

JOURNAL OF FLORIDA STUDIES

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF THE IDEA AND PLACE THAT IS FLORIDA

Volume 1, Issue 7, 2018

The Long Struggle for Quality Education for African Americans in East Florida

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Widespread racial desegregation of Florida's public schools, including those in Volusia County, was finally achieved in the fall of 1970, but only after the Supreme Court set a firm deadline and Governor Claude Kirk's motion to stay the Court's desegregation order was rejected. Although school desegregation was not the panacea hoped for by most African Americans and white liberals, it was still a watershed event that marked the end of a long struggle to desegregate Florida's schools that began in earnest during the post-World War II civil rights movement—

especially after the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) which mandated that the public schools be desegregated. However, documented attempts at creating racially integrated schools in Florida date back to 1864 in Jacksonville (Duval County), and 1866 in Port Orange (Volusia County), though these efforts quickly failed. For black Floridians the primary goal has always been to eliminate the educational inequalities between the races, with support of integrated schools contingent upon their facilitating this goal.

This article will trace and analyze the lengthy struggle by black Floridians (with a focus on Volusia County) for quality education from the colonial Spanish period through the modern civil rights era, and provide commentary on the post-civil rights

era. The educational activities and opportunities open to black Floridians during the following distinctive periods of Florida's post-European contact history will be examined: first Spanish period (1513-1763), British occupation (1763-1783), second Spanish period (1783-1821), United States antebellum era (1821-1861), Civil War (1861-1865), Reconstruction (1865-1877), Jim Crow era (1877-1965), modern civil rights era (1945-1971), and the current post-civil rights era (1971-present).

Under the terms of the Adams-Onís Treaty, signed by the United States and Spain in 1819, Florida officially became a United States territory in 1821, ending forever Spanish control over Florida. While under Spanish jurisdiction, Florida's free people of color enjoyed an exalted status compared to free blacks in the predominantly Anglo region to the north. People of all colors frequently mingled together in the streets, the workplace, and in church. Also, Spanish Florida's lenient manumission laws enabled many slaves to become free. Slaves could own and transfer property, and

therefore could—and not infrequently did—purchase their own freedom. With miscegenation legal and the Church urging matrimony as opposed to “living in sin,” interracial marriages, usually between white men and slave or free black women, were not uncommon. But even when they did not marry, the white fathers:

routinely acknowledged their children at baptism and in their wills. Children of interracial unions in St. Augustine often received education, training, or property from their white fathers. Free black parents also left more modest properties to their children. They tried to arrange good marriages for their daughters and sought to advance their sons by enrolling them in St. Augustine's parochial school or apprenticing them to tradesmen. (Landers 1996, 179)

As a result, St. Augustine (and especially Pensacola in West Florida) established a predominantly light-complexioned, relatively well-off free black community (Schafer 2013, 178; Landers 1996, 168).

St. Augustine's parochial school had its origins in 1786, during the Second Spanish Period when Governor Manuel de Zepedes decreed that a public school be established in St. Augustine. Priests were required to identify all of the boys in the city, talk to their parents about the importance of educating their children, and enroll as many as possible in the new school. The governor made clear to the teacher-priests that non-white pupils were to receive the same instruction as the whites. Although black, white, and mixed-race children attended classes together, racial segregation was not entirely absent, as nonwhites were required to sit by the door (Landers 1999, 116).

The growing size and status of Spanish Florida's free black population was mostly due to two factors: 1) the Catholic Church, which, as noted above, gave its influential support to interracial marriage and lenient manumission policies, and 2), the colony's need to counter both external and internal threats to Spanish white rule. Spain's desire to defend Florida from English incursion was a cogent reason for the Crown's policies regarding its colony's free black

population. In 1693, Spain's King Charles II issued an edict freeing all slaves entering Florida from the British colonies, provided that they converted to Catholicism, "so that by their example and by my liberality others will do the same" (Landers, 1990, 14). Promising freedom to South Carolina's slaves if they left their masters and settled in Florida potentially improved Florida's security by (1) establishing a free black community that would be highly motivated to defend their freedom by fighting against any British invaders and (2) depriving South Carolina of the labor it needed to sustain the colony. By 1710, South Carolina had a black majority and its economy was heavily dependent on slave labor. Slave revolts soon followed, as well as the Yamasee Indian War (1715), during which many slaves joined the Yamasee and fought the British. These uprisings were brutally crushed, but the turmoil they produced resulted in increasing numbers of slaves escaping to freedom in St. Augustine. In 1738, Governor Manuel de Montiano resettled the freed runaways in a new town, Mose, located two miles north of St. Augustine. The new residents,

under the able leadership Francisco Menendez, quickly built a stone fort, organized a militia, and planted crops in the surrounding fields. As runaway slaves from South Carolina continued to arrive in St. Augustine, they were transported to Ft. Mose, which served as the first line of defense for St. Augustine and its large fort, Castillo de San Marcos.

Florida serving as a sanctuary for runaway slaves from South Carolina added to the growing tensions between Spain and England during the 1730s, culminating in the War of Jenkins' Ear, which began in 1739. The following year an army led by Georgia's governor, James Oglethorpe, invaded Florida, seeking to capture St. Augustine and its Castillo. After a ferocious battle Ft. Mose was captured, but as designed, it blunted Oglethorpe's invasion and gave the townspeople of St. Augustine time to assemble inside the Castillo, where they were soon joined by the survivors from Mose. From the protection of the Castillo, Mose's militia regrouped and staged raids on Oglethorpe's army, earning the respect and admiration of St. Augustine's townspeople. One month

after Mose had been overrun and destroyed by the British, Spanish forces, aided by the Mose militia, retook the black fort, and soon thereafter Oglethorpe's forces withdrew from Florida (Landers 1990, 19-20).

