scheduled November 23, 1985, hearing, the judge ordered the school board to appoint a committee by December 20 to study integration in the district. The judge scheduled the committee's first meeting for January 10, 1986.

⁵³ "Delay in FW busing hearing yields cooling off period," *Dallas Morning News*, 26 August 1985.

⁵⁴ "FW school's request to end busing denied," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 14 August 1985.

⁵⁵ "Delay in FW busing hearing yields cooling off period," *The Dallas Morning News*, 26 August 1985.

⁵⁶ "NAACP requests more busing," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 August 1985.

⁵⁷ "Blacks, Hispanics building political muscles," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 15 July 1986.

According to Mahon's instructions, each school board member had to appoint a representative. Mahon ordered that the NAACP and Mexican American Educational Advisory Committee also appoint representatives. Mahon provided a March 31, 1986, deadline for the committee to submit its findings.⁵⁸

A major incident within Fort Worth ISD occurred before the committee submitted its findings. Superintendent Candoli, long known for his "volatile temper" and "troublesome" management style, resigned in a closed meeting with the school board during a review before his April 1 contract renewal. Board President Richard O'Neal complimented Candoli on his successes but informed reporters that the superintendent failed to meet the board's unspecified objectives for management.⁵⁹ Candoli had begun his career as Fort Worth ISD superintendent in 1980, inheriting an administration plagued by allegations of corruption.⁶⁰ The board nominated James Bailey, Assistant Superintendent for Non-Instructional Services, who had anticipated a June 1986 retirement, to temporarily replace Candoli.⁶¹

Candoli's resignation appeared to be a blow to Fort Worth's minority population; during his tenure, the superintendent had hired two members of minority communities to serve in high positions for the school district: African American Lonnie H. Wagstaff as associate superintendent for instructional services, and Mexican American Eugene Gutierrez as associate superintendent for non-instructional services.⁶² During Candoli's administration, the *Star-Telegram* found that academic achievement improved on Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores from twenty-fifth to thirty-fourth percentile among minority

⁵⁸ "Judge orders review of integration in FW schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 22 November 1985.

⁵⁹ "Candoli resigns amid dispute with school board," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 March 1986.

⁶⁰ "Candoli faced no easy task," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 March 1985.

⁶¹ "district veteran will fill in," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 March 1986.

⁶² "Management style faulted, but deeds given high marks," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 March 1985.

students from 1979 to 1985.⁶³ The superintendent also had nominated the first woman principal in the district.⁶⁴ Numerous people lauded Candoli for his reduction in the amount of busing in favor of the district's magnet school program, which many viewed as a success in 1986 Fort Worth.⁶⁵ The son of Italian immigrants, Superintendent Candoli focused on minority students' achievement. According to Anita Baker and Kim Brewer, two admiring *Star-Telegram* reporters, Candoli "brought with him a strong belief in working to help minorities and through most of his time in Fort Worth he [had] maintained good relationships with both blacks and Hispanics."⁶⁶ One resident, Jesse Herrera, wrote the *Star-Telegram* editors, lamenting, "The resignation of Dr. Carl Candoli will no doubt have a negative impact for many of us in the minority community." He lauded Candoli's hiring of Hispanic teachers, his attempts to improve the educational standards for Latino students, and his role in enhancing lines of communication with parents in the district.⁶⁷ Billy Sills, a social studies teacher and the impetus behind the formation of the district's research center, B.W. Sills Center for Archive, informally interviewed Candoli on January 2, 1987, after the superintendent's retirement. Candoli expressed some resentment towards the board, informing Sills, "The teaching staff is far better than the norm, the administrative staff is not (with few exceptions)!" Michigan-born Candoli continued, "Texas politics is like no other on the face of the earth. Feuds are for an eternity and political debts are for real!" True to his reputation, Candoli told Sills, "The minority community especially has been short-changed over the years. By

⁶³ "Minorities missing Candoli," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 May 1986.

⁶⁴ "Superintendent quits post in FW," *Dallas Morning News*, 25 March 1986.

⁶⁵ "Candoli faced no easy task," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 March 1985.

⁶⁶ "Management style faulted, but deeds given high marks," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 25 March 1985; "Candoli faced no easy task," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 March 1985.

⁶⁷ "Voices of the People: Great Loss," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 3 April 1986.

their black and brown educators, by their black and brown board members, and by the majority.⁶⁸

Months after his retirement, the *Star-Telegram* published a long article titled, “Minorities missing Candoli.” Sam Garcia, president of the Mexican American activist group the G.I. Forum, told reporters, “Minority educators and students experienced the greatest degree of mobility in the history of the Fort Worth Independent School District during the Candoli administration.” Garcia expressed concerns about a possible discontinuation of those policies. Ray Bell also presented a negative view of the future without Candoli’s leadership, saying, “I envision it [the school district] going back to more or less segregated schools.” Bell believed that “racists cost Candoli his job . . . [and] argued that the board forced Candoli out to appease the racist element in the district.” He denied the rumors of Candoli’s temper and abrasive style, arguing that the board “can dress it up all they want to, but he was fired for racial reasons.”⁶⁹

Regardless of the changes in leadership within the school district, federal involvement in Fort Worth’s school structure continued. A month after Candoli’s resignation, in July 1986, Mahon approved a cancellation of busing at naturally integrated Atwood McDonald Elementary School. The judge’s ruling dropped the number of elementary schools involved in busing from twenty to nineteen and the number of second and third graders bused in Fort Worth from 1,220 to 1,200. The court met again in July

⁶⁸ B. Sills Interview of Carl Candoli, Office of C. Candoli at 4:10 p.m. on 2 January 1987,” Folder “Candoli, Dr. Carl (Supt. Of Schools),” FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth.

