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# Resegregation and Educational Apartheid in Macon/Bibb County, Georgia: The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same

Ashley Paige Briandi

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# RESEGREGATION AND EDUCATIONAL APARTHEID

IN MACON/BIBB COUNTY, GEORGIA:

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME

by

ASHLEY PAIGE BRIANDI

(Under the Direction of Delores D. Liston)

## ABSTRACT

This study examined how the institution of the White private school system and the continued segregation of schools in Macon, GA has affected Macon's Black community. Archival data included newspaper accounts of Macon's educational climate from *Brown v. Board of Education* to present day. Interviews with five African-American women who lived in Macon during the time of integration showed through building "desegregation academies," gerrymandering public school districts, overcrowding and underfunding public schools (which are already at a disadvantage because of their socioeconomic status), the bureaucracy of Macon has unequivocally sent the message to the Black community that they are not worthy of a decent education. Bibb County public schools are mostly populated by African-American students who live below the poverty line. There are a disproportionate (to the general population) number of private schools in Macon, and they are mostly populated by Caucasian students who live a middle-class or higher life. This imbalance has persisted for decades, and permeates into the mainstream society as the students become adults and participate in various community affairs.

INDEX WORDS: Desegregation, Integration, Public Schools, Educational Apartheid, Macon

Resegregation and Educational Apartheid in Macon/Bibb County, Georgia:

The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same

by

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B.S., University of North Carolina – Greensboro, 1991

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	6
LIST OF FIGURES .....	7
CHAPTER	
1 What's the Problem and Who am I to Study It? .....	8
2 A White Woman's Research into Black Women's Lives .....	39
3 Oral History, or the Heart and Soul of the Matter .....	70
4 Baseball Bats and River Rats, Macon During the Jim Crow Era .....	104
5 Law and Order (Except for White Maconites Resisting Integration) .....	125
6 Drawing the Lines, Macon in the Post-Desegregation Era .....	158
7 The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same, An Analysis .....	215
REFERENCES .....	246
APPENDIX	
LARA'S DIARY .....	263

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Demographic Data for Macon/Bibb County Georgia, and Bibb County Public Schools .....	13
Table 2: Participant Contact/Interview Chart .....	81
Table 3: Participant Data .....	216

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Bibb County Public Schools High School Zones, Academic Year 2009-2010.....	76
Figure 2: Bibb County Public School Zones published in the <i>Macon Telegraph</i> February 15, 1970 .....	77
Figure 3a: As published in the <i>Macon Telegraph</i> February 15, 1970 .....	78
Figure 3b: As published in the <i>Macon Telegraph</i> February 15, 1970 .....	79
Figure 3c: As published in the <i>Macon Telegraph</i> February 15, 1970 .....	80
Figure 4: Bibb County Public Schools Bus Routes for the 1978-1979 Academic Year as published in the <i>Macon Telegraph</i> August 23, 1978 .....	162-164



## Chapter I

### What's the Problem and Who Am I to Study It?

#### **Inequity**

*“Beyond Macon’s resegregating public schools, racial realities remain central. Indeed, it is difficult to think any facet of life in Macon and Bibb County that is not hampered by the persistent and unutterable separation.”* (Manis, 2004, p. 328)

In Macon<sup>1</sup>, GA the public schools are failing—and they are failing the poorest among us. Bibb County Public Schools are overwhelmingly full of African-American students who live below the poverty line. There are a vast number of private schools in Macon, and they are overwhelmingly full of Caucasian students who live a middle-class or higher existence. This inequity has persisted for decades, and filters into the mainstream society as the students become adults and participate in various community affairs. I am deeply disturbed by the social injustice manifest in the fact that Macon’s schools have resegregated along racial lines, with White students predominantly in private schools and Black students in public schools (failing public schools, at that). This is nothing new, of course, as Lillian Smith (1949) indicated in an intimate memory of what a Black woman once told her, “We cannot ride together on the bus, you know. It is not legal to be human in Georgia.” (p. 31). Sadly, I can see those same sentiments are still prevalent in Macon, GA today. The dual educational systems that exist in Macon contribute to a widespread attitude that those who are not “fortunate” (read WHITE) enough to attend the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study, “Macon” refers to the greater Macon/Bibb County area. The city of Macon lies predominantly in Bibb County, GA. However there is a part of Macon’s northeast corridor that lies in Jones County. The city of Macon operates under one governmental entity, currently led by Mayor Robert Reichert and City Council President Miriam Paris. Bibb County encompasses most of Macon and part of Lizella. Bibb County also has an operating governing body, led by County Commission Chair Sam Hart. Both governments and the constituents they represent have vehemently resisted consolidation. Nonetheless, there is ONE public school system, Bibb County Public Schools, which is available to serve both the city’s and the county’s children.

private schools are and will remain sub-human (and riding the buses). These observations are at the very heart of my research project. Thus the overarching questions guiding my study:

- What can historical data and interviews with five African-American women bring to light about the institution of the White private school system in Macon, with regard to how said schools impacted education for Black Maconites?
- What specific decisions have local school boards made over the last four decades that have contributed to the perpetuation of educational apartheid?
- How has the continued segregation of schools in Macon affected the Black community? How did this segregation affect the women interviewed? What opportunities and challenges has the situation presented to these women?

### **Macon/Bibb County, GA**

*“Community crises in the form of the working poor, drugs and violence, homelessness, and hopelessness manifested in ‘the cultural other,’ are borne by the people enslaved within that community.”* (Gordon, 2005, p. 161).

From the antebellum houses set upon rolling hills and red clay, to the spires of Mercer University piercing the sky, Macon’s terrain is decorated by bright red azaleas and delicate cherry blossoms, fluffy crepe myrtles and hot pink camellias. There are shops of all kinds and a variety of restaurants that promise to please any palette. Ever nearby is a house of worship, as Macon sports a church on almost every corner. And with each passing dawn that gives way to sunset, the sky transforms into a luminous canvas of marbled crimsons, gingers, sapphires, violets and gold. Once inside the city limits however, this relatively small Southern town more closely mirrors a contemporary urban setting than it does an epitome of Southern hospitality.

Gallagher (1993), when describing the place of cities, says:

When the uninitiated come here or to many similar polyglot neighborhoods in big American cities, they are taken aback by the precise suggestions about safe routes and places to avoid that seasoned residents offer. Although they are surprised that a territory whose boundaries can be walked in five or ten minutes can encompass urban heavens and hells along with purgatories, most soon learn to read the cityscape for signs of danger and oasis. (p. 190)

In other words, driving into Macon, you are just as likely to find, as Jackson (2008) described, a neighborhood in a small Southern town, a community that “looks like Barbie’s Dream House threw up in here...A bunch of times. Like, went full-on bulimic” (p. 3), as you are to find a neighborhood with:

Guns or meth labs inside every house, drunk men laid out bare-chested on their porches, Dixie plates of soft white food left moldering on the floors, every yard adrift in dog crap and broken glass and needles and Taco Bell wrappers and used condoms. (p. 19)

For Macon boasts that unique blend of Southern charm with the unfortunate eyesore of relentless, hopeless poverty. In fact, Macon/Bibb County has a population of 155,000, of which 20% live below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2008). From the posh to the paupers, the residents of Macon must have radically differing perceptions of what it means to be a Maconite.

Yet “My Macon” is not really in Macon at all. It is in Lizella—however I still have a Macon address. I live in a quiet little area out by Lake Tobesofkee, where other than the occasional tornado, nothing much happens. The neighborhood is home to approximately 88 families, most of whom are White. Although there are several Black families that live in this community, it would definitely be considered a predominantly White neighborhood. We neighbors are friendly with each other, and we even have a neighborhood association to promote

the betterment of our community. We feel safe in our houses in “Pineworth by the Lake,” and comfortable in our yards shaded by oaks, pines, and Yoshino cherry trees. We keep our lush green lawns manicured and our common dock area clean. Yes, my neighborhood is a nice place to call home.

The stark contrasts of Macon’s diversity is never more apparent than when I drive from my house into downtown. During the twenty minute ride, I often find myself lost in thoughts that echo the sentiments expressed by Gordon (2005), “Community crises in the form of the working poor, drugs and violence, homelessness, and hopelessness manifested in ‘the cultural other,’ are borne by the people enslaved within that community” (p. 161). For many years, each morning I would venture into the city via route of Second Street. As I drove slowly past (the now closed) Burke Elementary School I would see the neighborhood’s children sleepily making their way in to school for another day of instruction and learning. The children playfully conversed with each other, seemingly oblivious to that which was lurking merely ten yards away. For on the other side of the street were, for example, the transvestite crack-whores returning back home from their long night of “work.” As I watched this occurrence day after day, it dawned on me that whereas in my neighborhood the presence of such a person would prompt a call to the sheriff, in this neighborhood no one even looks twice, as this person is just part of the “normal” scenery.

I did not mention, though it is significant, that almost all of the people I would see walking about in Burke’s neighborhood were African-American. While there are always exceptions, Macon’s neighborhoods are still, for the most part, racially divided—as are the schools. Historically, Macon, GA has been a city of tumult with regard to race relations. Macon has always been a city with a proportionately large Black population—just over 50%, as compared to 12.8% nationally and 30% statewide (U.S. Census, 2008). Macon has a population

of 155,000, of which 20% live below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2008). The U.S. Census Bureau (2008), reports that Macon's racial demographics are: Asian 1.4%, Black 50.4%, American Indian/Alaskan 0.2%, Hispanic 1.6%, White 47.2%, and Multiracial 0.07%. While the Black/White ratio is very close, Blacks actually hold the racial majority in Macon, with very little representation of "other" people of color. However there is an overwhelming disparity in the racial populations at large and the racial populations in the *public* schools. Macon/Bibb County has 41 public schools with 24,583 students and 19 private schools with 5,633 students (GeorgiaFacts.net, 2009). That translates into almost half as many private academies as public schools, with almost one-fourth of the school-age population attending private (usually church sponsored) academies. According to the 2006-2007 AYP data, Bibb County Public Schools have the following racial demographics<sup>2</sup>: Asian 0.01%, Black 73%, American Indian/Alaskan 0.0%, Hispanic 0.02%, White 22%, and Multiracial 0.01%. Of these students, 74% are considered to be economically disadvantaged. On the other hand, the private academies are almost exclusively White (with very few exceptions), and if any student is considered economically disadvantaged, this fact is not acknowledged. Macon's public schools consistently fail to meet AYP, while the private academies regularly win national awards as college preparatory schools of excellence.

The private school phenomenon in Macon, like other cities in Georgia and throughout the South, began as a blatant and direct demonstration of White resistance to court-ordered desegregation (Manis, 2004; Roche 1998; Woodward, 1966). A decade and a half after *Brown v. Board of Education* this resistance led to a federal mandate that required racial integration of public schools, Macon finally began said process of desegregating its public schools.

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<sup>2</sup> See Table 1 for graphic representation of demographic data.



Table 1

*Demographic Data for Macon/Bibb County Georgia, and Bibb County Public Schools*

Race	Percentage of Population in Macon/Bibb County	Attending Bibb County Public Schools
Asian	1.4%	.01%
Black	50.4%	73%
American Indian/Alaskan	0.2%	0.0%
Hispanic	1.6%	0.02%
White	47.2%	22%
Multiracial	0.07%	0.01%

*Note:* Demographic data on Macon/Bibb County was retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 statistics. Bibb County Public School data was retrieved from GeorgiaFacts.net (2009).

Simultaneously, segregationist schools rapidly appeared on the landscape of this relatively small Southern city, feverously enrolling and matriculating Macon's White school children (Manis, 2004). These private schools (mostly attached to churches) were used to maintain segregated schooling, inasmuch as their very existence allowed a significant number of middle class Whites to sidestep a law they simply did not want to follow, and disengage from public schools. The drop in the number of pupils attending public schools undercut funding (for the public schools), but the White citizens of Macon were more concerned with keeping their children separate than they were about the financial state of the public school system. After all, the monies were no longer helping their (White) children. Consequently, it has been common knowledge and conversation in the Macon area that those White citizens with *any* monetary means whatsoever, including working-class White families, send their children to private (read White) schools.

The fact that the White citizens of Macon were actually able to bring this phenomenon to fruition is, in and of itself, somewhat remarkable. For when the state of Georgia was forced to integrate its public school system, the state planned a private school system in order to keep

segregation alive and well (Manis, 2004; Roche, 1998). According to Manis (2004), in the wake of *Brown*, the state of Georgia proposed the “Private School Amendment” which would “circumvent *Brown* by amending the state constitution to allow public funds to subsidize private education in Georgia” (p. 173). Furthermore, Georgia and other Southern states planned to cease funding for any schools that attempted to teach Black and White children together (Manis, 2004; Roche, 1998; Woodward, 1966); and even fire any teachers who dared to teach an integrated classroom (Woodward, 1966). However Georgia’s then Governor-elect Marvin Griffin vowed “he would not ask the legislature to act on any private school plans until the schools were actually closed because of integration.” (Manis, 2004, p. 174). It appears we are still awaiting said closure...and as the state planned system failed to pass the legislature, Macon and other Southern cities quietly (or not so quietly) proceeded with their own racially divisive private school system—and largely succeeded (Manis, 2004; Roche, 1998). According to Manis (2004), in the fall of 1969 “the parents of some 300,000 students had chosen to send their children to some 200 segregated private schools that had sprung up throughout the South between 1954 and 1967” (p. 310). Although Macon was not alone in the phenomenon of “White Flight” from public schools, it was and is rare in the number of private schools in proportion to the population. In other words, throughout much of the United States, “White Flight” has occurred in the form of Whites literally leaving an area and relocating to a district or county that is predominantly White. However in Macon, while some residents did (and continue to) relocate to neighboring Jones, Houston, or Monroe Counties (where the school systems are predominantly White), many others chose to stay here in Bibb County and simply create their own private, White school system (Manis, 2004).



While nationwide most Black students attend public schools, in Macon most public schools are predominantly (73%) Black (GaDOE, 2007; Stoval, 2005). Macon's public schools fall prey to the same problems facing urban schools nationwide: Mediocrity, apathy, permissiveness, social promotion, insufficient curricula, and low expectations brought on by lack of funding, dilapidated conditions, unrealistic demands placed on teachers, and zero-tolerance policies (Kozol, 1992; Kozol, 2005; Stovall, 2005; Watkins, 2005). Furthermore, Macon's public schools suffer(ed) dramatically from the "White Flight" to private schools because funding for public schools is based, in part, on enrollment—which declined once desegregation was enforced (Manis, 2004).

In an attempt to justify lingering hypocrisy and denial of privilege, all throughout the "Heart of Georgia" do-gooders tell themselves and each other that racism is long gone—for Maconites, in 1999, elected C. Jack Ellis as the city's first Black mayor! Yet somehow that never filtered over to the schools, because Macon's White citizens continue to send their children to a private school (for the Christian values, etc.)—which the majority of Black Maconites are unable to afford, and are thus denied access and opportunity to attend—and return to comfort of their sheltered existence—packing the kids into the minivan en route to soccer practice, dance lessons, and a drive-through dinner, never stopping to think about their "neighbors" across town whose children are prisoners in their own homes, thanks to the poverty-bred violence and crime that control their streets.

Nonetheless, in 2010 (with a White mayor at the helm), as the local affiliate news station, Fox 24 reported, Macon has set up "Shalom Zones" in six different neighborhoods. "Shalom Zones" emerged from "a grassroots, faith-based, community development program designed to empower churches and communities to bring harmony, peace, prosperity, health, and wholeness

to their neighborhoods” into an international program that helps rebuild impoverished and crime-ridden neighborhoods in over two-hundred cities in the United States and Africa (Christensen, 2007). However, out of all the participating cities worldwide, Macon is the first city to implement the program in six neighborhoods (Fox24.com, 2010). Additionally, Richardson (2010) of the *Macon Telegraph* reported that Macon is the seventh poorest community in the United States, with “high rates of premature death, venereal disease chlamydia and low birth-weight babies,” (p. 6A) and that out of Georgia’s 157 counties Bibb ranks 155 for physical environment and 141 for high school graduation rate.

I believe these depressing conditions exist because Jim Crow is still alive and residing in Macon, GA. He shows his ugly face in our schools, churches, businesses, organizations, neighborhoods, salons, and social circles. He is here to make sure that his spirit influences the “decision makers” to maintain the status quo—one part of which is the continued phenomenon of segregated schooling and the negative impact said segregation has on the African-American community of Macon.

### **My Place in My Study**

*“I want my daughter to be a rebel—to defy the cultural stereotypes of ‘femininity.’ I love her strength and feistiness, her sexuality, her longing for independence and for authentic connection.”* (Kilbourne, 1999, p. 31).

I never heard words like this from my mother. In fact, I do not remember ever hearing her tell me who or what she wanted me to *be*. I only remember her telling me what to *do*, or when I would stray too far off the beaten path, what *not* to do. But it was always about her preconceived notions of what she thought was right or ideal, never about allowing me to explore

and find the answers on my own. Consequently, I rebelled forcefully. This becomes vividly apparent as I explore my place within this research project.

I had no choice in the matter. I was born in the South, to a Southern family, with Southern roots, practices, and ideals. This is not a bad thing, mind you; it is just that I was never destined to be a “Southern Belle.” I consider myself, like Smith (1949) and Whitlock (2007) to be Southern geographically, but not so much culturally. I have never understood the debutante phenomenon, I never “went Greek” in college, and I have never tasted a mint julep. I never cared a flip for Junior League or Garden Club—preferring instead to go to football and baseball games where I actually watch, understand, and love the games. And when I do so I wear apparel in support of my teams (New York Giants and Yankees), not high heels and sundresses (Go Dawgs!). What’s more, I married an Italian city slicker from Buffalo (or as they say ‘roun cheer, a Damn Yankee!).

I love the South though, I really do. I just had to leave it for a while to remember why. I needed to experience six frigid winters on the Great Lakes, digging my car out from under mounds of snow, believing that 32 degrees was balmy, and seeing nothing but grey skies from September to May. Then I was ready to come back down South. Thankfully there was still room for me, as the South is a big place, made up of LOTS of tiny places. And contrary to almost every Hollywood portrayal, there is not ONE Southern culture (or accent) that represents us all.

Through the years I have resided in exciting big cities, relaxing small towns, and some lovely places in between. I have made my home on the sandy east coast, the rolling hills and red clay of the Piedmont, and the wholesome plains of the Midwest. Having led a life that afforded me the opportunity to view the South from within and elsewhere, I wholeheartedly believe that

any place is what you make of it. I will concede that I am Southern by geography and bloodline, but I refuse to commit to a label in any other sense. Instead, I prefer to keep thinking of myself as being on an eternal quest to experience life. In doing so, my own personal curriculum continues to develop.

My Southern experience began in Jacksonville, NC in 1971, on my third birthday. My father was a Marine who had returned from Viet Nam, completed flight school, earned his wings, and received orders for duty at Camp LeJeune. Jacksonville is home to Camp LeJeune and thus it became home to us. Jacksonville is a relatively small coastal city in Southeastern NC, built around the mouth of the New River. With tall magnolias, long-leaf pines, and sweet-gum trees dressed in Spanish moss, on any given day you could close your eyes and smell the pungent aromas of scuppernongs and salty ocean breezes frolicking in the humidity. Jacksonville welcomed the pleasures of four distinct seasons—with azaleas and dogwoods blossoming in spring, hours of summer at the beach catching fish and sunburns, cool autumn breezes that turned leaves into fire, and cold winter nights with a sky full of constellations hovering above the flat terrain. For anyone who harbors a passion for hunting and fishing and things so outdoorsy, this place is heaven on earth. Alas for the rest of us, if there is else we desire, we are left with the sensation that something is missing—namely, something to do.

But unlike most military brats who uproot and move every year, I would remain in Jacksonville until I graduated from high school. Some may dub me fortunate that I was able to stay and grow up with the same group of friends. I suppose that is true in some ways. And growing up in a military town I also made many friends from all over the country and around the world. I was able to experience their cultures in their homes—with their foods, their languages,

their music, their customs, and their décors. I am thankful to this day for the enrichment I was provided, in that respect.

It was in Jacksonville that I completed twelve years of public education, in the early years of desegregation. Although my house was located within walking distance from my elementary, junior high, and high schools, the buses brought students from “the other side of town” to learn and grow with us. From the time I was in first grade I had Black teachers, also Black friends, and it was never an issue for me. I would say one distinct advantage of growing up in a military town is that on a daily basis I was exposed to and interacted with people who were “Others.” I believe the opportunities I had, in that respect, left me with a sense of something more than tolerance, rather a love of humans and cultures. For these experiences I am eternally grateful.

Otherwise, in many ways Jacksonville is a typical Southern town. For scores and decades the same families have owned the properties and businesses, run the political machines and the churches, gossiped and played bridge, waved flags at parades, and watched fireworks on the Fourth of July. Yet so obviously absent was that something intangible, like that sense of community and togetherness that truly “makes” a small Southern town. For the locals shunned their noses at the transient military (without whom Jacksonville would have little or no economy), and it was almost as if there were two Jacksonvilles—one military and one civilian. However there were those times when all came together like every October at the County Fair or at Christmas when Santa arrived by helicopter (provided by the Marines, of course), and most importantly on Friday nights at the high school football games (this seems pervasive throughout the entire South).

Then on the weekends, like so many across the South on Sundays, the good people of Jacksonville sought redemption in Jesus. I have dabbled in the Christian faith at different times

in my life – Methodist and Catholic, at least. Neither really suited me. I remember, as a child, intermittently going to Sunday School at the prominent Methodist church in town. I always had fancy Sunday School dresses and a Bible with my name engraved on the front cover. My mother even had a way of fixing my hair that she called “Sunday School Style.” She would pull my hair away from my face into a single barrette holding the long blonde strands that flowed down my back. The part I enjoyed, or should I say the ONLY part I enjoyed, was the ride home. We always stopped at Dunkin Donuts. It was worth sitting in a room for an hour, in uncomfortable clothes, listening to “Thou shalt not” this and that, if I could have a chocolate éclair when it was all over.

During this time, one of my best friends was Hindu. When another girl in our class (whose [much older] sister had founded an evangelical church) tried to convert my Hindu friend to Christianity, I sensed that something was askew. *I* was highly offended because even as a child I respected others’ freedom to believe and/or worship however they choose. When I grew somewhat older, I begged my mother to let me stop going to Sunday School, and eventually she agreed. Then, as a teenager when I became rebellious and a little bit wild, the same aforementioned friend’s sister asked if she could perform an exorcism on me. After that, I avoided churches entirely, with the only exceptions being weddings and funerals. Then, as an adult mystified by all the rituals, I converted to Catholicism. However soon thereafter I realized that truly, it was not the path for me, and I am back to entering places of worship only to attend weddings or funerals.

When I finally left home and went away to college at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, I was so elated that I actually obtained a new driver’s license just so I could prove to the world I no longer lived in Jacksonville. On the other hand, I was just as excited about being

IN Greensboro as I was about being OUT of Jacksonville. Greensboro was home to both of my parents, so when we went to Nana's or Gran's house we always went to Greensboro. For that reason I must admit part of my affinity for Greensboro is simply nostalgic love.

Aside from that, I adored Greensboro for so many reasons. One of the many great joys of autumn was to take a stroll down Market Street and admire the century old houses hidden in the canopy of pines, cedars, oaks, maples, and hickory trees. I remember the cedar-chipping factory behind the college pouring an uninterrupted flow of fragrance into the air, making me thankful to be able to breathe. But the water, oh! The water used to be such a treat that when I lived in Jacksonville I would take empty milk jugs with me to Nana's or Gran's, so I could fill them up with Greensboro water and bring that scrumptious liquid back home. Greensboro water is the most delicious water on earth—fresh, crisp, and clean. The thing that fascinated me most of all though, was that the fire hydrants in *Greensboro* were GREEN! Astounding!<sup>3</sup>

I have strong familial connections to UNC-Greensboro as well. My paternal grandmother graduated from there when it was the Normal School for Women in NC. Later, when the school became Woman's College of UNC, my paternal grandfather was a Vice Chancellor of the College. (I never knew him, as he passed away before I was born. However when I was a student at UNC-G, I did go find the dogwood tree they planted on campus in his honor.) In 1963, a remarkable year on many fronts, the "WC" became the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and opened its doors to men for the first time. That same year, my mother enrolled as a freshman. In October of her senior year she married my father, and by the time she graduated she was pregnant with me. (It was a very happy time for my parents back then.) Fast forward a decade or two, and I graduated from UNC-G; followed by my brother,

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<sup>3</sup> I must admit, I was too young to understand the underlying racial tensions that had been brewing in Greensboro in the decade of my birth. It amazes me now to see the similarities between Greensboro and Macon.

Travis, seven years later. We all had experiences there that were filled with growth in personally uncharted territory. Yet in a larger sense, we were simply living up to expectations we were supposed to fulfill. But we were (are) White, upper-middle class...

I realize I had a romanticized sense of Greensboro because of my kinship with both the city and the school. I do however clearly understand that it was in the Woolworth's downtown that the sit-ins occurred, sparking the entire Civil Rights Movement. I also fully comprehend the ramification of all the racial tension, hatred, and fear that surrounded and still surround that city today. Simply put, that was not the Greensboro I "lived."

Yet I have a friend and colleague, Brittany<sup>4</sup>, also from eastern NC, who enrolled as a freshman the year my mother was a senior. This is the story of her first experience in Greensboro as she told it to me over dinner one night.

*"From down the hallway she saw the key going in the door, and she screamed."*

Brittany had been valedictorian of her senior class in the small, poor community of Bertie County, North Carolina. Before she even applied to one college, five had sent her acceptance letters, based on her academic success. UNC-G was one of them. Never having been more than 18 feet away from her mother in her entire life, she chose to enroll at UNC-G because it was the one farthest from home. "How exciting life was going to be in the big city far from home," thought Brittany.

Soon she received her housing assignment along with the name and address of her new roommate. She and her roommate-to-be struck up a pen-pal friendship, writing letters back and forth to each other all summer long. Both young ladies were bubbling with anticipation, eager to meet, and looking forward to their freshman year together. They

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonym



were anxious to share in that beautiful and unique experience of university life that allows freedom without responsibility yet demands responsibility for the price of continued freedom.

As the sun finally set for the last time that summer, Brittany knew that the next morning her life was going to change forever. The next morning, she and her mother packed her bags and headed west. Filled with emotion she could not bear to unleash, Brittany's mother dropped her off in front of her residence hall at UNC-G and began the long, lonely trip back to Bertie County. Brittany, naive and energized, could hardly believe that for the first time in her life she was "on her own." Unfortunately, as she would soon find out, those words carried more weight than eight letters could hold.

With her necessities in tow, Brittany rushed inside the dormitory and commenced upon the long walk down the hall to her new "home." After what seemed like at least a mile, she finally arrived in front of her door. She took a deep breath, much like one does before jumping into a sparkling pool on a hot summer's day. Trembling with excitement, she held a key in her hand. As she lifted the key to her future in her hand, part of her said, "Goodbye" to her past. Without any further hesitation, Brittany touched the key to the door knob. She could feel the cold metal touch metal, causing her hand to tingle.

Then she heard it...the scream.

Then she saw it...the White girl.

Then a horrible realization hit her...the roommate—her roommate—staring and screaming at her!

"From down the hallway she saw the key going in the door, and she screamed. She had no idea I was Black."

You see, Greensboro was also home to NC A&T University, where Black students were supposed to go. Black students were not “supposed” to go to UNC-G. That was a “White folks” school. Brittany’s experiences at UNC-G were filled with stories like the one she shared with me over dinner. Her matriculation at UNC-G was a challenge she was never supposed to fulfill. Brittany never gave up, never even considered it. She went on to earn her Ph.D.

Twenty years passed between Brittany’s experiences at UNC-G and mine. Now, almost twenty years gone since I was there, it is one of the most liberal, diverse, and inclusive universities in the South. The University was just beginning to show signs of progress on the social justice front when I attended. In terms of racial diversity, not so much—as it was the first time in my life when my circle of friends included only one person of color, a Pakistani young man. But in other ways, for example, I remember there being a very active gay and lesbian community (not commonplace for Southern universities at the time). I recall one particular awareness activity they sponsored called “Blue Day.” The goings-on of “Blue Day” were that if you were gay or lesbian, you were supposed to dress in blue on the specified day. However, those who sponsored “Blue Day” did not announce or even share this information with the community at large. Word leaked out, but was not announced—as was the plan. Consequently, on “Blue Day” anyone who sported blue was looked upon by those “in the know” as if he or she were gay or lesbian. It was intended to bestow a sense of awareness upon heterosexuals about overt or subtle, and sometimes perhaps unconscious oppression to which gay and lesbian **humans** are subjected. Their efforts were poignant enough that twenty years later I still remember the day. And I think (although I will not swear to it), even though I have never been anything but boy-crazy every day of my life, I knew about it and wore blue anyway. Maybe I

was showing support, or maybe I wanted to see if the momentary experiential oppression would happen for me. Perhaps, even, I was simply being rebellious. I do not remember now.

After I earned my B.S. in Economics from UNC-G, I grew rather restless. I had lived in NC for all but one year of my life and I simply wanted to experience *being* somewhere else. Meanwhile Jim Kelly had taken over as quarterback of the Buffalo Bills, and had quickly become my favorite player in the National Football League (bear with me, this IS relevant). I was lucky enough to score two tickets to Buffalo's 1991 season home opener against their archrivals, the Miami Dolphins. My brother was willing to make the long road trip with me for the game, so long as I was brave enough to let him sit in Rich Stadium and cheer for the Dolphins. (Putting that into regional perspective, it would be like going to a Dawg's game between the hedges, and cheering for the Gators).