Ft. Mose was rebuilt in 1752, and soon thereafter was repopulated. A detailed census conducted in 1759, indicated that an ethnically diverse community of sixty-seven men, women, and children, mostly of West African heritage, lived at Mose. An extensive interdisciplinary excavation of the Mose site, directed by Kathleen Deagan from the Florida Museum of Natural History, has yielded a treasure trove of artifacts revealing a community of farmers, fishermen, tradesmen and tradeswomen, artisans, soldiers, and their children (Landers 1996, 174.) However, there is no indication of any schools at Mose, nor any record of the literacy rate among its residents. However, Jane Landers does note the literacy of Mose's first leader, Francisco Menendez, who unsuccessfully twice petitioned the Crown for payment of services in defense of Mose:

It was customary for an illiterate person to sign official documents with an X, and for the notary or witnesses to write underneath, "for, who does not know how to write." Both these petitions, however, were written and signed in the same hand and with a flourish, so it would seem that at some point Menendez learned how to write in Spanish-perhaps when he was the slave of the royal accountant whose name he took. (Landers 1990, 21)

During the second Spanish period, Spain faced existential threats to its far-flung colonial empire, including rebellions throughout the Americas led by Simon Bolivar, as well as threats to its sovereignty during the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815). With the mother country's attentions and resources concentrated elsewhere, Florida was left to fend for itself against multiple threats: the prospect of insurrection from its large Indian and slave population, and potential invasion from its expansion-minded neighbor, the United States. These were not abstract threats. Florida's black population increased dramatically

during the second Spanish Period, rising from twenty-seven percent of the total population in 1786, to fifty-seven percent by 1814 (Landers 1996, 178), sparking fears of a rebellion by an Indian-slave alliance. The United States seized over half of West Florida's territory between 1795 and 1814. East Florida twice faced invasion from her northern neighbor, first in 1795, when Fort Nicolas (now part of Jacksonville) was captured, and again from 1812 to 1814, during the so-called Patriot War, when an expeditionary force from Georgia seized portions of Northeast Florida in a failed attempt to foment an insurrection throughout the region (Coker and Parker 1996, 151, 162-163; Schafer 2013, 121-122).

Confronted with serious internal and external threats, Spanish Florida's leaders nurtured a third caste of subjects, the free people of color, most of whom were of light complexion and whose status lay between that of the white ruling caste and the mostly dark complexioned slaves. Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas, like Florida, had Roman Catholic colonial masters (Spain and/or France) and trended

toward a three-caste system. This differed from the two-caste system that evolved in the mostly Anglo-Protestant colonies of the Upper South where whites outnumbered blacks and their economies were less dependent on slave labor than in the Gulf Coast region. White residents of Anglo-Protestant America were inclined to view society in biracial terms—you either belonged to the white ruling caste or to the black slave caste. Once the Gulf Coast colonies became part of the United States, the special status of their free non-white, largely light-complexioned populations diminished but did not disappear. The lingering influence of French and/or Spanish Catholic heritage resulted in the free people of color in these states possessing some measure of preferred status compared to Upper South that included Missouri, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia. Favored status meant increased educational opportunities, so it is not surprising that the mean literacy rate for free blacks was higher in the Gulf Coast states (83 percent) as compared to the states of the

Upper South (76 percent) (Lempel 1979, 34-111).

Most East Florida planters of the Second Spanish Period, although they had come from Great Britain or the United States¹ lamented the changes that occurred after the United States acquired Florida. Historian Daniel L. Schafer concluded that “East Florida planters generally embraced Spain’s liberal manumission policies, believing they would produce an essential middle caste that would unite with whites against foreign invaders and help control the slave population” (Schafer 2013, 177). Zephaniah Kingsley, Jr., who owned numerous plantations along the St. John’s River from near Jacksonville to Lake George, maintained several long-term relationships with slave women and fathered several of their children. Though there are no records to indicate that he formally married these women, Kingsley “thought of himself as the patriarch of a very large family encompassing the slaves he owned, his own mixed-race children, and their African mothers....The biracial children he fathered were freed, educated, and provided with property and protection, as were their

mothers” (Schafer 2013, 191). Apparently, education of his children, all of whom were of mixed race, was a high priority for Kingsley. A visitor to his home plantation on Fort George Island in 1836, remarked that “Tutors have attended [Kingsley’s children] from infancy...the girls have been taught music and dancing, the modern languages and polite literature” (Schafer 2013, 194).

After 1821, life became more difficult for Kingsley and his family. United States anti-miscegenation laws and restrictions on manumission made him an outlaw and threatened the freedom of his biracial children and their mothers. For a while his wealth and influence protected Kingsley, but over time Florida’s laws placed more restrictions on free blacks, made it more difficult for them to remain free, and harder for masters to manumit their slaves. Kingsley responded to these changes with protest and defiance, but fearing for the well-being of his mixed race family, he ended up moving them to Haiti. Still concerned about his children’s education, Kingsley tried, unsuccessfully, to send tutors from

the United States to Haiti (Schafer 2013, 194).

