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Public Verses Private Desegregation:
A Comparison of Integrating Into Arkansas' Public and Private Education Systems

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Introduction

It was May 17, 1954, when the Supreme Court issued its decision ruling the segregation of public schools to be unconstitutional. The case, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, has maintained its significance in American history due to the way it brought about cultural change in the south. Before then, many southern states that were dominated by white democratic state legislatures and had mandated Jim Crow laws which forced African American and white children to be enrolled at separate schools.¹ There was an uproar after the court ruling, which led many of states to resist the push for integration. A second court decision was required, referred to as *Brown II*, instructing public schools to integrate “with all deliberate speed”.²

Arkansas state government had been one of the many acting in contrast to what was being directed by the federal government. However, in response to the court actions and added pressure from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Arkansas schools districts began devising plans to integrate their education systems (Hall 2008, 108).³ Among the first of the high schools was Little Rock Central, where, in 1957, nine courageous African American students registered for class at the all-white school. What these students experienced serves to illustrate for America the struggle this southern state had with the ongoing cultural shift.

Leading up to the students’ first day attendance, the community was in uproar, responding with heavy anger and bitterness. It became clear that the students would not be able

¹ State and local laws that enforced racial segregation after the Reconstruction period

² Baldwin, Lois. "Desegregation of Public Schools." *The Phylon Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1958): 224-25. Accessed April 7, 2020. doi:10.2307/272951.

³ Civil rights organization formed in 1909 with the goal of advancing justice for colored people

to enter the school without resistance.⁴ On the night before the arrival of the new students, Arkansas governor Orval Faubus requested the state's National Guard presence for the protection of the students. In reality, the National Guard acted to ensure the nine students would not be permitted to enter the school. Accompanying the National Guard was also a horrific mob, acting disgracefully through spitting and harassing the Little Rock Nine. On September 25, 1957, President Dwight Eisenhower federalized the National Guard and ordered the United States Army to assist the students into the school. It took being personally guarded by these troops for the Little Rock Nine to participate in regular attendance at the High School.⁵

This tragic response of the Central High crisis is useful in reflecting the history of Arkansas race relations during the civil rights movement. As the majority of the state's population did not take well to the national government involvement in enforcing integration, a large flooding of families moved their children's education to the private systems, where they could still be protected from unwanted African American company. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, independent schools were desegregated, and their numbers began to increase in enrolled African American students. This was predominantly the result of political, social, and cultural adjustments that were being conducted by African Americans advocating for national change and the ongoing civil rights movement which was enforcing voting rights, among other actions.⁶

This paper compares the experience of African Americans who were integrated into public schools verses those integrated into private schools. How did the environments differ, and

⁴ Wallace, David. "Orval Faubus: The Central Figure at Little Rock Central High School." *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1980): 314-29. Accessed April 7, 2020. doi:10.2307/4002413

⁵ Hall, Kermit L. "Little Rock Crisis." In *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 10: Law and Politics*, edited by Ely James W. and Bond Bradley G., by WILSON CHARLES REAGAN, 108-10. University of North Carolina Press, 2008. Accessed April 7, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469616742_ely.42.

⁶ Purdy, Michelle A. "Introduction." In *Transforming the Elite: Black Students and the Desegregation of Private Schools*, 1-21. CHAPEL HILL: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. Accessed April 7, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469643519_purdy.5.

how did the outcomes impact Arkansas' present day race relations? Examining a modern perspective will allow for an assessment on the progress of the southern state's racial inclusion throughout their education systems, both private and public. This is important in identifying if there is a need for improvement in righting the wrongs of America's past.

Methodology

This research was conducted using both primary and secondary sources, as well as a handful of interviews of modern-day experiences. The primary sources majorly come from newspaper archives, which account for the media's portrayal of the society's viewpoint. And the public's ideas surrounding the issue of integration. There were also a few documented correspondences between individuals that were beneficial in constructing comparisons between public and private schools' experience with desegregation. Secondary sources lay a framework to understanding the environment during that time and provide context for the primary source documents to be placed properly in this research. Lastly, I conducted three interviews that allowed for this research to expand in identifying the progress Arkansas has made in integrating schools. The interviews also allowed for a more thorough comparison of public versus private integration drawing from current students' perspectives.

Originally this research had a narrower focus, limiting the examination of only one specific private university and its history with desegregation. Due to an outbreak of the coronavirus disease, all non-essential businesses were closed, including the university's library, where I was collecting my primary source documents. Not all of the library's records had been placed online and it became difficult to obtain access to them. I accounted for this by expanding

my research to include all private schools in the state of Arkansas and comparing them to public schools integration experience.