So in early September, shuffle off to Buffalo we did. We arrived in this mysterious metropolis expecting to find Superman's "Fortress of Solitude" (Lester, 1981) situated on the banks of a cesspool called Lake Erie. Instead we were welcomed, that cool sunny weekend, by a proud city of extraordinary and historical architecture decorating the shores of a sparkling turquoise Lake Erie (whose waters more closely mimic the Caribbean Sea than the culvert we had always heard it was). It did not take long to realize the city's devotion to their beloved Bills, as the skyscrapers downtown were draped in banners shouting, "Go Bills!" and "Squish the Fish!" Making the drive all the more worth it, the Bills were the victors that wondrous opening day, and the following morning I called in to Buffalo's morning radio show and actually got to speak with Jim Kelly on the air! It was such an unbelievably grand weekend, that I decided I wanted to make Buffalo my new home!

Five months later in the dead of winter, and two days after the Bills had just lost the Superbowl for the second consecutive year, I ventured back up to a frigid Buffalo with my belongings in tow. I was all alone, had no job, and did not know a single soul in the city. Fearless and undeterred, I rented an apartment, took a waitressing job, and got a new driver's license to prove to the world I was now a Yankee!

I found Buffalo to be an affable place, full of hard working people who thought my Southern accent was *adorable*. I learned to say "chicken wings" instead of "Buffalo wings," and to eat said wings WITH pizza—in the same meal! As other phrases like "y'all," "sweet tea," and "cut the lights off," were replaced with "you guys," "lake-effect snow," and "Mighty Taco," I gleaned the subtle nuances of being Buffalonian. I even began to affectionately greet someone with a kiss on the cheek instead of a warm embrace. And with an unending sense of wonder, I continued to experience phenomena like frozen nose hairs in sub-zero temperatures as I cheered on Jim Kelly and the Bills from the ice-covered end-zone of Rich Stadium each Sunday.

What perplexed me however was the quite common question I was asked by many whom I was to meet. After the handshake and a quick, "Good ta know ya," would come the inevitable, "What are you?". I remember just smiling in response to this question, because I had no idea what I was being asked. Eventually, some kind soul took pity on me and explained that the question referred to my ancestral derivation. Still confused as to *why* people cared about such things, I would answer, "Scottish and German," because I now understood WHAT people wanted to know. But I still did not "get it." For in the South, there had been only Black and White. If you were not one, then by default you were the other. After awhile I realized that it is not enough to simply be Black or White in Buffalo. The city's neighborhoods and communities are divided by ethnicity—Italians on the west side, the Irish on the south side, Polish and

Germans on the east side, Blacks between the Irish and the Poles, Jews on the north side, etc. It was somewhat of a cultural shock for me to realize first, that White people were prejudiced (so to speak) amongst and against themselves and each other. That insight birthed the awareness that people would make assumptions about me based on the lands from where my ancestors hailed. Being an upper-middle class WASP, this was the first time in my life that *I was conscious* of being scrutinized for something that was entirely beyond my control. What an awkward feeling that was... however I was too young to understand the significance of that awkwardness at the time.

Immersed so completely in my “Yankeeess,” I journeyed home to NC only twice during the years I lived in Buffalo. Both times I harbored my newfound accent and that same attitude of arrogance and superiority that Southerners accuse Northerners of having (toward the South). As my mother welcomed me home with a handmade banner strung across the doorway and her rendition of “Buffalo Gals” (she sang and played the piano), I just took it all for granted. I dutifully made whirlwind visits, dropping by my father’s house, too, before hurrying back up north. Alas! The folly of youth.

Nonetheless, I enjoyed my time in Buffalo immensely. And I wholeheartedly believe the cosmos aligned in such a way that I was destined to call Buffalo home, at least for a moment. For it was in the beginning (I thought), my fascination with Jim Kelly that drew me to Buffalo—Jim Kelly, who was born on February 14<sup>th</sup>. By coincidence or fate (you make the call), in Buffalo I met and married John, the love of my life, who was born on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Now I realize that it was not the Bills or even adventure that called me to abandon life as I knew it in the South. All along that force pulling me to Buffalo was February 14<sup>th</sup>. I can thus reconcile

leaving my family so far behind for awhile, knowing that divine providence was at work to amalgamate me with my soul mate.

My husband's career took us from Buffalo to Chicago, and then on to Georgia. I vividly remember the three feet of snow under which we were buried in Chicago that March (when we moved to Georgia), and the blue skies and seventy degree weather to which we were greeted upon our arrival in Valdosta. It was almost as if the South had opened its loving arms to embrace me and say, "Welcome back home, Ashley!"

I recall hours just sitting by the pool gazing with wide wonder at the dazzling green pines soothingly undulating in the bright blue sky. It occurred to me that sunshine in March was something I had not experienced in over five years, and worse, had not even realized that I missed. But I did, oh! How I did. And although we quickly moved from Valdosta to Macon, we were still in the South, the very Deep South.

Nonetheless it is here, in the "Heart of Georgia," I finally began to understand the significance of the different facets of my identity. In other words, I have begun to grow up. I have gone through the angst and soul searching brought upon by religion, graduate school, loss, suffering, accomplishment, success, friendship, and love. I have laughed and I've cried; I have been frightened and brave. Most of all, I have lived and I've learned—I have been transformed.

This transformation began sometime between 2003 and 2005, while I was working on my master's degree at Mercer University. One of my professors was a self-proclaimed Critical Race Theorist, newly graduated from UCLA. Her father was Puerto Rican, and her mother was a very light-skinned African-American woman. She shared with us (her students) her frustrations with having to go through life with people staring just a little bit longer, trying to figure out to which race she belonged, and pointed out to the obviously White and obviously Black students that we

were lucky because we would never have to face such degrading scrutiny. As our course of study evolved, she segued into the issue of White privilege, echoing Roediger's (2003) sentiments that the very act of claiming colorblindness (with regard to race) is a bastion of privilege bestowed only to Whites.

At first, I was angry with her for even suggesting that I was privileged because I was White. I told her I firmly believed that all Americans were born under the same Constitution, with the same freedoms and opportunities. I fiercely argued that race had never mattered to me; therefore it should not matter to anyone else. We debated and struggled almost all semester over this issue. She told me the very thoughts I was espousing were afforded to me because of my White privilege. She also told me that as I White person, I thought I had no race, and that only non-Whites did. That in and of itself, she explained *is* White privilege (economic and political advantages aside). Still, I did not believe it and was offended by her insinuation (cognitive dissonance again in play).

Near the end of the semester, she gave us an assignment to write an essay from the perspective of "the Other." To do this, I had to step outside myself and think about all the things she had said during class. I started wondering, do non-White people look at me and see a White person? I thought about conversations I had with my White friends, and how when we talked about another White person, we just said, "this guy..." but if we talked about a non-White person, we would say "this Black guy..." or "this Japanese guy..." – always qualifying, always labeling. I realize that other groups label "outsiders" too, but the difference is that White people, as a whole, generally fail to recognize their Whiteness as a qualifier. Or as Conley (2001) says:

Ask any African American to list the adjectives that describe him, and he will most likely put black or African American at the top of the list. Ask someone of European descent the same question, and white will be far down on the list, if at all.” (p. 25)

This is simply a habit, or privilege of Whiteness. White people generally accept that they are part of, as MacMullen (2009) suggests, “a certain group of people who are, by virtue of their heredity, entitled to greater rights and privileges than other groups” (p. 168). As such, White people tend to see race as something that only other people have, and to describe oneself as White would be redundant—as their mere existence is enough to iterate said Whiteness.

Nonetheless, White people are not exempt from discriminating against their own for other reasons. As I prepared for the above mentioned assignment, I remembered how it felt to be different, as I had always been so much taller than everyone else. I have not grown since I was twelve years old. In sixth grade, I was five feet, nine inches tall—taller than all of the students and most of the teachers. I was also extremely skinny, and was often ridiculed with nicknames like “Bones,” “Giraffe,” “Weed,” and “Crane.”

Remembering how it felt to be marginalized and derided for something I could not control, I brought those feelings back to race. I started to realize that my professor might have been right after all. I had been angry with her and offended by her because she was saying things I did not want to hear or acknowledge. However, my denial of an issue did not make it any less real.

After that enlightenment I was able to begin the essay from the perspective of an “Other.” I took some liberty with the assignment, and wrote the essay as a diary of a seventh-grade White girl, Lara, who arrived at her new school on the first day to realize she was the only White



student in an all Black school<sup>5</sup>. Through Lara's experiences, I was able to come into consciousness of my Whiteness, as she did. I was able to live for a moment as the racial "Other," and admit that there is indeed something called "White privilege." I became cognizant of the fact that Whiteness is a race, and that race does matter. My professor could see my growth and new understanding through this diary, and she gave me an A++ on the assignment.

This, however, was only the beginning of my awakening. I had a similar experience in my first class at Georgia Southern with a professor who also challenged my beliefs. She offered some advice to our class that summer, which I have never forgotten. She said that a doctoral program, a good one anyway, was about finding out who you really are. I had no idea at the time just how utterly profound her words were. She was right, too. With each course I studied, a different part of my core was shaken. My mind, heart, and soul have been stretched in so many ways that their "pre-GSU" form is unrecognizable to me. I have transcended the bounds of a fixed identity, and instead have devoted my life to the *currere*. When I stop growing, stop searching, stop questioning, stop running, and stop changing, I will know that I have stopped living.

It is with this critical eye that I proceeded with a study of A Southern history<sup>6</sup> that is not mine, experiences I did not have, in a community in which I did not live. I did so with openness in my heart, ears, eyes, and "pen." I am interested in the stories African-American women have to tell about how the White resistance to school desegregation affected their communities. I did not attempt to give these women a voice, for they already have one. I just wanted to hear them.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix for the text of the diary.

<sup>6</sup> While this study is A Southern study, it is not a *Southern* study. Falling under the umbrella of Curriculum Studies, this is the study of racial marginalization and lived educational experiences of five African-American women in one city, which happens to be located in the South.

### Significance of My Study

I gained some insight into this systemic problem by listening to the Black women who have experienced the changes in schooling in Macon from the time before desegregation to our present resegregation. My hope is that my research has provided an opportunity for the citizens of Macon to truly listen to what has historically been regarded as background music—otherwise known as the voices of Black women—as they told the stories of what they see/saw happening in their communities, and work toward improving our schools and making Macon a comfortable place where we can all live peacefully and prosperously.

By investigating the differing lived experiences of select African-American women of Macon, who lived through desegregation and resegregation in some of Macon's different Black neighborhoods, and analyzing how those experiences have affected the Black community of Macon, I hoped to give further insight into the ongoing problem of low achievement in our urban schools in Macon. It was my intention to document how this continued apartheid in education is a systemic problem, and not just one of White Christian parents who feel the need to flee the public schools. The interesting thing about Macon is not that this private vs. public school opportunity perpetuates, without a doubt Macon is not the only city in Georgia, or the South, or the United States to have such situations. Rather the most interesting aspect of the phenomenon is that the number of private schools (and students within) in relation to the size of the community, coupled with the Black/White monetary stratification, has allowed Macon to “accomplish” what others have not, which is a systemic non-participation in the desegregation order set forth by *Brown vs. Board of Education, 1954*.

By researching the history of public school bureaucracy over the past four decades and gathering personal accounts of some of those most affected by said bureaucracy, I may have

exposed a few truths that Macon's White citizens (collectively) have been, as of yet, unwilling to acknowledge. I inquired into how this relatively small Southern city has been able to *legally* keep its schools racially segregated, despite the federal mandate to do otherwise, and how decisions made by local school boards have contributed to this perpetual segregation. Further, I explored the lived experiences of some of those on whom these decisions had the most disastrous effects, African-American women and their communities.

### **An Overview of My Methodology**

*I walk alone except for the eyes that join me on my journey. Eyes that do not recognize me, eyes that examine me for a tail, an extra teat, a man's whip between my legs. Wondering eyes that stare and decide if my navel is in the right place if my knees bend backward like the forelegs of a dog. They want to see if my tongue is split like a snake's or if my teeth are filing to points to chew them up. To know if I can spring out of the darkness and bite. Inside I am shrinking.* (Florens in Morrison, 2009, pp. 114-115).

I yearn to understand the essence of experiences like the one described above. I recognize that I exist in a state of eternal quest for understanding myself and my place in the world. But unlike Florens, I do not have to face the scrutiny of one who shows outward characteristics of Otherness. While inside I avoid conforming to any set or established expectations of who or what I am supposed to *be*, at the same time I long for that sense of self-actualization that can only come from connectedness with others and Others. The discontinuity within is that I yearn to be intellectually free of the responsibilities that come with subsistence in a civilized society, yet my soul could not bear a prolonged separation from said society. In other words, I desire to *be* in this world with and among my fellow humans, yet I consistently rebel against whatever "norms" said fellow humans have placed on me. This is especially true with

regard to expectations of women in the South. We are shown by the insular, totalitarian media that a desirable Southern woman is indeed finished (read thin) and polished (read well dressed, the right haircut, and the proper make-up), and is ready-made for a world in which, in one way or another, she is simultaneously dependent upon and objectified by a man. But I reflect too deeply and too often about what it means to *be* who I am to accept such pedantic limitations. An unceasing internal battle rages within me to delineate which parts of the “feminine” ideal I will accept as part of my identity. Yet at the end of the day, I know I have been afforded the societal privilege of choosing which path I will take.

On the other side of the coin, I know this struggle is faced by those who are bound by the place society has made for them, and they do not have the luxury of upward mobility that has been granted me. That aforementioned *place*, or should I say the role of place, is central to my study. The theme emerged time and again throughout my research, which represents an honest and sometimes painful investigation into how the issues of race, place, gender, academic opportunity, and economics have shaped the African-American community in Macon, GA.

Thus, I interviewed five African-American women, first individually, then collectively (as a focus group), and then again individually to hear their side of the effects of Macon’s educational apartheid. I recorded the interviews, as well as kept incidental/observational notes. Then I related, through oral history, the experiences of these women and the effects of the continued educational segregation on their struggle to face the duality of their identity as who they see themselves to be in a world that has largely already determined what it wants them to be. Additionally, I examined local school board minutes via the *Macon Telegraph* and *Southern School News* from the early 1970s to the present, in an attempt to uncover specific decisions made by local bureaucrats that have largely left the status quo unchanged for four decades.

### **Potential Challenges With My Study**

*We may find that much more is going on than meets the eye or than some of the more deterministic hidden curriculum theorists would have us believe. If determinations are seen not as producing mirror images, but as setting contradictory limits, limits that at the level of practice are often mediated by (and can potentially transform) the informal (and sometimes conscious) action of groups of people, then we can explore ways these limits are now being contested. In the process, we might find spaces where limits dissolve. There are few things more worthy of effort. (Apple, 1982/1995, p. 82)*

Emblazoned by sentiments like Apple's, Curriculum scholars dare to stand up to the powers that be and question those who decide what is worth knowing and how and how that was/is decided (Schubert, 2004, 2006, & 2009), disbursed, and disseminated. Curriculum Studies evolves from the voices of those who do *not* make the rules or set the norms, and are—for the most part—overlooked when these decisions are being made. These voices—that are “enslaved within a community” (Gordon, 2005, p. 161) that systematically silences and fails them year after year—are at the very heart of my research into the enduring problem of segregated schools in Macon, GA.

As a student of Curriculum Studies—a largely qualitative field of research that focuses on the human element, especially those humans who have been systematically marginalized by a vapid, superficial, materialistic, consumerist, and conformist society—I have the opportunity to examine the Hidden Curriculum (the implicit *lessons* taught by social and institutional cues or miscues) and what is omitted from a standardized curriculum.

Understanding Macon's hidden curriculum is essential to understanding how and why the educational apartheid has continued for fifty years since the courts ordered desegregation. The potential challenges with my study, however, are:

- I have limited myself to the stories of only five African-American women, when undoubtedly there are thousands of others to be heard.
- While interviewing women of different generations provided me with different perspectives on how segregation/desegregation/resegregation has affected their communities, perhaps the depth of my research into the topic does not reach the level it would have had I worked with women all of the "ripened" generation.
- In interviewing only women, I have excluded the Black male point of view regarding the effect of re-segregation on the Black community.
- In interviewing only African-Americans, I have excluded the voices of White citizens.
- By relying on newspaper reports of local happenings, I have subjected my research to the biases of the media.

There are so very many facets to this story, I cannot possibly uncover them all in one study. The nature of this study leaves the door open for many future research projects.

### **Chapter Outlines**

*"...race and everyday live are intermingled to such an extent that sorting one from the other is nearly impossible. Race influences where people live and who their neighbors are, where people go to school, where people go to church, where people go for recreation, even where people go for a bite to eat."* (Falk, 2004, p. 17)

The remaining chapters tell the story of desegregation and resegregation, and the impact they have had on the Black community in Macon, GA, as I have seen and heard it. Chapter II provides review of literature relevant to a study of resegregation in Macon, GA's schools. This review provides a brief history of the period of time between *Brown vs. Board of Education* and the "actual" desegregation of public schools in Macon. The review includes evidence of both White and Black resistance to these court mandates, as well as the role religion played in education in both the Black and White communities. Furthermore, Chapter II provides a detailed explanation of the lens through which I conducted my study, which is Critical Race Feminism.

Chapter III provides a detailed account of the methodology used in my research. I used archival data including maps, newspaper articles, and books about Macon to provide a historical context of Macon's educational climate prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the period between *Brown* and government mandated bussing to force integration, and the years since the conception of the church-affiliated segregationist academies. I also interviewed five African-American women who lived in Macon during the time period when Macon was forced to integrate public schools, resulting in the White flight to private schools. I employed oral history to retell the stories I heard from my participants. I specified and justified every means by which I collected and represented my data. I also provided theoretical connections to my methodology.

Chapters IV, V, and VI present the data I collected through my interviews, archival research, and incidental notes. These chapters begin with the archival data I found in the newspaper articles (specifically related to school board decisions) and end with the summaries of each participants' separate interview transcripts. Chapter IV focuses on Macon during the period of time commonly referred to as the Civil Rights Era—more specifically the time between when the United States Supreme Court ruled that separate was not equal, and when the South (albeit

reluctantly) finally made an attempt to desegregate. Chapter V focuses on the actual time of desegregation in Macon and the resistance to the way it was handled by both the White and Black citizens. Chapter VI focuses on the post-segregation era in Macon, from the 1980s until present day. Because of the importance of maintaining the integrity of the participants' voices throughout my representation, I saved all of my analysis for Chapter VII.

Chapter VII provides an analysis, discussion, and conclusion of findings obtained throughout the course of my research. I have included my own thoughts as well as those of my participants, as to what, if anything, we can do going forward.



## Chapter II

### A White Woman's Research into Black Women's Lives

*“...that Universal Man stands for all humankind, in fact this representation creates hierarchies and exclusions. Women, blacks, and various others have been either invisible as historical subjects or somehow depicted as less central, less important...white men have predominated; women and minorities have occupied a secondary place.”* (Scott, 1987/1992, p. 94)

In reading Hall (1996), I was introduced to an alternative concept of articulation. Hall defined articulation as, “the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two [or more] different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time.” (p. 141). In other words, articulation is taking two seemingly unrelated entities and merging them into one, viable, yet perhaps temporary, entity. This chapter will be my own articulation, as I, a White woman, employ a theoretical framework of Critical Race Feminism to discuss the issues of race, gender, class, and place as they relate to school desegregation and re-segregation in Macon, GA. I will also discuss the philosophical underpinnings of my study, which focuses on Critical Theory and the social construction of “realities” that keep society stratified.

Critical Race Feminism has expanded from a branch of legal studies to a field of academic/curricular inquiry<sup>7</sup>. Using Critical Race Feminism to provide a snapshot into Macon, which has the documented history of being a town controlled by the proverbial "Good Ole Boy Network," seeks to bring the silenced voices to the forefront—those of women, especially women of color. Investigating the differing lived experiences of life-long female residents of Macon, who have lived and taught or attended school in Macon's Black neighborhoods from the

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<sup>7</sup> This research provides “a” history of Macon through the lens of Critical Race Feminism. I do not contend that this is “the” history of Macon, or that Macon’s history could not be represented in other ways. Critical Race Feminism is the most appropriate and relevant framework for my study.

early 1970s to present day (during desegregation and re-segregation), and analyzing how those experiences affected their communities, continues the traditions of Curriculum Studies in that it allows *her-stories* to be told and provides a starting point for examining the roots of the resegregation, or apartheid, of the schools in Macon (a city with a majority African-American population and predominantly White government) today. Statewide, a study like mine could serve as a model for other cities in Georgia to begin examining their own histories as a way to improve their educational systems. On a national and/or global level, my study contributes to the growing field of scholars who endeavor to look at life from the points of view of those who, up until now, have not been allowed to contribute to their own histories, or her-stories, as it were.

Critical Race Feminism grew out of Critical Theory (signature of the Frankfurt School), and Critical Race Theory, which emerged from Critical Legal Studies in the U.S. However the roots of Critical Race Feminism reach back to the ideas and writings of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker (Wing, 2003). Alice Walker (1983) coined the term “Womanism,” in, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Garden: Womanist Prose*, in which she discusses the issues facing Black women and the men for whom they care. Then, Black Feminism emerged circa 1980-1990 as movement led by a small group of Black women who rallied against White essentialist Feminist ideals that held *all* women to White, middle-class women’s realities, without regard to the particular issues facing women of color (Harris, 2003). Meanwhile, the field of Critical Race Theory was gaining momentum by shedding light on legal studies, which centered on the fact that *all* do NOT have equal protection under the law (Wing, 2003). Kimberle Crenshaw (1994), discussed her initiation of the 1989 study of the *intersectionality* of race and gender, which contends there is no universal “women’s” experience and that women of color endure a double oppression (that of

being a woman *and* that of being Black). Feminists studying Critical Race Theory followed Crenshaw's lead and Critical Race Feminism was "born."

Thus, Critical Race Feminism is a theory that combines Critical Legal Studies, Critical Race Theory, and Feminism in such a way that the subjugation, oppression, and/or marginalization of non-White women become the focal point of studies, movements, and conversations (Wing, 2003). Critical Race Feminists such as Linda Martín Alcoff (2000) (has contributed to the field), Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Kimberle Crenshaw (1994/2003), Angela P. Harris (2003), bell hooks (1994, 1999) (like Alcoff, has contributed to the field), Audre Lorde (1984), Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, & Barbara Smith (1982), and Adrien Wing (2003) center their work on anti-essentialist Feminism<sup>8</sup>. In other words, Critical Race Feminists assert that contemporary Western Feminism is synonymous with "White Feminism" (Harris, 2003), which has historically championed women's issues as if all women live and abide by the standards held and issues faced by White women. Critical Race Feminism on the other hand, takes race into account as an equal dimension of societal oppression, recognizing that non-White women face additional marginalization of which White women are often not even cognizant. It is my interpretation that Critical Race Feminism does not exclude White Feminist issues, because the theory acknowledges Whiteness as a race (a step that many Whites, Feminists included, have failed to take). As a result, Critical Race Feminism is more inclusive and multicultural. Traditional Western Feminism, though perhaps not intentionally exclusive, is still largely White.

Other branches of Feminism overlap with Critical Race Feminism, at least in part, and could be useful to a study similar to mine. Black Feminist Thought and/or Womanism, approach

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<sup>8</sup> I would have included Sandy Grande here, however she asserts that she is not a feminist, but an *Indegina*, or indigenous woman (Grande, 2003). I see her more as a Native American Critical Race Feminist.

issues through similar lenses as Critical Race Feminism. Alice Walker (1983) is generally credited as having coined the term “Womanism,” which in turn became the name of a movement. Theorists such as Regina Austin (2003) and bell hooks (1994, 1999) joined Alice Walker as forerunners in the Womanist movement, using their Feminist approaches to bring consciousness to the issues facing the Black race as a whole. Black Feminist Thought, which focuses on the issues surrounding the phenomena of being both a woman and Black, and refuses to allow “Whitestream Feminists”<sup>9</sup> to speak for them. Prominent Black Feminists include Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Kimberle Crenshaw (1994, 2003), Angela P. Harris (2003), bell hooks, and Audre Lorde. Both Black Feminist Thought and Womanism are useful for my research, being that I will interview African-American women, exclusively. However, because Critical Race Feminism grew out of legal studies, and my research will also focus on state and local legislation, Critical Race Feminism is more appropriate as my theoretical framework.

Also influential to my perspective and understanding of my own race, gender, and place, is Uma Narayan’s book, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism* (1997), in which she offers a stinging critique of Western feminists who try to “fix” the problems faced by women living in developing nations without taking cultural issues into consideration. Furthermore, she denounces the essentialist tendencies of Western feminists who so quickly point out the atrocities perpetrated against women in “third world” countries, all the while ignoring the deplorable abuses taking place in their own “back yards” (Narayan, 1997).

Both of the above stated efforts are exemplified by her taking fellow feminist, Mary Daly (1978), to task for the chapter she wrote about the Indian practice of sati, or widow-burning (Narayan, 1997). Narayan (1997) points out that yes, widow-burning is horrific. However, she

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<sup>9</sup> Grande (2003) uses this term when discussing how White women tend to essentialize and speak for all women, without specific regards to issues of oppression faced by non-White women. By borrowing her term and using it in this context, I am by no means asserting that I consider Grande a Black Feminist.

argues, Daly does not have the accurate facts (nor even the correct spelling of sati, which Daly spells sutee). Narayan appeared to take it personally that Daly would write in apparent judgment of the Indian culture when there was (are) so very many injustices prevailing in her (Daly's) own.

Audre Lorde (1984) took Daly to task for the same offense in response to her comments regarding genital mutilation of African women. Both Narayan and Lorde make an important point about essentialism, and the understanding that one must not impose her culture on another. (This understanding is necessary for me, an outsider within, studying Macon, GA.) To be honest, this has been a struggle for me during the course of my studies. I once wrote a position paper in response to an article by Vrinda Dalmiya (2000) regarding the value, expectations, and treatment of Indian women. In the paper I argued that by exposing the injustices third world women face, and then avoiding the temptation to succumb to cultural essentialism or relativism, it would be possible to help women in third world countries take steps to lift themselves out of their oppressive states without doing so in a way that forces our values on them. I began my argument with Dalmiya's contention that the identity development of women in India is closely tied to their ability to produce male offspring (2000). Dalmiya claims, "In India, a *good* woman is not only one who gives birth but birth to *sons*..." (emphasis mine) (Dalmiya, 2000, p. 124). I pursued my case in good faith; truly believing that I could successfully "expose" the "abuse" suffered by Indian women (i.e. forced arranged marriages, subservient living conditions, minimal social value, etc.) and offer them a "path to salvation" in a way that would not impose my Western values on their culture. I was literally heartbroken when I received the feedback from Dr. Liston that I had "trampled all over the rights of Indian women" in my paper. Looking back now, I can see that I simply was not yet cognizant of the Western lens through which I viewed

the world. However at the time, I was extremely hard on myself due to the disappointment and the realization that I had done exactly that which I argued one should never do. Thus I searched for a way to find a balance between cultural essentialism and cultural relativism, with specific regard to Western women discussing the issues of women in developing countries. Dr. Liston pointed me toward Narayan's work. I needed to know whether Western women could involve themselves in the lives of women in developing nations without essentializing, and if not, would that mean that Western women were taking a relativist position. Narayan (1997) says it is possible, but only if Western women avoid trying to make Third-World cultures a mirror of their own. Furthermore, Narayan and others says that Western women need to recognize the individual differences and diversity within a cultural group and refrain from treating any member of said group as an "emissary" who knows everything about every aspect of that culture (Narayan, 1997; Schutte, 2000; Takaki, 1994).

Daphne Patai (1991) tackles the same issue, and says that it is in fact NOT possible for Western feminists—who (according to her) are "mostly white and middle class," to research issues of third-world women—who are "non-white and poor" in an objective and ethical manner (p. 137). Asserting that ethical research cannot take place while the researcher is "looking down" upon her subjects, perhaps Patai is correct, at least to a point. The vast majority of Western women probably DO think of third-world women as a sub-human group unworthy of the same considerations and social locations they enjoy. Patai's mistake, however, is assuming that the Western academics, the feminists, ALL think in this way. Is that not the same type of essentialism against which she warns Westerners from engaging?

It seems to me that one cannot remove the lens through which she sees the world. However, the lenses can be modified through a process of enlightenment that leads to

acknowledgement and awareness of issues of epistemic privilege. The only way this can happen is through dialog, discourse, and interaction. Women need to recognize each other's humanity. Unlike Alcoff (2000), who asserts that white people need to go through awareness training, I think a better way of attaining this seemingly esoteric knowledge is through immersion in interaction with women who are Others.