Although Zephaniah Kingsley was unique in the degree to which he embraced miscegenation, encouraged manumission, and openly acknowledged and protected his nonwhite extended family, most other planters in East Florida recognized the necessity of the three-caste society. Well after Florida joined the United States, many of these planters continued to defy government efforts to treat all African Americans as one inferior, subservient people whose natural condition was slavery. In 1833, twelve years after Florida became a United States territory, Kingsley composed a petition, signed by eleven other East Florida planters, demanding that Congress respect the rights of Florida’s free people of color as defined under Spanish law and as required under the terms of the Adams-Onís Treaty (Schafer 2013, 182). For these twelve petitioners the matter was personal—all had fathered mixed-race children and were concerned for their continued freedom and welfare.

The petition together with Kingsley’s other actions reflect the

endurance of Spanish assumptions about race, slaves, and free black people. These assumptions undoubtedly resonated in the black community, serving to encourage Florida's slaves and free blacks to assert the rights and privileges they had been promised while under Spanish rule, and in some cases fought for. Within Florida's antebellum free black community were the descendants of runaway slaves, mostly from South Carolina, who had fled to Florida during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and earned their freedom by defending the colony from English invasion. As evidence of the lingering influence of its Spanish colonial heritage, sixty-nine percent of Florida's 932 free people of color were of mixed race in 1860, and seventy-one percent of the Sunshine State's free blacks were literate in 1850 (Lempel 1979, 44, 59).

Florida's antebellum slaves likely had a comparatively high literacy rate. Historian Larry Eugene Rivers concluded that "upwards of 15 percent of Florida bond servants had gained some proficiency in reading and writing before emancipation" (Rivers 2000, 150). This is about five percent

higher than most estimates of slave literacy in the antebellum South. Rivers offers several examples of Florida planters' willingness to teach slaves to read and write despite laws forbidding such practices, because some jobs on the plantation were better done when the workers were literate. Miscegenation also facilitated slave literacy, as slave owners often educated their mixed race offspring (Rivers 2000, 149). Because both miscegenation and teaching slaves to read and write were legal in Spanish colonial Florida, it is likely that Florida possessed a relatively high literacy rate by 1821. After 1821, a high literacy rate was likely maintained by a combination of slave owners such as Kingsley defying such laws and literate bondsmen teaching their brethren.

Sometimes slaves took the initiative in acquiring literacy, perhaps getting a head start by accommodating members of their masters' families. Nine-year-old Frederick Douglass, after boldly asking Sophia Auld, the kind wife of his master, to teach him to read, was taught the rudiments of reading and writing. When Master Thomas Auld put an abrupt end to the lessons,

Douglass continued learning on his own by acquiring a copy of *Webster's Spelling-Book* and convincing his white playmates to help him (Douglass 1993, 56-57, 61-62). A similar story was told by former Florida slave, Douglas Dorsey. Young Douglas was assigned to carry the books of his owner's son, eight-year-old Willie. Willie then taught Douglas what he had been taught in school, enabling Douglas to learn the alphabet and some numbers. When Willie's mother (Douglas's mistress) found out what was happening, she severely beat both of the children and warned Douglas "If I ever catch you making another figure anywhere I'll cut off your right arm" (Dorsey 1937).

Literacy served important survival and resistance functions for slaves. Education increased one's self esteem, enabling bondsmen and women to resist the sense of worthlessness, inferiority, and psychological dependency that masters sought to instill in their slaves. Educated slaves were more likely to work in jobs on and off the plantation, which gave them greater freedom of movement, less dependence on masters, and more opportunities to escape.

Frederick Douglass' literacy and skills convinced his master to send him to Baltimore to "hire out his own time," enabling Douglass to live almost as a free man. But his new sense of independence only fueled his desire to escape from slavery altogether and made him realize that he possessed the skills to prosper on his own. Literacy also enabled Douglass to forge free papers, a skill he implemented in organizing his first escape attempt (Douglass 1993, 147, 172-175). Heavily influenced by the Second Great Awakening that swept the southern states during the early and mid-nineteenth century, many African Americans and whites became deeply religious. Slave owners used Christianity as a means of controlling slaves, teaching that the Bible urged servants to obey their masters. But literate blacks could examine Biblical passages that advocated resistance to slavery and favored the poor and the powerless over the powerful.

Southern society, including Florida, was turned upside down by the Civil War and Reconstruction eras. This period ended slavery and provided Constitutional guarantees of citizenship and suffrage for the newly

emancipated men and women, generally referred to as freedmen. For Volusia County, the aftermath of the war was especially significant for African Americans. In November 1866, just over a year after the Civil War's end, a determined and brave physician, Esther Hill Hawks, opened a school for freedmen and local whites in the new freedmen settlement of Port Orange, located just north of New Smyrna and a few miles south of modern-day Daytona Beach, on Volusia County's east coast.

A staunch abolitionist from New Hampshire, Esther Hawks spent much of the Civil War in Port Royal, South Carolina as an agent for the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, one of the numerous missionary organizations established during the war to assist the newly freed slaves. One of the nation's first female physicians, Dr. Hawks treated injured and sick black soldiers in field hospitals, and for a time commanded a hospital for black troops (Schwartz 1982, 155-56). However, since her position with the Freedmen's Aid Society required her to teach, Esther Hawks spent most of her time and energy educating the freedmen. She

left Port Royal in February 1864, when the military and the Freedmen's Aid Society authorized her to establish a free public school in Jacksonville, Florida just weeks after the city's capture by Union forces. It was there that Esther Hawks operated the first racially integrated school in Florida, and probably in the United States. The racially mixed student body generally worked well together, but most of the white parents and many union officers objected, and after six weeks only one white child still attended the school.