In doing so, this has resulted in strengths and weaknesses of the following research. By expanding my topic later in the writing process, I have had to rush through the research process in different areas in order to meet certain deadlines. This has caused some sources to not be examined as thoroughly as they could have been, meaning I did not exploit the sources for everything they could have offered to this study. Expanding my topic has provided a useful amount of more sources, which has made grasping certain themes of the past easier. There are many digital archives that could be accessed from my home in Dallas, Texas. These scholarly cites have helped in navigating the multitude of sources being presented. They organize them by labeling the specific type of source and limiting it to only scholarly sources.

COVID-19 has weakened this paper by minimizing those available for interviews. Through the chaos of uncertainty, it has proven difficult to get ahold of people. I was able to reach out to fellow students in Arkansas, through the university I attend, who were able to put me in contact with suitable people to interview. These current students provide insight into a college perspective of Arkansas' racial relations from both public and private universities. These interviews strengthen the study by understanding more of Arkansas' education system, instead of only limiting it to high school students' experiences. Because I am no longer in Arkansas, I was not able to gather interviews from present-day high school students who reside in the state. Having those interviews would have contributed to a more detailed understanding of the impact actions of the past has had on present day African American students.

Historiography

What Relevant Historiographies Does It Fall Into?

This paper is centered mostly around the effects the civil rights movement had on the nation's education system. Research as such can be categorized into multiple historiography genres such as political, social, and popular history. In the context of political history, the focus is majorly on how people in power have an impact on society and what the popular response is to any changes made within the culture. Part of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) strategy during the civil rights movement was getting local lawsuits into court rooms in order to bring about effective change. A large success was the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court Case that outlawed segregation in schools in 1954. An important aspect to the political historiography of the civil rights movement is studying the ideology that was used as a force to bring about the change in segregation laws. Researchers have looked at how significant leaders in the civil rights movement used their beliefs to powerfully influence the community, for example Martin Luther King leading the Montgomery bus boycott.⁷

Social history has worked to recognize more than just powerful political leaders during the civil rights movement, but narrow in on the effects society itself had during that time. This genre of historiography has studied how economic and social conditions of the civil rights era brought about change though looking at the people and not just authoritative influencers. Popular history approaches the historiography of the civil rights movement in a way that reaches a larger audience. It emphasizes more of a narrative style rather than a scholarly analysis. This is

⁷ Waite, Cally L. "The Challenge of Teaching Brown." *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (2004): 98-100. Accessed May 5, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/3218113.

important when trying to inform the general public. Many books have been written on the civil rights movement in a popular style, which has been beneficial in educating students on events that occurred. There are so many major events that are relevant to the civil rights movement, as well as personal stories, that a popular historiography approach has been used my countless times.

The Types of Methods Scholars Have Used to Discuss This Issue

Scholars have written Monographs on integration of schools during the civil rights movement as a way to provide in depth research with a specialized knowledge. These researchers work to contribute original insight on the subject and write for a more academic audience. Natalie Adams wrote a monograph, on the desegregation of schools in Mississippi, that was published by the University Press of Mississippi.⁸ Adams went deep into analyzing the resistance Mississippi put towards integrating their schools after the Brown v. Board of Education ruling and how change came about through ordinary people going through extraordinary circumstances. Adams writes this monograph as a way to shed light on the stories of these people that have been ignored.

Trade books have also been written on the civil rights movement, which are geared more towards general readers rather than scholarly peers. Historians have found desegregation of schools to be such an important topic that it's been a priority to write in a way that anyone who is trying to educate themselves on the subject will be able to understand the work. Joyce Carol Thomas wrote on the true story of Linda Brown, the young girl who was

⁸ Adams, Natalie G., Adams, James H. Just Trying to Have School: The Struggle for Desegregation in Mississippi. United States: University Press of Mississippi, (n.d.).

involved in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.⁹ This trade book includes a collection of works of personal stories, poems, and essays describing the experiences people faced with the integration of this young African American girl. Thomas' book allows for her audience to see a wide variety of perspectives who were involved with this change. Thomas takes a popular history approach to her book, making it easier for the general public to understand and productive to use in even adolescent classrooms. A wide variety of methods have been used as a tool to further the understanding of the civil rights movement and the desegregation that took place, including more than just monographs and trade books. The topic is rich and carries layers of different perspectives, making researcher approach the material in many diverse ways.