Back to Macon—Given Macon's past as a one-time large and voluminous slave market, Post-Colonial Feminism could lend some support to my study. However Post-Colonial Feminism generally relates to the oppression of women in countries that have liberated themselves from larger, oppressive regimes; and concentrates on the issues of non-Western women as they try to overcome marginalization on their own terms, not by (well-intentioned) Western standards. But when I am doing my inquiry into the various neighborhoods and cultures in Macon, I can apply what I have learned from Uma Narayan to help me hear and understand what the residents of Macon are saying about *their* experiences in *their* city without filtering it only through my upper-middle class white Western lens. Some of the other foremost scholars bringing Post-Colonial Feminist issues to light are Anne McClintock (1995), Chandra Mohanty (1991), Uma Narayan (1995, 1997, 2000, 2003), Mary Louise Pratt (2007), and Gayatri Spivak (1988). Closely related in both philosophy and practice to Post-Colonial Feminism, Third-World Feminism focuses on gender issues specific to women in "underdeveloped nations." In addition to Linda Martin Alcoff, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (1981), are among the most widely recognized scholars in the field of Third-World Feminism. I acknowledge that both Post-Colonial Feminism and Third-World Feminism are geographically inappropriate as theoretical frameworks for my study, however they do provide useful philosophical foundations

and perspectives for an upper-middle-class White woman, who is not a native Maconite, to proceed in an intimate study of a city plagued by extreme poverty and unofficial apartheid.

Furthermore it is my interpretation that the underlying philosophy of Critical Race Feminism is built upon the epistemological belief that knowledge comes from access to a system not available to all, making it largely esoteric rather than experiential. Ontologically, being is a function of duality. In other words, Others find themselves bouncing between the identity society imposes on them and the identity they know and/or seek for themselves—much like what DuBois (1903/1961) described as *double consciousness*, which speaks to the oxymoronic articulation of being both American and Black. Axiologically, values are based on intrinsic qualities that define humanity. Definitions of right and wrong emerge from the ideals of democracy and equality.

Critical Race Feminism is unlike any other theory because it is a *Feminist* movement that grew out of legal studies. This movement exposes the inherent racism and sexism in our patriarchal, Anglo-centric, Western society (for those who are willing to see it). Critical Race Feminism aligns with other branches of antiessentialist Feminist studies such as Post-Colonial Feminism and Third-World Feminism, asserting that Western women tend to judge and impose their own values upon women in/from developing countries (Narayan, 1997, 2000).

Moreover, Critical Whiteness Studies emerged in response to Critical Race Theory. Critical Whiteness Studies looks at the daily occurrences that are taken for granted as part of White Privilege, which Whites are taught NOT to acknowledge (McIntosh, 1997). However, studying Whiteness does not necessarily equate with studying the problems of inherent societal racism (Hurtado & Stewart, 2004). Critical Whiteness scholars have recently begun to examine the “privileged side of oppression,” according to Hurtado and Stewart (2004, p. 316).



Unfortunately, doing so puts Whites back into the center of the conversation (as opposed to Critical Race Feminism or Post-Colonial Feminism), where for once Others actually have a voice. Nonetheless, Critical Whiteness Studies explores the phenomena of Whiteness, which is usually discussed in terms of White supremacy (Mahoney, 1997). When discussing racial issues, Whites often feel victimized by “reverse racism” and become defensive when forced to acknowledge their race (Mahoney, 1997). Hence the necessity of Critical Race Feminism, which recognizes the White male supremacy that is inherent in our social institutions, and that Whites largely fail to see. Critical White Studies is not about advancing a cause or improving conditions for the White race. Rather Critical White “theorists” are either writing “How to deal with ‘Others’ manuals,” or tapping into White guilt in an attempt to reverse White supremacy. Yet at the end of the day, the consensus is that the current class structure will keep Whites in power (Ansley, 1997)—again reiterating the importance of Critical Race Feminism.

One of the strengths of Critical Race Feminism is that it puts women of color, rather than White women or men, in control of the conversation. In other words, Critical Race Feminists resist the White normativity in society and provide a forum for discussion with and regarding marginalized voices. Moreover, Critical Race Feminism forces the dominant (middle-class White male) culture to at least have an awareness that other perspectives exist.

Critical Race Feminism forces the issues of race *and* gender *and* class to be examined as joint tools of oppression. In our society, we like to think we have evolved to the point that things such as racism, sexism, and classism no longer exist. In fact, many people do believe exactly so. Simply because things are better than they once were does not mean that things are as they ought be. Those who deny the existence of oppression in Western society are doing so perhaps out of some misguided sense of patriotism or religious belief, or possibly out of simple

ignorance. Most likely however, the deniers are simply unwilling to see, as doing so might expose some culpability and responsibility on their parts, which could conceivably cause some cognitive dissonance (Gorski, 2009). On the other hand, Critical Race Feminism has a purpose to fight for social justice for all.

The critics of Critical Race Feminism are many. Because Critical Race Feminists exist on the margins of the margins, they are the most likely to be ignored, looked over, and/or condemned. “Oh, that’s very nice,” is the typical response to Adrien Wing (2003, p.1) when she discusses her work. Such is the patronizing attitude of a male dominated Whiteman society that asserts Critical Race Feminists should not be taken seriously. Furthermore, this ignorance runs concurrent with the misguided attitude that Feminists really want to be men. In the title of her first chapter of *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, bell hooks says it all, “Power to the Pussy: We don’t wanna be Dicks in Drag!” (1994, p. 9). I think this a compelling response to those who lack the depth to understand from where Critical Race Feminists come. Our society needs to understand that women (of all races) can think, feel, and speak for themselves, and wanting control of one’s life does not equate with wanting to be a man. Some people simply cannot comprehend that which is not about “them,” nor do they want to.

Another argument against Critical Race Feminism is that racism is merely an extension of sexism and therefore should not be given equal status. Alcoff (2000) points out that some critics of Critical Race Feminism, like the early Radical Feminists Catherine Stimpson, Shulamith Firestone, and Mary Daly, believe sexism (alone) is the fundamental oppression from which all other oppressions evolve.

Ferguson (2000), while discussing Global Feminism, points out the poststructuralist criticism of all Feminisms that, “general paradigms involve discourses for categorizing the

world, which...not only create the object of their discourse but also legitimize experts in the use of the discourse to determine what truths can be attributed to the objects of discourse” (p. 195). Chow (2000) and other post-structuralists say that talking about Critical Race Feminism creates the problems faced by women of color (racism, sexism, classism), as if to say that if these issues were not discussed, then they (the isms) would miraculously disappear. On the other hand Ferguson (2000) argues, “Feminism as an engaged standpoint cannot be satisfied with mere deconstructive or genealogical critiques but must develop positive visions and ethico-political strategies to challenge social domination” (p. 197). Although the statement applies to Feminism in general, Critical Race Feminism does fall under the umbrella of Feminism and the same argument applies.

Sandy Grande (2003) holds the same point of view as Ferguson (2000) and Chow (2000) in that she sees Feminism (including Critical Race Feminism) as merely an idea put forth by academics looking for a subject about which to write. On the other hand, Grande’s (2003) writing suggests that she may be a Native American Critical Race Feminist, but like the postmodern/poststructural feminists, she is reluctant to be bound by a label. Nevertheless, I believe that the issues brought forth by Feminists are necessary for the discourse that must take place in our society today. If not, who is ever going to hear marginalized women’s points of view?

Catherine McKinnon (1997) believes that meaningful discussions about race and gender can occur separately. McKinnon espouses the essentialist ideal that we should be colorblind and gender-neutral when it comes to race (Harris, 2003). When the conversations about race and gender are separated, the essentialist notion that the problems of White women are the problems of all women prevails (Harris, 2003) and the Black issues are excluded (Crenshaw, 2003).

Hence, the articulation of race, gender, and class embody the realm of Critical Race Feminism.

Tapping into the social construction of identity, one of the foremost scholars of Critical Race Feminism, Wing (2003) presents her “Social Construction Thesis,” or the idea that race is not biological, rather socially constructed (p. 5). Wing provides the example of her own lived experience, when she says that her looks had “led” her “to be classified as Black in the United States, Coloured in South Africa, and White in Brazil (p.5). Although she does not go into great detail, her experiences left her with the knowledge that race is indeed a social construction, and that it is one of the many facets of our identity that can lead to oppression.

It is important to separate educational changes generated by changes in philosophical paradigms versus those forced on society by the rule of law. While I will explore some potential philosophical agents of social change, I am ever cognizant that THE CHANGE I am studying was grounded in a mandate set forth by the United States Supreme Court, and was met with vehement resistance by both Black and White citizens alike. There is a great deal of literature that tells of the White resistance to desegregation, much of which implies that Black citizens were all too happy to be uprooted from their neighborhood school and bussed across town to White schools where they knew they were not wanted—all in the name of equality. There are fewer accounts, though some do exist, of Black resistance (Celceski 1994; Robinson & Bonnie, 2009; Watkins, 2001 & 2005) coming to light, but the scales tip heavily in White resistance’s favor. Robinson and Bonnie (2009) provide a collection of short narratives written by various African-Americans encapsulating their experiences in education since the dawn of court-ordered desegregation. The essays, stories told from Black voices, serve to support the idea that resegregation is a national crisis (if true integration ever took place at all). There are also studies, such as Bellamy (1979), Bickel (1964), Fiss (1974), Goldfield (1981), Hornsby (1991),

and Werum (1999) that provide a look at society's subtle efforts to re-segregate education. All of their perspectives, however are from the African-American point of view. This could speak to White America's reluctance to acknowledge inequity in today's "standardized" education. This intentional and systemic injustice is perpetuated by the "powers that be," that seek to maintain a White, patriarchal status quo.

When Georgia was forced to integrate its public school system, the state planned and proposed a private school system in order to keep segregation alive (Manis, 2004; Roche, 1998; Woodward, 1955/1966). Although the state planned system failed to come to fruition, Macon quietly (or not so quietly) built a private school system of its own (Manis, 2004). Having been a large slave market for the region, antebellum Macon was an industrial town built largely on slave labor (Davis, 2004). As such, Macon is and has always been a city with a proportionately large Black population. With the failure of the proposal for a state private school system Macon, like many communities in Georgia, witnessed rapid White flight from the public schools once integration took place (Falk, 2004; Manis, 2004). Suddenly, circa 1970, churches all over Georgia (about 20 in Macon alone) built "academies," which were attached to their church (Falk, 2004; Manis, 2004). Only the poorest White children were left in the public schools to be educated (or not) along with the Black students (Falk, 2004). While nationwide, most Black students attend public schools, in Macon most public schools are predominantly Black (GaDOE, 2007; Stoval, 2005). Macon/Bibb County public schools fall prey to the same problems facing urban schools nationwide: Mediocrity, apathy, permissiveness, social promotion, insufficient curricula, and low expectations (Stovall, 2004; Watkins, 2005). Furthermore, Freeman, Scafidi, and Sjoquist's (2005) findings show that in Georgia, "...schools with higher percentages of black students have lower-quality human resources. In particular, such schools experience much

higher turnover of white teachers, have fewer teachers with advanced degrees, and have more inexperienced teachers” (p. 162). Stovall (2004) points out, and I agree, that when success is not expected, is not considered the norm, then that signifies a crucial problem. That expectation of success or failure has far reaching ramifications leading to self-fulfilling prophecies. Anyon (2005) argues that one of the problems contributing to ongoing urban poverty is that once children (especially Black) of poverty graduate, there are no jobs available for which their education has prepared them. If no one expects the urban, poor, Black children to do well in school, and there is little or no employment waiting for them should they graduate, what incentive do they have to perform? While I certainly do not advocate education for the utilitarian purpose of employment alone, it would be naïve to pretend that in today’s society it is not orchestrated largely for that purpose.

One of the purposes of curriculum inquiry is to delve into the problems of our educational system with regards to the reciprocal relationship said system has with society. In the fields of education and curriculum studies, Critical Theory can serve as a catalyst for change, by opening minds and initiating discourse about new meanings within old ideas. Critical Theorists are interested in how knowledge is processed and re-defined, alternate ideas derived from text, and how this leads to a power structure (Apple, 1982/1995). Critical Theorists aim to eliminate the hidden curriculum by providing an analytical framework for studying policy within institutions and exposing those members of society who are on the margins, whose plights are least acknowledged (Apple, 1982/1995). The hidden curriculum to which Apple refers is the element of the curriculum that is left unspoken—that which is rendered unimportant or insignificant by its omission. Too often, if something is not written on the pages of a textbook, it does not exist within the confines of a school. Critical Theorists are opposed to the common practice of

defining knowledge as facts gleaned from a textbook (Apple, 1982/1995). Those whose existence, culture, history, and life are excluded from the pages of school textbooks are receiving the message that they are not worthy of being known. Instead, they must conform to the standardized norms.

Another component of a Critical Theorist's view of education is the offering of ways to move beyond the current hierarchical structures—eliminate NCLB, charter schools, vouchers, and other means of causing vast divisions within education to the detriment of educational equality (Spring, 2005). Stark differences in educational opportunities create economic turmoil, which when combined with ideological distress, breeds authoritarianism and allows the state to control approved knowledge (Apple, 1982/1995). When the state polices knowledge there is no room for free thoughts, no autonomy, no discourse, and no play (literally play—as in imaginative, social, physical play). Unfortunately, this is what is seen in schools across America today. Schools are largely about conformity and obeying the teacher (and of course, improving test scores). Hence educators and curriculum scholars have a duty to unleash the hidden curriculum and give credence to those who have been pushed aside, omitted, forgotten, marginalized, and left behind.

In our country, among those who found themselves cast out into the ether of the hidden curriculum were our Black citizens (and I use that word in a holistic sense, not so much a legal one). Much of what has been recorded as official “history” about the South and/or Macon, GA has been largely myopic—Brundage's *The Southern Past* (2005) was a well documented testament to the fact that the recorded Southern past was largely **the Southern White male** past. The book begged the question of whether was it even possible to get an accurate version of history. History was always written through a lens, and as Lillian Smith (1957/1978) said, “The

winner names the age” (p. 111). White males dominated the South (and the United States as a whole), thus their version of history has become "officialized" largely to the detriment of Women and non-Whites (mostly Blacks). Cash (1941) described the culture of the South as:

violence, intolerance, aversion and suspicion toward new ideas...an exaggerated individualism and a too narrow concept of social responsibility, attachment to fiction and false values, and above all too great attachment to racial values and a tendency to justify cruelty and injustice in the name of these values, sentimentality, and a lack of realism.  
(pp. 428-429)

Certainly during the Jim Crow era (in which these words were written) these attributes were more prevalent, particularly in the South, than they are at present. The South has made a great deal of progress since 1941 in terms of civil rights; however this history cannot be ignored as it laid the groundwork for some of the many problems still facing the South today. One of the major problems in the South, for both Black and White citizens, both in the past and at present, was/is education.

Prior to desegregation, the South portrayed the “ever-empty promise of separate but equal education” for both Blacks and Whites (Applebome, 1996, p. 211). Yet White citizens knew their Southern heritage and identity, which included such ideals as *hospitality, manners, leisure, belles and gentlemen, freedom, and entitlement*, depended on maintaining their supremacy over Blacks (Cobb, 2005; Malvasi, 2008). Recognizing this, Black citizens became conscious of the fact that they were struggling between being accepted *and* rejected by those who once owned them (Cobb, 2005), much like what Dubois (1903/1961) had described as “double consciousness.”



Knowing that those in power were loathe to relinquish said power, Black citizens knew they would have an ongoing fight for equality, as access to things equal was so difficult to attain (Dubois, 1903/1961; Greene, 1991). Furthermore, Blacks had been denied the privilege of learning to read during the time of slavery. When they were promised “40 acres and a mule,” they were told they were free, yet were forced into sharecropping, servitude, and extreme poverty.

In the post-bellum and Jim Crow eras Blacks realized that education was their only ticket to true freedom (Anderson, 1988). Yet the only education being offered them was industrial education, largely in an attempt by Whites to pacify Blacks, without too drastically changing the status quo (Anderson, 1988; Watkins, 2001). Whites deluded themselves into believing that their separate but equal practices, even though *equal* meant *less than* (since Blacks were considered *less than*), relieved them of any guilt or shame they should feel, so long as they did not *mistreat* the Blacks (McLaurin, 1998). Some, as Kliebard (1987/2004) showed, even believed that Black schools were “designed to equip America’s underclass with the skills that would bring it to the level of the white middle class” (p. 107). Yet W.E.B. Dubois (1903/1961) was a pioneer in the fight for allowing Blacks to attain a liberal arts education. It was his belief that the true path to a better race was for those Blacks who could, they should earn a degree from an institution of higher learning, and in turn, teach others how to read, write, and calculate (Dubois, 1903/1961). Dubois was largely criticized however, as being an elitist, and for fighting for the educational rights of Black *men* (as in, excluding women).

Black men were not alone, however in being shut out of higher education. Anna Julia Cooper, who originally published *A Voice From the South* in 1892, was the first Black American woman to earn a Ph.D., yet she had to go to Paris to do so (Cooper, 1892/1988). Cooper

(1892/1988) believed that a person should be judged for his or her contributions to society, not by gender or the color of skin. She advocated for women to be recognized for their contributions to society and railed against the Black men who excluded women from their fight for equality (Cooper, 1892/1988). Furthermore, White Southern women, specifically in Georgia, had to fight for educational opportunities. Recognizing the paternalistic nature of society (aka “The Good Ole Boy Network”), White women in Georgia started by participating in civic activities, and then *parléed* those efforts into a grassroots movement to open doors for women to have the same educational opportunities as men (Montgomery, 2006).

Although reluctant to do so, White Southerners were forced to provide education for Black citizens, both male and female. To make sure Blacks had “equal” access to the materials and privileges White students had, White school boards provided Black schools with used and/or discarded textbooks, furniture, etc. Then White Southerners, not wanting to abandon the lifestyle they enjoyed, simply imposed their culture on the entire South, and anyone who did not “fit the mold” (read *Black*), was considered to be less than human (Applebome, 1996). By considering Blacks to be less than human, Whites could justify providing them with a simple industrial education (not to mention keep Blacks in the working class with no possibility of upward mobility). Some even considered that Whites were doing Blacks a favor by providing such minimal educational opportunities (as opposed to none). Kliebard, (1987/2004) stated:

The prevailing rationale at...educational institutions designed specifically for blacks and Native Americans was that while those races were not inherently inferior, they were in an earlier stage of development than the white race. By designing the program of studies so as to introduce the more advanced white social institutions and social practices to the less advanced races, their progress toward a state of civilization could be speeded up. (p. 107)

In a detailed legal history of the events leading up to, surrounding, and the effects of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Kluger (1989) examines a desegregation issue pre-, during, and post-court ordered integration of schools. Once the schools were desegregated a whole new set of problems arose. First and foremost, was the issue that reform was reduced to one “best” system, centralized and controlled by Whites, who were in fact, the center of all curricula, yet were unable or unwilling to acknowledge this privilege (Danns, 2005; Henry, 2005). What would be wrong with allowing and/or providing for an Afro-centric curriculum and culturally relevant pedagogy for Black students (Kharem & Hayes, 2005)?

Siddle Walker and Tompkins studied the history of Southern segregated schooling. Through interviews with Black former students in the segregated South (certainly a marginalized group), they determined that the people they interviewed held their teachers in high esteem. One of the most predominant thoughts of students at that time was that they could tell the teachers who really cared because they were the ones “telling it like it is” (Siddle Walker & Tompkins, 2004, p. 81). The teachers, in turn, felt that they had information the students needed, and it was their duty to present it in such a way that their students grew as people and within their race. Furthermore, they used teachable moments whenever possible, and provided curricular and extracurricular programs, instruction, and materials that met the needs of their students (Siddle Walker & Tompkins, 2004). They did not teach to a test. Rather, they operated within an ethic of care and their students were provided with an education that prepared them to enter into a so-called “democratic society” because of it. Conversely, the students respected the teachers, and the teachers were able to teach because of it (Siddle Walker & Tompkins, 2004).

In her book, *Their Highest Potential*, Siddle Walker (1996) said the teachers at the Black school (whose former students she interviewed) taught their students that they had to perform

better than the White students to be considered nearly as good, or even worthy of competition. The teachers believed it was their duty to share this harsh reality with their students. However, if society had instituted an ethic of care (Siddle Walker & Tompkins, 2004), such a statement would not have been (and would not still be) necessary. Furthering the sentiment that assimilation into the White educational system was not exactly what Blacks were after, Cecelski (1994) provided a historical account of a Black protest to desegregation in Hyde County, North Carolina. His work is important because it provides an oft-unheard story of the voices on the Other side. While Cecelski's focus is on Black citizens who rebelled against the system by refusing to attend integrated (read White) schools, and my study will focus on women's stories, both of our studies aim to tell the hidden stories that do not make it into "officialized" versions of history.

St. John and Cadray (2004) also talked about segregation and desegregation, saying that in the segregated Black schools, care was equivalent to quality. Then, in the era of desegregation, Blacks were expected to assimilate into White schooling, or what was good for Whites (St. John and Cadray, 2004). Now, in the age of postsegregation, mostly African-American urban schools are in a state of despair, and it is going to take a "culture of care" to rebuild them (St. John and Cadray, 2004, p. 98). As Danna (2005) observed, "Teaching Black students was secondary to controlling their actions" (p. 188). Henry (2005) echoed that sentiment that the **one** correct answer, **one** correct way, White-male-perspective, direct instruction model served to do nothing but perpetuate the industrial educational practices of rote memorization, reproduction of facts, and one-dimensional assessment. For example, early on in the age of forced desegregation of schools, White teachers' efforts (if there were any) to teach Standard English and grammar to Black students failed (whether consciously or unconsciously) to adequately do so (Perlstein,

2005). Whites, especially in the South, tended to see the failure as being that of the Black students. “Scientific evidence” (read “Scientific Racism”) brought forth by the Eugenics Movement, Social Darwinism, IQ testing, etc. served to further White supremacist causes, as all of the above “proved” Blacks were inferior to Whites and should therefore remain subservient, worthy of nothing more than an industrial education (Watkins, 2001). The objective in “dealing” with Blacks in desegregated schools was simply control and subordination (Stovall, 2005). Yet Gallagher (1993) said, “...developmental scientists now think that the real environmental problem faced by inner-city kids is a chronic sensory overload that drains energy from their proper pursuits. Study after study shows that intensive background stimulation hinders development and that kids’ adaptation to it is ephemeral at best” (p. 159). Could the crowded, gun-shot riddled, gang-ridden, etc. conditions in which many of our urban-poor communities are situated possibly have more of a negative effect on children’s learning than the color of their skin? Gallagher (1993) further said:

If all the research on the best environments in which to raise and educate children could be boiled down to three words, they would be Small Is Beautiful. Intimate surroundings, a low student-to-teacher ratio, neighborhood rather than regional facilities—these are the kinds of nongimmicky, less-is-more environmental influences that year after year have proved to foster both academic and social learning. (p. 159)

So, which description matches the current state of urban classrooms, including Macon, GA? Which situation most closely mirrors the lived experiences of today’s public youth? What is lived experience, and how does it relate to education? Lived experience is exactly that—what a person has experienced through living, through being human, through observing and participating in the world in which he/she lives. Lived experience happens inside and outside of

the confines of the school. The two worlds are not mutually exclusive. Dewey (1956/1990, p. 80) stated, “The child can carry over what he learns in the home and utilize it in school; and things learned in the school he applies at home,” which reinforces the idea that lived experience is integral to education. True learning occurs through lived experience. Many curriculum scholars agree that lived experience is in fact at the heart of education (Dewey, 1956/1990; MacDonald 1995; Morris 2001; Pinar 1994). Yet Morris (2001, p.1) pointed out that lived experience is conspicuously “absented in school life.” She said, “Erasing lived experience, erasing human subjectivities in school life, endangers both students and teachers alike because we have no sense of who we are” (pp. 1-2). The pedagogy surrounding standardized testing all but executes lived experience. With monetary incentives being tied to test scores, it is no wonder that education has been reduced to a “banking” system (Freire, 1970/1986), whereby the teacher “deposits” facts with which to “fill” the students’ heads. Moreover, these facts are very narrow in the spectrum of knowledge. The children are not learning or experiencing many things they can apply outside of school. Although other subject areas are being tested, the money is attached to the math and reading. Seeing the danger therein, Rothstein and Jacobsen (2006) declared, “By basing sanctions solely on math and reading scores, the law creates the incentives to limit – or in some cases eliminate entirely – time spent on other important curricular activities” (p. 264). Many of these curricular activities to which they refer involve history, the humanities, the arts, and physical education—all of which contribute to the lived experience that makes us human.

Yet many schools programs for the arts, humanities, and physical education have already been eliminated—either for lack of funding, or a perceived lack of time (time being better spent on tested subjects). Even though, as Pinar (1994) stated, “We teachers have the mechanical means to present the material we deem important to present,” (p. 10) more often than not, that

which has become “important to present” is amazingly identical to that which is going to appear on that year’s standardized tests. However MacDonald (1995) pointed out, humanities “are focused squarely upon the development of individual persons as human beings, upon the welding of feeling with thought and action, and upon the awareness, experiencing, and analysis of cultural forms as expressive symbols” (p. 57). Unfortunately schools have lost sight of the idea that people are individuals who need to develop, to feel, to think, to reason, and to live their experience.

School has become the place where the individual is punished into obliteration. The practices of homogenous instruction, group work, cooperative learning, numbering students, and tracking all contribute to MacDonald’s (1995) idea of “collective accountability” (p. 53). This immoral practice, MacDonald argues, operates under the idea that if teachers are accountable for the group as a whole, then the individual is unimportant. (However, this “collective accountability” is exactly what standardized testing reinforces.) The very structure of the educational system is built on collective ideals. How else could one explain the practice of placing twenty or more children in one classroom and teaching them as if they were one person?

If schooling is about conformity, then what happens to the child who is non-conformist? Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen (2003) suggested:

Sent to school as very young children, both boys and girls learn very early that the Procrustean standards of ‘normalcy,’ ‘being good,’ and ‘doing school’ create a very narrow band of acceptable thought, speech, and action... Those who will not, or cannot comply with what schools and teachers demand are rapidly and effectively marginalized under the claim that early intervention is in the best interest of the child. (p. 164)

By invoking Procrustes, a figure in Greek mythology who tortured his prey by cutting or stretching them to fit the size of his beds, Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen liken his tactics to what is sometimes called the “cookie-cutter method of teaching,” or “one-size fits all.” Children who have their own way of thinking are subject to early intervention, which sometimes takes the form of special education and quite often other labels (that are all but impossible to shed), and drugs. Children are literally being labeled and then drugged into conformity. Children who daydream too much are given drugs for Attention Deficit Disorder. Children who wiggle too much are given drugs for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Children who cannot follow directions well or who are disrespectful to the teacher are given drugs for Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Children who feel too pressured or sad are given drugs for depression. Children who are overweight and find it hard to breathe during exercise are given drugs for asthma. The list goes on and on. I absolutely do not question the legitimacy of any of these disorders. I simply believe they are all over-diagnosed to the point of abuse—all for the purpose of “managing” rote memorization for standardized tests, and creating a society of workers—not thinkers. Furthermore, I see the overuse of drugs eroding the spirits of children to the point that recovery may be impossible. MacDonald (1995) said that education should be about centering, or “the search to find our inner being or to complete one’s awareness of wholeness and meaning as a person” (p. 87). Yet in schools today an inner being is seldom acknowledged, much less sought. Standardization and conformity are the “masters” today.

Kozol (1992) showed the vast disparities between schools in some of the United States’ largest urban areas. He provides a somewhat difficult-to-fathom accounts how cities from East St. Louis, to Chicago, to New York, and San Antonio systematically reward those students from middle-class or higher families with “good,” safe, and higher performing schools, while



punishing children born into poverty by crowding them into dangerous, filthy, and underperforming schools. Although Macon is smaller than the cities addressed by Kozol's research, it certainly faces similar problems. Further, Kozol (2005) described how the segregation/desegregation/resegregation issue is not unique to Macon, Georgia, or even the South. It is a nationwide problem. Kozol shows that "White flight" to the suburbs, scripted curricula, "standardized" high-stakes testing, tracking, and dilapidated facilities all contribute to the systemic and chronic failure of public schools to meet the needs of the United States' minority children.

Orfield and Eaton (1996) provided a collection of research from The Harvard Project on School Desegregation that serves as a pre-cursor for Kozol's work in 2005. In their edited book, they showed how easily cities across the United States were able to re-segregate along racial lines, with the help of the judicial system at the local, state, and federal level. These works are extremely important to my research, as they show that the re-segregation issue is not a "Macon" problem, but a national one.

A study done by Reardon and Yun (2005), for the purpose of determining what (if any) correlation exists between neighborhood segregation and public school segregation, showed an increasing trend toward a higher rate of segregation in the schools than in residential neighborhoods. Reardon and Yun (2005) found that:

In 1990, public schools in metropolitan area counties were, on average, forty percent less segregated than the housing patterns in their corresponding county. By 2000, however, public schools were only twenty-seven percent less segregated than their local housing markets, a one-third reduction in the effectiveness of desegregation efforts. (p. 51)

In other words, a public school's racial balance should reflect that of its district. However as the aforementioned study shows, the trend is moving in the opposite direction. Even as more neighborhoods achieve some level of racial diversity, the occurrence of White flight to the private schools has, in effect, negated the attempts for educational equality sought by African-Americans.

Furthermore, Anyon's (1997) study was somewhat similar to mine, but she focused on The Marcy School (pseudonym) in Newark, NJ. She traced the school's history and academic progress, critically examined its socioeconomic and sociocultural foundations, and contrasted her findings against the backdrop of the city in which it (the school) was located. Anyon said that in order to understand why urban schools were still failing, it was crucial to comprehend their history and what led them down this path to begin with. Liston (2001) described schools as a place where, "learners and teachers engage in meaningful exploration of themselves," which could facilitate the coming together of many good things from different aspects of life as a way of approaching education that will, in turn, benefit society as a whole" (p. 218). She called this "JOY."