If Esther Hawks was discouraged that her school had failed, it did not stop her from starting a similar school about 110 miles south Jacksonville on Florida's east coast, where her husband, John Milton Hawks, had established a freedmen settlement at Port Orange in 1866. Also a physician, Dr. J. M. Hawks founded the Florida Land and Lumber Company in late 1865 for the purpose of providing work and homesteads for the several hundred freedmen who had accompanied him from Port Royal, as well as building a lumber mill to enrich himself and the company's principal investors. Shortly after

joining her husband at Port Orange in November 1866, Esther Hawks opened school for the freedmen and their families, as well as for local white children. Despite the rugged frontier conditions of post-Civil War east central Florida and the hostility of local whites, Hawks' integrated school reportedly thrived in late 1866 through 1867. On November 19, 1867 she wrote that her "school flourishes, and the pupils are making good progress. Out of twenty-five, I have an average attendance of twenty-two; of these, eight are white, two mulattoes, and fifteen full blacks; so far we have had no discords; the children playing together as harmoniously as kittens" (Hawks Nov. 19, 1867). However, the Florida Land and Lumber Company and the freedmen community that it spawned faltered. By mid-April 1867, only about 250 freedmen resided in Port Orange, and by 1869 a mere nine black families remained (Schwartz 1989, 20-21).

Even as the colony declined, Esther Hawks persevered in her efforts to educate both blacks and whites. As the freedmen moved inland looking for work, she followed her

pupils, holding classes in the interior. However, this location brought her into frequent contact with native whites who generally despised Dr. Hawks' efforts to teach the freedmen, and were outraged that she would hold integrated classes. Thus, the same prejudice that had foiled Esther's integrated school in Jacksonville now reared its head in Central Florida. After re-opening her school in the fall of 1867, she noted that the parents of at least one or two of her pupils "have been very bitter in their remarks against 'mixing white children with the niggers in schools.'" Despite these sentiments, Hawks remained "hopeful that the time is rapidly approaching in this State when such prejudices will be overcome by a more liberal spirit" (Hawks Oct. 11, 1867).

While there was never much support for integrated schools after the Civil War, Florida's Reconstruction government did much to further public education in the state and to ensure that African Americans would benefit. In 1866, a combination of state legislation and cooperation with the Freedmen's Bureau led to the establishment of sixty day- and night-

schools for African Americans and the hiring of thirty-three black teachers to supplement the white teachers assigned to these schools. Twenty-five additional black teachers were soon hired, and by the end of the 1866-1867 schoolyear, freedmen enrollment had topped 2,700.

Historians Irvin D. S. Winsboro and Abel A. Bartley concluded that there were just as many, if not more African Americans attending public school in Florida during 1866-1867 than whites (Winsboro 2014, 717).

A state law passed in January 1869 replaced the freedmen schools with public schools and promised every resident a free public education. The new law was an important step toward educating the people of Florida, including African Americans. However, it called for "separate schools for the different classes," thus paving the way for a state-sponsored, racially segregated school system. The prospects for black education in the Sunshine State received another boost when Jonathan C. Gibbs, who had been Florida's first African American Secretary of State, was appointed in January 1873 to the recently-created position of State Superintendent of

Public Instruction and served in that office until his sudden death in August 1874. During his brief tenure, Gibbs presided over the expansion of public schools to much of the state, with African Americans comprising one-third of the student body. However, the taxing system established to support the public schools proved inadequate. Underfunded black schools looked to the black churches for assistance: "many black churches in Florida expanded their Sunday School programs into 'Sabbath Schools' to offer young parishioners a once-a-week opportunity to learn grammar, arithmetic, and other academic disciplines..." (Winsboro 2014, 719).

Meanwhile, in Volusia County Esther Hill Hawks was having increasing difficulty in sustaining her school. As freedmen continued to leave the failed Port Orange settlement, plans by the Freedmen's Bureau to finish the partially completed schoolhouse were delayed. Esther planned to open another school, even while the more elaborate Freedmen's Bureau school lay unfinished. She noted the exuberance of the "colored people...overjoyed at

the certainty of having school.” But in January 1869, this new schoolhouse fell victim to arson (Hawks Jan. 18, 1869). This event marked the end of Hawks’ noble efforts to establish an integrated school. She returned to New England the following year, exchanging her teaching duties for a flourishing medical practice in Lynn, Massachusetts (Schwartz 1989, 23).

Unfortunately, Esther Hawks’ prediction that objections to integrated schools in Florida would soon wane proved untrue. If anything, racial prejudice became more virulent following the collapse of Reconstruction in the 1870s, and beginning in 1885, Florida’s schools were racially segregated by law (Winsboro 2014, 721). The Supreme Court provided legitimacy to Jim Crow with its infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision, which established the so-called “separate but equal” doctrine—segregation was constitutional as long as equal facilities were provided for both races. However, under Florida’s dual system of education, schools for blacks were vastly inferior, and the racist beliefs of white educators ensured that these inequalities would be perpetuated.

Addressing a conference of Florida’s Superintendents of Public Instruction in 1919, Dr. A. Leight Monroe, Dean of Southwestern Homeopathic College in Louisville, Kentucky, informed the state’s leading educators “that the negro child is precocious and smart and quick, but his cerebral joints ossify at the age of fourteen, and his brain stops growing. His education should start at the age of six and finish at fourteen, when he is old enough to work. The negro is a menace to the public because of his tendency to crime and disease, but he is here and we need him in the field of labor.” Therefore, Dr. Monroe “was in favor of solving this problem by educating the negro to keep him clean in body and mind” (Sheats 1919, 864).