Why Scholars Have Written About This Topic and Their Shared Perspectives

Scholars have written on this topic due to the civil rights movement being a defining part of American history. Because the events that took place are still affecting society today, scholars have been motivated to dedicate many studies to the subject. Some have written as a way to commemorate the past. Others have written as a way to acknowledge the unjust actions that needed to be corrected, using their work as a way to keep the mistakes from being repeated. Some scholars feel that there are many individuals whose stories have gone ignored despite their exceptional actions committed to helping the movement. Scholars can act as a voice for the silenced and can provide an authoritative platform to speak from. Writings on the civil rights movement informs people of an event that shaped the country as a whole and studying it illustrates what being an active American citizen looks like. The civil right movement success took organization and commitment from the people involved and not everyone agreed on the best

⁹ Thomas, Joyce Carol., and Curtis E. James. *Linda Brown, You Are Not Alone: the Brown V. Board of Education Decision*. New York: Jump at the Sun/Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.

way to bring about change. Some scholars have researched the topic as a way to understand how diverse thinking can still work together to accomplish a goal. There is also a wide availability of sources for researches to use, making it easier than other topics to write on. Scholars have access to school records, court cases, news articles, and interviews. There was a lot of media coverage during the civil rights movement because it an effective way to inform the north about the injustice taking place in the south. Due to all the primary sources, it can be less intimidating for a historian to attempt adding new insight to the topic.

The civil rights movement involved largely two sides, those for African American rights and those opposed. Academic scholars have brought fourth different perspectives by representing the different points of view. There are some works that focus on the African Americans who were being targeted and others study those who were doing the targeting. There are perspectives on people who went about bringing change through peaceful methods and others who wanted a more forceful approach.

Gaps in the Literature

Much of the civil rights movement has been covered by the academic community. The gaps that seem to occur happen with in the nitty gritty parts of the movement. There are so many who were affected by the inequality in the United States that not everyone's story has been told. This has not kept scholars from being able to piece together the narrative of the history, but has rather helped them in analyzing the events that took place. This can be a hot topic due to it involving discussion on racism and many people are still affected by the horrors that have happened. For this reason scholars must maintain respect when writing on the civil rights movement.

Research

After the Central High Crisis

What came to be known as “The Lost Year” took place during the 1958 to 1959 school year in Little Rock, Arkansas. In an attempt to thwart desegregation, every high school in the city was shut down. It happened a year after Arkansas Governor Faubus used the state National Guard to block the federal court from enforcing integration at the Little Rock Central High School in.¹⁰ The events necessary for this decision came together during the summer of 1958 that would lay the foundation for the Lost Year.

Leading up to the Lost Year, the Little Rock School Board had gotten approval for a delay in any progression of desegregating the schools until January 1961. It was Federal District Judge Harry Lemley who admitted the postponement. When the NAACP caught wind of this, a petition was put into play to overturn the delay issued by Lemley. This took Little Rock’s school district back into the courts.¹¹ At the same time, Faubus was fighting for a third term as governor by being the Democratic nominee. There was a strong guarantee for his win due to the positive voter approval he had received the previous election. Lastly, Faubus was able to pass a series of laws in August, 1958, which would forestall desegregation. Act 4 was one of the sixteen bills which declared that any school who was in danger of further racial integration would be allowed to close. Act 4 was in need of voter approval, so Faubus placed the new law for only the schools

¹⁰ “Interview with Governor Orval Faubus”, September 15, 1957. *Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin*. Accessed April 8, 2020. <https://hrc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15878coll90/id/28/rec/35>.

¹¹ Cope, Graeme. ““A Mockery for Education”? Little Rock’s Thomas J. Raney High School during the Lost Year, 1958-1959.” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2019): 248-73. Accessed April 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/26856263.

of Little Rock due to them being at the most risk for integration during that time. By limiting the votes to only the residents of Little Rock, the ballot was guaranteed to pass due to the passion Little Rock had to keep schools segregated. Therefore, under state law, All four of Little Rock's school were closed for the 1958-59 school year¹².

The Lost Year left a total of 3,665 high school students, both black and white, forced with seeking out an alternative to the free Little Rock public education. The number of displaced white students was 2,915. Thirty-five percent of those white students were able to find other public schools to attend in the state. A greater percentage of forty-four white students chose to enter private schooling. For African American students, only thirty-seven percent of the 750 displaced students were able to find alternative public schooling. However, an average of fifty percent of the black students could find no schooling at all. At that time, there weren't any private schools in the area who would integrate. Roy Wilkins, a member of the NAACP, was opposed to the tactic of opening up a private school for the displaced African American students. His reasoning stood behind the idea that in doing so, it would undermine their goal of gaining equal access for all students to public education, regardless of race.¹³

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, almost a decade after The Lost Year, increased the rate of desegregation Arkansas much faster than ever before. An outcome, caused by the growth in integrating public schools, led to what can be referred to as the "segregation academy" movement. White citizens of Arkansas were inspired to maintain segregated education through the creation of more independent schooling. From the years 1969 to 1972 there was a

¹² Cope, Graeme. "'A Mockery for Education'? Little Rock's Thomas J. Raney High School during the Lost Year, 1958-1959." *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2019): 248-73. Accessed April 8, 2020. doi:10.2307/26856263.