It is now acceptable to include said humanity in academia, including critiques, analyses, editorials, narratives, and multiple-interpretations of the human experience. All of the above is beginning to matter (to some). Paulo Freire (2007) recognized the importance of human experience in education, as he chronicled in *Daring to Dream*. If there was one theme running through this series of essays and dialog, it was **possibility**. School and education **ought** to be about showing someone the possibilities of and the pathways to a higher level of being, freedom, responsibility, and happiness. In reality, however, school is often reduced to a mere tool of oppression and control; and education is reduced to test scores. Much like a "hellfire and

brimstone" religion that threatens "do it my way or burn in eternal damnation," schools threaten conformity as the **only** option. Those who dare to think, speak, act, or DREAM outside of what is deemed "normal" are labeled as discipline problems, special needs, ADD, ADHD, OCD, BHD, ODD, and the list goes on. Drugs and/or removal from the classroom are the remedies of choice. Freire argued that we are wrong to accept this as status quo. When we accept without question what we are given in the forms of government, religion, education, propriety, society, etc., we are left eventually with nothing to do except cry for what might have been.

*Rules, religion, normativity, oppression, conformity, control*—words woven together by one common thread—dehumanization. Through legislation or brutal tyranny rules are made for some to enforce and Others to follow. The so-called rule-makers are allowed to be human, while the rule followers/breakers are subhuman. There is no doubt that we are a society of laws and rules, and we do need these to forge some attempt at civilization. However it is in the making of the rules, be they legal or societal, that the dehumanization takes place—in as much as a rule that liberates one debilitates another. Rules place people in positions of power, whether as creators or enforcers, often to the extent that said people do not abide by the very rules they create (as they are exempt, no doubt). Gibran (1923) said, “You delight in laying down laws, yet you delight more in breaking them” (p. 44). Point being, we must question the “rulers,” and the rules.

Carlson (2008) stated, “The failure of modern metaphysics is...a humanism that in fact dehumanizes precisely by claiming to offer a clear and distinct idea of the human” (pp. 118-119). Hence, when we try to define who is really human and who is not, again we dehumanize those who live on or outside the margins of said humanity. And that brings all of these ideas together—toward a deconstruction of humanity. Who is human? Who decides? Whose stories

are told, heard, and recorded? Who sits within the margins, and who sits on the margins of the margins? The same questions arise again and again. Kamuf (2005) stated, ““The experience of deconstruction, if such a thing were possible, would be the singular experience of a repeating singularity, always someone’s. But whose? Whose experience is it? To whom does it belong?” (p. 154). And further, “If it [the experience of deconstruction] were possible, it would have to be an experience in which the very question of *whose* experience it is, to whom it belongs or returns, has to remain suspended.” (p. 155). Therein lies the lesson. Ideas, rules, mores, morals, standards, etc. all have to be redefined constantly as the definitions of humanity change. We cannot continue to “measure” ourselves with tools that are rendered obsolete by our own intervention.

In direct retaliation to unending marginalization, movements such as Feminism and Critical Race Feminism have begun to flourish, and as they continue to grow, more cross-cultural, cross-racial dialogue is taking place between women. Yet there is still a looming gap in research specific to the stories of Black women in the South and their experiences with the forced educational changes that occurred as a direct result of court-ordered desegregation.

One could argue that not much has changed in the South—neither in my adopted home of Georgia nor my childhood home of North Carolina. Furthermore, while some states employed very organized White citizens groups that were sometimes covert in how they operated, Georgia was not one of them. Because every datum I have found about Georgia's leaders suggest that they were so overt about their intentions, groups like the Citizens’ Council (McMillen, 1971) and others were not able to operate behind the scenes (effectively) to push forward their agendas to keep education segregated (KKK notwithstanding). This is somewhat ironic, considering that the research (case-specific to North Carolina) into Black schools prior to desegregation shows

that despite the often dilapidated conditions of their buildings, despite the outdated textbooks, and despite the lack of funding from local school boards, Black children were able to earn a viable education (Siddle Walker, 1996; Siddle Walker & Tompkins, 2004; St. John & Cadray, 2004). Anyon (2005), Cecelski (1994), Fox-Genovese (1988), Kozol (2005), and Siddle Walker (1996) all provided excellent examples upon which I can base my work, however a thorough search of literature related to the history of education in Macon, GA yielded no oral histories of women's stories from the pre-segregation, to segregation, to post-segregation/re-segregation eras. It seems to me that the fight to end segregation was for Black citizens to have the right and/or freedom to choose which school their children would attend, not to be forced by the government into White schools where they (Black children) were expected to assimilate into White ways of schooling (St. John and Cadray, 2004). Undoubtedly, this assimilation (for lack of a better word) has impacted the Black community in such a way that Black students are caught up in another mechanism of subjugation, which takes the form of substandard facilities, unenthusiastic and overwhelmed teachers, often unsafe conditions, and standardized curricula of mediocrity. Taking the Critical Race Feminist standpoint, I believe this is by design, in an effort to perpetuate the stratification of society within the White middle/upper-middle class male paradigm that still seems to influence who is "allowed" to participate in which parts of society. Yet the Black community, as this review of literature has shown, has been so grossly neglected by our educational system, due in large part by government regulations that were supposedly put in place for their (Black students) benefit. Stovall (2005) supports my case here through his argument regarding interest convergence (a powerful tenet of Critical Race Theory), in which he explains the idea that Whites are never going to willingly relinquish their hold on the positions of

power in society, and as such will only offer superficial attempts at rectifying social injustices created by inherent and systemic racism.

Moreover, I believe women are the souls of any community. And the piece of the story I want to contribute is that of the souls of Black women, and how said souls have been tortured and tormented by the actions of the White community following *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In other words, I believe that the members of our community who were most negatively impacted by forced integration of public schooling were our Black students, and I think we (society in general) need to hear from those closest to the heart of the matter, Black women. Historically, Black women have been the least recognized within the social hierarchy. And although this phenomenon has been highlighted by the likes of Alcoff (2000), Austin (2003), and Collins (2000), one only has to extrapolate from observation to come to this conclusion: White privilege plus patriarchal norms equals the diminished value of the Black woman. This is a gross social injustice.

Furthermore, since the dawn of desegregation, the predominant situation was and is White teachers teaching Black children, and thus the ideas of culturally responsive or culturally relevant pedagogy have (relatively) recently gained recognition (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings 1994). Culturally responsive/relevant teaching first requires that culture and/or race is acknowledged, and it unacceptable for anyone to claim she does not see race. Teachers who say they do not see race are guilty of forcing minorities to assimilate into the dominant (White) culture, thereby rendering their (non-White) culture insignificant (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Unfortunately, many White and Black teachers are guilty of the assimilation tactic. They think they are being open-minded or liberal, but in actuality they are demeaning entire cultures of people. A better way to handle the situation would be to acknowledge the differences races,

develop pedagogy that is relevant to the students in the class, and to foster an atmosphere of understanding and respect, rather than mere tolerance or erasure.

And at the end of the day, regardless of the criticisms, and regardless of my race—the fact that I am specifically studying the experiences of Black women with tender regard to reciprocal relationship between their experiences, race, gender, and class, it is entirely justifiable that Critical Race Feminism remains the best lens through which to conduct my inquiry. Thus I will proceed with my research into the lived histories of five African-American women, their experiences in the educational apartheid in Macon’s schools, (led by the local bureaucracy systematically makes decisions that lead to or perpetuate the ever-growing urban decay in Macon), and how these combined factors affect said women’s communities.

### Chapter III

#### Oral History, or The Heart and Soul of the Matter

*“What I want to know is, where do all the White kids go to school?”* – L. C. H., 2009

Last spring (2009) I was teaching an upper level education course to pre-service teachers at Mercer University in Macon. At the same time, they were engaged in field experiences to supplement their teacher preparation. At the beginning of class one night, a student (L. C. H.), who is a African-American, raised her hand to ask me where the “White kids” in Macon went to school. She had not grown up in Macon, and did not understand why she saw **only** Black students at the public schools where she attended her fieldwork. Before I could answer her, I shook my head, half-heartedly smiled, and told her she had just made it into my dissertation. I then explained to her, and the class, the reality that schools in Macon are re-segregated, and that the White children were in private schools. Thankfully this was a social studies class I was teaching, so this conversation segued quite nicely into the course material. I then shared with L. C. H. and the rest of her class that my research project (dissertation) focused on the resegregation of schools in Macon and the effects this situation has had on the African-American community in Macon.

Since that time I have refined my topic, focus, research questions, methodology, and philosophical grounding. In summary, I have extensively examined archival data and conducted in-depth interviews as means of inquiry, and employed Oral History influenced by ethnographic research as a means of representation (Glesne, 2006). The overarching questions guiding my study were: What can historical data and interviews with five African-American women bring to light about the institution of the White private school system in Macon, with regard to how said schools impacted education for Black Maconites? What specific decisions have local school



boards made over the last four decades that have contributed to the perpetuation of educational apartheid? How has the continued segregation of schools in Macon affected the Black community? How did this segregation affect the women interviewed? What opportunities and challenges has the situation presented to these women?

Burnaford (2001) says, “A researcher’s primary goal is to understand,” (p. 49). Hence it is not enough for researchers to examine and define a phenomenon; the researcher’s goal is to understand *why* certain phenomena occur, especially when it relates to social problems—as this is the first step in making change to better the situation(s) (Zhou & Wen, 2007). To understand the social, political, cultural, economic, and religious ramifications of the impact of the educational apartheid in Macon, I conducted my research project in two phases: investigating archival data, and collecting oral histories. I limited the scope of my study to the “Desegregation” and “Resegregation” eras because the story I wanted to capture is what my participants went through as a result of forced integration, which did not happen in Macon until 1970.

### **Data Collection**

Butchart (1986) provided what I can best describe as a “How-To” for researching the local school system. While many of the suggestions he makes are simple, they formulate a plan with structured organization. From narrowing my focus and the scope of my investigation to how to access archival data, Butchart’s *Local Schools* served as an invaluable roadmap for this leg of my journey.

The archival data I collected and studied are existing documents in the form of newspaper articles from the *Macon Telegraph*, specifically related to Bibb County School Board decisions, largely from the 1970s and some from the 1980s. Through this part of my research I was able to

record, in one document, the systemic apathy of those in power toward Macon's African-American community, and the White and Black resistance to integration. I was able to uncover how influential community leaders at the time (of desegregation), set the tone for how the citizens of Macon would view and treat the issue of desegregation for the next four decades. With this, I documented the emergence of a new, White school system, otherwise known as private academies—that left the public schools to the Black children, again separate...again not equal.

Initially I had planned to examine the local school board minutes to look for decisions they had made that systematically and continually underfund(ed) public schools, adding to the stratification already suffered by Macon's youth. These minutes, I was told, were stored in Macon, at the Board of Education. I had spoken with a woman at the Board of Education in April, who told me I needed to give a one-day verbal notice and she would provide the minutes I requested. I was told I would be allowed to view and study them on site. Additionally, I asked this woman if I could access a map of the Bibb County School Zones, and before I could finish my sentence, she flatly and forcefully said, "No." She then told me I could access that information online (not entirely true).

When I contacted the same woman at the Board of Education on June 14, 2010 to set a date for my examination of the minutes (with three days notice), I requested the minutes from the years 1968 – 1979. When I arrived on June 17, 2010, the woman provided me with the minutes from 1975 – 1980, and told me that was all she could find. She told me, explicitly, that I would be able to access all recorded minutes at Washington Library. She offered no apologies or further explanation. I did examine the minutes for a couple of hours that day, however they were

indexed by date, which made it difficult to find the information I was seeking. Hence, it was off to the Washington Library I went, the very next day.

The Washington Library in Macon, GA houses the largest collection of historical archives in the area. It was there that I met a librarian and local historian who told me that the library does not, in fact, have the School Board Minutes, per se, because many of the minutes, including the ones for the years of my interest, had been destroyed by water damage from a leaky roof at the Board office (I have no other verification of this other than her word). But, she said that I could access the decisions made by the Board through articles in the *Macon Telegraph*. Finally, she showed me maps of the city prior to desegregation, which I was welcomed to study there, but could not duplicate, photograph, or remove from the library.

Thus, I retrieved the indexes of the microfiche copies of the *Macon Telegraph's* archives from 1954 and 1955 (following both *Brown* court decisions), and the 1970s and 1980s. I searched for newspaper articles directly related to the Bibb County School Board, as it had become obvious that the Board of Education was not going to cooperate with me in a timely fashion. I also searched for articles about Macon's elected leaders with regard to their behavior and attitudes concerning desegregation.

As somewhat of an aside, yet pertinent to the conversation, Bibb County Public Schools is currently engaged in a national search to hire a superintendent. Because of numerous ethics violations, the former superintendent was forced to resign. Two deputy superintendents and a secretary are serving out suspensions related to the same incidents and cover-ups. The district's public schools are coming under fire for cheating on standardized tests, not controlling violence and sexual acts in the schools, principals having affairs with teachers or physically abusing children, school buses running over children, teacher furloughs, layoffs, low test scores, and

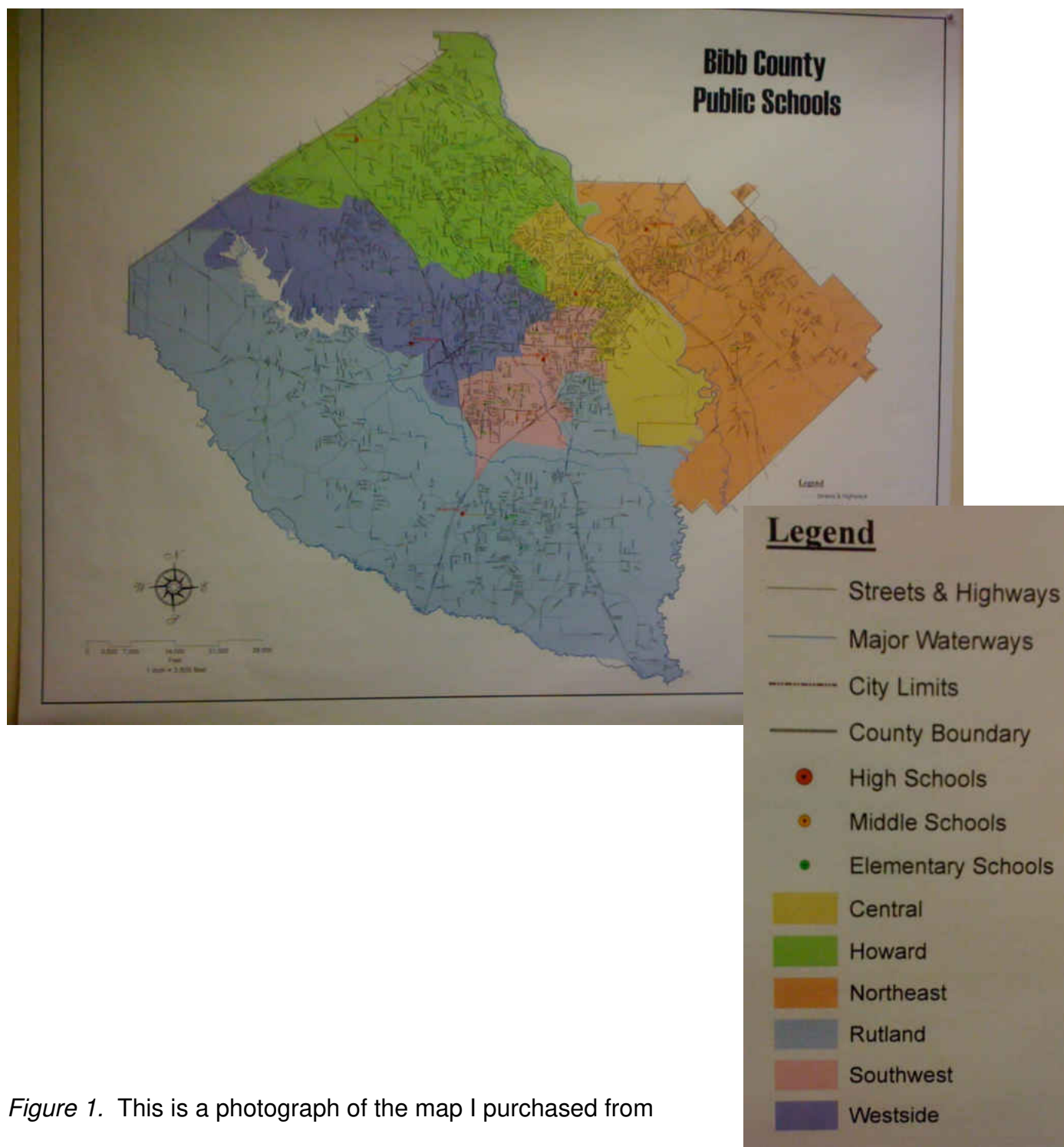
needless to say, a severe lack of morale. It is not surprising that the Board of Education, in the midst of all this chaos, was unable to aid in my research at this time.

Back to the archives...Because of my position at Mercer University, I had/have access to the Jack Tarver Library at Mercer University, which has all of the same *Macon Telegraph* archives as the Washington Library. Due to the fact that it was summertime and most of the university students were not on campus, I chose to do my archival research of the *Macon Telegraph* in Tarver Library, rather than at Washington Library. I spent several days during the week of June 20-25, 2010 in Tarver Library collecting data. I used the index I obtained from Washington Library to locate the articles I needed for my research. I took notes from some of the articles and printed others for further use.

Because of the aforementioned and resounding, “No” with which I was answered when I inquired at the Board of Education as to possible access to a map, I felt I simply must find whatever it was that the Board did not wish for me to see. At first, I just wanted a map so I could obtain a better perspective of the places in which my participants grew up and went to school. Then after the response I received from the woman at the Board office, I was on a mission to get that map! First, I tried to access the map that I was told was available online, which turned out to be nothing more than a Google Map linked to the Bibb County Public Schools website. There was a function on the website that would allow one to input an address and locate the school to which children residing at that address would attend, but there was no visual, no political map that showed the school zones. I purchased a street map of Macon from Barnes and Noble on June 13, 2010, which was published in 2004, and included all streets, identified neighborhoods, and showed schools existing at that time. However, that map did not map out the school *zones*, and did not provide anything that could not be accessed through Google Maps. On June 15,

2010, I called two different realtors, a local bank, the sheriff's office, the police department, the city engineer, and finally the Macon Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission (P & Z). A man at the P & Z was able to create a map for me (for a fee of \$20), which showed all of the streets and school zones in Bibb County Public Schools. He told me he was able to obtain that information from someone he knew at the Board of Education who worked in the transportation department mapping out bus routes. Eagerly I purchased the map, and the two maps cover almost an entire wall in my office. I also retrieved, from the *Macon Telegraph*, a map printed on February 15, 1970, that showed the newly designed school zones that the board had planned to integrate schools. I have provided, in the next few pages, photographs I took with my personal iPhone of the map I purchased from Bibb P & Z and of the map published in the Macon Telegraph on February 15, 1970. I will discuss the importance of these maps with the rest of my data, in subsequent chapters.

## Maps



*Figure 1.* This is a photograph of the map I purchased from Macon/Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission, which shows Bibb County Public School Zones for Academic Year 2009-2010.



*Figure 2.* This is a photograph of the map of the Bibb County Public School Zones published in the *Macon Telegraph* February 15, 1970 that I copied from microfiche, enlarged, and then cut and pasted together. Even as large as it is, the names of streets and schools are largely illegible. Subsequent maps will show how small the print was when it was published in the *Macon Telegraph*.

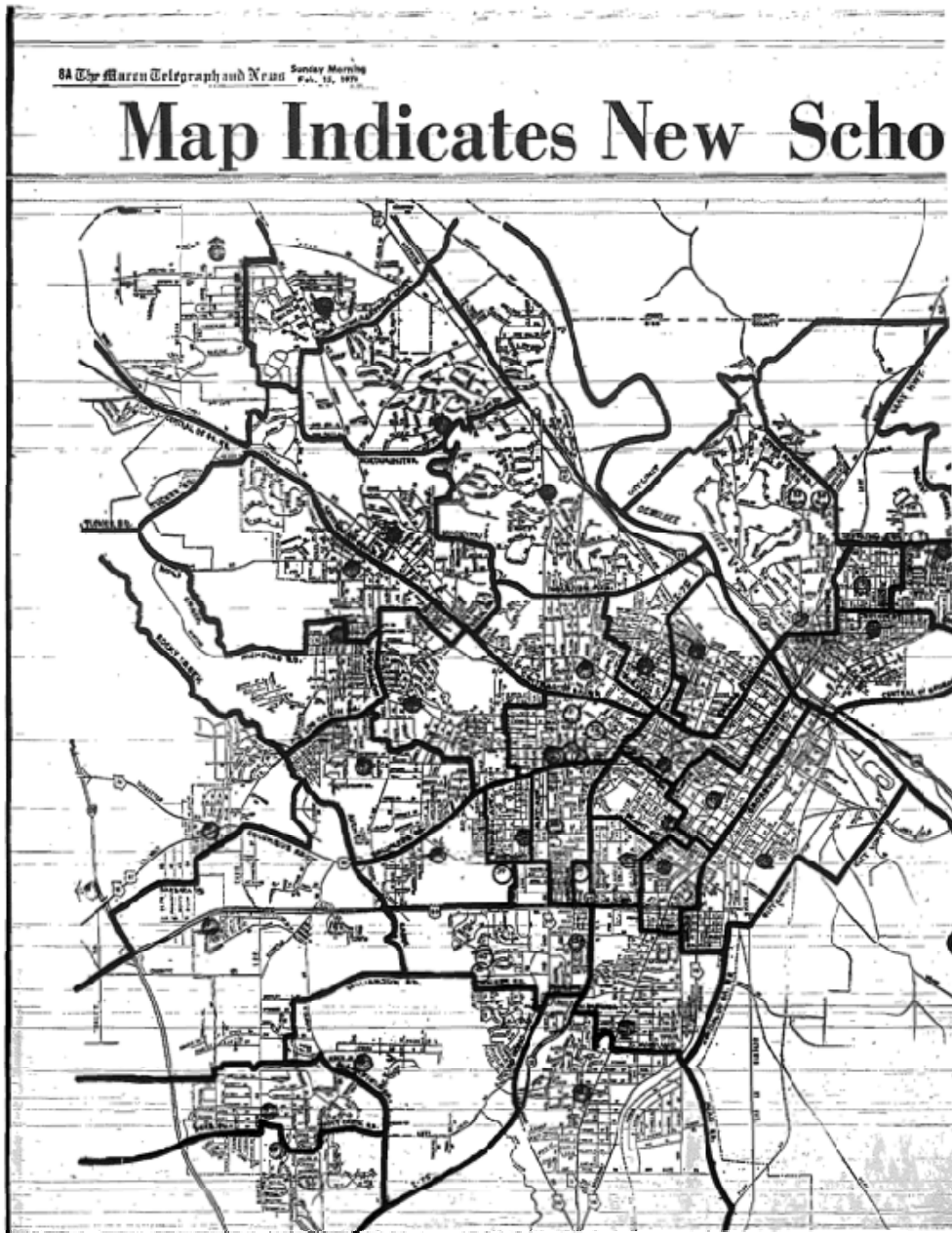
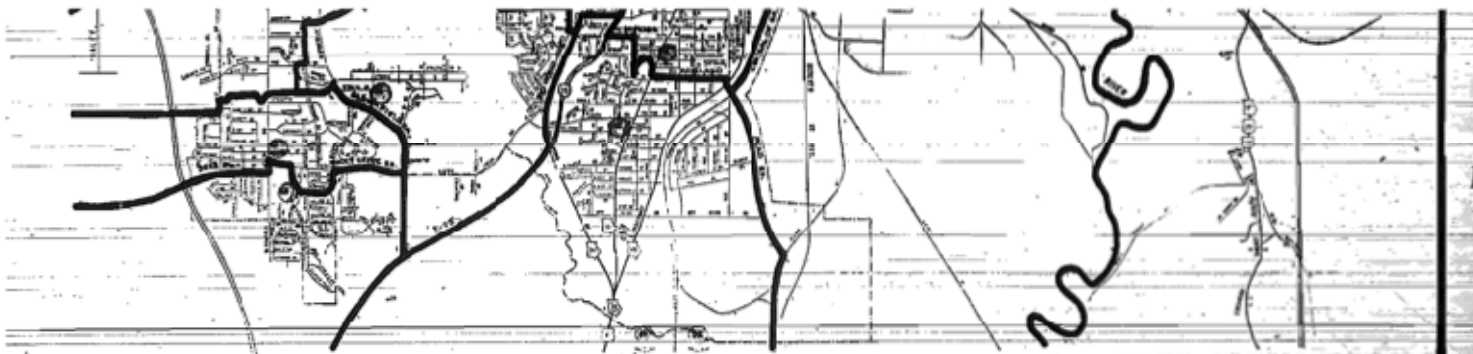


Figure 3a. As published in the *Macon Telegraph* February 15, 1970.





FOLLOWING is the key to the numbered schools on the map above. There is an elementary school in each of the zones, shown by a shaded red circle, and this is the elementary school to be attended by all students living in that zone for grades 1-7. The junior and senior high school buildings, parts of complexes in different areas, are identified by number in a clear circle. Students will be

assigned to these schools by a feeder system from the elementary school zones which is described elsewhere on this page. 1. Lane, 2. Rosa Taylor, 3. T. D. Tinsley, 4. Alexander III, 5. Burdell, 6. Henry Hunt, 7. Peter G. Appling Junior High, 8. Jones, 9. Dandorh, 10. Peter G. Appling Junior High, 11. J. Elsworth Hall, 12. Duresville, 13. Ft. Hawkins, 14. Green Street, 15. Williams, 16. Joseph

Cisby, 17. Alexander IV, 18. Bellevue, 19. Minnie Butler, 20. Pearl Stephens, 21. Lanier Junior High School, 22. Lanier Senior High School, 23. Waship, 24. Miller Junior High School, 25. Miller Senior High School, 26. Alexander II, 27. George W. Carver, 28. B. S. Ingram, 29. Ada-Banks, 30. John W. Burke, 31. Maude Pys, 32. Ballard-Hudson Senior High, 33. Eugenia Hamilton, 34. Unionville, 35. Riley, 36.

Union, 37. Morgan, 38. Hartley, 39. Ballard-Hudson Junior High, 40. Willingham High Schools, 41. McEvoy High School, 42. Joseph N. Neal, 43. Charles J. Bruce, 44. Florence Berns, 45. Cynthia West, 46. Jessie Rice, 47. Agnes Burch, 48. Burghard, 49. Porter, 50. Hamd, 51. Redding, 52. Springdale (next fall), 53. Lanester High School, 54. Mark Smith High School.

## Map's Key to Jr. High, Sr. High Assignments, Too

By GEORGE DOSS

The map on this page showing attendance zones for Cobb County elementary schools also is the key to assignment of students to junior and senior high schools to become effective "well before the end of the current school year."

Zones for several of the schools located in or serving students in outlying and rural areas of the county are shown only partially and in some cases not at all on the map.

These include Duresville and Bernd Schools in East Macon, with the line dividing the two zones in the outlying area being generally Jeffersonville Road and Franklinton Road.

Porter and Heard Schools, which will take students from Chapel School which is being abandoned, will divide a part of the southern part of the county with an irregular line dividing the two, and Redding, Union and Alexander IV Schools will divide outlying areas in the west and north-west part of the county.

Since it was not possible to include these large and in most cases sparsely populated areas on the map, detailed information about the boundary lines should be obtained from school officials.

Pleasant Grove School also will be closed in the LaSalle area.

An area for Springdale School also is shown on the map, but "this school, now under construction on Springdale Drive near Wesleyan Drive, will not be ready for use before next September. Students in that area will go to Lane School for the remainder of this school year.

Principals and members of the superintendent's staff will make any necessary adjustments on assignments to meet special space problems of the school normally required at the beginning of each school year.

The plan calls for four secondary school complexes with a fifth to be added by the fall of 1971 by the additional construction on the campus of the present Ballard-Hudson Junior High School. But that is for the future, if it is to be, and the fourth complex is to be set up this year in Dudley-Hughes High School, which is to become the westernmost school of the high school complex with enrollment to be limited to students pursuing a course of vocational training. Students now pursuing an academic program at Hughes will be gradually phased out, according to the plan.

So, for this school year, three complexes will be set

up, since all junior high schools will be non-divisional and all senior high schools separate for boys and girls, the feeder elementary schools into each complex must be split up for the junior high buildings while all will feed boys into one senior high building and girls into the other.

Following is the list of the complexes, buildings in each and feeder schools into each:

**NORTHEAST COMPLEX**  
Junior High Division

Appling Junior building, boys and girls; Feeder schools, Alexander III, Ft. Hawkins, Hunt, Burdell, and Lane.

Appling Senior building, boys and girls; Feeder schools, Bernd, Hall, Dandorh, Duresville, and Jones.

Senior High Division

Lanester High building for girls and Mark Smith High building for boys, with all of the above schools feeding girls to boys, respectively, into each.

**CENTRAL COMPLEX**  
Junior High Division

Miller Junior building, boys and girls; Feeder schools, Alexander II, Bellevue, Riley, Tinsley, Ingram and Butler.