⁶⁹ “Minorities missing Candoli,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 May 1986.

1987, to propose setting a hearing date to review busing and integration within Fort Worth schools.⁷⁰

Even after the board's petitions during the 1980s to end busing, the black community remained divided over the issue. As per Mahon's order, NAACP and Mexican American Educational Advisory Committee members met with nominees to the school board's integration committee concerning a possible end to busing. In early November 1987, the committee tentatively agreed to meet MAEAC and NAACP's demands for increased black and Latino faculty hiring and higher funding for minority schools in exchange for an end to six years of court-ordered busing. However, on November 28, 1987, the local NAACP membership voted unanimously against the committee's decision to end busing. Despite losing local NAACP support, the committee planned to present its agreement to Mahon on December 7. Because the NAACP represented the plaintiffs in *Flax*, the organization's decision to oppose busing's end meant that the committee could not present a plan to Mahon. Mexican American representatives also disagreed as to their stance on busing. Referencing the changes caused by white flight, Mendoza felt that busing "is not a realistic alternative because there are not enough Anglo students to go around." League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) President Jodi Eubanks agreed with the NAACP's rejection of busing, adding, "There are still some things in the proposal that we can still continue to negotiate with the school district on." Attorneys Leon Haley and Glenn O. Lewis represented the local NAACP in the *Flax* case's current debates. Haley informed the *Star-Telegram* that "the NAACP might have made a mistake in 1983 when it agreed to cut back busing to current levels." Lewis continued articulating his "too little, too late" philosophy, stating,

⁷⁰ *Flax v. Potts*, 869 F.2D 1157 (5th Cir. 1989).

“Whether we have busing or not, we will have one-race schools. We have to accept the reality that there will always be one-race schools.” Despite the NAACP’s objections, the committee still submitted its preliminary proposal to provide the affirmative action director with the capability to contribute suggestions, to redirect the funds earmarked for busing to low-achieving schools, and to change elementary school boundaries to address overcrowding in schools.⁷¹

Representatives from each side of the debate met for a hearing with Mahon in early December 1987. Dan Powell shared his interpretation of population statistics with the court. He added that the district bused a total of 674 students from principally white areas to predominately black schools; thirteen percent of the students being bused from largely white to largely black schools were African American.⁷² Of the students bused to predominately white schools, four percent came from mostly black neighborhoods.⁷³ These figures, according to Powell, indicated that local busing may have once succeeded but had now failed to create a unitary system that met the guidelines articulated in the *Swann* decision. Superintendent Don Roberts added, “I think busing was a legitimate tool in desegregating America’s schools but I think other things are more important now.”⁷⁴

In light of the failed compromise among the committee members, Mahon informed the attorneys that he required statistics on busing and school enrollments. He also told the attorneys to expect a ruling in two or three weeks. School attorney David Owen presented the board’s principal arguments: the freed funds could benefit low-

⁷¹ “NAACP votes against a plan to drop busing,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 29 November 1987.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Flax v. Potts*, 869 F.2D 1157 (5th Cir. 1989).

⁷⁴ “School officials blame busing for white flight,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 8 December 1987.

achieving schools; busing in its present state had minimally impacted integration statistics; gerrymandering and magnet programs functioned as more effective integration catalysts than busing; and in nine years white enrollment declined from sixty-seven percent in 1978 to twenty-six percent of the total number of students in 1987.⁷⁵ The NAACP's attorneys argued that the district's school demographics still failed to meet the established "integration" definition of seventy percent white and thirty percent minority enrollment, thus failing to satisfy the Supreme Court's order to remove all vestiges of discrimination "root and branch."

Attorneys again met in Mahon's court in February 1988. Mahon delivered his historic decision on February 19, disbanding the cluster system and ending busing for integration purposes. He ordered the district to reassign to minority schools the funds originally designated for transportation purposes. Mahon decided, "The usefulness of busing no longer outweighed its costs even though the elimination of busing actually would result in an immediate but temporary increase by more than ten percent in the number of students of the predominant race in several of the nineteen schools." Additionally, "the court found busing was losing its effectiveness in the FWISD." Greater integration occurred in previously all-white neighborhoods and busing thwarted the natural integration, Mahon determined. As Mahon noted, some students rode a bus 13.8 miles each way daily, and one child spent three hours a day on a school bus. According to the court, an average student rode the bus 9.3 miles one-way for a round trip total of one hour. Busing cost \$313,462 annually. Reflecting the previous court decisions, Mahon noted, "Because of this interrelationship between school segregation

⁷⁵ "Busing decision expected Two, Three Weeks," *Fort Worth News Tribune*, 11 December 1987.

and residential patterns, it is important to recognize the residential integration that has been achieved by allowing neighborhood schools.”⁷⁶