¹³ Butler, Jerry. "Remembering...a Lost Year." *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, September 9, 2018. Accessed April 2, 2020.

massive growth in white families sending their children to private schooling in the Arkansas Pulaski County, which is included in the Little Rock Area. This is often referred to as desegregation busing or just simply busing.¹⁴

Introducing the Schools

The research conducted is at a micro level that compares the experience of two different schools that integrated in Arkansas – one private, one public. Little Rock Central High School was one of the four public schools to close down during the lost year. After it reopened, only four of the original Little Rock Nine ended up graduating from Central High. The others had transfer to other schools. The experience of those first African American to walk the halls of Central High provides a detailed account to compare to students who faced desegregation of private institutions. Melba Pattillo Beals was one of the Little Rock Nine. She has taken the responsibility of documenting her experience and the reality of what it was like in the public school system.¹⁵

One of the first private school academies that was created out of fear of integration was the North Side Academy in 1969. It's campus was located at the Smokey Lane Apostolic Church in North Little Rock. The principal was adamite of segregation and openly admitted to parents sending their children to the academy in order to avoid integration. The school ended up closing in 1974.¹⁶ Another private institution that opened as an escape from the change in segregation

¹⁴ Strauss, Valerie. "Little Rock Schools Desegregated 59 Years Old. Now 'We Are Retreating to 1957.'" The Washington Post. WP Company, July 28, 2016. Date Accessed April 6, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/07/28/little-rock-schools-desegregated-59-years-old-now-we-are-retreating-to-1957/>.

¹⁵ "Interview with Melba Pattillo Beals: The Melba Pattillo Story.", January 31, 1995. Scholastic Database. Date Accessed April 5, 2020. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/barrier/hwyf/mpbstory/interview.htm>.

¹⁶ Egerton, John. "Seg Academies, with Much Church Aid, Flourish in South, as Other Private Schools Wane." *South Today*, September, 1973.

policy was the Victory Baptist School, its campus being at the Victory Baptist Church in Sherwood.¹⁷ The church took it as their duty to provide a way to maintain what the pastor considered to be the “right” way of education by stating that the “[Victory Baptist School] will be a segregated school—that’s the policy.” It was his belief that it was “not the court’s place to force integration upon people unwillingly.”¹⁸

In 1971, the first private institution, in Little Rock, to allow the enrollment of African American Students opened. It was called the Pulaski Academy, located on Hinson Road. A majority reason to its allowance of black students was due to the *Swan v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*. This was a supreme court case focused on permitting the busing of students. The goal was to ensure all education institutions to continue integration regardless of race.¹⁹ The headmaster was clear about the schools acceptance of African American students. However, the tuition of the school kept many from being able to enroll. It was not until 1978 that the Pulaski Academy received its first black student.²⁰

Differing Time Periods

The integration of private schools began happening almost a decade after the integration of public schools. The obvious reasoning being that private schools were an escape from the integration of public education. While desegregation of Central High and Pulaski Academy caused resistance in their surrounding communities, the differing time periods of when they took place is important to note. The beginning of the 1970’s holds many moments of the civil rights

¹⁷ Cleghorn, Reese. “Segregation Academies: The Old South Tries Again.” *Saturday Review*, May 16, 1970.

¹⁸ Stewart, Jeffery. “The Private School Movement in Pulaski County: 1969-1972.” *The Road from Hell Is Paved with Little Rocks RSS*, 2014. Date Accessed April 20, 2020. <https://ualrexhibits.org/desegregation/political-action-and-reaction/private-schools/>.

¹⁹ Horack, Benjamin S. 1968. “Benjamin S. Horack papers”. UNC Charlotte Libraries

²⁰ Stewart, Jeffery. “Private School Movement.” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, December 30, 2016. Date Accessed, April 5, 2020. <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/private-school-movement-9384/>.

movement achieving goals it set out on. The most impactful involving government change in policy. Segregation had been declared unconstitutional and the idea of separate but equal was proven to be unsound²¹. The civil rights activists now had the law on their side. The law is not enough to accomplish the elimination of racism or the guarantee of equal education. The change in government policy does not mean a change in heart of the white community.

The concept of racism “is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another”.²² This idea of whites being superior to blacks has been ingrained into the minds of white citizens for generations, resulting in African Americans enduring countless acts of discrimination. It would be unreasonable to believe that could all be undone with the change of a law. While a white teacher might be forced to have a black student apart of their classroom, there is no enforcement upon the teacher not showing prejudice toward the student, nor any of the student’s white peers showing disapproval of the black student’s presence. The amount of time that separates the desegregation of Central High and Pulaski Academy is not much, but it is enough time for a new generation to begin. And with a new generation comes new ideas, new traditions, and new acceptance.

Environment of the Schools

The institution of private education has roots in establishing the elite. It is a way of separating the privileged from the underprivilege. There is a high tuition rate for private schools, due to it not receiving funds from the government. Instead, it relies on the income from students enrolled in the schools. In return for paying the expensive price, families are able to control what

²¹ Mayford, Lindsey. “Documents Related to Brown v. Board of Education.” National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, 2016. Accessed April 10, 2020. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brown-v-board>.