Junior Junior building, boys and girls; Feeder schools, Alexander IV, Cisby, Elsworth, Taylor, Green Street, Williams and Waship.

Senior High Division

Lanier Senior building for boys and Miller Senior building for girls, with all of the above schools feeding boys and girls, respectively, into each.

Note: According to a release from the administrative staff, the school board is considering the feasibility of placing the senior divisions for the Central Complex in the Miller Junior and Miller Senior buildings. If this is decided, then the students assigned to the Lanier Junior building will be assigned to the Miller Senior building and the students

at the Miller Senior building will be assigned to the Lanier Senior building. The major factor in this decision will be the utilization of buildings according to curriculum needs, according to the announcement.

**SOUTHWEST COMPLEX**  
Junior High Division

Ballard-Hudson Junior building, boys and girls; Feeder schools, Burke, Burch, Burghard, Hamd, Hartley, McEvoy, Morgan, Porter, Redding, Union and Unionville.

Ballard-Hudson Senior building, boys and girls; Feeder schools, Burke, Burch, Capel, Heard, Carver, Neal, Pys, Rice and West.

Senior High Division

McEvoy Junior and Senior buildings for girls and Willingham Junior and Senior buildings for boys with all of the above schools feeding boys and girls, respectively into each.

## New Bus Routes Going Into Effect for Some Schools

"Busing," which many opponents say is their principal objection to school desegregation orders, apparently will be reduced somewhat at least in elementary schools under the Cobb County policy which was transported, school authorities said. Pupils living further than a mile and half from their school by the most practical route will be provided bus transportation.

The following list shows bus routes beginning tomorrow, subject to later adjustments, for the other schools:

**ALEXANDER III** — Established bus route will continue from Old Clinton Road out to Mark Smith High School then to Alexander III.

**ALEXANDER IV** — Bus route will provide service from Rivoli Park area which is within Alexander IV attendance zone. This includes portions of Rivoli, Lakeshore, and all of Alexander Drive. The second bus route which is now serving the London Road area will be continued.

**JAMES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus route (two trips) down Spikes Street to Anich to Maize Avenue Junction and back to Broadway with stops at Anich and McCalvery churches. Then return to Banks.

**BELLEVUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus route will run Agnes Road and will pick up at Furgit Road at Country Club Estates.

**BERND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will be unchanged at this time. The area will be re-routed at a later date.

**BUTLER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — A bus route will run up Log Cabin Drive with stops as needed, then proceed up Cooper Avenue to Lanier Elementary School. Another route will run along Woodland Road up to Wolf Creek and then to school.

**BURGHARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus route will be unchanged. Pick up point at Fairfax and Rocky Creek and at Silver Pine and Pine.

**CHARLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will remain unchanged at present. Route Capel children will be transported to Heard and Porter. Children who previously walked to Capel will be picked up by Bus Number 21 at Capel School.

**HUNT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus route will start at intersection of Old Chapel Road and Gray Highway and will come down Old Chapel Road with last stop in front of Mark Smith High School. Another bus route will remain unchanged.

**JACKSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will be unchanged at present. Some buses previously serving F. Bernd will now serve both Bernd and Duresville.

**JAMES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will be unchanged at present. Bus routes will run from Stratford Drive to Jones County Line including the Lake Arrowhead area. Parked routes in this area will remain unchanged.

**JEFFERSONVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will remain unchanged at present. Route Capel children will be transported to Heard and Porter. Children who previously walked to Capel will be picked up by Bus Number 21 at Capel School.

**JOHN W. BURKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus route will start at intersection of Old Chapel Road and Gray Highway and will come down Old Chapel Road with last stop in front of Mark Smith High School. Another bus route will remain unchanged.

**JOHN W. BURKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will remain unchanged at present. Route Capel children will be transported to Heard and Porter. Children who previously walked to Capel will be picked up by Bus Number 21 at Capel School.

**JOHN W. BURKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will remain unchanged at present. Route Capel children will be transported to Heard and Porter. Children who previously walked to Capel will be picked up by Bus Number 21 at Capel School.

**JOHN W. BURKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** — Bus routes will remain unchanged at present. Route Capel children will be transported to Heard and Porter. Children who previously walked to Capel will be picked up by Bus Number 21 at Capel School.

Figure 3b. As published in the Macon Telegraph February 15, 1970. I included this to provide a sense of how small this map actually was. The map shared space on the page with two articles.

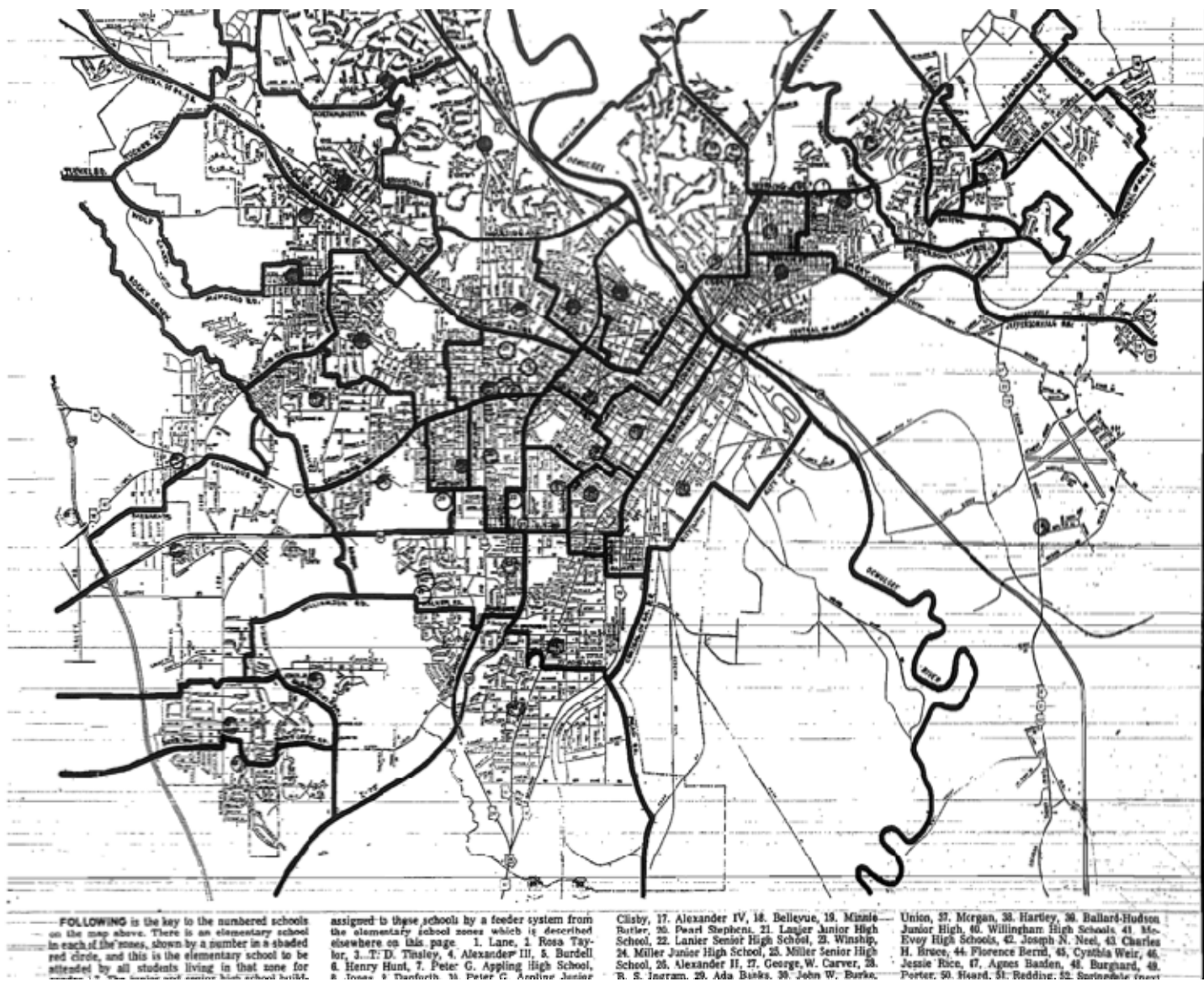


Figure 3c. As published in the *Macon Telegraph* February 15, 1970. Another view.

## Collecting the Stories

To find the heart and soul of the story, I conducted individual and focus group interviews with five African-American women who were affiliated with Bibb County Public Schools during the desegregation and resegregation eras, and willing to share their stories with me about the effects that the public/private school systems in Macon have had on their communities. My participants live and have lived in Macon since before the time of desegregation. The sequence of contact with each participant is as represented in the table below.

Table 2

### *Participant Contact/Interview Chart*

Participant (Pseudonym)	Initial Contact Requesting Participation	Contact to Schedule Interview	First Individual Interview	Contact to Schedule Focus Group	Focus Group	Pseudonym Letters Sent	Contact to Schedule Interview	Final Interview
Alethea	02/10	5/3/10	5/13/10	5/17/10	5/25/10	6/9/10	7/6/10	7/9/10
Alyiah	01/10	5/3/10	5/14/10	5/17/10	5/25/10	6/9/10	7/6/10	7/19/10
Merci	02/10	5/3/10	5/12/10	5/17/10	5/25/10	6/9/10	7/6/10	7/9/10
Ruth	02/10	5/3/10	5/11/10	5/17/10	5/25/10	6/9/10	7/6/10	7/9/10
Veda	05/10	5/3/10	5/17/10	5/17/10	5/25/10	6/9/10	7/6/10	7/22/10

During the focus group meeting, I asked my participants if they would prefer choosing their own pseudonym or having me decide. They all agreed to allow me the privilege. Because I feel so personally connected to my participants and their stories, I thought that the pseudonyms I chose to represent them ought to reflect the inner nature of the women. I visited a website, [www.2babynames.com](http://www.2babynames.com), and searched for names as if I were naming a newborn baby. I sent a handwritten note via the U.S. Post to each participant explaining the name I had chosen for her and the explanation why. Each participant contacted me after receiving the note to indicate her approval of the name. Each participant's name derived from a different ancient culture, and

below, as I describe the meaning of each name, I describe each woman with respect to her place in Bibb County Public Schools at the time of desegregation<sup>10</sup>.

Veda (from the ancient Sanskrit tradition meaning “knowledge and understanding”) is Ruth’s dear friend, who volunteered to share her stories with me. She taught in Bibb County Public Schools for over 30 years, and is now retired. She was a high school teacher and a mother during the time of desegregation. She also holds a master’s degree in education and spends much of her time actively working toward the betterment of the community, especially with regards to race relations and education. Veda participated in individual interviews on May 17, 2010 and July 22, 2010.

Ruth, (from the ancient Hebrew tradition meaning “friend to all”) is retired from teaching junior high and elementary school in Macon/Bibb County for over 30 years. She was a teacher and a mother during the time of desegregation. She holds a master’s degree in education, and now volunteers in various Bibb County Public Schools. She is also the mother of four, all of whom are grown and went through Macon’s public school system. I have known her for ten years, as we are both former teachers at a local Catholic school. When I approached her via a phone call about my research project, she enthusiastically agreed to participate. She was so excited that she told her friend about her upcoming participation in my study, and her friend then volunteered to participate, as well. Ruth participated in individual interviews on May 11, 2010 and July 9, 2010.

Alethea (from the ancient Greek tradition meaning, “truth, sincerity”) is also a native Maconite, who attended junior high school at a Bibb County Public School during the time of desegregation. Alethea is also former student of mine, and is currently a teacher in Bibb County.

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<sup>10</sup> I have provided a chart with all the data described in the narrative descriptions of each participant, with regard to her place in my study, in my analysis in Chapter 7.

Prior to that, she was a paraprofessional in Bibb County for over 20 years. I called Alethea, via telephone, to ask her to participate, and she graciously consented. Alethea participated in individual interviews on May 13, 2010 and July 9, 2010.

Merci (from the ancient Latin tradition meaning “compassionate”) is also a former student of mine. She has graduated from Mercer with an education degree, but works as a paraprofessional at a Bibb County School. She also grew up in Macon and attended elementary school at a Bibb County Public School during the time of desegregation. I contacted Merci via email to ask her to participate in my study. She agreed to do so. Merci participated in individual interviews on May 12, 2010 and July 9, 2010.

Alyiah (from the ancient Arabic tradition meaning “to ascend, highly exalted”) is currently a parent of two children attending Bibb County Public Schools. Alyiah grew up in Macon and is, herself, a product of Bibb County Public Schools. She was an elementary school student during the time of desegregation. She has returned to the role of student in her adult life, and is currently working on her master’s degree in business education. Alyiah is my colleague now, and has been for the past two years. She was also at one time my student<sup>11</sup>. I approached her face to face to ask for her participation in my study, and she agreed—even volunteering that there is a “big story” there to tell. Alyiah participated in individual interviews on May 14, 2010 and July 19, 2010.

Prior to each interview I obtained a signed, Written Release Statement from each of the interviewees. Both the interviewee and I signed and dated the document, which read:

Thank you for participating in my Oral History dissertation project. I am researching the differing lived experiences of select African-American women of Macon, who lived

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<sup>11</sup> Mercer University has a program for working adults. All three former students were in this program, have graduated, and are working in an educational setting. There is no conflict of interest.

through desegregation and resegregation in some of Macon's different Black neighborhoods, and analyzing how those experiences have affected the Black community of Macon. It is my intention to document how this continued apartheid in education is a systemic problem, and not just one of White Christian parents who feel the need to flee the public schools.

By signing the form below you give me your permission to share any recordings of our interview made during my Oral History Project, and you grant that I may use the information for scholarly and educational purposes, including possible donation to a historical archive. Your signature also indicates your acknowledgement that you willingly and freely agree to participate in a recorded interview discussion your experiences as I have described for the purpose of my study, your identity will be protected by a pseudonym, and that your stories will become part of my dissertation. Furthermore, you agree to participate in additional interviews as needed, including a focus group. You understand that you have the right to ask questions during the interview process and that your participation is of your own free will.

By giving your permission, you give up any copyright or performance rights that you may hold.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature lines for Researcher and Participant

### **First Individual Interview with Participants**

I interviewed each participant separately, in my office at Mercer University, and recorded the entirety of each interview using the Audacity program on my personal MacBook Pro. I burned each interview to an audio disc, and then transcribed each interview for later analysis

(Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 2001; Glesne, 2006; Weis & Fine, 2000). The first set of interview questions are as follows:

1. Tell me your favorite story from about your experiences in Bibb County Public Schools prior to the court-ordered bussing, which forced integration of the schools.
2. Tell me a story of your worst experience with in Bibb County Public Schools.
3. What other stories do you recall from the era prior to 1970 in Bibb County?
4. What do you remember about your experiences once Bibb County finally conceded to integrate?
5. How did integration affect you personally, your family, your friends?
6. How do you remember your community responding to desegregation?
7. Tell me some stories of friends and/or family who were directly impacted in some way or another by the forced integration in Bibb County Public Schools. For example, who as the first to graduate, first to attend and get picked on, first to be displaced (if interviewee was a teacher)?
8. What do you remember about the feelings in your community surrounding the issue of the so-called “segregation academies” that appeared throughout Macon?

### **Focus Group Interview with Participants**

The focus group interview took place on May 25, 2010 in the Powell-Williamson Board Room in the Stetson Building, where my office is located at Mercer University. I asked the participants to arrive at 11:00 AM. I provided coffee and Dunkin Donuts Munchkins for refreshments. I placed a scribble pad, a pen, tissues, stress balls, and a copy of the interview questions at five chairs around the table—one for each participant. I intentionally placed myself such that I was not at the head of the table. I did not want to give the impression that the

conversation would be about me. I even provided the participants with the interview questions so as to take as much focus off of me as possible. I placed my MacBook Pro in the center of the table and recorded the meeting using the program Audacity. As I had done with the individual interviews, I burned the interview to a disc and transcribed it for further study. The focus group interview questions are as follows:

1. Tell me something about Macon's community leaders during the time of desegregation that I will not find in the Telegraph?
2. How did those events affect you, your family, your friends, and/or your neighborhood?
3. What would you like to tell me about that period of time that I have not asked?

### **Second Individual Interview with Participants**

I repeated the exact process for the second set of individual interviews as I had used for the first. The only change in protocol being that the written release statement only needed to be signed once. The second set of individual interview questions are as follows:

1. Since our last conversation, what, if anything, have you remembered about the desegregation/resegregation era in Macon that you would like to share?
2. Since our last conversation, what, if anything, about your memories and or perceptions has changed?
3. How do you think the apartheid in education in Macon continues to affect your community?
4. How do you think the current or next generation is being affected by the de facto apartheid in education in Macon?
5. Can you relate stories of your family or friends currently in the public schools in Macon?



6. What do you make of the current trend in the academic literature to reflect negatively on the results of *Brown v. Board*?
7. Which more accurately reflects your experience: the recent revisionist history or the previous story?
8. What do you think/feel your community gained and lost in desegregation?
9. What do you think are the most important educational concerns and goals for Black communities in Macon? Or for Macon in general?

The purpose for the multiple sets of interviews was to allow each participant to share what she initially remembered about her experiences in Macon's public schools during the desegregation/resegregation eras; next was to see what memories were triggered for each participant by participating in a focus group that would foster conversations with other African-American women who lived in Macon and either taught in or attended public schools during the desegregation/resegregation eras; and then finally to allow each participant to reflect upon and possibly add to the stories she had already shared. The interview questions mostly flowed from the stories the participants had to tell, but I began by asking each participant a given set of interview questions. Depending on where their stories lead, I followed.

### **Representation**

Oral history, as a form of research representation, allowed me to tell the participants' stories using their (the researchers' or participants) own "voices." I was able to re-tell the stories of the participants' lives using their own culture and dialects, but telling their life stories through the teller's (my) eyes (Glesne, 2006). I also presented the data from different viewpoints. Ayala (2000) provided an example of how to approach this, saying, "In this piece I present an interpretation of narrative material in three different voices. I self-consciously deploy different

lenses for interpreting these materials and (re)presenting my work” (p. 102). She went on to discuss how she used her own “voices” of science, standpoint theory, and poetry to present her work. I, too, had to use varying lenses to interpret my data. For example, two of my participants were teachers during the time of forced integration, and the other three were students. I needed to use different lenses for interpreting teachers’ experiences versus students’ experiences. Furthermore, because the majority of my archival data was recorded by White men, and the interviews were conducted with Black women, different lenses were needed to interpret, analyze, and transmit that data as well. I chose to tell the story of Macon’s desegregation/resegregation fiasco by presenting archival data first, and then letting the participants’ voices speak in response to the happenings.

Oral history is especially useful in combination with feminist theoretical frameworks (Perks & Thompson, 2006). According to Perks and Thompson(2006):

Oral history and feminist history have enjoyed an especially significant symbiotic connection since the late 1960s. Interviews with women have provided an invaluable source for uncovering and exploring experiences which have been...’hidden from history’, and for challenging historical interpretations based upon the lives and documents of men. (p. 6)

Some examples of Oral Histories from which I drew my inspiration are Fox-Genovese (1988), who tells stories of women’s relationships within a plantation household during the time of slavery, Falk (2004) who tells stories of Black families who did not participate in the great migration northward because they were attached to the place they called home , McLaurin (1988) who recalls his own story as a White boy coming of age during the Jim Crow era, and Siddle Walker (1996), who describes life in a Black school during segregation. Additionally,

anthologies edited by Gluck and Patai (1991) and Perks and Thomson (1998) provide a variety of Oral Histories for reference.

I approached the reading, re-reading, coding, analyzing, and re-presentations of each participant's stories bearing in mind that the words should remain unabridged; but with my interpretations of their words, their stories became part of a dialogue, or a conversation (Bishop, 2005). I was careful to avoid any alteration of the participants' stories in the process.

Because my study focused on a specific group of people, African-American women in Macon, GA, I used an ethnographic approach to my Oral History. Ethnography, or the study of groups of people (classified by culture) is an extremely broad term that embodies much of qualitative research (Foley & Valenauela, 2005; Glesne, 2006). Ethnography goes beyond sociology, because ethnography tends to focus on those groups of people who are underrepresented in other studies, those who are marginalized, oppressed, or even forgotten. As such, many ethnographers tend to be women, and from "other" socioeconomic classes and ethnicities than the "mainstream" (Foley & Valenauela, 2005; Glesne, 2006). Fortunately, qualitative research and ethnographic studies have become more accepted in academia and the stories of the "Others" are finally being told.

My justification for delving into the struggles of a culture other than my own is that whether the community of Macon at large accepts me or not, I am now a member of said community. Although I am an outsider geographically, racially, socioeconomically, culturally, and perhaps other ways that escape me now, I am deeply concerned about the social injustices I witness on a daily basis. It is disconcerting that the population in the county's public schools is not representative of the population of the county as a whole. Because the government determines school districts, where one lives largely determines the quality of education she will

receive (private schools notwithstanding). This research could provide insight into the systemic inequity of educational opportunity for the citizens of Macon.

Due to the political nature of my inquiry, I remain cognizant of the questions that may surround the validity of my data. To ensure that my data was trustworthy, I referred to Denzin and Lincoln (2004) to check my work for credibility (truth in my findings), transferability (applicable to others' studies), dependability (hold up through changing times), and confirmability (data relates to findings). I also looked critically at my data for validity using Butchart's (1986) two-pronged test—Are the data authentic? And are the data true? I cross-referenced the newspaper archives against the participants' stories, to determine what is "true."

I color-coded the interviews for analysis, based on the time period discussed at that point in the conversation. Charmaz (2005) says:

Coding gives a researcher analytic scaffolding on which to build. Because researchers study their empirical materials closely, they can define both new leads from them and gaps in them. Each piece of data—whether an interview, a field note, a case study, a personal account, or a document—can inform earlier data...Researchers can give their data multiple readings and renderings. (p. 517)

My coding scheme was simple. I highlighted passages of conversation as thus: Green represented the period of time prior to desegregation. Yellow represented the desegregation era. Orange represented the time between desegregation and present day. Pink represented present day. Blue represented the future. Each and every time I read my data, whether interviews or archival data, I was searching for themes. I have discussed those themes in Chapter VII.

The traditional method of representing the findings of a qualitative research study is to write said findings in the form of a paper, article, dissertation, etc. My written findings include a

subjectivities statement, summaries and portions of collected data, and the analysis of the data (including frequencies, charts, tables, comparisons, and contrasting data) (Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 2001; Glesne, 2006; Weis & Fine, 2000).

My role as a researcher was that of “observer as participant.” An “observer as participant” does observe, but also has conversations with the participants and conducts interviews with a particular person or a few persons involved in the study (Glesne, 2006). While I conducted said interviews, I will made notes about the demeanor, body language, and expressions of the interviewees. Such is necessary due to the inability of the written transcripts to portray such phenomena accurately, which could result in important data being misinterpreted, or worse, eliminated all together (Burnaford, 2001). Bearing in mind that my participants told their stories as they remembered and/or perceived them, I was careful not to represent those narratives as facts or truths, rather as memories (Clark, 2007). I kept all notes in a folder, along with any field notes, other observations, and/or reflections that I may have encountered.

### **Subjectivities**

Understanding my theoretical perspective allows me, as a researcher to examine my biases about my inquiry, participants, or the subject in general (Meloy, 2002; Glesne, 2006). I, as a qualitative researcher, recognize that my study is not going to be objective (I believe objectivity is an ideal, not a reality). My research questions, interview questions, coding and analysis of data, and data representation were all filtered through the lens of my own ideas and lived experiences. To add to the credibility of my work, I have undergirded my research with a theoretical framework of Critical Race Feminism. By adding a subjectivities statement to my research, I have allowed the reader or my audience to know from the onset what my biases are.

Furthermore, Weis and Fine (2000) state that researchers engaging in critical ethnography have a moral duty to elaborate on their identities and subjectivities.

Because my study delved into cultural issues regarding women's histories in Macon, I found it useful to examine my own place in this project. I am a woman who lives in Macon but is still an "outsider." I call home a place that is not my home. One might say that I am a Maconite, as I have lived in Macon for eleven years. However, as a Maconite, I am an outsider—and sometimes even a "Yankee" (having been born and raised in North Carolina and having lived on the Great Lakes for several years). This puts me in a position to study Macon more critically than I would (possibly) if it were my hometown, yet with a personal connection that one who has never resided here would not have. In other words, I am an insider/outsider.

I wholeheartedly acknowledge I am in a vulnerable position as a researcher. I am a White woman using Critical Race Feminism as a theoretical framework, and who used only Black women as participants. Originally I feared that a reader might perceive that I saw myself as the "Great White Savior" who was going to speak for the Black voices or "allow" those Black voices to be heard. I no longer worry about that. I am confident that the tenderness with which I treat our stories (their stories have become part of mine) dispels any negative assumptions. I am eternally grateful for the intimacy and friendships that have deepened through this project. I hope that we can continue—from the standpoint of respect and understanding—on a path toward social justice.

Moreover, I feel I should state that I truly struggled over the decision to employ Critical Race Feminism as my theoretical framework. When Dr. He first suggested that I use Critical Race Feminism I balked at the notion simply because I am White. Looking back, I remember the cognitive dissonance (Gorski, 2009) I felt when I first realized that my Whiteness mattered.

Because I grew up in a multicultural, multiracial, and largely transient social environment, everyone was green (as in military). I do not mean to say that the military does not have any racial or gender issues, rather that because military children are constantly exposed to and interacting with children from many different races, ethnicities, and cultures, we tend to view race as a non-issue (although one's father's rank and ensuing socioeconomic status was a huge issue). My circle of friends included both boys and girls of many different races, and quite often multiple races.

Prior to delving into Curriculum Studies, I truly believed that everyone was playing on a level playing field (read *equal opportunity*), and that if one was downtrodden, all she had to do was “pull herself up by her bootstraps” and do whatever was necessary to change her life for the better. I was so very naïve! I did not yet understand that one has to *have* a pair of boots before she can grab those aforementioned straps. In other words, I used to take offense to Critical Race Feminism because I felt defensive—believing that since I felt I was not racist, sexist, classist, or any other “ist,” neither was the world in which I lived. Ha! I think I just wanted the world not to need Critical Race Feminism. It was much easier to just refuse to acknowledge the necessity for the field and brush it off as Communist, or “reverse racist” propaganda. It took a great deal of reading, research, and soul searching to accept that a lack of hatred for or feelings of superiority over a certain group of people does not absolve one of any “ism” affliction. No one is free of bias...knowledge is subjective and based on our experiences. The world I know is not exactly the same as the world anyone else knows—and who is to say who is right?

Typical of those raised in an upper-middle-class WASPy world, I had no sense of the sexism that still exists in the United States today. I cannot remember the exact course or class meeting (it was rather early in the program), but I do remember Dr. Liston stating, in one of her

passionate Feminist lectures, that middle class White women were the only oppressed group of people she knew of who didn't realize they were oppressed. That statement had an enormous impact on me, and helped me face the likelihood that the world was not exactly as I had always been led to believe—starting with gender oppression.

It took immersion in the work of Feminist Theorists, especially Uma Narayan, (1995, 1997, 2000, 2003), to help me see that Feminism was more than the NOW, Vagina Monologues, and bra-burners that are systematically exploited for media headlines. Narayan's work presented me with a conundrum, with which I still struggle, of trying to find that point of balance between cultural relativism and cultural essentialism. Narayan (2000) had rallied against gender and cultural essentialism, mostly targeting Western women who made the mistake of assuming that all women's issues are the same across cultures, and generalizing that all women in a particular group suffer the same injustices as each other simply because they are in said group. Narayan stressed that oppression is not the same across the board, and no one's and no group's strife should be overlooked or accepted. I took Narayan's words and work very seriously, and as such have proceeded with my study with her ideas close to my heart, guiding my every move.

Similarly, Susan M. Okin (2000) contributed to my ever-expanding collection of philosophical dilemmas. Okin (2000), a White feminist scholar, asked why injustices against women were accepted in the name of multiculturalism. She believed women could change the reality of their existence as injustices against women worldwide were discovered and exposed. No matter where they lived, women could work toward helping each other attain equal rights, privileges, and status (as men). Furthermore, Okin (2000) argued, it is wrong to overlook violence, abuse and oppression of women in the name of respecting cultural and or/ religious differences. Women, she said, have the moral obligation to help women in oppressive situations



attempt to free themselves. Okin (2000) wanted to bring to the forefront the fact that just because Western women have gained many rights, freedoms, and liberties previously denied them, such does not suggest that the fight is not over. Western women still live under societal oppression, and women in third world countries live under massively oppressive conditions (i.e. arranged marriages, genital mutilation, accepted abuse, male domination, no rights, no voice, etc.) Completely supporting Narayan's assault on relativism, Okin stated, "If it was not clear earlier, surely it was clear now that bending over backward out of respect for cultural diversity could do great disservice to women and girls" (p. 40). Okin made her entire point in this quote. If we, as a society, accept atrocities just because they are a cultural norm, are we not guilty of perpetuating said atrocities? Do we not have an obligation to show the women that live in such cultures (even here in the United States) that there is a better way to live, and do so in a way that they will want to fight for the right to live a better life? Both philosophers are concerned with women's sense of being and their roles in the respective cultures (no matter where in the world they live) being defined in terms of Western, middle-class, heterosexual women. Both Narayan (2000) and Okin (2000) monumentally influenced my new paradigm. Through extensive, deep, and close reading, and genuinely trying to understand if and how such a balance were possible, I allowed myself to open up to the possibility of seeing the world from many others' eyes. Once I stepped outside myself, quite simply, I grew.

