Historical Examination of the Segregated School Experience

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EFFECTIVE HISTORY TEACHING includes ample opportunities for students to develop historical thinking skills and habits of mind which encourage them to learn content beyond simple acquisition of facts.[1] Wineburg contends that such examination of the past "humanize[s]" us insofar as we gain insight and historical empathy through analysis, interpretation and decision-making based on historical evidence.[2] Covering the profound topic of segregation by employing multiple perspectives and encouraging investigation beyond the traditional narrative provides students with opportunities to examine and evaluate issues and events surrounding segregation, and, consequently, the process of integration, at a level that generates meaningful learning. Teachers covering this topic facilitate critical analysis of sources in an effort to develop a more nuanced and reflexive view of the segregation experience inclusive of the perspectives of African Americans and the social relevance of past and ongoing racial struggles in America. Students in these classrooms delve into original and secondary sources for evidence of the experience of segregation. In so doing, they may find associations to contemporary issues of the educational environment, discrimination, and de facto segregation, even while the realities of Jim Crow and de jure segregation are far removed from their daily lives. An ideal opportunity exists within the topic of segregation to

facilitate the development of these connections for students as they explore this topic beyond what is often presented in textbooks and covered in most classrooms. And "[i]f history is to be valued by others it needs to be made relevant to one's principal audience."[3]

Allowing students opportunities to understand and appreciate the segregated *school* experience may therefore provide an effective platform from which to further explore segregation and its wider societal implications. Students relate to the schooling experiences of others, and the experiences of African Americans attending black-only schools during segregation is indeed relevant and worthy of investigation in our history classrooms as we seek a more inclusive and interpretive understanding of the past.

While we recognize the need for students to investigate, analyze, and interpret relevant sources related to historical content including segregation and the segregated school experience, we must recognize that for most students, standardized assessments and textbooks largely drive the direction of course content.[4] Although the topic of school segregation is found on many assessments and in textbooks, it is typically only cursory coverage of salient events including the Supreme Court Decision in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* and the Little Rock Nine episode. The segregated school experience in American history course curriculum is not meaningfully reflected in the traditional narrative presented in textbooks. What appears to be missing—specifically in textbooks—is the story of the African American experience surrounding the realities of education in segregated and integrated schools which, we argue, can serve as an engaging entre into the broader realities of segregation as part of American history. The prevailing narrative overwhelmingly fails to acknowledge strides made by African Americans in the face of systemic racial oppression[5] and instead tends to imply that as America became more enlightened (further removed from the institution of slavery), whites—and a few select African Americans—recognized the injustices of a segregated society and began the protracted process of desegregation for the good of African Americans and society at large. It is important for students to recognize, however, that this narrative is inadequate.

In some cases, despite the lack of access to adequate facilities, resources, and general freedoms found in white society,[6] and in the face of overt attempts to marginalize black access to formal learning,[7] education was valued by the black community and great strides were taken to support a system of education during the Jim Crow Era. Moreover, some black schools were likely as competitive as white schools. Such was the case in Topeka, Kansas, the site of the events that eventually resulted in the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*. "In Topeka, African American schools were fairly equivalent to white schools with

regards to the visible signs of education quality, teacher quality, facilities, and so on. Thus, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chose the case (in Topeka) specifically to test the *Plessy v. Ferguson* doctrine of 'separate but equal.'"[8]

Further research supports the efforts by black communities to develop successful schools through attention to teacher training. Initially, black-only schools employed untrained teachers,[9] a challenge that was soon addressed through the establishment of black normal schools, created to formally develop teachers to support an effective educational system in black communities. And, as in the white system, the scope and utility of teacher training evolved. By the 1920s, teacher training for black educators was refashioned to become more enmeshed in higher education to reflect "higher standards for certification paralleling the development of professional standards, [and] the job opportunities in teaching."[10] Specifically, African Americans at this time began to seek training in private colleges and universities, in all regions, to obtain undergraduate and advanced degrees. By 1930, "seventy-five percent of the Black high school teachers in the South had at least a bachelor's degree."[11] "Eventually, the faculty [in the Washington, D.C. Dunbar School] consisted of the best trained men and women of color, attracted from many parts of the country by federal salaries and the cultural contact of the community."[12] Sowell added that "Dunbar had three Ph.D.s on its teaching staff in the 1920's [sic], due to the almost total exclusion of blacks from most college and university faculties."[13] Consequently, the strength of the teacher development for black educators undoubtedly affected student performance. A survey provided in Mary Gibson Hundley's *The Dunbar Story* lists the colleges of past graduates educated there during the 1920s-1940s, many of whom earned admission to some of the most prestigious institutions in the United States, including Amherst, Antioch, Dartmouth, Hamilton, New York University, Oberlin, and Rutgers.[14]