²² “Racism.” Anti-Defamation League. Accessed May 5, 2020. <https://www.adl.org/racism>.

is taught in school, how nice the facilities are, what lifestyles should be promoted, etc. This makes it appealing to those who can afford it, which often tend to be the wealthy. The price of tuition at Pulaski Academy is what kept black students from being enrolled for seven years after the school had opened. Upon entering, the environment was much different than anything the African Americans had been exposed to before. While they might have been introduced to the luxuries of a white family's home or workplace, it would not have been for their own personal use. But being students at Pulaski Academy meant they were able to enjoy the benefits of the institution. There were manicured lawns and well-kept classrooms.²³

Little Rock Central High was built in 1927 and didn't desegregate until 1957. Everything had been under use for the most part, but in comparison with what education black students had been receiving beforehand, the transition to this public school was highly impactful. Central High School had seven floors and took up a two block radius. It was a school that had been received top ratings in the nation. The school where Melba Beals came from in comparison was only one story tall, with none of the state-of-the-art equipment. Her teachers had been dedicated to teach them though and committed to making their learning experience worth their time. While African Americans now had access to nicer materials at Central High, their quality of teaching went down. They didn't just endure hate from the students upon attending the school, but received hate from the faculty as well.²⁴

²³ Purdy, Michelle A. "Introduction." In *Transforming the Elite: Black Students and the Desegregation of Private Schools*, 1-21. CHAPEL HILL: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. Accessed April 7, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469643519_purdy.5.

²⁴ "Interview with Melba Pattillo Beals: The Melba Pattillo Story.", January 31, 1995. Scholastic Database. Accessed April 5, 2020. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/barrier/hwyf/mpbstory/interview.htm>.

Public response

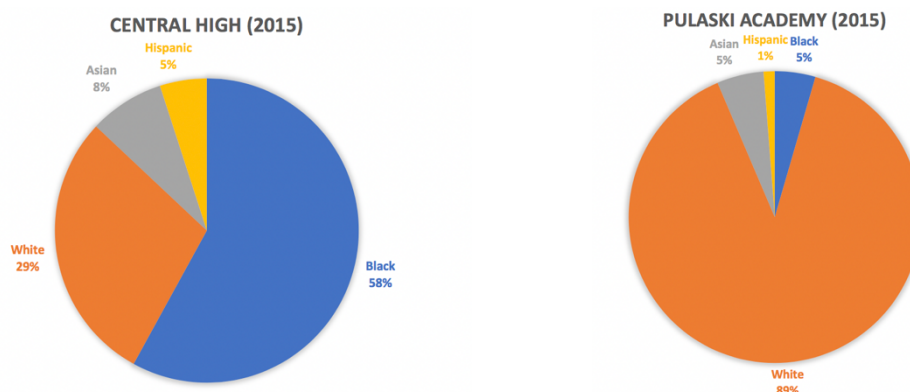
Because Pulaski Academy opened as an integrated school, the students who first attended expected at some point for an African American to enroll. The families who sent their children to the school would have been exposed to the idea beforehand. Teachers had accepted the notion that African Americans would be allowed to receive an education at the school. Little Rock Central High was forced to desegregate. It was against everything the southern white culture believed. It struck anger in their hearts. Melba Beals recalls her very first day at Central High starting off with men chasing her away from the school carrying ropes, threatening to kill her.²⁵ Her second attempt of starting school ended at noon, due to a mob rushing the school grounds. Mrs. Beals tells of policemen she watched throw down their badges in order to join the mob. The few white students who reached out kindly toward the Little Rock Nine, were quickly dismissed by the threat of segregationists turning their hate on them.²⁶

The natural response of the segregationists was to have their children leave any integrated institutions in order in order to preserve their traditions. In return, this led to a future spike in African American's attendance of Little Rock public school systems. This was due to the absence of those opposed to integration who fled the public system. As well as the expense to enroll in a private schools that was unaffordable to the majority of the black community. African Americans have stayed the minority in private institutions, while becoming the majority in public institutions. Even though there was less resistance to Pulaski Academy integrating vs. Central High, eventually Central High would hold more African American students than white students.

²⁵ "Interview with Melba Pattillo Beals: The Melba Pattillo Story.", January 31, 1995. Scholastic Database. Accessed April 5, 2020. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/barrier/hwyf/mpbstory/interview.htm>.

²⁶ Collins, Janelle. "Authority and Subjectivity in Melba Pattillo Beals' "Warriors Don't Cry"." *CEA Critic* 73, no. 2 (2011): 55-69. Accessed May 5, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/44378443.