Racism was just as difficult for me to accept as sexism. Growing up, two of my best and closest friends were not White. Because of *my* love for these two girls, I did not want to see the racism, especially the institutionalized racism that exists in today's society (again, I essentialized the world into my own belief system). Chandra, who is Hindu Indian, I have already mentioned. We became friends in second grade when we discovered that we had the same birthday (smart as

we were, we figured out that she was actually older than I because she was born in India, and November 9<sup>th</sup> happened in India before it did in the United States). We remained best friends until she moved out of town, and then we reconnected in college. We have kept in touch intermittently since childhood, and have upcoming plans to see each other. Looking back, I know I spent many days and nights at Chandra's house, but I do not ever remember seeing another White person there. I was too young to make any meaning of it at the time, but I can see now that most of the Indian families in town did not intermingle with the White families. And although Chandra's father is a doctor, their family was never considered part of the upper class of Jacksonville. My other best friend, Regina, is Black. She is still my very best friend, even today. Although several hundred miles separate us (she is an attorney in Durham, NC), we can pick up the phone and talk like we've never missed a beat. We have always had honest and sincere discussions, even about race. Regina feels (and she recently told me so) that her family was an exception to the Black race, having assimilated into the White culture and basically lived as a White family. She bases this on the fact that both of her parents are college educated, and her father was an officer in the Marine Corps. They lived in a White neighborhood and were mostly accepted by the White community. Both Regina and her brother are well-educated and married White spouses. Regina was even our homecoming queen. But, she acknowledges, this did cause her some trouble from time to time. For example when Regina went to Duke University our freshman year of college, she was miserable because the White crowd would not let her in due to her being Black, but the Black crowd would not let her in because she only knew how to "act White." She ended up transferring, and then, ironically, returning to Duke for law school (perhaps her full scholarship had something to do with that). But looking back, as we have talked about, there were other problems when we were younger. Regina moved in across

the street from me when we were ten years old. The week before she moved in, her next-door neighbor put up a fence between their houses (oddly enough, the neighbor did not put up a fence on the *other* side of her yard). We also had one or more friends whose parents objected to having Regina spend the night at their houses. And, perhaps the most sickening, was the Ku Klux Klan family who lived down the street, who would put vitriolic White supremacist literature in everyone's mailboxes and spray paint racial slurs in front of Regina's house. In my young mind, though, I could not see racism as a systemic problem. I thought individual people were racist (which did scare me a bit), but not our entire society. Lastly, like both Regina and Chandra, I dated outside my race. This was not well accepted by many, especially my parents (perhaps Jacksonville was not the melting pot I thought it was after all). Eventually I married a Sicilian, and much to my surprise, I have encountered many who believe that in doing so I am in an interracial marriage. I am perplexed by this, although not bothered in the least.

Reading theorists who expose systemic oppression, like Anyon (2006), Apple (1995), Ayers (2004 & 2009), Delpit (2006), Gay (2000 & 2004), He (2003), Kumashiro (2009), Ladson-Billings (1994), Scott-Simmons (2008), Siddle-Walker (1996) and Watkins (2001 & 2005) helped open my eyes—once again—to the fact that the world was much bigger than what I could see. There were so many things to which I was blind...I feel as if Curriculum Studies has delivered me to some point of enlightenment, where I can acknowledge that racism is still a problem in the United States, and armed with that knowledge, try to make a positive change—rather than just pretend it (racism) does not exist.

As a result, I can no longer accept *anything* at face value. I question *everything*. And I suspect an ulterior motive behind everyone's actions (yet I do not consider myself paranoid). I have learned that knowledge is fluid, perception is reality, and that truth is whatever we choose it

to be (I suppose one might label me an existentialist). I do not believe any two people truly hold any identical truths to be self-evident, as so much of our world is socially constructed.

I have learned, through deep immersion in Critical Race Feminism, that I had choices more readily available to me than did some of my closest friends. I now understand, or realize, that I have been allowed to choose my own destiny (to a large extent). Although there still exists the “glass ceiling” for me as a woman, racially (and in other ways), I have lived a life of privilege that has afforded me said freedom of choice. However, it is not my wish to “deliver” anyone to a better place, or to speak for or over another. I desire to speak with others, listen to them, and make viable meaning of their histories. I believe in the mission of Critical Race Feminism and I embrace it. It comes from my heart and I do not see any other theoretical framework through which it would be appropriate for me to passionately conduct my study.

On the other hand, I did mention that I struggled with whether I had the “right” to conduct a research project as a Critical Race Feminist. I believe I do—since when did one have to be a member of a group to study one or members of said group? How would any of the social studies, social sciences, humanities, or even Curriculum Studies exist if we did not study those who are different than ourselves? While I once thought that my using Critical Race Feminism as my theoretical framework might be “stealing someone else’s thunder,” in the end however, with the help of my White dissertation chair, my Chinese professor, my African-American professor, my Black colleague, and several African-American classmates (not to mention, my friend, Regina), I was convinced that there is no reason why I should not proceed as such. Later, when a White, female, historian joined my committee, she also concurred. All of the aforementioned assured me that to do otherwise would be ridiculous.

I contend that White feminists need only to look at the works of Paley (1979 & 1995),

McLaurin (1998), Alcoff (2000), Russo (1991) and McIntosh (1997) to see how Whites can engage in and constructively contribute to the discussion about Critical Race Feminism. Once White women acknowledge that race and class are indeed essential components of their identity, and that racial inequality and socioeconomic disparity are real problems, there is no way possible to refute the efforts of the Critical Race Feminist movement. Additionally, as Bailey (2000) says, being an “outsider within” might allow for a broader perspective (p. 285). White women have much to contribute to conversations about race (if we are willing to take the chance to do so).

Moving to my professional experiences and how they affect my subjectivities, since I began a career in education I have worked as a substitute teacher, a paraprofessional, a kindergarten teacher, and a university professor. While my grade school, undergraduate studies, and doctoral work have been in public, racially integrated schools, the majority of my teaching experience has been in private schools<sup>12</sup>. Unlike many who send their children to private schools, existing in that environment opened my eyes to the differences between the “educations” being offered at the private versus public schools in such a way that I feel called to action to record and voice how the public school children in Macon, who are overwhelmingly poor and majority Black, have been systematically neglected and exploited for decades by the very community that is entrusted to guide and protect them.

Furthermore, I have a few subjectivities about education in general. I harbor strong disdain for inept, bean-counting type administrators, standardized high-stakes testing, curriculum based on those standardized tests, and the current trends in public schools to replace PE, recess, and the fine arts with brain-altering medication. I have equally as much disrespect for one-size-fits-all

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<sup>12</sup> This is largely due to the fact that I have come into the profession, both at the grade school and university levels, through non-traditional means that would not have been available to me in the public schools.

discipline policies and any type of zero-tolerance punitive system, as both effectively target those who do not have the means, position, or often the knowledge (or access to said knowledge) to question their “punishments.” I believe discipline should be for the purpose of teaching a child to make informed choices, and that there should be natural consequences for undesired behavior. I have a great deal of respect for the Montessori model of child-centered curricula, discovery learning, and holistic approach to education. I would love to see Montessori methods brought to the public schools<sup>13</sup>. But if that were to happen, the youth of the United States might actually learn to think for themselves, and how can that be measured with a high-stakes multiple-choice test? And who would be left to fill the shoes of the working class?

My study was somewhat limited by the resources I was able to access, and by how much my participants were willing to reveal. Weis and Fine (2000) argue that, “...ethnography depends upon human relationships, engagement and attachment, with the research process potentially placing research subjects at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal” (p. 43). I recognized the dangers and vulnerabilities that existed both for my participants and myself, and I was willing to take that risk.

Lastly, Macon is my home now. It was my husband’s job that brought us to Macon, but we were tired of moving around. We decided to make Macon our home, and have not regretted our decision to do so. As such, I see that we are stakeholders in the community at large, and the long-term ramifications of what is happening in our public schools is going to have tremendous impact on the future of this town. In order to fully comprehend what is happening in our schools, I need a historical perspective that I am not going to receive from the powers that be,

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<sup>13</sup>I shake my head in wonder at those who say her methods would never work with today’s inner-city youth, for did she not begin her work in the ghettos—the slums of Rome?

which perpetuate the status quo. My community matters to me. I do not know what more needs to be said.

### **Summary**

*To seek an understanding of the strengths and problems in our communities is an important civic function. This is true in big and small cities, towns, suburbs, and rural communities. As education researchers, we have a civic responsibility to provide relevant and rigorous research that informs how we come to understand the interdependencies of the social, cultural, and economic institutions in our communities and how they relate to education processes and outcomes.*

(William Tate, 2008, p. 408)

The collection and analysis of archival data and oral histories has allowed me to show how the bureaucratic decisions made by one group of people affected the real lives of others. I tell the stories of the participants' lives using their own culture and dialects, making it a life story told through the teller's eyes (Glesne, 2006). I have provided a thorough description of the methodology used in my research. I studied archival data including newspaper clippings about school board minutes to provide a historical context of Macon's educational climate prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, the period between *Brown* and government mandated busing to force integration, and the years since the conception of the church-affiliated segregationist academies. I also interviewed five African-American women who lived in Macon during the time period when Macon was forced to integrate public schools, resulting in the White flight to private schools. I took these data and presented them from different viewpoints (Ayala, 2000).

I have employed oral history to re-tell the stories I heard from my participants. I specified and justified every means by which I collected and represented all data. I have also elaborated on my subjectivities as a researcher and provided theoretical connections to my methodology.

The educational significance of my study shows through building “desegregation academies,” gerrymandering public school districts, overcrowding and underfunding public schools (which are already at a disadvantage because of their socioeconomic status), the bureaucracy of Macon has unequivocally sent the message to the Black community that they are not worthy of a decent education. I have observed that in Macon, the public schools are failing—and they are failing the poorest among us. Bibb County public schools are mostly populated by African-American students who live below the poverty line. There are a disproportionate (to the general population) number of private schools in Macon, and they are mostly populated by Caucasian students who live a middle-class or higher life. This imbalance has persisted for decades, and permeates into the mainstream society as the students become adults and participate in various community affairs. I am disturbed by the social injustice that Macon’s community has allowed to perpetuate as the schools have re-segregated along racial lines, with White students predominantly in private schools and Black students in public schools (failing public schools, at that). I have gleaned some insight into this systemic crisis by listening to the Black women who have experienced the changes in schooling in Macon from the time before desegregation to our present resegregation. My hope would be that my research could offer an opportunity for the people of Macon to truly pay attention to the voices of Black women—as they tell the stories of what they see happening in their communities, and work toward improving our schools and making Macon a comfortable place where we can all live peacefully and prosperously.



By opening the proverbial “can of worms” and telling the stories of select African-American women of Macon, who lived through desegregation and resegregation in some of Macon's different predominantly Black neighborhoods, and analyzing how those experiences have affected the Black community of Macon, I would hope to give added insight into the continuing difficulty with low achievement in our schools in Macon. It has been my aim to document how this continued apartheid in education is a systemic problem, and not just one of White Flight. Again, I reiterate, the vexing point about Macon is not that this private vs. public school access continues, as Macon is not the only town to have such situations. Rather, the interesting aspect of the phenomenon is the vast number of private schools (and students within) that have perpetuated segregation, in relation to the size of the community. Finally, by researching the history of public school organization over the past forty years and recording personal accounts of some of those most adversely affected by said bureaucracy, I may expose a few truths that Macon’s White citizens (collectively) have been, as of yet, unwilling to acknowledge.

## Chapter IV

### Baseball Bats and River Rats, Macon During the Jim Crow Era

*“When you knew that there was a desperate need, and you did not want to just prolong it being— not having, not doing anything. It’s best to do something, than to not do anything.”*

*(Veda, 2010)*

As I edge toward the path of Macon’s history, I find myself wondering how far into the past I truly need to reach to effectively tell my story. Some of Macon’s history, after all, is not unique. For example Macon was, like most cities in the South, taken from the Native Americans (in this case, the Creeks), and rebuilt on slave labor and agricultural trade. Then during the “War Between the States,” Macon was bypassed by General Sherman’s torch, and therefore served as a temporary capitol, an arsenal, and a boarding room for soldiers. During and after Reconstruction Macon suffered, along with the rest of the South, the growing pains of simultaneously having to rebuild their economic structure while trying to retain their social and culture structures. For a while, thanks to the Jim Crow laws, Macon was fairly well able to accomplish this task, as separate but “equal” was the law of the land. All of these things I have learned just by living in Macon and visiting historical sites such as the Ocmulgee Indian Mounds (the Southern name for the sacred burial grounds of the Creeks), the Cannonball House (an antebellum home downtown in which a cannonball fired from across the Ocmulgee River landed in the foyer, where it still sits today), and other local monuments scattered throughout the city. I consider these to be easy, generic pieces of history that are worth the acknowledgement I have given them, but are only relevant as to foundation.

More pertinent to my study is the year 1954. On May 17, 1954, the front page of the *Macon Telegraph* celebrated the dedication of a newly built (White) school, Hall Elementary.

On the other hand, the last page of the paper read “News for Colored People,” with a disclaimer that “This Department Edited and Managed Exclusively By Colored People” (Jones, 1954, p. 8). The section mostly covered societal events, such as upcoming reunions or church functions, and occasionally a marriage or obituary announcement. Mrs. Mildred Jones was listed as the “Colored News Editor.” I found it interesting that the “News for Colored People” shared a page with the comics in a two-column format, and that there were no people of color represented in the comics. Nonetheless, elsewhere in the United States a decision was being made that would forever change the landscape of the South.

Such was revealed the very next day as the *Macon Telegraph's* front page shouted very different headlines: “Segregation In Schools Outlawed By Sweeping Supreme Court Ruling,” and “Bibb School Men Expect To Work Out Problems, ” referring, of course, to the United States Supreme Court’s decision on *Brown vs. Board of Education*. Bennett (1954) of the *Macon Telegraph* reported that Bibb County Public School superintendent Dr. Mark A. Smith said “We will just have to cross that bridge when we come to it” (p. 1). Dr. Smith further declared that the school board would not hold any special meetings as a result of the decision. Yet, as Bennett said, “The superintendent is, however, one of the 21 members of the Georgia Education Commission has been called into immediate session to map ‘a program to insure continued and permanent segregation of the races’” (p.1) But just in case, as Bennett reported:

The Bibb board made plans last June to cope with the situation in the event the Supreme Court ruled segregation illegal in public schools. The board at that time abolished 13 schools districts which had been in existence for many years. Under the old rule, children were to attend the schools in their districts. The districts, however, had not been

revised down through the years to follow the shifts in the county's population and the construction of new educational plants. (p. 1)

The *Macon Telegraph's* Raymond (1954), after citing a poll that showed both White and Black races were content with the way things were, quoted an unnamed White Maconite as saying “the problem is how to segregate folks and still not have segregation.” (p.1). This mentality was evidently fostered by local White leaders like State Senator J. Douglas Carlisle of Bibb County, whom the *Macon Telegraph* (1954) quoted as saying, “This court has done the most radical thing the Supreme Court has done in my lifetime. They have reversed the decisions of many fine old judges who occupied that bench before them,” and that it “was to the best interest of both races to keep segregation” (p.1)

But the city merely fell in line with state leaders, as McClellan (1954) reported “Governor Herman Talmadge and five of the six candidates of the governorship today pledged continuation of Georgia's segregated classrooms regardless of the U. S. Supreme Court's ruling that the practice is unconstitutional” (p. 8). Interestingly, there was no “News For Colored People” on that day.

In December the *Macon Telegraph's* Turpin (1954) wrote that the local Board of Education had “shelved until a ‘constructive and proper time’ a request by 42 persons and the local unit of the NAACP for a conference to discuss immediate integration of the white and colored races in public schools here” (p. 1). Reassuringly, the Chairman of the Board, Crump said, “that the board has no intention of putting off indefinitely or stalling the hearing” (Turpin, 1954, p. 1). Four days later, Turpin (1954) reported that the petitioners had been tricked into signing the petition under false pretenses.

On May 31, 1955, the United States Supreme Court followed up with a directive in what is commonly known as *Brown II*. On June 1, 1955 the *Macon Telegraph* reported, “Jurists Order Prompt Start Of Integration But Leave Enforcement To Local Courts,” and that there was “No comment” from the local school board (p. 1). The state’s new Governor, Marvin Griffin was quoted as saying:

We are not going to mix the races in the classrooms of our schools and colleges in Georgia. No matter how much the Supreme Court seeks to sugarcoat its bitter pill of tyranny, the people of Georgia and the South will not swallow it. Under no circumstances will we sacrifice the welfare and best interests of our children to satisfy such an unconstitutional decision of the Supreme Court. As long as I am governor, and as long as the state of Georgia operates its schools, that precept will stand... (p.1)

Again there was a “Personal and Social News for Colored People” section alongside the comics on the last page of the paper. There was no mention of the Supreme Court’s decision or any reaction to such.

Georgia, along with several other states, largely ignored the desegregation order in what has become commonly known as the “massive resistance.” This massive resistance was possible, in part, because of manipulative legislation. For example, in 1960 Georgia’s (then) Governor Vandiver created a General Assembly Committee on Schools led by John Sibley (Huff, 2010; Roche, 1998). This committee, which has come to be known as the Sibley Commission, was given the task of polling the citizens of Georgia as to their opinions on public school desegregation. According to Huff (2010), the citizens (who were handpicked) were presented with a choice of which they thought would be better for Georgia’s schools: “Continuing massive resistance at the expense of the school system or amending state law to

allow token integration while keeping segregation largely intact” (§ 4). Based on the findings, the Commission would then advise the General Assembly and the Governor as to how to proceed in dealing with the desegregation order mandated by the federal courts (Huff, 2010; Roche, 1998). Although the Commission found that a majority of those polled would have preferred to fully integrate schools, the report generated by the Commission recommended various ways that the citizens of Georgia could skirt the issue all together (Huff, 2010; Roche, 1998). Thus, massive resistance would continue.

By 1964 Bibb County had presented the United States District Court with a plan to desegregate public schools one grade at a time, each year, until the 1972-1973 school year when the system would be fully integrated (Moore, 1964). In 1967, Bibb County had implemented a “Freedom of Choice Plan” and, as the *Macon Telegraph* reported on July 8, 1967, a “Majority to Minority” transfer option (initially intended to allow White students to attend predominantly Black schools) (p. 3A). These were merely options, however, and very few of Macon’s White students partook.

What I have offered thus far is the very public, very White, very male perspective of the racial climate in Macon prior to integration. There are other stories to be told, including the very private, Black female stories. I am fortunate enough to have built relationships with five African-American women who were willing to bare their souls to help me work on this project. It was a long and sometimes painful process for all of us, but through it we each grew individually and we also grew together. We are all fruits borne of the same tree, yet in different stages of ripeness. Of the five women I interviewed Veda is the oldest, followed by Ruth, Alethea, Merci, and Alyiah, respectively. I will tell each woman’s stories, using her words and following that progression. Depending on the time period discussed and each woman’s place

within that time period, some have more to say than others at a particular point. I paid close attention to what was said, what was left unsaid, what was unable to be said, and what was implied. And I have included all of their stories regardless, because they are all part of the bigger picture.

### **Veda**

*A memory that stuck with me, a long time, well I never forgot this point that I lived, I grew up in, well it was it was east Macon. And then they had subdivisions like Fort Hill. I lived in what you call Fort Hill because we was right across the street from this fort<sup>14</sup>. That fort is still standing. But what I never forgot—the fact that even though I lived right across the street, here was Ft. Hawkins elementary school, but I couldn't go to that school. And as a young person that sorta stuck with me. Because back there during that time (Jim Crow era) they, and now I hate to be sayin this but, I was smart, could read, really could do anything anybody else could do, and other child could do, but I had to leave outta my house every day go down the street and make a right turn and go all the way down to Burdell, which was a school for Blacks, see. See then, your schools were totally segregated. Even though there was a White... We were Black people. We lived on Woolfolk Street, which was across the street from Ft. Hawkins—that school. You went to the school that was, you know, where you lived...*

*And, and it just so happened that, in talking to, I put it like this. In talking to my mother, years ago you only lived with, well the communities were segregated. So purposely they would not sell you anything that was not considered to be your neighborhood. You see there—but that just sorta reminded me—years ago you lived just where, I mean there were just certain neighborhoods that you lived in. And wherever the neighborhood, you went to that school,*

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<sup>14</sup> The fort on Fort Hill is a replica of the old Fort Hawkins, which stood at the top of a hill.

*except where I gave you a example where I lived—what on the street in Fort Hill, but right across the street was Fort Hill elementary school. But I couldn't go to that school...Now on the other side of Ft. Hawkins you had the White community. And though, quite naturally they fed into that school. But the ones who lived on Woolfolk Street, on the other side, that was a big Black community. All the way back down.*

*Down...*

*Down the street a little piece, and go all the way down the Fort Hill Street to get to Burdell. It's Burdell Hunt now. You still had to go down the street to Burdell. And it was, it didn't really bother me. I just thought it was just interesting. And see, it didn't bother my parents and those either. And those other—because Black families that lived in there because they sorta felt safer with us goin down to Burdell because they really didn't know how we would be treated or whatever, if that woulda happen. But it was just interesting. And I never forgot that.*

*I wasn't worried about it but it was interesting to me to see that here all of these kids goin to that school, and they were bused in. Many of them were bused in then. You know, the Whites. Even before, yeah when I was in elementary school, they bussed White students in from other places. And see the kids sometime playin out—when we would get—we had to walk home. But those who lived...the busses ran for White Americans and not Blacks, back when I was growin up. Now today everybody rides the school bus. Even though people were payin their taxes back during that time, too. But the busses were for the White community.*

*And I could remember my mother always sayin when she had to go to school—they lived down near the Coliseum. I don't know whether you know where the coliseum is (I do). That used to be an entirely Black community before Urban Renewal came in and they all had to move. Oh, they (Urban Renewal) came, they (Black Maconites) went out in the area by Shurling Drive. I*



*don't know you know where Shurling Drive (I do). But they filled in all a that area right before you get to Shurling Drive, and then after you get to Shurling Drive. But beyond that people just, you know, they moved out. Those who could did—and some did move cross town, and could go across town you know, to live in the little houses and projects.*

*And like people just moved. And in those areas, you know they had to leave out. And that happened more than once. That happened a long time ago, and then it really happened during the sixties. When they totally cleared everybody out and the people who lived over there before the Coliseum and all that area uh, was built. They referred to them as “River Rats.” Because they lived close to the river. The Ocmulgee River. That used to be houses all around that river. Not that, real close to it, but it was, they was referred to as “River Rats.” And there are a lot of thing that some people still sorta hold—they laugh about it now but then it was not it was not funny. And progress has been made now as far as the integrating and the blending of the races.*

*But I can remember (mother) always sayin that they had to walk to over there where Booker T. Washington center is. They had to go that far to school. But they had to walk and the boys, the White boys and the White girls would be on busses. You know, riding by. They just always rode the school bus. I just remember that.*

*Oh and that remind me. Lemme tell you, too about the fair now. When I was growin up they used to have that same Georgia fair, State fair comin, and Blacks couldn't go except on Saturday nights. And so my mom and dad chose not, they told they wasn't goin to it. They say you, we can't go during the week we won't be goin. Because somebody had told my mama, I don't remember seein it, well we didn't go down there so I couldn't a seen it, but somebody had told her they had had a sign up, down to the fair, sayin uh, Black dogs and cats on Saturday*

*night. You know they use that n—you know that N word. Saying that they could go on Saturday night. And there was some foolish people who did go down there. I guess you know they just want to get to the fair but we didn't ever go. And that is one of the reasons why I never got attached to going to the um to the Georgia State Fair. Comin year after year after year, you know, and that kinda thing. We just stay home we didn't even have to go to that.*

*We always lived in a Black neighborhood. Well see, my parents were, my father started workin his first job, was at the cotton mill. They (Macon) used to have a cotton mill over to—there across from the Coliseum, it was. The area's still blank over there where they used to have a cotton mill. For a while he work there. And then when Armstrong Court come, that's what it was called, Armstrong Court. It's called Armstrong World now, but that's what he, spent most of his time, that's where he worked and he made a decent salary. But we they didn't wanna move anywhere, as they just stayed in the same neighborhood. You know, where they bought, well the house was bought. But they didn't try to move, to go anywhere else. They didn't wanna, they just didn't wanna, cause they felt comfortable where they were.*

*And, well the churches were a lot like that, too, open. We never did try to go to any other church. We just, our own church. And we always lived in there. I'm just bein honest with you. You know, a lot... And you know, back during the Civil Rights Movement, your meetings, all, people didn't have other places to meet. They would have their mass meetings and what have you in the church, because they felt safe being in they church. And oppositions, people that was opposing, they for some reason, they, well I know they would pray to tackle the church anyway, you know, somebody else's church. But, you know they didn't they didn't get involved in the any battles or anything. And I think that one reason why a lot of things were more peaceful, people just sort of took it in because that was no availability of weapons. For example, people are more*

*aware, and I think stand up and demand rights. And not be just, I'm not sayin they didn't wanna do, but in many instances they didn't know what to do. They knew something need to be done.*

*And that brings us back to having the right kind of leadership.*

*And your stronger leaders, you can go back to somebody like Martin Luther King, I'm just goin back to him, started out in the leadership in the church. And several of those people who fought, many many years ago, they had careers and their training and what have you, came from the church. The hymns, the songs, what have you, all that came from havin a strong belief. You know and havin faith and all. People did start voting, too. They were not afraid to get out and vote, now. Uh, now I do have a neighbor who told me, we walk, I have people that I walk with every morning, we walk for a hour and a half, she lived on the other side a town but she remember, she told us one morning that her grandmother, had a cross burn in their yard. I could not believe that. And every, it was something about, it had to do with the man, somebody registered to vote or something. That was a long time ago and the man that he work to that he work for didn't like it and they just, she say, but it was a cross burned in they yard. But we didn't never, we didn't have anything like that. You know I never did experience anything like that. I never did.*

*All right, the high school that I graduated from did not, well none of em had air condition, but the one I went to was built like a factory. But the ones, the other schools in this city, they were built like, I mean schools were pleasant environments. You know just goin into the building you got a certain feeling, or what have you. But the high school where I went, it was new, but they built it on the factory level. It was always identified as bein on the factory level. But that was, that was neither here or there. I was just you know saying, giving an example of what the people in my community paid attention to.*

*Okay. Once I graduated (from college at Talladega), came back to Macon, I graduated at June and I was able to get a job right then and there. And when school opened in September then I went right back to the high school that I had graduated from. It was called Ballard-Hudson Senior High, then It became a part of Southwest. And that's where I spent most of my teaching career at Southwest. Uh, I didn't teach in any other county but this county. All my time was spent here, in Macon teaching. And in my first year of teaching it was totally, we uh, Ballard-Hudson was the big, Black school on this side of town. Uh really it was the only one because Appling hadn't been built then. Then when I started working, when I was working they had, over here, Appling. That was a high school. It's on Shurling Drive, now. Appling, and your Black boys and Black girls went to that.*

*Everybody had to be bused, those who couldn't walk there, they had to be bused in. It was just one big Black high school. And that was Ballard-Hudson. I started out teaching social studies and that's all I taught. American history, world history, and then we had what was called Afro-American history. And those are the things that I just taught. Oh every now and then they would give me something like civics, to work with the younger people, but uh I did better with juniors and seniors. And once I got over to Southwest it was the same way. I help, really those last years that I taught I did more remediation so that the students would be able to pass uh the graduation test. The social studies part of the graduation test. But I taught Black history, well once I got out to Southwest, it was called Black History. And I taught that for many, many years and, I learned a lot, and well about, well the culture. It – not only livin it but reading and studying on it about it.*

*And I had some friends who went to a school, about two, during the sixties they tried to experiment too, went to school, before 1970, and there was just two teachers in that building,*

*two Black teachers and all the rest of em were White, and she was sayin that they, at first those people didn't even speak to them. And if they were to go after, they went in the dining hall to get their lunches they came and sat at the table, those people would get up and move. You know that kind of thang. And you know that duttn even (laugh) phase anybody today. But I can remember one of my church members telling me about that. Well, when she told it to me she laughed about it to just say you know how ridiculous it used to be, but they were, I knew that they were offended.*

*I could reflect back sometimes and lookin at, you know I'm just thinking sometimes that this book, belong somewhere else, or it would have Lanier in it, you know written inside of it, or Lasseter or something. See you had, well there Central. What is now Central used to be Lanier for the boys, Miller for the girls. What is known as Northeast now had Lasseter for the girls, Mark Smith for the boys. What is Southwest now once had McEvoy for the girls and Willingham for the boys. Ballard-Hudson was the only Black school when they first start, I mean when I was goin to school.*

*But back then I was so interested in trying, I said you know I will use whatever I have to teach. And that you know, didn't really bother me. But as I thought back on it it was, I mean it was unfair, but I didn't feel that it hindered me enough from teachin the students what they needed to know. I just didn't worry about that. But then many people did. But I said just go on whatever it is and teach it, because they needed whatever it is we had to give them. I guess because I was a history teacher and I knew that many years ago they didn't have any, any kind of books. And even when they got books they were outdated and all that but at least they were bein exposed to something. I thought about people 100 years ago who couldn't even go to school anywhere, you know. That kind of, that was just the way I felt. I know a lotta people didn't feel*