Dr. Monroe’s views were typical of late nineteenth and early twentieth century white intellectuals who, while affirming the intellectual inferiority of African Americans, maintained that some minimal level of education for blacks was beneficial for white Southerners. In doing so, these white elites were combating the common, more rabid white supremacist belief that blacks were mere beasts of

burden that required no formal education. In 1919 Florida's educators were still defending Florida's compulsory school attendance law, which had been enacted in 1915 against strong opposition from Negrophobes who argued that any education for blacks was not only a waste of money, but worked to undermine the racial caste system. World War I produced another rationale for ensuring that blacks received at least some education. At the same professional meeting where Dr. Monroe lectured, Florida's Superintendent of Public Instruction, William N. Sheats, noted that "In regard to the negro children: This war has taught us a great deal...if we do not want to have to do all the fighting for the negroes we must educate them, as most of the negroes were exempt from the war on account of ignorance." Sheats, like Monroe, believed that African Americans were dangerous and burdensome, and providing a modicum of education for them ameliorated the danger and the burden. Sheats asserted that "we will have to educate the negroes, for our own interest. As long as he is here he is a menace to the health and life of

this country. We must educate the negro to take care of himself...else we will have to support him always" (Sheats 1919, 860-61).

Given this hostility toward black Floridians, it is hardly surprising that much fewer resources were devoted to educating black than white children. In 1902, white teachers' salaries in Volusia County averaged \$48.50 per month compared to only \$34.20 per month for black teachers. However, the school year for blacks was 37 days shorter than for whites, thus accentuating the racial pay difference (Wyatt n.d., 3). Until the 1940s, salaries for African American teachers averaged less than one-half the salaries of white teachers in Florida. Salary differences were an important cause of racial differences in per pupil expenditures (Margo 1991, 52-54). For the 1916-1917 school term, the per capita expenditure for white children enrolled in Volusia County schools was \$138.63, but for black children only \$13.19. The disparity in expenditures for white vs. black education found in Volusia County was found statewide and throughout the South during the early decades of the twentieth century (Sheats 1919, 108).

Dramatic improvement toward equalization was seen in the 1940s and 1950s, largely due to the *Alston v. School Board of the City of Norfolk* (1940) decision, where the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with the NAACP's claim that black and white teachers should receive equal pay (Margo 1991, 52-54). The Alston decision was especially welcomed by Harry T. Moore, a math teacher living in Mims and head of the Florida NAACP, who had sued Brevard County in 1937 for not paying black and white teachers equally (Green 1999, 38-42). By 1950, black teachers in Florida were earning 86 percent of what white teachers earned—a vast improvement from 1936, when black teachers earned only 48 percent as much as whites. The gap between black and white per pupil expenditure by Florida's school districts narrowed as well. By the eve of the *Brown* decision, per pupil expenditures stood at \$175.43 for blacks and \$194.81 for whites. In Volusia County the gap was even less: \$205.05 for blacks and \$215.19 for whites (Biannual Report 1955, 212-13, 222-23).

Despite the improvement, decades of abject neglect of black schools had

left the education of black children in Florida in a pitiful state. A glimpse of the horrors perpetrated by the dual education system is found in a comprehensive 1947 report by the Florida Citizens Committee on Education. This study revealed that there were still no black high schools in several Florida counties. Black schools, generally of poor construction to begin with, were woefully lacking in facilities as compared to white schools. For example, 33.5 percent of white schools had laboratories, but only five percent of black schools. Fifty percent of white schools had libraries, but only nine percent of black schools. Fifty-eight percent of white schools had lunch rooms, but less than two percent of black schools. Seventy-two percent of white schools had inside toilets, but less than twelve percent of black schools—sixty-four percent of black schools only had pit privies. Certainly, there were examples of fine black schools, such as Gibbs High School in St. Petersburg, which employed exceptional faculty that produced well-educated citizens. However, the abysmal facilities coupled with poorly trained faculty at most black schools

made a mockery of the idea that separate education meant equal education. Indeed, the report used the terms “disturbing” and “appalling” to describe the vast gulf in academic achievement between white and black pupils (Florida Citizens 1947, 83, 183, 187, 191, 80).

While the black schools in Volusia County were rated higher than the state average, the racial disparity remained enormous at mid-century (DBEN March 16 & April 6, 1950). However, in post-World War II America, African Americans were more determined than ever to alter the imbalance. In 1953 Daytona's Negro PTA delivered a petition to the School Board, signed by 600 residents, protesting inferior facilities as well as double and triple sessions at the city's black schools (DBMJ Jan. 25m, 1953). The School Board indicated it would correct the matters (Minutes 1953) but little was done, and by 1960, African American organizations still were protesting the “deplorable” conditions at several black schools, with one having “only one toilet, no electricity, and no drinking water” (DBMJ Oct.31, 1960).

Although the 1953 protest failed to yield immediate results, it demonstrated that Daytona’s long suffering black community was unwilling to tolerate continued injustice perpetrated against its children. The protest also reflected the heightened activism of post-World War II African Americans who, as a consequence of their wartime service, became imbued with a growing sense of pride and determination to establish a New South where racial equality prevailed. The school protests were part of a groundswell of actions which symbolized the birth of the modern civil rights movement in Daytona Beach. In 1948 George Engram became the first black to run for a city commission seat (Lempel 1998, 11-14), and the following year a newly formed black organization, the West Side Business and Professional Men’s Association, initiated a federal suit when the city refused to admit blacks into its new civic auditorium (Lempel Dec. 1999, 3-5).