Mahon’s February 19, 1988, ruling ended busing for the 1988-89 school year. A jubilant school board member, Gary Manny, hoped the decision might improve public perception of the city and provide funds for minority schools.⁷⁷ Other school officials hoped that the decision would spark an increase in enrollment in the public school system and, in July 1988, noted that the elementary school grades reflected the first demographic balance in well over a decade, forcing the board to hastily construct buildings for the upcoming academic year.⁷⁸ Some Southwest Fort Worth parents and principals greeted the decision with warmth, believing that the residential integration in the area encouraged further school integration. To many parents, the ruling meant increased convenience; their children would spend less time on buses and have more time to sleep in the mornings. African American and Como community leader Viola Pitts also supported the decision. Noting low rates of literacy among young children of color, she told reporters, “I think black students will probably get a better education in predominately black schools.”⁷⁹

Others, mostly African American leaders, objected to the district court’s ruling. NAACP board member Reverend B.L. McCormick told the *Star-Telegram*, “Oh my goodness! Oh no! In my opinion, the busing order was our only defense at this time to follow through with equity in the school system. I have a feeling that we are turning back

⁷⁶ *Flax v. Potts*, 869 F.2D 1157 (5th Cir. 1989).

⁷⁷ “Judge stops busing in Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 1988.

⁷⁸ “New riling may boost enrollment,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 14 July 1988.

⁷⁹ “Black leaders split on effects of judge’s ruling,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 21 February 1988.

the clock.”⁸⁰ Aging black community leader Lenora Rolla, the founder of Fort Worth’s Black Historical and Genealogical Society, referenced her childhood when small communities bused African Americans to Fort Worth’s segregated schools. Rolla believed, “Busing made us stronger.” The court ended busing because the plan involved the busing of white children, and she insightfully reminded readers, “If we didn’t have segregation, we wouldn’t have to make an issue of integration.”⁸¹ Ray Bell planned to appeal the case to the Fifth Circuit Court. He discouragingly noted, “Busing 1,200 kids is not doing anything anyway. In every [standardized] test that comes out, black kids are at the bottom. There is no reason for that. Our kids are not being taught.”⁸² Reby Cary agreed: “They [the courts] can pronounce whatever they want, but the schools are not integrated.”⁸³ One African American mother of bused children lamented the psychological effects. She told reporters that her son Jimmy O. rode a bus to the predominately white Stevens Elementary, where “he was exposed to some things he never would have been exposed to at Pate, mainly the people. As you grow up, you should know how to deal with all types of people, all races, all groups. I’ve thought the earlier kids are exposed to these things, the better.”⁸⁴

Others had mixed reactions to Mahon’s ruling. Robert Forrester, principal of Stevens Elementary, tentatively supported busing but acknowledged its difficulties. He included a word of caution, saying, “I just hope that every effort is made to see that the

⁸⁰ “Judge stops busing in Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 1988.

⁸¹ “Black leaders split on effects of judge’s ruling,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 21 February 1988.

⁸² “Judge stops busing in Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 1988.

⁸³ “Black leaders split on effects of judge’s ruling,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 21 February 1988.

⁸⁴ “Some happy, some sad,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 1988.

gains we've made in integrating faculty and administration, as well as the advent of the magnet schools [,] do not revert to the old days.”⁸⁵

The NAACP appealed Mahon's decision to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which upheld Mahon's ruling on January 20, 1989. The ruling, from a sixteen-member court with seven Reagan appointees, agreed that the limited busing neglected to significantly impact the district's integration. The appellate court found that gerrymandering attendance zones, integrated faculties, and magnet schools to be more effective means of combating segregation than busing.⁸⁶

Emboldened by the appellate court's decision to uphold the end of busing in Fort Worth, the school board again petitioned Mahon's court. School district attorney Owen filed a motion for Fort Worth ISD to be declared unitary, a designation that identified the district as free from vestiges of segregation, and the district court set a hearing date for February 21, 1989.⁸⁷ Mahon delayed that hearing, encouraging the school board and local NAACP representatives to continue negotiations. Representatives of the Mexican American community declined to continue debates with the school board, a decision NAACP member Robert Starr expected, stating, “Their main goals were to get more Hispanic teachers and bilingual programs, and they have been very successful at that.” Revealing fissures between the two groups, Starr vowed to continue the battle without the support of the Mexican American Educational Advisory Committee, “Because they haven't been discriminated against in the manner that we have.”⁸⁸ Although the judge conversed with each group privately in his chambers and cautioned discretion until the

⁸⁵ “Judge stops busing in Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 20 February 1988.

⁸⁶ “Court upholds end to busing in Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 31 January 1989.

⁸⁷ “Demise of busing upheld on appeal,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 31 January 1989.

⁸⁸ “Hearing delayed on Fort Worth school integration,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 23 February 1989.

next hearing, the *Star-Telegram* obtained copies of the NAACP's proposal and the board's counteroffer. The NAACP requested that schools with fewer than six African American teachers immediately hire five black instructors and hire more African Americans as associate superintendents; the board countered with an offer of a program in which the faculty members at each school reflect the demography of Fort Worth residents.⁸⁹

After several meetings between the board's committee and the NAACP, attorneys attended a hearing in Mahon's court in April 1989. School officials again emphasized their faith in the alleged integration-ending powers of magnet schools and gerrymandering attendance zones. NAACP attorney Leon Haley disagreed, calling magnets "elite, private schools" that existed independently on minority school grounds. The attorney also provided evidence that six schools formed before integration still retained a largely African American student body, defining them as "vestiges of that [*de jure* segregated] system."⁹⁰ Despite Haley's arguments, Mahon issued his verdict in September of 1989, identifying the Fort Worth ISD as one maintaining "unitary" status. The judge added a three-year overview requirement, at the end of which the court could dismiss the case if the school maintained or improved its current integration levels.⁹¹

Again, many members of the African American community reacted to another court defeat with depressed resignation. "What the judge should have done was look at the whole picture, reflected back on the objective of the desegregation cases and asked the district to employ some creative kinds of strategies to truly produce an educational system equal for all children regardless of where they live," said Pam Dunlop, attorney

⁸⁹ "Jobs tied to blacks' holdout," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 24 February 1989.