*that way, and quite naturally now would raise a ruckus about not having the right kinda, not havin updated computers, you know kind of a thing now. Which they was, but before then it wasn't really, like I told you it hadn't really bothered me because I was so interested in trying to share whatever it is that I had, I really didn't, I didn't concentrate too much on that. I often wondered did that really make a difference or—I don't think it made a difference with many of my students because they wanted to learn regardless. You know?*

*At one time if you were a teacher you were highly respected. People obeyed you, whether you were their teacher or whatever it is. And things like graduation was, they was just big things in the lives of those students, their parents, and well the community. As long as somebody, if they had met the requirements then, of what was offered, the parents were happy. This is the first graduate that we've ever had, or nobody else graduated in the family or what have you. You know they were just happy to do that.*

*Teaching at Ballard-Hudson, now this is before that court order and all that during the seventies, I really enjoyed the students. Believe it or not they were very well disciplined. You didn't have, even though they were not rich or anything like that, they were well disciplined. And I tell you a reason why I think they were well disciplined back then. During that time the parents took pride in their children bein able to go to a high school and graduate, because of the fact that many of them had not had that opportunity. And school was just important, then in the Black community. I mean it was just really important. And the parents made sure, they would they would tell the kids before they left home—you are goin to school and you behave and you learn all that you can so that your life will be better than our lives. I know that they told them that because that's what my parents told us.*

*Okay, they were well disciplined. They also wanted, everybody wanted to try to, it had been instilled in them, they wanted to learn as much as they could. And whatever was gonna be available for them, they wanted to learn to read. I can remember that. They wanted...they loved reading. Many of them didn't pronounce words and what have you as fluently as you woulda thought. But over a period of time, because they were interested, they were willing to learn. And they had a sense of pride about them, the way that they dressed. They didn't have expensive clothes but they were clean clothes.*

*And they had, they upheld high moral values, too. You didn't hear about anybody stealing anything, you know, robbing. Well quite naturally they didn't have automobiles (laugh) back then during that time and they showed respect to the teachers. Now teachers were on a high priority when I began teaching. And even, well even when I go back to high school with myself, teachers were set on a pedestal. If you were a teacher, and if you got to be a doctor or every—oh that was just the end right there, you know! For any Black community... And people just took pride in things like that and they uh were spiritual minded, too. You know you can't even mention that today but, they don't even go that way now. Yes, you could speak your mind—well in elementary. I didn't do it in high school. We didn't have devotion every morning. But they had a sense of letting you know, on a Monday morning where I went to church, or you know I went to Sunday school, or whatever, and their behavior showed it. They showed that kind of thing, came out in their behavior. But to me, back during that time they, the Blacks had a greater sense of pride and appreciation. And they had a desire. And they were willing to learn all they could because they had been taught at home, that in order to get ahead, you had to be educated.*

*Was it better before Brown v. Board of Education? No it wasn't better for everybody. (Laugh) it wasn't better for everybody. Because well Brown v. Board of Education, you had a little girl who had to—I see I'm sorta hung up on, where now I believe in neighborhood schools. I believe in that I believe in neighborhood schools if they were being—because that was 1954 wattrn it? What, um hmm, okay, I believe in neighborhood, I did believe in neighborhood schools but after I learned that the neighborhood schools were not equal... See now separate does not mean equal. You know there was a law back during 18—whatever that was the reason why they came up with this Brown thing—if it had been equal then things would have been different. So we needed the Brown decision to bring, to bring it to everybody's attention. It needed to be brought their, that there was inequality as far as providing public a free public education for every child.*

### **Ruth**

*Original intentions, you know, I could see, and those were the times we were living in, but it did not give equality. You know? When you're, you, you know, how can you equate equality? What, what is equal? What is equal? What is equal? And there is no way to make it equal.*

*I'm old enough to have been there when that was happening, or unfolding. Because our schools, the schools that I grew up in, certainly, they were separate schools. And yes, there was a desire to attend the White schools. And one of those was that, materials, you know things that you had to use, for teaching in the Black schools and the White schools. And the facilities themselves, they were not equal. And that, sorta, you know motivate you to wanna be where it was better equipped. Rather than havin things passed over from where it had been used. That was definitely, you know, one of the things that came to play. And your buses, you had drivers*



*for your Black population and your White population—you didn't have so much of a mixed ethnic beyond that that I can recall at that time. And my daddy is one that drove a school bus, unless he was sick and we'd have to walk the miles to school.*

*Once I began teaching, one of the ways I think that we could see a difference is the way that discipline played into the schools. There was no problem in the Black schools, of paddling a child. If they were sent to the office several times and paddlin was done and what have you—but with integration there came, put your paddles in your drawer.*

*Also during that time, you know they were, not you know they didn't—you didn't find...we were comfortable<sup>15</sup>—you know with businesses and go in—and where you enter and where you sit and, especially, you know, with your meals and your busing, your public transportation. You know was not ideal the way we think it should be. It was still dealing with signs, (laugh) you know that were White and Black, enter this door and that door. Um, (pause), how, how would a community move from point A to point point B?*

*With Brown v. Board of Education? I don't think it did what it was intended to do. Even though it answered some questions of the day. I would say resistance. Yes resistance on every side. You know there are two sides—as in, we all play a major role in it.*

### **Alethea**

*I do remember the time. I remember that time. And during that time it was a all Black school. Which I can't say that, you know, I, I've read a lot where during that time, most African-American children, they got uh, it was supposed to be equal. But they had not the best books. Not the best buses. Not, you know, but I can't remember—basically growing up, not knowing what was good, because I didn't know. I didn't have that opportunity to say, okay this was a*

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<sup>15</sup> By “comfortable” I believe she meant that she understood the situation, not that she enjoyed it.

*better book at a at a White school, versus this was a not so good book at a African-American school. I do recall that (sniff), I remember when, I, just hearing my parents or just hearing people say that the reason that it happened, the reason that Black schools, you know that...I remember my mom being really afraid at the time. She was very afraid of the Ku Klux Klan. I don't know what was said at that time. Because when I was growin up, kids are not like kids are today. We had a deep respect for our parents. We didn't sit around our parents and listen to their conversations. It was...we all had a place. And as children we had to stay in our place. This is how my household was.*

*My parents were very strict. Even until I grew up. I just had strict parents. I had, you know, a curfew to be in. I, you know, even in as a child I could visit but only like a hour, you can go over to visit your friend for one hour. And I was expect to do that. So, when things went on, you kinda heard and you didn't hear. All I can remember is my mom sayin, "I have a bat. And if they come in my house, you know, I'm gonna fight back." So, I don't know what was occurring at that time. I was sheltered.*

*And (pause) and Imma explain it to you like this. I remember there was more love toward each other, more family oriented, you know? More couples striving to stay married, do the right things. If people did things, it was kept deep hidden. Even when it came to someone romancing someone else wife—you know, it was hidden. A lotta things would go on in our neighborhoods with other families. Like the father might break up with or get a divorce from his wife or whatever, and it was never told. You know, and I always thought we lived in this in this glass house where everything was perfect because everybody, I thought everybody had a dad, everybody had a mom, unless something—tragedy happened. But that wasn't the real world. But that's how my family sheltered me.*

*I have talked, spoken with some people about it and um, they were telling me pretty much they remember where the African-American children would get old books from the Caucasian schools, and that they would be pretty much written in, torn. That basically at that time, and I do remember a time where, when I was in school they were saying that, there was pretty much, talking where there was a time when children could be paddled in school. And I do remember when integration occurred, all that stopped. I know pretty much, when I was in school, I even got paddled. Um, just basically I brought some—we used to have spelling bees. And I lost, I came in second place. And I really wanted the candy, so since she wouldn't give me the candy I decided to stop by the store the next morning and bring it to school so I could have candy. So, even when, it wasn't much but, you can remember, I can remember that you know, sometimes you would get paddled for not learning. In school. That you know, if they told you to learn just basically your letters or multiplication facts, you would get paddled for not learning them. So, so, that happened in African-American schools during that time.*

*And even, I hate to just cross up but, I just wanna be honest, you know. I even hear now, you know that, they feel like that, those were the best times for Black children, to basically be in a Black, predominantly Black school—because they felt like they had a better handle on children at that time. Because at the time before um integration, Black teachers could spank their children in school. Well now, after integration, after that took place, they couldn't. It couldn't no longer happen. So, you know, one phase of it say, you know, this is what has happen. Since we no longer can take care a our kids the way we used to. By spanking them or whatever. Uh, that's you know, with inner city. But, I don't know. Some people say that schools were, schools were better when Blacks went to Black schools and Whites went to White schools. They say it was better. I tend to disagree.*

*And the reason I disagree is because I feel like as children, when you separate children from each other, what is that telling us? Is that telling us that all kids can't learn, from each other? That there are certain teachers that solely can teach these children, and certain teachers that can teach these kids? Because when you talking about Brown v. Board of Education, the White teachers taught the White children, and the Black teachers taught the Black kids. They felt like children were much smarter. That African-American kids were much smarter than they are now.*

*So it's not just the—it's not about the Black kids and White kids. It's more than that. Children learn from each other. And sometimes kids need to see, I feel like, wit my kids, I always wanted them to know, that you're no different than anybody. And that in this big world, we all have to live together. How can we separate education? If we separate education then we gotta start separating everything.*

*I think, that the problem occurred, the thing back in the day during that time, is that you had parents that didn't get an opportunity to go to school and they wanted their children to go to school. So they were that support. Cuz my parents was that support that said that you know you're gonna go to school. And you're gonna do your best in school because I didn't have it, that opportunity. My mom graduated, but my father did not. So goin to school was important to them.*

*And it was sad that (that generation) had to go, I mean to even think of, for me to think about what they went through for the Brown v. Board of Education. Those people fought for those children to be able to go into the same schools and get the same education the same privileges that the White children had. And even now, you can just see it. Not just through elementary, but just follow your way through college. Where you see Thurgood Marshall and*

*how he had to go so far away to even go to a college, when there was one right there in his hometown, because he was Black.*

*Why in the world would you want to go backwards instead of forwards? And I don't know how that happened. Because when you look at slavery, during that time, all they wanted was their freedom. And in the sixties and the fifties, all they wanna do was to ride the bus and be able to go to school the way they wanted to. But now you have all this. And when you look at a paper, you didn't see that much in that day where we killed each other. If you read, if you go back and in the fifties and the sixties, you didn't see where a lot of violence was takin place between us.*

### **Merci**

*And the terminal station downtown, it was still open when (my brothers and sisters) were young, and (my sister) remembers a Black only side and a White only side. She re—she remember that. She remembers most of that.*

*I started school at uh L.H. Williams over on a Ward Street, on the west side and I, we wuddn bussed students, we was we was in walkin distance. And so we walked to school and so I really didn't experience what everybody else—you know I hear stories about—the segregation and all dat, I don't I don't remember experiencing that. I really don't. I know we had Black and White teachers. I knew that. But, and I knew all the kids in the school Black. But once we, once I got, I left L. H. Williams when they, I guess they did the court order.*

### **Alyiah**

*I did not know, you know, that the struggle was so hard back then. I really didn't know that. So you know, (and still) after they decided to give them the opportunity to not be in separate schools, it took a long time for segregation to end.*

*I just totally disagree with (the negative reflections on the results of Brown vs. BOE). Because just look at all these doctors you have and lawyers you have, and nurses of different races and different backgrounds now—that were able to go to school with other, White students. To go back, I mean if you look at the video (Simple Justice) they (Black students) in this little one room, maybe 68 students in one room—one teacher. They had to get the books from the White students that they had already used. No technology back then but still, they didn't even have separate classrooms for them. They didn't even have a middle or a high school. They just turn a certain age and that's it. So I disagree with that. I think that desegregation was the best thing that coulda happened to any race. I really do. Because you have the opportunity to get the same, equal, education.*

## Chapter V

### Law and Order (Except for White Maconites Resisting Integration)

*“Choice is taken from them, and conscience is either killed, or, if it lives, at all, lies but to give rebellion its fascination and disobedience its charm. For all sins, as theologians weary not of reminding us, are sins of disobedience.” (Wilde, 1890/2003, p. 194).*

The late sixties and early seventies were tumultuous times in the history of our nation. As a people we were deeply divided over civil rights, a war in Viet Nam, and a generation of baby-boomers rebelling against the restrictive lifestyles led by their Depression-Era parents. There was widespread political and social unrest throughout the United States, rendering many communities all but dysfunctional. And the reason I care to mention this is because what I have to say in this chapter paints a portrait of a city so ridiculously entrenched by fear and hatred that it still has not recovered four decades later. I feel, in this case, I must again state that I do realize Macon is not the only city to ever have racial troubles. I just do not understand why Macon’s residents cannot seem to get past them. (Although Macon is not unique in this either, I see and feel the racial tension more pervasively here than anywhere else I have ever lived.)

I have come to understand that when talking about Macon, race is always part of the discussion, either explicitly or implicitly. And when talking about racial desegregation in Macon, former Mayor Ronnie Thompson is a necessary part of the discussion. His tenure as Macon’s mayor is legendary, discussed with admiration or contempt, depending on who is speaking. “Machine-Gun Ronnie,” as he would later come to be known, displayed behavior as the leader of Macon that, as an outsider looking back forty years later, I can only describe as bizarre. While I do not mean for this chapter to be an indictment of Ronnie Thompson, he put himself in the spotlight with his antics. I am merely documenting his actions, as recorded by the

*Macon Telegraph*, so that later I can analyze the impact he had on both Macon's Black and White communities.

I commence with a pivotal moment in the struggle for civil rights, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This was also a prolific moment in the career of Macon's new mayor, Ronnie Thompson. Because he had heard about the societal unrest throughout the United States in response due to King's murder, he put the city of Macon under a curfew for four days (*Macon Telegraph, 1968, April 16*). While this may seem unremarkable, it is the authority he claimed in doing so that forever changed the face of this relatively small, Southern city. According to a staff writer in the *Macon Telegraph* (1968, April 16):

The mayor said he acted in the public interest as ranking head and chief in command of the police department. A city ordinance now on the book gives the chief the responsibility of preserving peace, preventing crime, protecting persons and property, suppressing riots and insurrections, and regulating traffic movements. Under a civil defense portion of the code, the mayor is authorized to "promulgate such emergency regulations as may be deemed necessary to protect life and property and conserve critical resources and such regulations may be invoked when necessary for tests of civil defense and disaster plans." The regulations are subject to the approval of the city council "as soon as practicable," according to the ordinance. (p. 24A)

The affable mayor would call on this authority time and again as he tried so desperately to keep Macon's citizens racially segregated in every facet of society.

As I mentioned previously, Macon had to be forced by a federal court judge to act on the *Brown v. Board of Education 1954* decision. This desegregation of the schools did not come to fruition in Macon until January of 1970, following the Christmas holidays. Bibb County



integrated the teachers at this time, and then would allow the students to follow on February 15, 1970. On February 14, 1970, the *Macon Telegraph* reported that Ronnie Thompson had plead with the school board (of which he was an ex-officio member) to allow seniors to graduate “now,” so it would be more meaningful for them. Two days later Governor Lester Maddox was in town, at Thompson’s side, to urge Macon’s White citizens to defy the court order to integrate the schools (Carter, 1970). In that speech, Carter (1970) said, Maddox “called private Christian schools a major weapon against federal encroachment on public education” (p. 1A). Following suit, Carter (1970) stated, Thompson asked parents to take their children to the schools they had been attending and stand by their side, declaring, “I would discourage any adult or anybody else from laying a hand on them because if they do I am going to accept as a declaration of war and send our troops in there” (p. 2A). With state and local leaders reacting this way, it was no surprise to find the White citizens of Macon participating in sit-ins at local schools, refusing to send their children to the newly integrated schools, and threatening lawsuits (Bellury, 1970). Because the desegregation involved mixing Black students and White students in public schools, there is no other conclusion to draw except that Thompson, an avowed segregationist, had no other motivation for his fury than pure racism. And like his repeated usurpation of authority, Thompson would unleash his wrath upon the Black community of Macon time and again.

In actuality, however, most of the 23,000 students in Bibb County Public Schools at the time were not even reassigned. According to a *Macon Telegraph* report by Bellury (1970, February 17), the merger at that time only involved about 5,500 students. Approximately 500 of those followed Mayor Thompson’s lead, and like the mayor’s own children, returned to their original schools. But unlike what so many had feared, the initial integration was peaceful. There were no reported incidents of harassment or violence.

Meanwhile, as in numerous cities throughout the South at the time, Macon's Black citizens were organizing marches, boycotts, pickets, and (sometimes) violent acts to bring attention to their fight for equal rights. Macon's Black Liberation Front, one such group which, though small in numbers, was very vocal and public in its efforts. In response to some of the demonstrations by the BLF, the *Macon Telegraph* (1970, June 20) reported that Ronnie Thompson, invoking his aforementioned authority, ordered the police force to "shoot to kill" people "engaged in lawlessness and anarchy" (p. 1A). (Do I need to mention that the lawless anarchists were Black?) Six months later, with the order still intact, Thompson tried to arm members of the fire department with shotguns, and have them sworn in as police officers, to help curb the state of emergency he had declared in the wake of armed robberies (Carter, 1970). Although, as Carter (1970) reported, "Macon's Detective Chief W. H. Bargeron said yesterday that armed robberies (were) not on the increase for this time of year" (p. 1A).

In July of 1971, citing an unverified rash of firebombs and sniper fire (presumably perpetrated by the BLF) Thompson again called a state of emergency and imposed a curfew on the city (Corson, 1971). This time, however, Thompson allowed a transit exemption for those who worked after curfew hours, provided they could provide a note from their employer that they were going to and from work (Land, 1971). Four days later, the *Macon Telegraph* reported that Thompson strapped on a sub-machine gun and led the police on a sniper hunt (Carter, 1971). No sniper was found, and the mayor had earned a nickname—Machine Gun Ronnie.

In August of that year, Thompson sent a telegram to then President Richard Nixon, asking for his assistance with the school desegregation problems in Macon. Then, when the school year resumed in September of 1971, the mayor publicly criticized the newly formed

federal program to aid pregnant teens in staying in school. He said he was fearful of the school board looking as if they condoned such a thing (Birdseye, 1971).

A few months later, Machine Gun Ronnie was more specific in his orders. According to the *Macon Telegraph* (1972, February 5) “Mayor Ronnie Thompson has instructed Macon policemen to ‘shoot first and ask questions later’ while investigating armed robberies and burglaries if there is the ‘slightest indication’ that they might be harmed” (p. 3A). And finally, to top it all, in June 1973 Machine Gun Ronnie bought an armored tank to protect the city and its police officers from “snipers” and “riots” (Savage, 1973). Locals have varying stories about the tank—everything from his riding it up and down the streets of downtown Macon, to his driving it up on the campus of a local elementary school. Regardless, it sent a message to Macon’s Black community—as in—he did not want them there, at all. Sadly, the message that Blacks should not be part of the community was also sent to the White community of Macon—and they still seem to believe it.

### **Veda**

*When I first started teaching at McEvoy, that whole area out there was totally White (whisper). And over a period of years, more people be movin out, people be movin, you know Blacks a be movin in. So that area out there around Southwest right now is predominantly African-American. It just started and you know every year would just get more and more. Once integration blended, Appling became the middle school. And see, Ballard-Hudson became a middle school, although they went back now and rebuilt a new one. They built a new school but it’s the same lot. Over there on Anthony Road. And they just let Southwest be Southwest, over there, that had what was once McEvoy and Willingham.*

*Now I saw, once the great big turnover during the seventies, because you know the Brown vs. Board of Education. That was during the fifties but they didn't do anything about it. They ignored it. They ignored it. They didn't they didn't pay that any attention. But they, during the seventies, they had to. The mandate was set. And they had this great big turnover. And when I first went to—well everybody who was at Ballard-Hudson had to go. Everybody who was at Ballard-Hudson on my side of town. I mean where I worked, cause where I lived you had, Lasseter. It was the, wasn't Northeast then cause they didn't change those name to Southwest and Northeast till after they blended in at the schools. Cause when I first had to transfer I went to what was called McEvoy. See Southwest was made up of McEvoy and Willingham. Willingham was for the boys, and McEvoy was for the girls. I don't know whether you're aware or not (I was) but in Bibb County when you got to be high school age—this was after I came to teach and I, well they even had it when I was in high school myself. We all, Black girls and Black boys all went to Ballard-Hudson. But White girls went to McEvoy. White boys went to Willingham. White boys went to Mark Smith. White girls went to Lasseter. They separate, and you know I never really did figure out why they did that<sup>16</sup>. But I just know even when I was in high school that was the case. We all went to with the boys. They didn't. They didn't.*

*Now after we got to Willingham and, well some people went to, they sent some of the men, Black men, to Willingham to teach. I was one of those women who went to McEvoy to teach. And I had all girls. All girls. All day. And that meant that you mixed in—if you had Black girls and White girls—all that. And then the people who were down on the hill, down under the hill, they that was Willingham. And they had all Black boys and all White boys. They still kept them separated. Now once the name changed and they made it Southwest, and they*

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<sup>16</sup> It is common knowledge in Macon that the gender segregation was done in hopes of preventing Black boys from ever being in the same school with White girls. Veda knew this, too. But she only told me implicitly, via her comments about women and girls wearing pants.

*made it over here on my side of town Northeast, then they start mixin the classes together. You know, mixin the boys with the girls. And somebody say, well they behave better if you put the boys and girls together. I think that was sorta what they were tryin to say. Put, mix them together and they will behave. But at first it was separated.*

*At first they didn't have those boys with their White girls. And one other thing, too, that happened—a few years, it mighta been that second year, they allowed everybody to start wearin pants. Because, before then you couldn't wear pants. High school kids couldn't wear pants. Teachers couldn't wear pants. When I first started teaching you couldn't wear pants. You had to either wear a skirt or a dress. But once they integrated they said everybody could wear pants. And I, they gave me a reason for that too, but I laughed. Similar to what you know, about lookin at them and somebody bend over and whatever and if you have on pants nobody'll be able to see if you bend over. Now that was just, I don't know what that is, but I know that I couldn't wear pants when I first started teaching in the fall of 62, but once they integrated I could. Now we remember. We talked about that cause I had a friend who started working the same time that I did. We had been to Ballard-Hudson, you know, to high school together. We would often talk about that.*

*And the buildings that I worked in, well I can tell you one thing. I just thinking about, you had all these buildings and then around them you had what was called a soccer field, where they would meet out... they would get on the soccer field before class and... but that's how they, the White girls and the White boys would socialize before integration. You know they would all meet on the soccer field and talk and whatever it is. And then when the bell sound they all had to go to their individual buildings. And when the Blacks went out, you know in integration, the Blacks came, they were out there mingling too, with each other, you know Black boys and Black*

girls. That's the one thing I can remember lookin out the window every morning looking down there, seein them socializing.

Let me give you an example. When I first went to, after desegregation I went to this school, and like I told you the boys and the girls were separated during the academics, in classes. But every morning everybody could meet on the soccer field and the intermingling of showing public affection, what have you, that was something I was not accustomed to seeing. Students, it was public display, I mean of affection, and you can—teachers could just stand at the window and just look down and that, that was, to me that was a shocker. You know that people would, everybody, all of em were, didn't matter, all of em, they adopted that. You know everybody was publicly showing affection.

Now though you had your, well it wasn't big, it wasn't a big thing, because of the fact that once you had integration, you had Black counselors and White counselors. And they, just like it is with anything else, they sorta steered their own. If, I know that they would get information from various colleges and what have you, and those Black counselors, they would make sure that if they knew somebody who was sorta good and whatever they would sorta encourage them. I know the Whites did. So nobody, I couldn't put my hands on anybody being totally left out of anything. Because maybe before they got a Black counselor, back then somebody might have been. But I know Blacks say, and that may be one of the reason they would be kinda sorta smart in doin that, because they knew if they had totally just White doin one thing or totally Black doin one thing that it would be obvious. I think they were smart enough. If you had some Black teachers then you better get some White teachers. You got a White counselor you better get a Black counselor. You know, that kinda thing.

*I believe that was their own, individual mindset as to ideas and what have you that had been handed down, from one generation to another. And as we know, and as we've studied, well I always go back to Brown v. Board of Education, back during the fifties where it came, it was, although it was passed that there was to be no more segregation as far as the schools and so forth, all that mindset was handed down from generation to generation and it was just, time for integration. First of all I think because of the fact that they were forced, they were, they had made up in their minds that they were not going to comply. And I don't know how this idea got out whereby they felt that Black teachers were inferior as far as the education they had received, and they did not, the parents did not want to—I mean, that's what it all boils down to. That's what it amounts to. Then, even though the law said that they had to integrate, they made up the, the parents made up their minds that they were not going to do it. And they didn't do it. And they put their own individual schools into motion as, that's the background reason why you still gotta lotta private schools now.*

*I never was in an environment where private schools were pushed, as far as African-Americans were concerned, because we were still about the, we were, around the mentality of tryin to get to a school that was a neighborhood school. I do remember the fact that you had your parochial schools, your Catholic schools. That's one area of private school, with the private school mentality, that Blacks were able—they went to the Catholic school. They went there. But once integration came about, there were some people who ventured out to try to go over there. But I don't think that there was a big, and I might be wrong because Imma—I don't know about other environments or what have you, a big push for Blacks to even go to a private school. As a teacher we often talked about it and it nobody—nobody, I'll just say the teachers I worked with, sometimes they would just laugh and say well there's another one you know.*

*Another school comin up. And they sort of, I guess in their own way, they didn't resent it. They just kept their hands off of it.*

*But that's what it boils down to, that they did not want to do the mixing. And it really didn't bother the people that I associated with. It really didn't bother them bout that because with they own children they said, well I'm teachin them morals you know. I believe in the public schools and so forth and my children never went to a private school. They graduated, both of them graduated from Northeast High school. And the elementary school, J. Elsworth Hall, that's where they went. That school, they closed that school Hall, um hmm J. Elsworth Hall. It's on Shurling Drive. And when they first went, especially my son, there was just maybe I think there was two (Whites) in his class. You know, two or three, watn more than five. I would say in that class. So he's been around them a lot and, that didn't, it really didn't bother him, because they even had a woman who did Cub Scouts and she had little Black boys as well as the White ones.*

*We really didn't um get hung up in the, now we were lucky, nobody ever attacked us, and I don't remember my son ever being called outta his name. Or he didn't tell me about it. He woulda been like— (no words for the sentiment) about that word and the same thing about my daughter. Nobody ever called her. But my dad and all of them, now they were called outta their names. We never were really just attacked, but we knew of other people who had been abused, you know, by bein called that word and what have you. Some would be overly upset and others would not. I guess it depend upon where you live, what you believe in, if you believe and went to church and knew that didn't matter. You know that kind of thing. And you have to have strong people to resist that and not try to just tit for tat.*

*All in all, from desegregation we gained, we gained access to being able to go to a neighborhood, a close school, quite naturally the supplies and what have you, and all of that if*



*it's in one school then it's for everybody. We also gained access to public places, well there were some of those, I can't, I know it was downtown. The only thing that I can say is that it's downtown. And as I mentioned to you before, a lot of things my parents had experienced, and their parents, they just automatically steered away from certain places. Just like, what's the restaurant, I mean it's not a restaurant now, S & S? If you see now, they used to be one downtown, and African-Americans were not permitted to go into that area at all. They (Blacks) didn't boycott it on they own, they (Whites) just didn't want their (Blacks') services there. It was downtown but now to name a particular store, places like S & S and Dairy Queen, they didn't want the Black patronage.*

*Well, one thing that I never forgot, and it was sorta, was a change—when you would go shopping. I can remember before integration I standing in line waitin, you know to buy something, and if a White person came up they would, they didn't even get in line they just went up on up there. And the clerk, whoever it is waitin, you know waitin on them (laugh) now that is that was back there during the seventies. Early seventies. But eventually that changed because you had people who would speak out and say I know you aren't getting in front of me, you know that kind of thing. And over a period of time it changed. But the old people, they didn't say anything. Whoever it is went up there in front of them to go on and pay for whatever it was they were goin to get. And these waiting rooms and things, that used to sorta bother me. Specially tryin to travel. And that's one reason why we didn't do a lot of travelling. Because my parents were not going to...you just...they didn't support pushing that kinda thing. We just stay home. We didn't even have to go to that.*

*Now there were some Black-owned business over in what is called the Pleasant Hill area.*

*I can't just name them but I know they had all the, had they own, they even had a drug store where you could go and buy ice cream, and I have a neighbor who could give me the name of a restaurant. I could name a grocery store, a Black grocery store—it was the Mathis family had a had a grocery store. A Black grocery store. But your heaviest Black ownership, were your entrepreneurs Black entrepreneurs, they were in east Macon. I mean in Pleasant Hill mostly other than anywhere else.*

*But the Black community did lose this—all right let me sorta give you an example. I mentioned this earlier. Before desegregation African-Americans took pride, and I can understand why, in the graduation ceremony and what have you. That was a something in the community that they looked forward to. Didn't happen but once a year. But that was one thing. Another thing that was lost was respect for the teachers. Then of course the—something that was minor, but it got to be you know, the way they dress before desegregation, and then once desegregation. The laxity, for lack of a better word you know, of unprofessional dress. And everybody's everybody wanted to smoke now. And I'm not saying people wanna smoke but they used to, if they, if a teacher smoked or anything you didn't ever know it. They did it at home or away from the school.*