The pace of protest quickened following the 1954 *Brown* decision, which declared that segregation was inherently unequal, and called for desegregation of the public schools.

Civil rights activists were immensely encouraged by the decision, which to them signaled the death knell of Jim Crow. During the next few years, black Daytonans formed several new grass roots civil rights organizations and began challenging the city's racial caste system. City blacks petitioned against their exclusion from the bathing beaches in 1955, demanded integration of the municipal golf course in 1956, and protested the inhumane treatment of a black laundry worker who was kicked, beaten, and then fired by her white manager, also in 1956. In January 1957 several black community leaders objected to the creation of segregated junior colleges in the city—part of Governor Leroy Collins' plan to establish several all-white and all-black two-year colleges throughout the state (Lempel 2009, 97).

After the *Brown* decision, many enlightened Daytonans believed their city would forsake Jim Crow and rapidly transform itself into a New South metropolis. There were solid reasons for such optimism. Founded mostly by Northern whites, and with a continued influx of snowbirds and Northern tourists, Daytona possessed

a long tradition of relatively harmonious race relations that was enhanced by the influence of Mary McLeod Bethune, Bethune-Cookman College, a progressive newspaper (the *News-Journal*) that supported desegregation, and a city leadership determined to preserve the lucrative tourist trade. Furthermore, African Americans in both Daytona Beach (east Volusia) and DeLand (west Volusia), the county's two population centers at mid-century, possessed a level of political clout rarely seen in the South before World War II, thanks to a close alliance with the powerful city and county political machines that dated back to the 1920s.²

However, progress occurred at a slower pace than anticipated. By 1960 only the busses in Daytona Beach were integrated, and segregation on most facilities did not end until after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Reactionary state leadership impeded desegregation, and entrenched local officials demonstrated little interest in reform. Rabid segregationists known as the "Pork Chop Gang" dominated the Florida legislature during the 1950s and 1960s. Florida's governors during

this era were virtually powerless to challenge segregation with the Pork Chop Gang in control, even if they had been inclined to do so. Only one governor, LeRoy Collins, was considered a racial moderate. Although he blocked attempts by the legislature to enact extreme anti-integration laws, Collins supported the continued segregation of Florida's institutions, including its schools. Meanwhile, the next three governors, Farris Bryant, Haydon Burns, and Claude Kirk, vigorously opposed racial integration (Colburn 1980, 224-28).

The actions of these three governors and the "Pork Chop Gang" were typical Southern political responses to the *Brown* decision, what became known as massive resistance to integration. In 1956 seventy-seven of 105 Southern Congressmen and nineteen of twenty-two Southern Senators signed the "Southern Manifesto," which pledged to uphold segregation (U.S. Congress 1956, 4459-60). In June of that year, militant segregationists in Florida formed a statewide Citizens Council, modeled after racist Citizens Councils that formed elsewhere in the South in reaction to *Brown*. The following

month a Daytona Beach chapter of the Citizens Council formed, drawing about 200 people to its initial meetings (DBMJ July 17, 1956). In 1959, twenty-four state legislators signed Florida's version of the Southern Manifesto while attending the first Daytona 500 (DBEN April 7, 1959).

Historic connections between African Americans and Volusia County's political machine, especially in Daytona Beach, further blunted efforts to end segregation. This allegiance yielded some benefits for the county's black residents, including suffrage, employment, and improved public facilities such as playgrounds and paved streets. However, these gains came at a steep price. The machine enforced rigid segregation and white political rule. It also condoned vote-buying and other corrupt political practices, and the black community's identification with the machine thereby hampered efforts to establish a meaningful coalition between white reformers and blacks. Also, businesses were concerned that desegregation would drive away white tourists, especially Southern vacationers. Therefore, no matter who

won public office—political bosses, reformers, or businessmen—none were particularly anxious to aid African Americans in their struggle for equality.

Resistance to school desegregation was particularly great. Volusia County schools remained completely segregated for several years after the *Brown* decision. The Court itself facilitated the delay in its ambiguous 1955 *Brown II* ruling, which, declared that desegregation should proceed at “all deliberate speed” instead of setting firm deadlines. With the school board making no effort to develop a desegregation plan, forty-five black and white parents, most from Daytona Beach, petitioned the Volusia County School Board in March of 1960 to obey the Court’s rulings and come up with a desegregation plan immediately. In June the parents of thirty-five black children and four white children, all but three from Daytona Beach, sued the School Board for failing to develop a plan to desegregate Volusia County’s schools (*Tillman* 1970, 1; *DBEN* Nov. 18, 1960).

The suit prompted the School Board to institute a program that enabled blacks to transfer to white

schools under Florida’s Pupil Assignment law, which required the child’s parents to appear in person at the school and file a written request for transfer. If admission was denied, the parents could appeal by petitioning the School Board for a hearing. Only if the parents could convince the School Board to reverse the decision would their child be able to attend a white school (Paulson 2004, 10-11; *DBEN* Oct. 29, 1962 and Sept. 8, 1964). This resulted in only token desegregation of Volusia’s schools, beginning in August 1961 when two black girls were admitted to a white Daytona Beach elementary school (*DBEN*, Aug. 17, 1961). As of September 1964, just seventy-four black students were enrolled in predominantly white schools in the county. That number rose to 157 in the fall of 1965, but this still amounted to only token integration (*DBEN* June 15, 1965). As late as 1969, ten of Daytona Beach’s twenty-four schools remained either completely segregated or consisted of more than ninety percent of one race. County wide, as of June 1969, ninety-nine percent of all white students were in “white schools” and sixty percent of

all Negro students were in “black schools.” And in DeLand, seventy-five percent of black elementary children were “in a totally segregated educational setting” (Button 1989, 89; Tillman 1970, 6, 10).