⁹⁰ "Official defends schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 14 April 1989.

⁹¹ "District is unitary, judge says," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 27 September 1989.

and president of the Fort Worth Minority Leaders and Citizen Council. Nelda Harris, president of the Black Women Lawyers Association of Tarrant County, provided interesting insights from her experience in the district. She interpreted Mahon's decision as accepting that "the fact is that public education is inferior and it's OK for white parents to take their children and place them in good schools where they can get a good education. Public schools are left as the melting pot for the minorities – the cesspool of inferior education." Harris had graduated from I.M. Terrell High School in 1969, and remembered Fort Worth as an environment that presented limited educational and career opportunities to African Americans. Many black Fort Worth residents, such as renowned teacher Hazel Harvey Peace, attended college, earned graduate degrees, and then returned to Fort Worth and taught at I. M. Terrell. "With desegregation," Harris remembers, "those best and those brightest were placed in white schools or went to white universities." She added, "The school system merely reflects society. . . . It's broken down, so of course little black children can't get into the cracks."⁹²

As this chapter has shown, white flight from the school district to private schools or the surrounding communities nullified the benefits of busing and affected the court's eventual ruling to end busing. Judge Mahon's September 1989 ruling declared the district "unitary" even though many schools failed to meet the demographic statistics for integration outlined by the court. The district remained under federal court supervision for the next three years. Despite the court's pronouncement and the demise of busing, school district still consisted of ninety-two schools, of which forty-three were minority-

⁹² "Some are irate; others resigned,": *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 28 September 1989.

majority, at the turn of the twenty-first century.⁹³ Although the school board agreed to redirect the funds once allocated to busing to developing low-achievement, high minority schools, some critics wondered if the shift in focus from creating schools with a proportionate racial demography to improving conditions at minority-majority schools reflected a change from adherence to the principles outlined in *Brown* to adherence to the “separate but equal” mandate defined in 1896 by *Plessy*.

⁹³ David R. Squires, “Court upholds end to busing in Fort Worth,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 31 January 1989.

Conclusion

“If we didn’t have segregation, we wouldn’t have to make an issue of integration.”

-- Lenora Rolla, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 21 February 1988.

In examining the issue of desegregating Fort Worth’s public schools, this dissertation looks at the lasting influences of Jim Crow restrictions and how those influences continue to mold many facets of Fort Worth’s public school system. Since its inception, Fort Worth defined itself as a western town, complete with cattle drives and a ruggedly self-sufficient spirit, located on the western edge of the Jim Crow South. Fort Worth citizens implemented and lived by the rule of Jim Crow, but they claimed to have created a more benevolent form of segregation, having avoided many of racism’s harsher aspects and violent backlash, made painfully visible in places like Birmingham, Alabama, the Mississippi Delta region, and even in Dallas, Texas. In order to buttress their claims of superiority to Deep South cities, white early settlers could have directed attention to the schools they made available to black children long before *Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education*. When Fort Worth created public schools for white children, they also funded black education, using the black parochial schools as the basis for its burgeoning public school system for African Americans. The district hired the capable Isaiah Terrell to educate black children and to create the illustrious I.M. Terrell High School from a rudimentary secondary school system. Even though public taxes supported the schools, facilities for African Americans remained inferior to and separate from the white schools. Despite the seemingly placid exterior of race relations, the implementation of the 1954 *Brown* decision on Fort Worth demonstrates the legal and cultural entrenchment of the ideals behind segregation.

The public places accessible to all of Fort Worth's black residents mirrored the city's concept of education: facilities were available to the black population but not at the expense of or inconvenience to white residents. African Americans could visit the zoo, the parks, or the public golf courses but only on Juneteenth and under the supervision of white caretakers. The city made a public pool accessible to Cowtown's black citizens but expected those residents to travel to the lone pool available to them while avoiding pools for whites. African Americans objected to the restrictions. They viewed the city's "benevolent paternalism" in its true light, as a racist restriction of inalienable rights granted by the Constitution, and they consciously fought for equal access. Some radical black activists of the 1970s may have characterized Fort Worth's black leaders as accommodationists, but all evidence points to a regular and conscientious gauging of city's social mores and choosing to attack segregation quietly, diplomatically, and at its weakest link. For instance, the leaders realized that the concept of integrated swimming pools horrified many white parents, so activists fought for equal access to public golf courses and determined to fight segregated swimming pools at a later date.

Once black leaders won several local victories, they carefully planned an assault on the segregated school system after the monumental *Brown* decision. One of the African American plaintiffs personified Southern middle-class conventionality: a family man and member of the U.S. military who simply wanted the best education at the nearest school for his six-year-old daughter. White residents reacted to the lawsuit in shock. Some formed a branch of the White Citizens' Council to battle integration, others resigned themselves to the inevitable implementation of integration, and the school board reacted with almost comic denial. Board members believed that because Fort Worth's

schools for African Americans surpassed the Clareton County, South Carolina, schools, Fort Worth was exempt from *Brown*'s statutes.