While anecdotal evidence of high-quality black schools and teacher training suggests that the African American population desired high-quality education, the great challenges black schools faced must not be overlooked. It is well accepted that segregated schools were grossly underfunded and under-resourced, which certainly impacted student outcomes. Siddle Walker emphasized "the blatant lack of equality in school facilities and resources [which] was, of course, a reflection of the unequal treatment of the blacks in all aspects of American life."[15] What we assert, however, is that this inequality should not be the only historical recollection taught in regards to segregated American education. Siddle Walker reminded us:

> The memory of inequality is thus not inaccurate. However, to remember segregated schools largely by recalling only their poor resources presents a historically incomplete picture. Although black schools were indeed

> commonly lacking in facilities and funding, some evidence suggests that the environment of the segregated school had affective traits, institutional policies, and community support that helped black children learn in spite of the neglect their schools received from white school boards.[16]

We argue that advocating a more thoughtful inclusion of African American perspectives of education may provide a context that allows students the opportunity to examine complexities within the historical record and foster the development of historical habits of mind, eschewing a solely one-sided perspective that the policy of integration was the only means to provide effective education to African Americans.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to present an ethnographic historical study that includes personal narrative from three black citizens who experienced segregated America as students, initially in black-only schools, and later as members of integrated schools. Themes developed from these interviews were positioned alongside existing historiographical research of black-only schools in many areas of the United States to provide a deeper understanding of the African American narrative within segregated schools.[17] Our intention is that the presentation of the participants' narratives serves to entice teachers and those interested in social justice in education to consider the education of blacks in segregated America as integral to a more complete picture of the realities of that time for African Americans living in communities where separate was surely not equal, but where the quality of education cannot unequivocally be depicted as inferior.

Methods

In order to examine the black experience in segregated schools, we first sought to better understand the dynamics of the black segregated school experience. As such, we utilized a historical research methodology as described by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, who refer to historical research as the systematic and objective location, evaluation, and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and make conclusions about past events.[18] Adhering to the guidelines of sound historical research, we analyzed and evaluated historical evidence. We conducted, transcribed, and analyzed recorded interviews with three different individuals involved in black-only schools—as students, teachers, administrators, or all three—to better explore and appreciate their school experience. Specifically, interviews were performed in order to provide a "recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form"[19] from participants who experienced both segregated and integrated education in predominately African American communities, thus allowing these previously marginalized members of society an opportunity to have their stories known.[20]

Furthermore, we investigated United States federal judicial records of segregated schools to discern findings of the black school experience from our targeted research sites and across the nation. The analysis of historical records included crosschecking dates, statements, and other facts with other sources to ensure accuracy and clear understanding of the events surrounding the black segregated school experience.

Two school sites with extensive segregated history were selected to study. Site one was the Excelsior School, located just south of downtown St. Augustine, Florida. The Excelsior School resides in the historic black neighborhood of Lincolnville. Lincolnville has a rich civil rights history and was home to many prominent black leaders, including Henry and Katherine Twine. Lincolnville also notably served as host to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on his visits to St. Augustine to organize and participate in civil rights demonstrations, including the demonstration to integrate the swimming pool at the Monson Motor Lodge, located less than a mile from Lincolnville. This demonstration, incidentally, resulted in the infamous image of the motel manager pouring acid into the pool of demonstrators. The Excelsior School itself is located on what is now Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, which runs through the center of Lincolnville. The building was rebuilt in the 1920s after the dilapidated previous school building was razed. Throughout its operation, until it became used for state offices in the late 1960s, it served at various times as an elementary, middle, and high school. Portions of the building are currently used as a museum and cultural center, housing artifacts from the Lincolnville area specific to the school and the Civil Rights Era.