Volusia County schools were not fully desegregated until the fall of 1970, and only then after a protracted battle. Supreme Court decisions in 1968 and 1969 were instrumental in ending the delaying tactics employed by school districts throughout the South to thwart desegregation. In the *Green* decision (1968) the Court replaced the “all deliberate speed” directive from *Brown II* with an order for schools to desegregate immediately; the *Alexander* decision of 1969 established a deadline of no later than February 1970 for school systems to integrate. Armed with these Supreme Court decisions, the United States district court overseeing Volusia County’s desegregation process compelled the county to desegregate all of its schools by February 1970. But just when the long saga appeared over, Governor Claude Kirk intervened in January 1970 with a motion to stay the court’s desegregation order. Ultimately, Kirk’s

motion was rejected by the courts, and Volusia County’s dual school system ended when the fall 1970 school term began (DBEN Dec. 19, 1969; Button 1989, 89).

Unlike the crawling pace of integration in Volusia County Public Schools, Daytona Beach Junior College (DBJC) integrated suddenly in 1965. All-white DBJC, along with all-black Volusia County Community College (VCCC) were founded in 1957 under Governor Collins’ Jim Crow two-year college program. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited segregation on public facilities and in the schools, prompted the State Division of Community-Junior Colleges to issue an advisory requesting that counties begin consolidating their separate two-year colleges immediately. Fearing that the county might be sued for violating the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Volusia County School Board promptly ordered VCCC to close by the beginning of the fall 1966 school term. The black community college would remain open during the 1965-66 school year to allow matriculating students to finish. Those students wishing to continue their studies

would have to transfer to DBJC (Lempel 1999, "VCCC," 10).

At VCCC and within the black community a storm of protest erupted over the School Board's decision. VCCC President, J. Griffin Greene warned that the sudden consolidation would hurt many black students who had received inferior instruction at a Jim Crow college and were unprepared to compete with white students at DBJC after so short a transition (Lempel 1999, "VCCC," 8-11; Smith 1994, 144). Also, VCCC faculty and staff worried that the college's closure would result in job loss and demotions. Such fears were well founded. During the years immediately following VCCC's closing, black student enrollment at DBJC was far less than what it had been at VCCC during its last two years of operation. In addition, despite the school superintendent's promise that ninety-five percent of VCCC's personnel would be hired by DBJC, only ten of sixteen black full-time faculty were employed; those not hired were offered teaching jobs in Volusia County public schools. President Greene, despite his stellar record of administrative leadership, was hired to

supervise instructors teaching remedial courses, and was later promoted to dean of continuing education. Interviewed shortly after his retirement from the college in 1974, Green vented his displeasure: "I would have stayed if I had been offered a meaningful vice presidency. However, I could not in good conscience continue to be treated like a field hand" (Smith 1994, 146-47; Lempel 1999, "VCCC," 10-11).

The slow pace of school integration in the public schools and the prompt closing of VCCC contributed to the growing frustration within Volusia's black community during the mid-1960s. The 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and President Johnson's War on Poverty promised social, political, and economic equality for African Americans, and expectations for substantive change within the black community rose accordingly. But to many blacks, change came too slowly, if at all, especially in the realms of educational and economic opportunity. By the late 1960s, the unfulfilled promises of the civil rights movement generated increasing militancy. Black power became the rallying cry of

African Americans demanding justice and equal opportunity without delay. Determined to confront racism head-on, the militants rejected the traditional black leaders who urged moderation and cooperation with the city's white elites. Thus, there was substantial interracial polarization, but also polarization within the black community. Whites were increasingly divided as well during the late 1960s—on racial matters, lifestyles, and the war in Vietnam (Daytona Beach Westside 1970; Lempel 2006, 102).

When Volusia's schools finally desegregated in the fall of 1970, controversy arose over its implementation. While most African Americans applauded the actions of the Court to end segregated schools, young activists, including several Bethune-Cookman students as well as some of their professors and staff, opposed it because the school desegregation plan called for African Americans to shoulder most of the burden—black, not white students would have to adjust to new schools. Many blacks feared that the school closings would mean lost jobs, and that students would face hostile white students and teachers. Eight of

Volusia County's fourteen black schools closed in 1969 and 1970, while all of the county's forty-six white schools remained open.

In 1969, black militants and their supporters in Daytona Beach formed the Citizens Coordinating Committee. Leadership and inspiration for the CCC came from Charles Cherry, chief accountant at Bethune-Cookman College and former business manager at VCCC. Unhappy with the conservatism of the area's premiere civil rights organization, the NAACP, Cherry organized an NAACP youth group in 1963, recruited students from B-CC and VCCC, and led them into several demonstrations that targeted Daytona Beach's segregated businesses. By 1969, Cherry had emerged as the leading advocate for the city's underpaid and exploited black workers. For example, when black bus drivers went out on strike in 1969 over unsafe vehicles, Cherry formed the Committee for Better Buses that raised enough money to pay the drivers' salaries for two weeks. That year, Cherry began publishing *The West Side Rapper*, a radical newspaper modeled after the Black Panther Party's newspaper, *The*

Black Panther. The *Rapper* became the official newspaper of the CCC, and Cherry's primary advocate of his militant social justice agenda that included critiques of school desegregation and urban renewal—hot-button issues in the black community. Many whites as well as moderate and conservative blacks viewed Cherry, the CCC, and the *Rapper* as incendiary (Lempel 2009, 102-03).