A federal court revealed the flaws in the school board's self-delusions and ordered the district to submit an integration plan. The board submitted a strategy for nominal integration and, after a few years, the NAACP and the school board again appeared before the court. The newly elected, moderate board president Julius Truelson and a cohesive local NAACP branch—represented by long-time leader Dr. George Flemmings and NAACP attorney Clifford Davis—navigated the combustible atmosphere. At the same time, the African American community tackled the issue of public space integration. The battles for access to schools and public spaces simultaneously exposed the fallacies of segregation and paved the way for the grueling struggle for equality.

Many white residents viewed the district as effectively integrated in 1967, but black leaders labeled the stair-step plan “token integration.” After the passage of the 1971 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* decision, the federal court ordered FWISD to abandon its creep towards desegregation for the brisker pursuit outlined in the *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* and *Swann* decisions. The federal court ordered the district to use busing as the venue to create “a system without a ‘white’ school and a ‘Negro’ school, but just schools,” hoping that creating “just schools” would result in a just school system.¹ Subsequently, Fort Worth began the cluster plan in the fall of 1971. Clusters included predominately white and predominately black elementary schools; students rode buses to their nearest school, called a “satellite school,” where kindergarteners and first-graders attended classes; white students then

¹ “Reading 2: Excerpts from the Supreme Court Decision *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (1968),” <http://www.nps.gov/history/Nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/104newkent/104facts2.htm>, accessed on 21 February 2009,

rode the bus to the minority-majority school in their cluster for second grade and African American children rode the bus to one of their cluster's white schools for third through fifth grades. The district also closed the large black schools, including the long-standing I.M. Terrell High School. Rather than send their children to the minority schools on long bus rides, many white parents chose to withdraw their children from the public schools and enroll them in private schools or move to nearby areas with small school systems exempt from the desegregation order. After busing, white enrollment in Fort Worth ISD dropped to half the enrollment before the busing order.

NAACP attorneys recognized the demographic imbalance in the school district and returned to court. Mexican American leaders also became involved in the desegregation attempts and in the *Flax* case, asking for representation on the school board and more English as a Second Language classes. Judge Eldon Mahon ordered more busing. Fearing the impact of white flight on Fort Worth's economy and reputation, the school board appealed to Mahon's court. After more than a decade of busing, Mahon lightened the busing order in favor of the creation of magnet programs at minority-majority schools and funding "quality education," which amounted to the redistribution of the funds earmarked for busing to academically lagging schools.

In September 1989, Mahon granted Fort Worth ISD a provisional "unitary" status even though many of Fort Worth's public schools still failed to meet the original racial demographic percentages outlined in *Swann* and later defined by Mahon's court and the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. In deciding to end busing in Fort Worth, Judge Mahon abandoned the admittedly oblique ambition of removing one hundred years of Jim Crow restrictions "root and branch" and surrendered to the startling ramifications of white

flight. Mahon decided that reallocating transportation funds into improving minority schools and using the magnet programs to combat residential segregation best served Fort Worth's present and future school-aged children. With the provisional status, the district remained under federal court supervision for the next three years. Other large Texas cities followed suit when federal courts declared Austin, Dallas, and Houston "unitary" years after Fort Worth's designation. NAACP attorneys filed a motion asking Mahon to retain jurisdiction over Fort Worth's school district, citing a decrease in the percentage of black teachers hired and fears that the district would regress into racial inequality.² Despite their objections, Mahon lifted the provisional element of his unitary label in February 1994.³

Thus, the saga of busing for desegregation in Fort Worth came nearly full circle as many schools remained predominantly white or predominantly black. In 1896, the Supreme Court decided in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that states could provide separate facilities for Anglos and for people of color as long as the facilities were equal to one another. The Supreme Court struck down the *Plessy* decision in 1954, when it ruled in *Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education* that "separate but equal is inherently unequal."⁴ Sadly, some believe that after Mahon's unitary designation, Fort Worth reverted to the conditions existing before the *Brown* decision while others would argue that even the "separate but equal" mandate defined in *Plessy* remains unfulfilled. For instance, some critics still think that the schools in mostly-white neighborhoods are better built and maintained structure than those in heavily minority areas. Most people interviewed during the course

² "Judge reviews desegregation court order," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 February 1994; "NAACP calls for teachers," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 29 September 1992.994.

³ "'Judges lifts court order on schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 19 February 1994.

⁴ *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 1954.

of the research and writing of this project said they hoped to provide the very best education for their children possible, and justifiably so. For many parents, doing so meant that they chose to send their children to a private school, particularly if somehow their children failed to qualify for admission to Paschal High School's renowned magnet program. Others remembered spending long hours on school buses as children and thus viewed Fort Worth's public education system with conditioned wariness. Some blamed the long integration battles for the current unequal state of Fort Worth's school system. Others faulted bureaucratic divisions within the district's leadership. Recently deceased longtime African American activist Lenora Rolla told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, "If we didn't have segregation, we wouldn't have to make an issue of integration."⁵ Reading further into Rolla's observation, one could conclude that the blame for an unequal public school system may reside with decades of segregation and those who twisted and abused the Constitution, scripture, and common sense to justify racism in order to create a system within which they could wield the most power. At the very least, "removal of all vestiges of segregation, root and branch" as defined in *Green v. County Board of Education in New Kent County* remains unfulfilled in Fort Worth. While the need to maintain order allows a city to provide an overall peaceful and lawful society, Fort Worth city and school officials, at least at first, valued order over justice. Notable exceptions like the district attorney, who hired the first black attorney, and *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* editor Jack Butler, who offered Cecil Johnson a position as the first black reporter at a white-owned Texas newspaper, proved that some Fort Worth officials chose to quietly pursue equality in their own spheres.