In 2015, the racial demographics report of Pulaski was to be only five percent African Americans,²⁷ while Central High reported an estimate of fifty-eight percent African Americans.²⁸



Interviews

Introduction of interviews (220)

This trend led me to continue research in studying present day universities racial demographics. Comparing public and private university students' experience in attending college in the state of Arkansas. The interviews consist of one current student of a public university and two students of a private university, both of which are located in Arkadelphia, Arkansas – about an hour drive from Pulaski county. These interviews were conducted over the phone and documented by a recording. The purpose of these interviews is to broaden the study's comparisons of Arkansas integration of students who chose to continue education after secondary school.

²⁷ USASchoolInfo.com. "Pulaski Academy Little Rock, AR Enrollment & Demographics." USASchoolInfo. Accessed May 5, 2020. <http://www.usaschoolinfo.com/school/pulaski-academy-little-rock-arkansas.104183/enrollment>.

²⁸ USASchoolInfo.com. "Central High School Little Rock, AR Enrollment & Demographics." USASchoolInfo. Accessed May 5, 2020. <http://www.usaschoolinfo.com/school/central-high-school-little-rock-arkansas.5225/enrollment>.

Ouachita Baptist University (220)

Ouachita Baptist University is an independent, residential institution in the liberal arts tradition. And the school is affiliated with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Ouachita was founded in the year 1886, but it was not until 1964 the school integrated two African Americans onto its campus.²⁹ The college admitted Rhodesians Michael and Mary Makosholo as the Universities first black students to be enrolled. This was a married couple from Africa. Ouachita hoped to educate them in the states, so that when they returned to their country, Michael Makosholo (picture featured on the right)³⁰ could be the principal of the school Ouachita Missions had just built.³¹ At this time, the school was not open to all integration, rather the Makosholos' were the exception. But two years after, the trustees of Ouachita opened admission to all persons "regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin." That fall, Carolyn Jean Green became the first African American to enroll under the new policy.³²



Interview One

Gerald Wayne Fursman is a white male, now fifty-two years of age, who graduated with a business degree from Ouachita Baptist University in 1990. While attending the school he

²⁹ "Ouachita Baptist University (OBU)." Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Accessed May 5, 2020. <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/ouachita-baptist-university-2998/>.

³⁰ "Mike Makosholo, First Black Student at Ouachita Baptist." Universities Libraries Digital Collection . Ouachita Digital Archives . Accessed May 5, 2020. <https://digitalcollections.uark.edu/digital/collection/Civilrights/id/256/>.

³¹ Fray, Marion. *Oral History Regarding Integration of Ouachita Baptist University*. Interview by Brant Matros, University of Arkansas Libraries. Accessed March 10, 2020 <https://digitalcollections.uark.edu/digital/collection/Civilrights/id/1538>

³² Bealer, Ariel, Marissa Pilcher, and OBU Signal. "Ariel Bealer." The OBU Signal, September 27, 2007. <https://www.obusignal.com/history-of-little-rock-integration-celebrated-remembered-today/>.

participated in social club activities, was a Rho Sigma member, and a linebacker for the Ouachita football team. He is originally from Dallas, Texas but came to Arkansas after being offered an athletic scholarship from the school. He classified his family's financial background to be upper middle class at the time.

Fursman never considered himself to be racist nor his parents. But it was not until looking back at his youth that he realized there was still much prejudice against African Americans during his four years at the University, he was just ignorant to identify it. Upon entering the school as a freshman, he was assigned a black roommate to live with in the boys athletic dormitories. Fursman remembers his father being utterly surprised that the school would place people of two different races to be roommates. He didn't think much of it at the time, but he has come to understand his parents were of a different generation, a generation that was not used to being in close proximity to the African American Race. It wasn't that his parents did not know blacks had been granted equal rights and their Baptist values even supported it, but their upper middle class status kept them enclosed to only white company.

Fursman recalls his rooming with a black student resulted in them both receiving heavier hazing from the football team. The coach, however showed no such prejudice. Fursman jokingly reported "Coach saw all of us as no good scoundrels who were in dire need of getting whooped into shape". The heavier hazing resulted in Fursman and his back roommate developing a deeper friendship with one another, rather than animosity. Fursman explains "hazing was a part of being guy". He didn't take it personally or blame anyone for the somewhat hard conditions they endured.³³ Sometimes their clothes were stolen from the locker room or they were locked out of

³³ Fursman, Gerald. Interview by Kaleb McAdams, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. March 15, 2020.

the dormitories at night, resulting in them missing curfew and having to run laps the next day in practice.