Members interviewed from this site included two individuals who were both students and teachers at Excelsior. Mr. Otis A. Mason was asked to participate in this research project because of his vast experience in both segregated and integrated schools. Mr. Mason attended Excelsior as a student and later served as one of its faculty members. When students from Lincolnville were integrated into St. Augustine High School, Mr. Mason continued to serve as a teacher and school leader in the district. In fact, this participant became the district superintendent; an elementary school bearing his name stands today. His wife, Mrs. Mason, also interviewed for this project, was a student at Excelsior as well. She, like her husband, later became a teacher there and in the integrated county school system as well.

A second site for this study was located in Falls Church, Virginia. Falls Church was ripe with segregated history and, in 1915, became the site for the first rural branch of the NAACP. Two schools involved in integration in this area were examined as part of this study. The first, known today as Luther Jackson Middle School, was originally Luther Porter Jackson

High School and served as the region's black-only school from 1954 to 1965. This school was built specifically to educate black students within the Fairfax County School District to avoid having students bussed to nearby Washington, D.C. The second school, George Mason High School, served as the first integrated high school in Falls Church.

Marian Selby was a targeted participant for this research because of her experience as one of the first African Americans to integrate into a white high school from the Falls Church area. Selby started her high school education at Luther Porter Jackson High School in 1960. She transferred to George Mason High School her sophomore year with one other black student. The other student did not complete the year at George Mason, leaving Selby as the only African American to attend during the 1961-1962 school year. She completed the year and graduated from George Mason High School in 1963. Two other black community members from the Northern Virginia area participated in the interviews and provided anecdotes of their experience in the school system and surrounding community.

Interview Protocol

Interview questions were developed to gain an understanding of the overall black school experience. We inquired about details of academics, school culture, extracurricular activities, and preparation for the post-secondary world. Further open-ended questions were developed in the tradition of Patton's Standardized Open-Ended Interview protocol, with the intent to discern more details about the experiences of these students and teachers during the time of investigation.[21] These questions focused on school academics as well as activities and facilities. We further sought to address the extent to which the school was a part of the black community in which it resided. Finally, we included questions related to the degree to which the participants recognized their status as black students prior to integration. All participants were asked the same questions in order to obtain the story of the educational experience of each interviewee. Common to Patton's Standardized Open-Ended Interview protocol, some of these questions developed into further investigation, which allowed us to amplify areas of importance. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

Artifacts from research sites and the Library of Congress—including school newspapers, yearbooks, photographs, various samples of correspondence, and minutes from teacher meetings—were collected to supplement interview themes. Additionally, relevant scholarship related to black education was examined to illuminate areas of inquiry shared by participants.

Findings

From our historical analysis, three distinct themes emerged. First, participant recollection of attending black schools was of an overwhelmingly positive experience in spite of myriad societal and political obstacles. Second, the schools provided and demanded academic rigor. And third, although black schools were not equal in significant ways—including overall funding for facilities, resources, and supplies—compared to white schools, those we examined managed to provide a rich and dynamic educational experience that included many of the same activities found in white schools. And from within these themes, various sub-themes emerged that further coincided with the purpose of this manuscript.

School Experience

Learning Spaces

As commonly accepted in the traditional narrative, black schools lacked funding and resources during the time of segregation. This, however, did not prevent African Americans from providing adequate spaces where learning could take place. Educational facilities were established by, among other things, "filling the makeshift schools in contraband camps; establishing their own day, evening, and Sunday schools in abandoned buildings after emancipation."[22] In the early 1900s, the Rosenwald Fund (developed by a founder of Sears, Roebuck and Co.) increased opportunities to build educational facilities by providing financial support for the construction of African American schools. The Rosenwald schools, however, did not come without cost: "Black residents of the selected school district were required to raise enough money to match or exceed the amount requested from the Rosenwald Fund, which initially was a maximum of $350."[23] Additional barriers were present in the construction of a Rosenwald school in Tuskegee, Alabama:

> [A]pproval and cooperation of the state, county, or township school officers were required; all property, including the land, money, and other voluntary contributions by Blacks, was to be deeded to the local public school authorities; the school building to be erected had to be approved by Tuskegee's Extension Department; and the efforts in each state were to be coordinated by the state agents of Negro education and the Jeanes Fund supervisors.[24]