⁵ *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 21 February 1988.

Albert Einstein once said, “Memory is deceptive because it is colored by today's events.” People who attended or taught school during the integration debates in Fort Worth have differing recollections and feelings about the events of the desegregation era. African American former principal Kerven Carter admitted, “Maybe I’m not sensitive enough to pick up on bad vibes but when you remain open with folks and you’re accepting of them, people are generally accepting of you. When you make kids happy at your school and have an atmosphere conducive to learning, parents are automatically going to be happy.”⁶ One retired teacher, who identified herself as a recovering paternalistic idealist who thought that “I would be the Great White Hope at an all-black middle school,” called integration, “the worst thing that has happened to black children in Fort Worth,” pointing to I.M. Terrell’s closing and the reassignment of Terrell’s experienced faculty members to formerly all-white schools. Another white former teacher remembered taking offense to a comment she overheard, saying, “Looks like we’ve got some salt mixed in with our pepper,” when the school board reassigned white teachers to I.M. Terrell.

Terrell’s closing revealed still-open wounds in the Fort Worth’s public school history. The irony of the overwhelmingly negative response to closing I.M. Terrell and assaults in the 1990s on the magnet school program hint at the degree of disconnect between the NAACP’s legal counsel and their plaintiffs, the black parents and children in Fort Worth. When the court ordered Terrell’s closing in 1973, the high school had never enrolled a white student. Cecil Johnson, an I.M. Terrell graduate and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*’s first black reporter, remembered that “The demise of Terrell as a high school was emotionally wrenching for many black residents who looked upon graduation

⁶ “District administrator recalls desegregation of schools,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 19 December 2000.

from Terrell as a family tradition.”⁷ Bob Ray Sanders, hired by *Star-Telegram* editor Jack Butler and one of the first African American employees at a white-owned Texas newspaper, never attended an integrated school and remembered his shock at the district’s closing of his alma mater. When asked how he felt about Terrell’s closing, he said, “I was very hurt. In fact, I found out that they [district leaders] were thinking about closing it early in ’72. I didn’t think they would do it, and most other people didn’t think they would either, which is why there wasn’t a great fight to keep it open.” Sanders blamed racism and tensions for Terrell’s closing, concluding, “It became very clear that white people did not want to bus white kids to Terrell, which is the most centrally located school in the city.”⁸ Longtime African American schoolteacher Hazel Harvey Pease also lamented I.M. Terrell’s closing, saying, “Jim Crow was horrible – but out of that I.M. Terrell grew as a place that gave a quality high school education.”⁹ One editorialist also expressed regret, saying, “Terrell was closed in 1973 to achieve school desegregation. Now, we know that was mostly a delusion of the times.”¹⁰

I.M. Terrell re-opened later as an elementary school. Sanders had other dreams for Terrell’s campus. When interviewed about his ideas about a new function for Terrell, he said, “Actually I wanted it to be used as a performing arts school, but the district hasn’t been sold on the idea of a performing arts school.” He pointed out that Fort Worth is one of the largest schools in the country without a performing arts magnet school. As he recalled, Terrell “has a history of performing arts, too, with all the jazz musicians who

⁷ Cecil Johnson, “Terrell closed, not forgotten,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 23 June 1982.

⁸ Bob Ray Sanders, interview by Tina Cannon, 21 March at 10:30 AM, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* offices, Fort Worth, Texas.

⁹ Hazel Harvey Pease, interview by Melody Sprecht Kelly, 28 March 2004, Oral History Program, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, 215.

¹⁰ Bud Kennedy, “Hughes recalls days of excellence at old I.M. Terrell,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 August 1998.

came out of this town and came out of that school.”¹¹ Another *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reporter, Bud Kennedy, a white contributor to the Fort Worth paper, disagreed with Sanders’s assessment, stating, “The rebirth of I.M Terrell as an elementary school is a symbol of the new vitality in Fort Worth’s inner-city schools, and a subtle confession that it was wrong to padlock 91 years of black high school history.”¹²

Like the closing of I.M. Terrell, the court’s other efforts to combat “all vestiges of segregation” occasionally met with disapproval from Fort Worth’s African American community. In 1994, the school board acknowledged that the magnet programs “essentially established a school within a school,” but the board denied allegations that the parents of magnet school children felt superior to the regular school students.¹³ One year later, Della Brooks, the grandmother of an African American Morningside Elementary School student sparked a heated protest movement against perceived discrimination in favor of Morningside’s largely white magnet program student body. Brooks called school board officials “racist” at public meetings and claimed a concerted conspiracy between the school board members, parents, the police, and the media. Many parents of other “regular” Morningside students joined the protest, claiming that the faculty favored the magnet pupils.¹⁴ Brooks, some parents, and local leader Reverend Michael Bell, often referred to as a contentious voice in Fort Worth’s black population, carried signs reading, “Fort Worth Indifferent School District,” and protested outside of magnet schools for months. The protestors voiced grievances against the district and

¹¹ Bob Ray Sanders, interview by Tina Cannon, 21 March at 10:30 AM, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* offices, Fort Worth, Texas.