Fursman has dyslexia and it made it very difficult for him to succeed in literature classes. In order to play in the football games, Fursman had to maintain a certain GPA. His roommate, however, was an English major and excelled well in writing. They developed such a close friendship that his roommate would help him in his English classes, and in return Fursman would take him hunting and fishing, one of his roommates favorite pass times. The hazing only lasted their first year on the team, after that both boys had received enough credibility to be left alone and start their own hazing on the next group of freshman.³⁴

Interview Two

Ouachita University currently has an average undergraduate enrollment of 1,600 students, Jacolby McCray was not shocked for the number of those graduating with a biology degree to be small as well. What did come as a surprise was finding himself to be the only African American to graduate with a major in biology. He had not taken notice until he looked up on the bulletin board where every biology student's photo, graduating his same year, had been hung up. Scanning across his classmates faces, brought it to his attention. McCray is currently finishing up his last semester at Ouachita University and is in the process of applying for medical school. He hopes to work as a family pediatrician in the future.

McCray is originally from Dallas, Texas, where he underwent a public education. McCray explains that for him racism was something of the past.³⁵ It's what he heard his grandparents talk about and what his ancestors experienced, but believed it wasn't very active in

³⁴ Fursman, Gerald. Interview by Kaleb McAdams, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. March 15, 2020.

³⁵ McCray, Jacolby. Interview by Kaleb McAdams, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. April 16, 2020.

present day. McCray report up until attending Ouachita Baptist University, he had never felt like a minority. He had worked through high school, never struggling to get hired, and attended a high school with a large diversity. Upon moving to Arkadelphia, he experienced a much different environment. Most of his classes were majorly white students. It was an odd feeling for him because “I was used to there being a mix of culture, but now I was surrounded by a bunch of middle class white people”. It wasn’t a bad thing for him he explained, just took a little bit of time to get used to. McCray hasn’t experienced any prejudice from the school and has enjoyed his time studying at the university. However, McCray reports that the surrounding counties are not always as inclusive as the people on campus.

Every semester, Ouachita hosts an event called Tiger Serve Day. It is an opportunity for students to help the community by completing service projects. McCray retells an incident of something that happened one year while serving that reminded him of the reality of prejudice thinking still be alive. McCray had been working on a house for an older woman with a group of other students. There were a bunch of bricks that needed to be removed from the driveway. While working by himself, one of the neighbors came out and started harassing him for what he was doing. They accused him of stealing and calling him out for the color of his skin. McCray was shocked. It was the first time he had experienced any form of racism. McCray learned that the city is much different then rural areas. He explains that it seems harder for people away from the urban cities to be exposed to new ways of living. They are more isolated and don’t get exposed to as much diversity. For him personally, it helps him understand why he never had contact with any discrimination before.³⁶

³⁶ McCray, Jacolby. Interview by Kaleb McAdams, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. April 16, 2020.

Henderson State University

Henderson State University is a public liberal-arts school, located in Arkadelphia Arkansas. It is one of Arkansas's oldest publicly funded universities and remains the only public liberal-arts school in the state. Henderson was founded in 1890, first as a Methodist College. It was not until 1929 that the institution broke away from the Methodist church and became known as Henderson State Teachers College and then changed its name once more in 1975 to Henderson State University. It was under the university's presidency of D. D. McBrien, that Henderson integrated its first black students in 1955. Maurice Horton, who graduated from the school, continued on to achieve being the first African American to receive an undergraduate degree from a majorly white school in Arkansas in 1957.³⁷

Interview Three

Ian Perkins-Smith is an African American and a current Junior at Henderson State University. He is a communications major, who is originally from Plano, Texas. Smith says that he grew up receiving private education. He was enrolled at Prestonwood Baptist Academy for his primary and secondary education. He enjoyed his time there and was used to being the minority in a classroom. His father had attended Henderson State University, which is why he chose to apply to the school. Upon being guaranteed to graduate debt free, he decided to leave his private education and experience public schooling.³⁸

Smith admits explains that he was already used to small classroom sizes, so it was a comfortable transition to the small state university. What he didn't expect was how much the

³⁷ "Henderson State University (HSU)." Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Accessed May 5, 2020. <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/henderson-state-university-hsu-4139/>.

³⁸ Perkins-Smith, Ian. Interview by Kaleb McAdams, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. April 12, 2020.

diversity was going to impact him. Smith was used to a very conservative culture. His schooling was founded on Baptist values and the conduct of his peers reflected so. Not everyone took the Baptist religion as their own, but it was in the culture to silence differing opinions out of respect to the majority. At Henderson, Smith describes the culture to much different. He says that “people aren’t afraid to offend anyone. For Henderson students, we can speak our mind without others feeling disrespected by our views”. Smith goes on to verify that having an kind understanding isn’t always the case, but it’s taught him to not let conflict bother him.