Siddle Walker described the type of private, community fundraising that occurred in order to meet the financial demands required to receive support from the Rosenwald Fund through a case study in North Carolina.[25] The African American community in Caswell County, North Carolina

participated in taffy pulls and socials. In the case of Caswell County Training School (CCTS), it took African Americans six years to raise $800 to meet the financial obligation required to erect a Rosenwald school. "It was particularly painful for black southerners to make private contributions for the maintenance of public schools during the late 1920s and 1930s."[26] Important to note is that even though communities were successful in establishing schools, these buildings, while "model[s] of Negro buildings…were not in physical terms a model of educational equality."[27]

Our research found evidence of acute financial discrepancies as illustrated in a 1935 School Disparity Report from Fairfax County, Virginia.[28] This document, provided to us by our research participants, illustrated stark variations in school expenditures that left black schools far less funded than corresponding white schools within this Northern Virginia area (See Figure 1). In light of the notions of underfunded black schools found in the traditional narrative of American history, we asked our participants about their recollections of resource allocations and found that the state of facilities seemed less consequential to students and faculty and did not significantly impede the learning environment. The recollections of Mr. and Mrs. Mason (of Florida) overwhelming characterized their school as a warm and welcoming facility rather than a run-down building. As she sat in the foyer of the former school, now a museum and cultural center, Mrs. Mason recalled the welcoming signs posted in the school entrance. Mr. Mason added that there were also inspirational slogans encouraging students to work hard and succeed. Specifically, he shared his recollection of a wall adjacent to a staircase that displayed the slogan, "stairway to success." Included on this path to success were words of encouragement—one for each grade level—including terms typically associated with character education: honesty, integrity, and responsibility.[29] Evident in various photographs housed at the museum, classrooms themselves at the Excelsior School were modest indeed. Desks were in rows with a teacher desk and blackboard at the front of the room. Yearbook images depict a clean facility with shining floors, sturdy desks, and blackboards in usable condition.

School districts throughout the U.S. tried to adapt to the government mandate to provide equal education as a result of the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision by erecting black-only high schools.[30] These schools tended to have improved facilities, yet were often built with less care than white schools. Excelsior had been one that was entirely re-built for such an effort. Selby attended a black high school in Northern Virginia that had been built in 1954 solely to educate blacks. She arrived as a new student to this school in 1960.[31] Prior to its construction,

OUR DISGRACE AND SHAME

SCHOOL FACILITIES FOR NEGRO CHILDREN IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

WHITE SCHOOLS	NEGRO SCHOOLS
1 All brick or stone, except 4 wooden buildings	1 One to three room wooden buildings
2 Have running water, janitorial service, inside toilets, central heating	2 All have outside "pit" toilets for teachers and children, no running water; all stoves in the rooms
3 Children ride in heated busses.	3 No janitorial service—teachers do all cleaning, haul water, make fires
	4 Three schools have no water on premises
	5 Some children walk from 4 to 6 miles to school
	6 Buses are old and rickety and are not heated.

HOW SCHOOL FUNDS ARE SHARED

In 1935 the School Board sought a grant of $153,022.50 from PWA and a bond issue (which was defeated) to raise $187,027.50. Of this total of $340,050.00 it was proposed to spend for:

WHITE SCHOOLS.....$330,750—97.4 per cent
COLORED SCHOOLS ..... 9,000— 2.6 per cent

In 1935 this county owed the State Literary Fund $188,739.32 (all of which had been spent on white schools). In that year the colored population of the county was 19 per cent.

The 1945-46 PROPOSED budget provided among other items:

FOR WHITE SCHOOLS	FOR COLORED SCHOOLS
Administration $18,380	0
Operation of School Plant ..... 80,350 (Salary of janitor, light, telephone and fuel)	?
Capital Outlay $745,000	$45,000

The following proposed expenditures of a proposed loan from the State Literary fund were approved:

WHITE SCHOOLS	COLORED SCHOOLS
$50,000 for Herndon High School	0
$40,000 for 2 classrooms, wash room and cafeteria at Vienna	0
$20,000 for 2 classrooms at Lincolnia	0
$10,000 to complete 2 classrooms at Groveton	0
$40,000 additional was secured to add elementary rooms to Madison School	

Figure 1: School Disparity Report, 1935, by Mary Ellen Henderson. Obtained from and permission provided by Tinner Hill Foundation, Falls Church, Virginia.

African Americans were bussed to Washington, D.C. or Manassas, Virginia, both of which involved long rides to schools in unfamiliar neighborhoods. As a newly constructed school, this facility was not recognizably physically inadequate in comparison to the integrated high school she attended by choice in 1961.