¹² “Bud Kennedy, “Hughes recalls days of excellence at old I.M. Terrell,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 18 August 1998.

¹³ Ruth M. Bond, “Changes at magnet school draw questions,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 10 May 1994.

¹⁴ “Allegations of racism plunge school into chaos – Tension high as Morningside protests continue,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 26 November 1995.

demanded better access to the magnet programs.¹⁵ The debates over magnet schools became increasingly acrimonious, with allegations that the district favored white over black children and implemented racist admission practices.¹⁶ One protestor objected to the board of trustees' decision to create another magnet school, telling the board, "You've proved your arrogance, you've proved your racism."¹⁷ The protests ended with nominal compromises between the district and the objectors, two arrests of and a restraining order against Della Brooks, reprimands for two Fort Worth Police Department officers after Brooks's "fishy" arrest, and a fiercely divided group of parents and administrators.¹⁸

The objections against magnet schools continued for the next few years, resulting in tense and uneasy interactions between unhappy members of the black community and the Fort Worth school board. In 1998, Michael Bell demanded that the school board abolish magnet schools, which the district had formed with the hopes of naturally integrating campuses. Instead of leading to naturally integrated campuses, the magnet programs attracted predominately white students who only mixed with regular school students, who were minorities, at lunchtime in the cafeteria. Magnet school graduates even attended separate graduation ceremonies, provoking arguments that magnet programs created segregated schools within minority-majority campuses. Bell referenced the negative perception of magnet schools in his argument to have the schools closed, and he also informed the school board that magnet school students' high achievement scores

¹⁵ "Special classes a magnet for racial tension," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 11 February 1996.

¹⁶ "Magnet programs defended," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 13 February 1996; "Trustees approve new magnet school for west Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 June 1996.

¹⁷ "Trustees approve new magnet school for west Fort Worth," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 June 1996.

¹⁸ Betty Brink, "Sworn to Silence," *Fort Worth Weekly*, 28 August – 4 September 1997.

masked the regular students' poor performances on academic assessment tests.¹⁹ He instituted a three-year-long protest at Tanglewood Elementary School, blaming school officials for "the school district's failure to educate African-American children."²⁰ Although the controversies ended with compromises between each party, the protests demonstrated the depths of frustration felt by the parents of African American school children and heralded the end of Fort Worth's quiet, behind-the-scenes negotiations, which had ended segregation in public places during the 1960s.

Several physical manifestations of the battle to combat Jim Crow and the long continuing impact of segregation on education remain visible, and at times contentious, landmarks. One reporter called I.M. Terrell a "physical relic of an intolerant time" but "also a dearly loved symbol of determination, self-sufficiency and an African American community as closely knit as family."²¹ The argument over the preservation of James E. Guinn School typifies the complex paradox of Fort Worth's black educational history. Despite the school board's arguments to the contrary, the Strayer Report, examined in Chapter One of this dissertation, proves that as a whole buildings used for educating black children before *Brown* failed to meet construction expectations for those of white children. As a result, the schools deteriorated at a quicker rate and cost more to improve than the school facilities for white children. In addition, the "remove all vestiges of segregation" order from *Green* either encouraged school officials to move children of color to the better-constructed, once-segregated buildings or allowed the authorities to escape their obligation to transfer white children to formerly all-black schools. Regardless of the motivation behind abandoning several all-black schools, the school

¹⁹ "Trustees agree to change, not scrap, magnets," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 21 October 1998.

²⁰ "Bob Ray Sanders. "Children victimized by protestors," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 6 February 2000.

²¹ "Decaying monument," *Dallas Morning News*, 5 July 1995.

buildings quickly fell into disrepair. In 1995, the Fort Worth Housing Authority moved into the renovated Carver-Hamilton Elementary building, a school closed and abandoned in 1973.²² In 1997, graduates of Guinn, one of the all-black schools closed and subsequently used as a homeless shelter, petitioned the federal government for a \$1.5 million grant to restore the school to its original condition.²³ The Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society attempted to raise funds to buy the dilapidated Guinn buildings, renovate them, and use the former school as the society's museum.

Unfortunately, the society failed to acquire enough funds to purchase the building for the \$400,000 price tag in 1997.²⁴ The next year, the city of Fort Worth eventually bought the buildings from the school district for ten dollars and received a \$2.9 million Economic Development Administration grant to renovate the school and use it as the Business Assistance Center headquarters.²⁵ Although the Business Assistance Center seems a thriving and necessary establishment on the previously all-black school's campus, the debate unearthed longtime concerns about the relationship between the African American community and public officials. The school district sold the property to the city for a significantly reduced price and, rather than preserving the building as a museum as the Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society wished, the city established the Business Assistance Center at the location. Spectators could present the argument that city officials again overlooked both the needs of the black community and the means

²² "Memories remodeled – An African-American school will be the new administration for the Fort Worth Housing Authority, offering social services to residents," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 17 November 1995.

²³ "Trying to save a piece of History: City may seek grant to renovate historic black school," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 8 January 1997.