At Henderson, Smith is no longer the minority in his classrooms, but he says he has experienced more racism living in Arkansas than he ever had in Texas. It doesn’t happen in the classrooms for him, but it takes place out in nearby counties. Little Rock is only an hour drive from his school. Smith and his friends like to drive out to the city some weekends to be around a more urban feel. He explains that he had to learn which nearby counties were safe for him to stop in along the way. If he ever needed to get gas or food, there are certain mile markers he won’t go to because there is too much prejudice against African Americans. Smith says he has friends who have even told him about fast food joints refusing them service due to them being black. It angers him, but also makes him sad that there are still people missing out on a whole culture just because of the color of their skin.³⁹

Comparison

Ouachita Baptist University and Henderson State University are both considered small liberal arts school. Ouachita has an undergraduate enrollment of about sixteen-hundred students, while Henderson has around Three-thousand. Just like the with the secondary schools,

³⁹ Perkins-Smith, Ian. Interview by Kaleb McAdams, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. April 12, 2020.

Henderson (being public) integrated a little more than a decade before Ouachita (being private) did. The results of the racial diversity between the public and private schools seemed to stay consistent as well. Smith states Henderson to contain much more diversity than what he experienced at his private high school education, while McCray became the minority upon enrolling in the private University.

It was reassuring to hear that both students felt that they were accepted on their own school's campus and integration of the university had been a successful on the account of providing equal education and opportunity at both institutions. However, Smith and McCray both report incidents off campus where racism and discrimination still exist. The mentality of hate against the color of someone's skin still exists in the state of Arkansas. But it does not seem to be affecting the result of the integration of the schools. On the contrary, by Ouachita continuing to reach out to the surrounding community with service projects, the school helps create a new norm for rural people to be exposed to. Both universities hold events that celebrate black history month and include the surrounding communities to come and participate.⁴⁰ McCray and Smith agree that in doing so, it provides education to those who don't understand the wrong in America's past or the goodness of the civil rights movement.

Direction For Future Research

Much still needs to be done in order to fully understand the progress of integration of public and private schools in the state of Arkansas. Future research should include many more interviews with students from both past and present experiences. It would benefit to have

⁴⁰ Monroe Housing Authority Board Of Commissioners. "Black History Month: A Salute to Local Outstanding Citizens." Hanna Newspapers, February 19, 2020. https://www.hannapub.com/ouachitacitizen/news/local_state_headlines/black-history-month-a-salute-to-local-outstanding-citizens/article_d9cfc4b0-5338-11ea-acbd-c7c2940c7343.html.

accounts from current Arkansas high schoolers to compare to students who are currently receiving a higher education. Most high schools have an attendance of students who live near the school or are at least in the state. This is much different than colleges, who can have students from all around country and even some from around the world. Having these outside state perspectives does help broaden the research, but it would serve well to have students who can compare the culture of what is outside the high school to what is inside the high school. Another factor necessary for this research is more interviews done with females. Female African Americans have had to undergo double discrimination due to the color of their skin and their gender. It would be interesting to learn how one has affected the other.

While more interviews will benefit this research, there should also be a further study on the church's relationship with integration. Many of the "segregated academies" were hosted by the local church. Religion can often be have a heavy influence on a communities culture. This is because while the government creates laws to follow, religion creates morals to be kept. Future research should include what doctrines Arkansas churches were teaching and what were the different churches' stance regarding integration of education systems. There are some churches located in the Little Rock Area that have been around since the late eighteen-hundreds. How have their stances changed during the shift to different eras?

Lastly, it would be good to review more closely what the all black education systems were like and did any of them choose to integrate white students? There were not as many all black private schools that were created, compared to how many white private schools were established. A future study could include what it was like for the few black private schools that existed.

Conclusion

Arkansas has a long and ugly past regarding integration of public schools. There has been a lot of hate and devastating actions taken against those who are underserving of it. Schools are the biggest place children spend outside their home. This makes a school's influence on the development of a child quite heavy. Arkansas is a southern state that was raised on the belief that whites are superior to blacks. When the actions of the civil rights movement began threatening to eliminate their superiority, it created massive resistance and an even more intense hatred for the African American race that was causing it. It is humans instinct to protect their young, their children. For the white residents of Little Rock, Arkansas, their children were at risk of being exposed to what they thought of as unclean people. It made the white community respond irrationally and commit horrific acts to keep black people away from their children.

When public schools failed to uphold white Arkansas citizens' traditions, they fled to the private institutions. Many private schools didn't make it because of the lack of funds needed to keep the schools afloat. This left the private academies that succeed to have enrolled majorly wealthy students. The administration could then raise tuition to keep blacks out. However, with time African Americans became enrolled in both public and private education systems. The difference being in the environment the students faced. Private schools have continued to result in African Americans being the minority and many of the other students come from upper middle class to wealthy families. Public schools tend to have majorly middle class to low income families. This changes the culture inside the schools.

While African Americans tend to remain the minority in private institutions and have become the majority in public schools, the notion of equal rights and education, regardless of

race, has been established. But while the law is on the side of equality, not all the hearts of Arkansas citizens have changed in accepting the change.

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