Limited Resources

Limited support from the community was present not only in the establishment of a school building, but also in the resources supplied to them. "While whites permitted schooling for Negroes, some of them viewed it as unfair appropriations of their taxes."[32] This consternation trickled down into resources such as textbooks and materials supplied to black-only schools. "Negro schools that received this kind of 'help' from the school board often were given materials or facilities that were no longer being used by white children. Old desks, for example, were given or occasionally sold to Negro patrons."[33] Stories of the lack of financial and town support abound. Hundley, who served as administrator at Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., commented that it took ten years to have a stadium considered for their high school even though the white school, which had been built at the same time, had a "beautiful stadium" constructed far sooner.[34] In fact, delayed town approval for administration of various resources often required extensive lobbying by the African American community in the District of Columbia:

> Congress controlled the appropriations and usually curtailed the budget submitted by the D.C. Commissioners, with expected indifference to the needs of a voteless community. The annual scramble for buildings and salaries resulted in neglect of the colored schools, long delays for needed repairs, and an inadequate teaching staff with large classes of underprivileged pupils.[35]

The participants interviewed for this study articulated the fact that their resources, including textbooks and other materials, were not always in adequate condition. Many textbooks were dilapidated. Participants shared stories that some second-hand books bore the word "nigger" inside. Mr. Mason speculated that white students expected their textbooks to be handed down and the racial epithets were a reminder to him of the racial tension that existed just outside his Lincolnville community.[36]

Typical School Day

The school day itself was described as quite typical of what was expected in any public school at the time. Participants recalled arriving around 8:00AM, taking academic and elective classes, and leaving in the mid-afternoon. Students took six courses during the day. Having experience

at both a segregated and integrated school, Selby shared her thoughts on her daily experience:

> My school day at the black school was as I would have imagined any other student's experience to be. You rode a school bus, my ride was approximately [a] half-hour, arrived at school, and attended classes. Unless you were involved in after school activities, you got back on the bus and went home. What else are you supposed to do at school? Just because this was an all-Black school did not mean that the main focus, which was learning, was not adhered to.[37]

Teachers

Teachers who taught in black-only schools exhibited characteristics of caring, authority, and sacrifice, necessary to promote student success in any school environment. "The key [to our academic success] was our teachers. They gave us the push. They continually told us 'you can be what you want to be,' and we believed them," said Mr. Mason.[38] Patterson et al.'s research on segregated Douglass High School in Kansas supports this claim.[39] During Douglass' fifty-year existence, teacher pedagogy exemplified high expectations and included a culturally relevant and rigorous curriculum. Students were expected to succeed academically and challenged to become productive members of a democratic society. The teachers at Excelsior were, for Mr. and Mrs. Mason, caring and highly involved with their students. Mr. Mason recalled that while he was a teacher at Excelsior, he often worked closely with parents to ensure the academic success of their children; a practice he had learned as a student and continued to practice as he worked toward his superintendentship.[40]

Academic Rigor

The black community's determination to develop an education system led to the success of erecting school buildings and, additionally, to the eventual adoption of a classical liberal curriculum. Anderson articulated:

> Students in elementary schools received instruction in reading, spelling, writing, grammar, diction, history, geography, arithmetic, and music. Normal school students took this Standard English curriculum with additional courses in orthography, map drawing, physiology, algebra, and geometry, as well as the theory and practice of teaching. The college curriculum varied slightly, but the classical course leading to the B.A. usually required Latin, Greek, mathematics, science, philosophy, and in a few cases, one modern language.[41]

Patterson et al. specifically studied pedagogy during segregation at Douglass High School in Kansas and determined that "[o]ne method Douglass teachers used to prepare their students was to provide them with a

strong foundation of academic skills and the confidence to be successful."[42] Siddle Walker discussed the high expectations at Caswell, stating that "teachers were careful to cover the content of the texts provided for their classes and were apparently unwilling to promote students who they felt had not mastered the content."[43] Selby's experience demonstrated no great difference in curriculum between her black-only school and integrated high school experiences. Her recollection was that the integrated school offered only one course, psychology, not offered at Luther Jackson. In fact, Selby suggested that the educators at Luther Jackson greatly invested in her education: "The teachers and administrators who had worked very hard to get the degrees, I felt, were giving back to the community by working hard to prepare us for a life after Luther Jackson."[44]