²⁴ Cecil Johnson, "Put a piece of city heritage to good use," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, no date, "James E. Guinn" clippings folder, Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society Collection, Fort Worth Central Public Library.

²⁵ Untitled, 11 April 1998, "James E. Guinn" clippings folder, Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society Collection, Fort Worth Central Public Library.

of addressing them by failing to extensively consult the population. Also, a change in tactics, from abandoning previously all-black school facilities to seeking \$2 million grants in order to restore them for other uses, reveals Fort Worth's circuitous means of addressing the race issue.

Fort Worth's erratic public behavior towards its black population parallels that of other metropolitan cities. Although public schools in large Texas cities integrated without the violence visible in other regions, white residents expressed their discontentment with the effect of integration on the public school system by moving to suburban areas or enrolling their children in private schools. The quiet but steady response to integration and busing resulted in a school district that failed to reflect the demographic makeup of city's population.²⁶ Bob Ray Sanders noted that Fort Worth "effectively integrated in '73 with that busing order, but with the continued white flight, it quickly resegregated. Whites continued to leave and those schools quickly became majority black or all black. Of course now, in many of the schools that I visit, the Hispanic population is the majority."²⁷

The year after Judge Mahon lifted the thirty-five-year desegregation order, administrators and desegregation specialists pondered the city's checkered history of educating black pupils. Assistant superintendent Dan Powell noted that the population of white students in the district decreased from fifty-six percent at the beginning of mass busing to twenty-seven percent of the overall population in 1995. Gary Orfield, a Harvard Graduate School of Education professor, told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* that

²⁶ William Henry Kellar argues that "massive retreat" replaced "massive resistance" among the white population; Kellar, William Henry, *Make Haste More Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and Social Desegregation in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1999).

²⁷ Bob Ray Sanders, interview by Tina Cannon, 21 March 2007 at 10:30 AM, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* offices, Fort Worth, Texas.

“there’s been no real progress since the 1970s. And since the late ‘80s, we’ve been going backward. In Texas, the big cities delayed desegregation as long as possible and resegregated as fast as possible.”²⁸ Dallas desegregation monitor Juan Flores disagreed, calling Orfield’s theory a “misconception” and noting, “How can you do that [resegregate] when you’re already 80 percent minority?” Bob Ray Sanders blamed segregation’s ugly legacy for the continued inequality; he said, “One hundred years of Jim Crow was so devastating. Sadly [we all pretend] . . . that we don’t like to talk about it [race] and don’t want to talk about it, but the truth it is still there. It’s still being passed on.”²⁹

During the period between the 1897 *Plessy* decision and the 1963 introduction of the stair-step plan, Fort Worth public schools followed the “separate but equal” mandate outlined in *Plessy*. When African American plaintiffs filed suit with the *Flax* case, Fort Worth became a microcosm of the impact of Supreme Court civil rights decisions on Southern metropolises. After the *Brown* decision and the first judgment in *Flax*, Fort Worth citizens, city officials, and the school board attempted to seek equality in schools and other public places with some gains but mostly the maintenance of the status quo. *Brown*, *Flax*, *Green*, and *Swann* exposed Fort Worth’s touted frontier identity as unique and bucolic, but also as burdened by racial imbalance and the aftershocks of Jim Crow: poverty, violence, and inequality.

²⁸ Shilachter, Barry, “Integration record is more mixed than some other schools,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 12 November 1995.

²⁹ Bob Ray Sanders, interview by Tina Cannon, 21 March at 10:30 AM, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* offices, Fort Worth, Texas.

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ABSTRACT

COWTOWN AND THE COLOR LINE: DESEGREGATING FORT WORTH'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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This dissertation examines the process of desegregating Fort Worth's public schools from the inception of the public school system to the 1994 conclusion of the local desegregation case. When members of the African American community filed a suit against the school district in 1959, the subsequent court case, *Flax v. Potts*, made Fort Worth a petri dish for experimentation with the implementation of Supreme Court cases.

Despite the city's claim to a western heritage, it had roots in the South, especially in the realm of race relations. The opening chapters trace the formation of Fort Worth's public school system, its pride in providing "equal" educational opportunities, and the status of race relations before the desegregation battles. While *Brown v. Board of Education* and the subsequent *Flax* case made black activism visible, local African Americans made their voices heard in Fort Worth decades earlier, particularly through NAACP membership and activism. Chapter Three explores responses to *Brown*, revealing many Fort Worth white residents' racism and self-denial regarding *Brown*'s implementation. Chapter Four and Five examine the early impact of *Flax* and the school board members' responses to the case's filing. School desegregation propelled a fight to integrate public spaces, which in turn spurred demands for increased integration in public schools. After the Supreme Court's decision in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg*, Fort

Worth Independent School District began busing its students. Chapter Six addresses the district's attempts to create a truly integrated school district as defined by *Swann* and the new issues *Swann* introduced. Busing served as the primary catalyst for white flight in Fort Worth. Chapter Seven reviews efforts by local education leaders, and even the federal judge presiding over the case, to find avenues to address integration demands and curb white flight into private schools and suburban areas. This dissertation is a narrative of the battle for equal access to Fort Worth's public schools, but it is also the story of a city and its startled response when confronted with the jarring reality that its self-identity differs dramatically from the perception of those who live on its racial, cultural, and economic periphery.