The racial tensions that had been building during the 1960s boiled over in the fall of 1970. The trouble began with fights between white and black students at Daytona Beach's previously all-white Mainland High School during late October, leading to approximately 200 black students walking out of classes in early November. Calm seemed to return after joint meetings by students, parents, school administrators, and community leaders to discuss grievances. However, violence broke out again on November 5 when a black youth was shot by a white gas station attendant after rocks were thrown at the gas station. That incident sparked a full-scale riot as crowds gathered and attacked police

and cars entering the black neighborhood. Racial violence then spread to several locations in Daytona Beach over the next few days, with 150 incidences of fire bombings and sniper fire being reported by the police. Believing that the CCC was behind much of the violence, heavily armed police converged on its office, forcing the surrender of its more than two dozen occupants. Police later broke up a CCC-sponsored march protesting the police crackdown and allegedly racist policies of Daytona Beach's officials, arresting nineteen of the estimated 150 marchers, including several CCC activists (Lempel 2009, 104-05).

In the wake of the racial violence, the Southern Regional Council (SRC) conducted a study to uncover the reasons for and solutions to the violence. The Council's report, issued in December 1970, blamed Daytona Beach city officials for much of the racial strife, accusing it of being mostly insensitive to the city's racial and economic divisions. The SRC especially criticized those city officials who viewed the whole situation as a police problem that could be solved with greater law enforcement. The

report warned that Daytona Beach's difficulties "are social and political. Solving them by adding more policemen and riot equipment . . . could be disastrous." The SRC report reiterated the grievances of many African Americans in Daytona Beach: student dissatisfaction over the closure of black schools and the racism displayed at "integrated" schools, high unemployment, incidents of police brutality, the paucity of blacks in city departments, and the preponderance of blacks in menial jobs. In the wake of the riots the Council urged "white officialdom...to...drop its cocksure attitude and reach out in a genuine effort to improve the lot of Daytona Beach blacks" (Bowler 1970).

Ironically, the city's racial disturbances came after the long-term goal of the civil rights movement—school desegregation—had finally been achieved. Indeed, if racial progress is measured by the degree to which school desegregation could be maintained, Daytona Beach arguably represented an exemplary model. The city's public schools have remained well integrated up to the present, even while Florida and much of the

nation have re-segregated. That the desegregation plan for Daytona Beach included surrounding towns was a major reason for the city's success in sustaining racially integrated schools. Unlike many other districts under court ordered desegregation, whites in Daytona Beach could not simply move to nearby white towns to escape the reach of the desegregation plan. The fact that more blacks than whites were displaced by the desegregation process also mitigated against "white flight." Black schools were closed and blacks were bussed; white children and their families were largely unaffected and thus saw little reason to move, especially since the majority of white students attended schools experiencing only a modest increase in black enrollment of less than 10 percent. With "white flight" minimized, it was easier for the Volusia County School Board to maintain racially balanced schools in the greater Daytona Beach area (Reber 2005, 577-79).

However, even in localities such as Daytona Beach, where black-white numerical balance has been largely achieved, racial harmony and equality are not assured. The racial strife in

1970 at newly integrated Mainland High School demonstrated that desegregation was no magic bullet. Simply placing black and white students in the same school—whether it be Mainland High School in 1970 or St. Augustine’s parochial school in 1786—does not ensure racial harmony or guarantee eventual equality. The other interrelated factors that have resulted in America’s racial divide need to be addressed, including pervasive stereotypes, intolerance of cultural differences, and economic inequality.

Esther Hawks’ 140-year-old dream of racially integrated schools in Volusia County has finally been realized. However, her hopes of full racial equality and an end to prejudice remain unfulfilled, and perhaps more remote than ever given America’s retreat in recent years from the legislation and Supreme Court decisions of the civil rights era. Florida has witnessed such retreats from racial justice before, most notably after her acquisition by Great Britain (1763) and the United States (1821), and with the end of Reconstruction in 1877. Yet after each setback, progress toward greater

racial tolerance has resumed. But progress is not predestined. As during Reconstruction and the modern civil rights era (Second Reconstruction), it will require concerted effort and enlightened leadership to achieve more tolerance of and greater opportunities for our country’s increasingly diverse population.

Notes

¹ Some British planters remained after Spain retook Florida in 1783. Many Loyalist planters came to Florida during and shortly after the American Revolution; others came after the Spanish Crown, in 1790, offered foreign settlers homestead grants if they settled in Florida (Coker and Parker 1996, 161).

² During the 1920s and 1930s, the political machine of the Mayor of Daytona Beach, Edward H. Armstrong, forged a biracial alliance that helped keep him in power for almost a decade, and provided African Americans with a level of political influence virtually unheard of in a southern city before World War II. In west Volusia County, the county seat of DeLand was dominated by the powerful political machine led by Bert Fish, Cary D. Landis, and Francis P. Whitehair. This "ring" also utilized the black vote to bolster their political clout (Lempel 2001, 267-96).

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