Additional evidence exemplifies that providing an education of high academic standards was of such tremendous importance that continual campaigning and fundraising were necessary in order to provide an exemplary education. Hundley outlined such efforts at Dunbar High School, where a physics teacher "supplemented his laboratory equipment with personal funds when appropriations were inadequate."[45]

The emphasis of getting students college-ready was present at both Dunbar High School and CCTS. Dunbar developed "the college bureau," which served as an after-hours coaching program for students to prepare for college entrance examinations.[46] At CCTS, a college scholarship club was formed to meet during the day to help students obtain and maintain college funding, thus allowing many students, otherwise financially unable to do so, to attend colleges. The Masons echoed that, not only did their school experience as students prepare them for higher education, but, during their teaching experiences, many of their students continued their academic success at prestigious universities. To earn his own teaching credentials, Mr. Mason first applied to the University of Florida. He was granted an interview, during which time university administration acknowledged his qualifications and communication skills. Unfortunately, however, at that time, a black student had little opportunity for higher education in much of the South, leading Mr. Mason to pursue his degree at New York University. He graduated with distinction, and in our interview, he recognized his sound academic preparation as critical to his success competing with white students at one of America's top-tier universities.[47] The supported research on academic rigor stresses the value that black-only schools placed on academic success and the ability to compete in a dominant white society. The words provided by Hundley reiterate this cause: if "[t]he supreme test of any school's contribution to education is a survey of the achievements of its graduates,"[48] then one must acknowledge the exceptional academic preparation that must have occurred in these schools.

Rich Education Experience

Extracurricular Activities

Selby discussed that Luther Jackson High School not only emphasized high academic standards, but additionally offered a plethora of student activities and clubs intended to enrich academics. These offerings were often provided during the school day to ensure maximum participation. Selby, who attended both segregated and integrated high schools in Northern Virginia, discussed that her brother, who had originally traveled over an hour each way to attend a black school in Washington, D.C., relished the extracurricular activities at his school.[49] Activities and clubs were seen as a way to provide opportunities to students to compensate for the cultural and economic deprivation they often experienced as a result of segregation.

Research on black-only schools supports Selby's claim to the fact that extensive activities and club offerings were present. Hundley listed the clubs offered at Dunbar High School in the 1940s, including:

> Banking, Biology, Chemistry, Commercial, Contemporary Literature, Current Topics, Debating, Dramatics, News Reel, Girl Reserves, Golf, Home Nursing, Foreign Languages, Library, Music, Negro History, Red Cross, Race Relations, Social Service, Stamp Collection, Short Story and Travel Clubs.[50]

CCTS experienced tremendous success in debate and attributed it to "[t]he school's serious approach to student activities and the success that was sometimes attained in these activities could be seen in a variety of areas."[51] In 1941, CCTS prepared for the state finals:

> Two weeks leading up to the championship, students had regular debate hours at the school during the activity period…after school, they walked to their teacher's home where the teacher fixed dinner for them, and from 4 to 6 p.m. they would go through mock debates.[52]

Many of the same extracurricular activities were offered at each of our targeted site schools, including sports, modern dance, science club, cheerleading, and the 4H club. In fact, Selby reminisced, "[w]hether it was in sports, science fairs, music contests, or forensic competitions—the Black high school was the school to beat."[53] Mr. Mason played sports while he was a student at Excelsior. He recalled experiencing that being an athlete made him popular in school. Basketball and football were the most prevalent sports there, but he also recalled wrestling and soccer. Although Mason and his teammates typically were not sanctioned to play white schools, a competitive spirit was alive and there was a palpable sense that, regardless of the opponent, their teams could be competitive.

Mrs. Mason was a cheerleader and remembered decorating cars for homecoming parade: "School spirit was very, very high. At homecoming, I was a cheerleader and a majorette. At halftime, I had to change clothes."[54] According to Selby, a feeling of pride, based largely on a robust offering of extracurricular activities was central:

> In our Black high school there was a certain feeling of pride and respect when you said you attended Luther Jackson High School. The school spirit was strong. There was a tremendous sense of community. We liked being together.[55]

To reiterate the sense of pride that was prevalent in black-only schools, a letter was uncovered from the late E. B. Henderson, one of the founders of the Falls Church NAACP branch and the founder of Washington's *12th Streeters*, making him known as the father of black basketball. Henderson was also a professor and advocate of physical education. In the letter from 1923, Henderson made a request for the multiple purchases of the songbook "Lift Every Voice" for the black high school at which he was working during the time. This song was selected in an effort to teach students what was intended to become the African American National Anthem.

While similar extracurricular activities were offered at both schools Selby attended, she reported a tremendous decrease in her desire to participate in school activities after integration. When attending the integrated school, Selby reflected that she did not participate in extracurricular activities as readily. "I only went to school there. Six hours of managing was all I wanted to do."[56]

Implications

Attending segregated schools for African American students has been most often presented in history classrooms with a cursory review that adheres to the implied narrative that, through the policies of integration, African Americans were finally given opportunities for quality education. Conducting interviews allowed us an opportunity to examine segregation from the perspective of African Americans who experienced it as students and teachers. Findings, bolstered by interviews conducted specifically for this topic, suggested that teachers and administrators in black schools provided a nurturing learning environment designed to facilitate student academic and social success. Students had a tremendous sense of pride and community in their schools and were often shielded from the segregation that existed in society at large.

Moreover, analysis of the segregated school experience demonstrated the academic and social challenges black students faced with integration. Our interviews suggested that, while there was acknowledgment that integration would provide the ability to walk into a theater, store, diner,

or bus and take part in the services offered—and public school was one forum for that—the desire to integrate was not overwhelmingly present. Apprehension and anxiety that came with the process of school integration forever altered the communities in which black schools resided. With integration, schools were lost and so was a significant piece of those communities—places where students felt comfortable and supported. "School changed utterly with racial integration. Gone was the messianic zeal to transform our minds and beings that had characterized teachers and their pedagogical practices in all-black schools. Knowledge was suddenly about information only."[57] The participants in this study shared similar experiences and sentiments in regards to the issues surrounding segregation, regardless of the vast geographical distance between the sites selected. These "shared" experiences provide educators an interesting narrative on how integration was perceived from the African American perspective and suggest that consideration of how segregation is presented in the classroom should include their narratives. An appropriate summary to our research can be found within the Excelsior Cultural Center's website, which states that the Excelsior School graduated "many of the area's top educators, nurses, business persons, entertainers and professional athletes,"[58] in spite of the challenges of operating within a school system that prevented black students from equity of educational services and opportunities beyond graduation. In fact, Mr. Mason commented, "I sometimes wonder whether folks take time to recognize the contributions that the products from those schools contributed to the culture and history of the community over a period of years."[59]

The financial disparities were real. Black schools overwhelmingly received inadequate funding, and facilities were substandard. As demonstrated, however, the school could be a nurturing setting—one in which students developed a sense of self-efficacy and teachers fostered student achievement through academic rigor. The school environments we shared may not be typical of all segregated schools, but the evidence of achievement, sense of community, and the fond memories of the participants certainly contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the segregated school environment.

The ability of African Americans to achieve and succeed within a segregated environment suggests that history teachers should present this theme of American history in such a way that the narrative of the African American "devotion to learning, to a life of the mind," enabled some black-only schools to triumph against significant odds.[60] The notion that segregation resulted in an environment in which all systems provided by and for the black communities, including education, were ineffectual and inferior continues. Further implication from this narrative is that only

with the emergence of an integrated school system did black students begin to receive adequate education. The ability that schools were able to support student success in a segregated society ought to become more prevalent in our history classrooms, since "to truly understand race as a historical force it must be approached through nuance, not with a broad brush."[61] Without question, counterexamples of failed attempts to educate blacks in segregated America exist. However, acknowledgment of the existence of quality education and student achievement in black schools deserves a place in the current American history curriculum—not as an entre into promoting a segregated society as in any way moral, but as an acknowledgement and an opportunity to discover that, in the face of substantial challenges and overwhelming racism, members of black communities created environments where students learned and achieved, hoped and dreamed. Boix-Mansilla succinctly stated:

> Teachers are left with two pedagogical options. They may choose to teach the past carefully and rely on the hope that students eventually will appropriately bring to bear historical knowledge and analytic tools when they confront novel social or political processes in the future. Alternatively, teachers may scaffold students to make such connections by giving them multiple supervised opportunities to do so, identifying students' difficulties, and orienting their efforts.[62]

Our desire is that this research represents a minor yet meaningful contribution to the goal of presenting a more nuanced history filled with multiple perspectives about a range of topics heretofore not adequately addressed to our K-12 students.

Notes

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