*Now as far as leaders during that time? I can remember somebody, I hate to call names, but Bill Randall, he was involved in that. You know the father, Bill Randall. No his son is a judge now but we're talking about the father, the old one, he was one of the most prominent leaders you had during the period of desegregation. He getting people to just stay away from certain places and they did. I mean it paid off. Maybe not with big numbers but it did pay off. And we know that it happened with the bus drivers.*

*Most of the leadership in the Black community, in addition to him, came from the ministers. No, they were not elected. Now Randall did get to be the first (Black) County commissioner. But uh I was talking about leadership in the Black community. And it did spill over because there were some ministers like Mack Tier, at Mount Moriah over there, and I can't recall who was the, it mighta been Vann J. Malone, over at First Baptist. He, sorta led the Blacks but then he had a lotta influence in the community period. They listened to Vann Malone. Because he was experienced. He wattrn born and reared here but he was an experienced military man. I'll say a lot of intelligence, and he just had a lotta influence. He knew how to get along with anybody, and then he helped to spearhead some of those, what they used to call em, mass meetings in the churches. And that was not only in Macon but throughout the South, they used to have them mass meetings. Well, they would meet at churches and plan their strategies as to what they could do to further implement integration. And like I said I really, a lot of the leadership came from the ministers and that's how you got that Ministerial Alliance organized here, too. Because it was during the period of desegregation—the ministers got together...*

### **Ruth**

*I started teaching in Bibb County in the fall of 1967. At that time I did not have any children in the school system. My first child was born in February of 1969. So, at the time of his birth, I worked in the system one and a half years. And I was also fortunate to live about a block away from the school. At first I lived in a apartment complex that was called Macon Homes. Okay it is now gone down. And I, they're looking at redeveloping that area. Then I moved from there, to the Ballard-Hudson area, near Ingram-Pye, Ballard Place, which is just like a kinda little cul-de-sac. Didn't have a lot of, you know, you had houses there but not a lot, of traffic or anything of that nature. A lotta the students that attended Ingram-Pye came outta that*

*community. And of course they were the best that you would want or you could ever ask to work with. When I say that I mean for a first time teacher. See for a first time teacher coming in you know, they were the students who felt that if anything went wrong at school, there was someone in my community that could communicate with my pa, you know. So it was just ideal in that sense. And then it was one of those times where, where your parents were your own.*

*Actually at that time it was Pye Elementary school. Over there on Anthony Road. There was no Ingram-Pye. It was later, merged together, and Ingram was closed. Ingram was located right at Mercer University and Telfair Street just at the railroads. A thought came to my mind, and correct me if I'm wrong, but you know as schools were being built what were, there was more of a concern that there were more of the Black schools that were being shut down and torn down...But at the time that I worked at Pye, I taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and it was a combined group of boys and girls. There was no integration, at that time. Integration did not come until January of 1970. And at that time it was just done, only with the staff, faculty. It did not involve a movement of students yet. I got moved. One of the things, and I'm not really sure I can say it. And I'm not sure what the numbers were. But you had to, I believe they worked toward having a certain ratio of Black and White teachers per school. I don't know what those numbers were. I'm thinking perhaps it was it was based on your entire staff, the ratio of Black and White teachers. Teachers first, teachers first. Macon/Bibb County was afraid, I think. And this was the most cautious way to make a move. You get your teachers there, and let them be accepted first. Then you move the students. And that's exactly what happened.*

*But I was fortunate in that, I worked from the fall of 1967 through December of 1968. At that time I went out on maternity leave. So I did not work from January through May-June. My first child was born February 26 of 1969. So when I reapplied, to work in the school system, and*

*I'll back up just a moment, because we had to resign at that time. For maternity leave we had to actually resign. I resigned from my position at Pye Elementary. When I returned, to re-enter the profession, I spoke with a gentleman who was assigning teachers at that time. And because the turnover was coming in January of 1970, they would not reassign me to Pye in the fall of 1969. So what he did then was to assign me to what was then a predominantly White school. Except for I believe for maybe two staff members that...so far as the student population it was not yet integrated. So I was assigned to Weir Elementary the fall of 1969. Therefore I was not in the massive turnover in January of 1970. So I was very very lucky. Other teachers, and those without seniority, were the ones that were moved... I didn't have seniority but I woulda been one of those they would have moved had I gone back. So rather than move me in the middle of the year, they went on and assigned me, in the fall of 1969 to Cynthia Weir Elementary. I was teaching fifth grade, all subjects.*

*I really found it to be better than what I thought. The principal was very warm. A very loving, a very kind person, a very firm person, and supported me in every way that she possibly could. And as I recall, there were two Black teachers already assigned there. I believe that's right. And the reception. I was, you know I was, I was happy. It was an adjustment for all of us but we accepted each other. And it was very, very ideal. And a good situation for me. Because the Black schools were so much behind in materials, the facility itself. And so once in, then you begin to see that second-handed the books and stuff like that. It was kind of a satisfying feel where you know you finally made it in where you could take part in some of those better things. That we were happy for an opportunity just to go to a school where we had known all the time that everything is better there. You get new textbooks, you get science labs, you get all of these things, that we didn't have, so integration for the Blacks, as I see it, meant well, hello, we gonna*

*get a chance to go to a quality school. One that's you know, kind of a top notch school. And we were not so worried about takin 2 leaps at one time.*

*And if I'm remembering correctly, you know I remember the busing initially started as transporting Blacks and Whites. But then they began to look at ways that you could have that move all over the school system, magnet schools came into play. And that was sorta a door that opened up for that movement. The magnet schools kinda set a tone for busing students. You would have to apply to attend the school, and the students were not refused an opportunity to apply. However there was a waiting list and they made selections from that. You know I can remember exactly how that was done. That meant that students from all over the school system could feed into the setting, and you would not necessarily be attending your neighborhood school. But the numbers were limited. Screening of course, was done. In the spring of the year the applications were sent to the various schools, for parents to apply for their students to attend. So that was one of the things that helped them, get the students, you know maybe outta their neighborhood, to say that it's not just transporting Black students to White schools and White students to Black schools. Also in that era, you began to see the neighborhoods change. And that, too, helped with the integrating of your school population. Because then you were in a neighborhood and it may have been a neighborhood that fed into a particular school. So your mix of people in the neighborhoods also helped the population.*

*But the Black students that were sent to Weir, and I'm sure this is true of other schools in the system as well, if you had three students and they were in the same grade...and let's say that you had three teachers in that grade, one child was put in each of those classrooms. They were never put together. I didn't understand it then and I do not understand it now, why. But they were spread out over the school. They were never put together. So that they would feel that you*

*had somebody that was your own, you know, there. I felt comfortable enough to ask (my principal why) but I didn't ask the question. I don't know that anyone there asked. It came from the school system you know, and that's how it was. You'd see one here, and one there, and one there, and over here. We were given Black children to teach. It didn't matter if the teacher was Black. But the students were not put together in the early busing of the students.*

*Let me see if I can recall...my first child entered Weir School when he came of age. And he was in that same situation. And he asked, he did ask me that question and I didn't have, really have an answer for him. But he wonder why he was the only Black child in a classroom a Whites. He didn't have any problem makin friends, but he just didn't understand...He was six. And he noticed that there was a difference in skin color. But he didn't have any, so far as people, he's a people person, you know. But he couldn't understand that. And really and truly I'm not sure what was given for us to get over that. But he made many friends. While he was there, and all the way through school. You know Black friends or White friends.*

*Backing up, I don't like to use White and Black, because another thing that was in the school system then, and I imagine they still do it. There was just something that just hit the bottom with me. When I had to ask my students stand up at the opening of school. Let me count you as Black and White. You know, easy way not to count, I found. Whatever it was, I remember standing. And you count heads. And you had to get the Black girls and the Black boys, White boys whatever, and that always bothered me to have to do that.*

*Another one of the things that I saw evolve in the earlier years that I taught, and that was in all of the schools, you know at Pye and then at Weir as well, you started out with a classroom that was full of good children. Didn't have but one bad one. Or two, maybe three, and there was always a place that you could put them where they would be separated in the classroom.*

*And as time moved forward I saw that you were having fewer good ones, and more that needed discipline, and not as many places. I also saw the numbers grow, of more, in the school where I was. I began to see the population increase, naturally, because of busing. But you don't touch a child. And that was one of the things that would let you know the true feeling, you know of people. You know, it was it was it was a real difficult thing to get over because now you were in a situation where a child is able to tell you, you better not hit me and if you hit me thus, this, and so on. And you could go back and see there's some real issues there. So you began to see a breakdown of discipline, of having a handle on the student population. Or if something went wrong, what were you gonna do? It moved from, paddling still could be done, at the onset, but it had to be done in the office, by the principal, with a witness, the right kind of documentation and everything, and still that did—that was not ideal for the times that we were goin through. Till eventually I think that was ruled, that was ruled out<sup>17</sup>. So discipline, you know, that part of it, I remember there. My friends and I, we made it a business to work with each other. You know, we understood that we needed to work and we needed to work you know as a group, rather than to be fighters, you know. Not fighters in that sense, but at a point where there was not a good working relationship. And so I think the students observed and watched us to see how we would handle the situation, you know. And then they, themselves, would kinda fall in line. But I found in the situation I worked to have very cooperative, supportive parents. Very seldom were there any, very seldom were there any with real concerns. Or would not cooperate. They want the best for their children. And we tried to provide that. So again, it was, how it affects you I think determines on how you work yourself into it all. And I was very positive and open to making it the best. But I was very comfortable in the situation that I was in.*

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<sup>17</sup> Corporal punishment is actually still legal in the State of Georgia. Indeed it must be administered by the principal, with witnesses, and not without written parental consent.



*I also saw in the school system where there were changes in the schools by name. You had McEvoy and Willingham, moving from those names to Southwest. Okay Central, I believe, was Lanier. Northeast, I forget what it may have been. They each had their own identity, and those to pretty much the location where they are. You had students coming from wider areas of the county to feed into those schools and you had to get something that would maybe be accepted by Blacks and Whites. My thinking is you would need something, cause we didn't wanna identify with, you know, maybe with certain names. You have this kind of change, you need to change the names of the school. So they became, they gave them names according to their location in the school system.*

*But yes, private schools came. My reaction was like, White flight, and for those parents that did really not want to ... I realize you want the best education for your child that you can. But a lot of em did take White flight just because of that. Just because you aren't ready to accept each other. So, but what happened then over time also, is you found that you also had some Blacks that were in the position to become a part of those private schools. Being that you could pay the tuition for your children to go there.*

*And we were moving from the times where you had all of the businesses...to get these done, and to do it with the least bit of, I don't know, so that it would be a smooth transition. You know I can remember those because, look like I was right at the end of that. And you just wonder how did you get to the next (clap), next place in our time. So, the adults, I think, of our population, needed to help, or set a, be a model for those that would come along—the younger ones, which would really be caught up in the times, the integration, you know. So it was just a time when I don't think we, as a community, were sure how to do it.*

*It was 1970. In the community, just like in the schools, you didn't find that Blacks were very much wanted, to serve in those positions as community leaders. And our community was not ready for that change. You could not see it in the schools unless your community leaders, also in their minds, were ready for the change. Also, as a part of our community, you would have to think of our churches, and those who were leaders in your churches. And our churches, like the schools, were pretty much segregated. You didn't find a lotta welcome, when it came to actually bein a part of another congregation.*

*Another thing that affected our community, as in other places, was the relationship with businesses and community leaders. Goin to the stores, being able to just feel that you were a part of what's going on, rather than to make it—you couldn't work in the stores, or in certain positions you could not. And our community (Macon) was just not able to accept integration. Not only in the schools, but in every other entity of it. You could see the same thing there. So you know what's in the schools, you also saw it existing you know in the churches, everything was just divided. So we were trying to pull together, and make the schools, I think, have it work, so that everything else may, may fall into place.*

*But it was a difficult time, in life, and I can remember, and this, this is not about our community leaders per se, those times when we were riding on the back of the bus, where I actually, I rode on the back of the bus. Where you entered into the businesses, through certain doors, the signs for Blacks and the signs for Whites, were very much evident in places of business, during the time of integration.*

*I remember also in our school system, at the board of education, there was one very qualified Black that was on the board. I guess back in the, it was back in the sixties, late sixties, seventies, Bob Williams, and he ran for superintendent at one point. And he was never able to*

*get enough votes to become superintendent of Bibb County. But I think he would've done a lot for our community had he been given that opportunity. And I really think that the results of it, it's because of the times that we were in.*

*You know there were boycotts of the stores. Because they were trying, in order to get cashiers, Black cashiers in some of the stores, because you didn't find that to have existed very much. Then what that did was to, for the monies that were coming in, see, once you begin to affect the dollar amount that you're receiving, eyes begin to open. Well perhaps we better hire some Black cashiers. Because they were gonna lose the money. Yes boycotts because you know we, there was a need to have cashiers or Blacks workin in the stores. And you didn't have that very much and so that's one of the things that was done was to boycott stores. It was downtown. It was downtown. Because when it comes down to shopping, if Blacks and Whites were in line to make purchases, they would wait on the Whites before they would wait on the Blacks. It was very obvious sometimes. And another thing that was noticed, there was some that did not like want to touch, touch the hand. Or if it had to, change would just be dropped in.*

*Also, the mayor at that time, Ronnie Thompson, was one of those that did not give the community a positive image. The negatives were more of the things that ran through the mind, and if this was going to happen, how are we going to rise up against this? So he wasn't one of those mayors, I don't believe that was appreciated. In fact I know that he was not appreciated in the Black community. Because of the things he did and the things he said, and also when you think of, what was that thing? The tanker, you know, and the firin upon Blacks. That's not anything that's goin sell a leader to the people in the community. Not many. I would think it was just one of those where you needed and wanted direction, and you couldn't figure which way you needed to go.*

*He was the face of Macon, you know? Shoot to kill, the armored truck, and all, it just wasn't something that we wanted to live through. That just wasn't good. Back then I didn't think it was good for our community. And I don't believe there was anything positive that one had to say about the man. I can't recall that the community itself was in upheaval or anything of that nature. Coulda been, depending on what may have happened. And that's at any time in history. Things that we think we have gotten over, we hattrn really gotten over them, I don't believe. And all it takes is just the right thing to happen. And we'll come to realize that. And we hope to come to, well you know, where we're supposed to be. Cause, seeing some things that happen it really puts fear in you to think, you know, what could come out of it. Fear, surely. Fear. Another thing that would have um, I think would have been in our minds is the fact that— were you safe anywhere in your community? With that kind of leadership? You know that Blacks would shoot Whites or Whites would shoot, or you know cause harm to the other. So we were not comfortable to even be out at certain times of night and if I can remember, there may have been some time when there was some curfews even, because of that fear.*

*It wasn't something the community felt good about. It's just like you stand together in the event something happened, you know, you stand together. I'm just saying that you would lend your support of there was a need to. I can't really recall that there was anything that we really did except just to understand, really, that this is something against you. And together, you know, you stand – there's strength in unity. He woulda been one of those, we would've once said, okay let's cast a vote and get someone else. If you could have, that's the thing you would have done. In the wake of Ronnie Thompson we would, we...it was a bad taste in ya mouth.*

## **Alethea**

*Right and at that time (1970), and at elementary, I walked to school. So in elementary I wasn't bused. Nor in middle school. I wasn't bused, you know, then either. I had to walk to school. I really wanna say at that time, I remember when it happened. When integration occurred. But I want to say that it was in the late sixties when it happened. The reason I can say it is because my mom died in 73. And that was my first year in middle school. And I think, when I was in elementary, my last year, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I think that's when integration occurred. Because we had children being bused in our school from King Park. But those kids, they were Black as well. I never remember a White child coming to the school when I was in elementary. I don't remember why it happened, or why it didn't happen. And it could have been because of the neighborhood I lived in. You know the surrounding neighborhoods. So I don't remember any White child at my school at all.*

*If they tried, I think the community was more or less, they had mixed feelings about it. Not knowing how the students would react to us, or what, even during that time how teachers would react to us, if they would come in to teach Black kids. Which they didn't. We never had any White teachers. No. Not in elementary. Now we might have had one or two in middle school but it was never that many. Now in high school it was different. But elementary and middle school, no. I think that you know the teachers that were there in those schools, either they couldn't go anywhere else, or they didn't want to be there.*

*I remember when Northeast had, it was supposed to be where White kids were to be bused in to Northeast. And it hadn't been that long ago. And they, the parents said no. They will not be bused into Northeast. Before I before we do that we'll take them out and send em to private schools. That's how these schools started popping up. To keep them from coming to*

*Northeast. And why did they, think about why private school came to existence. They came to existence because most of the White race decided that if they, if their children had to go to school with Black kids that—I wouldn't send em to school with Black kids. I would send em to private school. And look at what happened. Well we felt like, at that time, when they started poppin up like that, my parents, they couldn't afford them. So the people that was in my community, they knew what was happening, and they talked about what was happening, that they knew that something would occur to keep the White kids from going to school with the Black children, but they couldn't afford to put us in a place like that so we had to go to public school. But the only thing that they said was that they knew something would happen. They knew it was because these private schools—that was their way of sayin you can fight all you want to but we still don't have to go to school with them.*

*Okay, I do remember a Black superintendent. Coming in they gave him a fit. Yes. Every year when it came up for re-election, he was only given two years, where other superintendents would come in and they would have five years. That's where I remember him. And I know he had a very hard time. They would never give him more than two years. Never. Every time it was two years. I can't remember how long he ended up serving but each time, each term was two years. And that was it.*

*I can remember the Macon community leaders. There were no African-Americans in leadership during that time. I just don't remember any (Blacks) holding any high positions at the time, when I was young. I remember Ronnie Thompson bein our mayor. I remember he was the mayor that my parents did not like. And the reason they didn't like him was that they said he, when it came to a Black person, he called em a nigger. I know that my parents didn't like him. Because it was shoot to kill. And that was the slogan that he used at that time. Shoot to kill. And*

*if a Black person, if they came in your yard or something, from what my parents said, was that if you kill them, to drag them in the house, and then call the police. Now, ya know, I don't know whether or not that was true, but that's what my parents were saying at that time. If you kill them them drag them in the house. Um hmm, in your house. And then call the police. Yes. I remember that well. They didn't like him. All the conversations that was about him was pretty much negative. They, to be just honest, they hated him. You know they really did.*

*I don't think he really thought that we had a place in the community. That that's how I feel about him. He felt like the city could go on without us. That he wanted to make sure that the Whites was the head of everything. And that we had no say in the community. And really, when you think about it, the only place we did have a say was in the Black community, at those African-American churches. Because, who was gonna listen at that time, you know, to us?*

*And back then my parents, and I think even in my community, they didn't start anything. I think they were scared to. I think they wanted it, I think they wanted to make a difference, but they didn't know how to change. They didn't know how to make that difference. And if they were, I think they were afraid to. They were afraid that something might happen to them. When I think back on it, they kept it within that community. If they didn't like it wasn't like they aired it out. It was always in the community and it never went anywhere else.*

*You know even when sometime I think back to the city bus, the city buses, where, you know, at that time where, they said that we couldn't, you know we had to ride on the back of the bus? Um, I remember just a little bit maybe, we didn't ride the bus a lot. But, you know, it had to be during that time that we couldn't you know sit in the front of the bus. But my mom, I said, she never made a big thing about it, you know, we just obeyed. Right, we just went with the flow. And even I remember, just travelling as a child, you know I never thought about it till, I guess a*

*while back, that my parents would pack a lunch. We never stopped, anywhere, you know like on the road, ate at a restaurant, you know, when we travelled up north. I remember that. I think not knowing where to stop, who you can trust, you know, that's what I think. At that time. Because like I said, my parents pretty much, I know my mom was afraid.*

*And I even remember my dad, and it used to bother me a lot. Because he would say yes ma'am to even, to people that were, like, in their teens. If he went into a business, and he was waited on, no matter how young that person was that was waiting on him, he would always say, "yes ma'am." And I used to ask him, I would say, "Daddy, she is younger than you are, why you sayin yes ma'am to her?" And that bothered me...*

## **Merci**

*I was seven. And half of second grade, right after Christmas, I can remember this, right after Christmas we started back and I went to Winship (Elementary). And when we left there (Williams Elementary) and went to Winship, it was Black and White, but I didn't feel any prejudice. I love my second grade teacher. She was a artist (smile, giggle), and so was I, and that was when I found out that I, you know, I can actually draw. And she pushed me towards that. And her name was Mrs. Stevens. Her name was Ms. Williams first, then she left for a week and came back and she was Mrs. Stevens. And we were like "why your name Mrs. Stevens now?" And she had got married. And so I remember her. I mean I could I could actually see her. She was a White woman bout your height, short blond hair, and she was thin, and real outgoing, and she just interacted with the kids a lot. And that was the BEST experience I had the whole twelve years I was in school.*

*It was really kinda hard for me cuz I was always a quiet child. I didn't talk, at all. Not unless I was asked a question, then I'd speak. But it was kinda hard, it was hard makin friends.*



*Because, I really didn't have that many friends at L.H. Williams either because I was shy. It was really, really hard makin friends there. Everybody was bigger, because I was a year younger than everybody else. Cause I started school a year early. And everybody else was like trees and I was this little short person. And it's kinda scary. It really was. It took me almost to the end of the year to actually get used to it. To bein the littlest. But they got me in. And I just went on, instead of staying back in kindergarten two years. I went on to first grade. And a lot of people say, you know, light skinned people have it easier in school, but my, that wattrn true in my case. It was different. I was treated different because I was light skinned. Even with family members, I was like—I didn't understand that, it took me a long time, I mean I was actually grown before I asked, I finally asked my sisters I said why, why was I singled out? It seemed like I was singled out. You know, they come get everybody else and I was left behind. Like I said, with me, it affected me in a way where, I felt like, I felt like an outsider. Because I wasn't like some people, say the typical, stereotypical Black people. And they didn't associate with me, they didn't, I was like in the middle. Because I was quiet, I was smart, and I really kept to myself, and it was just hard going through school. I mean I went through my whole twelve years that way.*

*See I guess most of the kids in the class with me at Williams was either cousins or people we knew on the street. We all lived in the same area. We weren't exactly in Pleasant Hill directly. We were across the railroad tracks. Because the railroad tracks divided Pleasant Hill up on the other side, on the west side, and we were on the other side of the railroad tracks. We used to live on Tatanall Street. And we moved from Tatanall Street to Carling Avenue, like round the corner. So that wat'n so hard. But when I went to Winship, it was a different area. It was on Beech Avenue. It's still the west side, but closer up to Pio Nono.*

*Anyway we lived on Carling Avenue, and we lived on the, like three four houses up from the (Police) chief mother, and we were like family. I mean we would eat together, you know just interact together. Because on that, I guess it was just on that one street, I didn't really, we were all Black and White, it didn't matter. And I guess, my Momma, what I can remember from my Mom, it was like her door was always open to anybody. If anybody came by, and you were hungry she'd feed ya. Then you know you come on and eat and go on your way. You know Black, White, she didn't care. I guess that's why I am the way I am. It makes no difference to me. I don't care. I just don't, I don't feel like I experienced that, what you wanna call it, the prejudice part. I didn't really didn't experience that part. My sister said we were lucky because we didn't actually go through all that. Cause we was like one big family. And we just didn't feel it. And my mom worked for the chief of police's mother. And she was her maid. She was, I mean for years. They were like sisters really. And I don't know if that's why I didn't experience most of that...because it was like we were one big family. I mean we did everything. I mean she treated us like we were her kids.*

*I know we had a big family. There was 11 of us, 11 of us that lived. It was actually 13, but there were 11 that lived. And we all stayed in the same house. And even though a couple of em was married and had kids, but we was still in the same house. And we all went to the same school. And most of the families back then were the same way. Where you took care of your own. You didn't just put em out and—because there was always sisters, brothers, and mama, if daddy was there, you know grammom, and granddaddy if he was there. And we all stayed in the same household.*

*Well I talked to my sister and when she was in high school, she was goin to Ballard. And she left and went to what they call now, used to call it Lanier, now they call it Central. Because*

*at the time that we went, it was split into two schools. Lanier A was the girls building, and the boys building was the B building. And she went there. And it was all girls. I don't think, I they started mixin' the boys in till I got to high school. It was all girls. All girls. All girl teachers, but they had a couple of male teachers. She said she remembered a particular episode that it was one teacher there, that no matter how hard they tried, the Black students, no matter how hard they tried they never got anything above a C or a D. And my sister was a straight A student. She taught me. You know. And that was a big issue, with her when she was in high school. But they may have had some that was displaced, that's probably why they were so mean.*

*Then, back then, I always go back to funding. Funding wasn't as easy to get for the Black schools, as it is to get for the schools now. And when they did desegregate the schools, they lost a lot of funding. Because a lot of the funding they was getting when the schools were all White, they actually wouldn't get when they desegregated. And they wasn't getting as much and they were like, "Hmm." I don't think they took too well to that. I don't remember getting new books until I got to high school. While I was in grammar school, the books were the same books that my older brothers and sisters had had. They were the same books then. But when I got to high school now, I can remember getting new books. I guess that was the legislature that came down to get new educational stuff, and it decreased. The public schools did. A lot. But once they enforced the integration laws, a lot of the White kids' parents pulled them out and sent them to private school. If that ditt'n happen, and the funding wattrn gone, I do think it woulda been different. Maybe we woulda had more, maybe say like, books. Or newer books, rather, than we were using the same books my sister used 20 years ago. We still had the same books. And they were still using em. And you know, stuff has changed since then. But, I think we woulda had that. We woulda had more books. We woulda had a bigger library. For sure, you*

*know. Um, we woulda had more, what do you call em, school events, type things, cause ah, I don't remember havin anything when I was. Like you know we do Field Day and all that? I don't remember doin that when I was in school.*

*And (the quality of public education) kinda, it decreased a lot. It did. I think it had a lot to do with the funding. I think they cut back on a lot of the funding because it was, you know, predominantly Black. And we watt'n getting that many fundings. I don't think they really, the teachers didn't too much care anymore. The White teachers, anyway. They didn't care anymore you know, cause they couldn't have funding, and they didn't care whether you learned a lot. I have heard a lot of em tell Black kids that I get mine you get yours. And little comments like that. And you know it's up to you to learn it. I show you once but that's it. You learn it on your own. And it's kinda hard for the ones that watt'n like this. I had I had help at home. I had older sisters and brothers. So it wat'n really that hard on me. But I saw it on some of the other kids that didn't you know have that support at home. And it just seem like, how y'all say, slip through the cracks.*

*There was a lot of people in the community, they didn't care, they didn't care about laws. And they still didn't do it (desegregate). I mean if you didn't sit where they want you to sit, you just didn't eat there. I guess that's when they came up with the "We have the right to serve." The little signs they'd have in the windows that say, "We have the right ...To refuse service to anyone." It was they way of getting around it, I guess. "No shoes, no shirt, no service, and all that stuff." Mm, yeah. It was a lot of hatred. It's like, how do I say this, when we used to go shopping, you could feel the tension. And you could see how people look at you, you're like—you know it's integrated now. We agree to go and do what you do but we still have that eye rollin. And why? Who they think they is? And why they here? You know, but I don't remember,*

*really remember being, you know treated that way. But I saw it a lot. And I don't know how can I say that. I saw it, but it wan't towards me. You understand what I'm saying? Okay, when I went grocery shopping once, with my sister, and there was a older couple, we was in one lane and they were in the other lane. And they had a little White cashier, and the older couple was getting ready to go through the line. You know. And the line was all the way back and she turned the light off. Said she was on break. So they would have to get out of that line and get into the other line with the other cashier, which was a Black woman. Now I can remember that part. I can remember that. Cause I can remember I got home I asked my sister, I asked her why, why did she do that. Cause I was young, I didn't understand. So I was like why did she do that? What difference did it make? You know, they were still gonna make money? You know? You still makin money, and... But she said that's just the way it is right now, so. That's about the only that comes to mind when you ask me to remember.*

### **Alyiah**

*See I was born in 1965, so I was just five years old. Well, let's see. When I was five years old I was adopted. So actually I have a second chance on life. My mom said she couldn't really remember the mayor at that time but she said she remember it bein bad. So she did shield us. Like we didntn really go to alotta places but church or school or something. We didn't really hang out a lot, because she was really tryin to shield us from what was goin on with the desegregation stuff.*

*I do, as a child, I remember Martin Luther King Jr. and when he got shot. And on TV and I remember my parents talking about how he tried to make it better. Better for Blacks and Whites to get along, you know, and I don't know, a lot of people was just saying it'll never change. You know, even though they tryin a get everybody together in the schools, integrate and*

*everything, they was just sayin it's always goin be like this. And, I told, people were saying that like my parents' friends and stuff and like my dad would say, "Oh no, it's gonna change one day, it's gonna change." My feelings were, you can be whatever you wanna be.*

*And growing up, on television there was a lot of talk about slavery and White people, and how Macon is really only concerned about White children. Not Black children. And there's a lot of rumors, and, my parents just really taught me, okay listen, you cannot get around, get away from being around White people. You gonna be around White people at your school, at your job, and basically you gonna you need to try to get along with them, and try to understand that it's not their fault. So, it's the way they taught me to make me understand that. But there are a lot of my friends, when we was goin to school, they hate White people. And I mean, I am not racist, but they didn't wanna deal with them. They saw a White person, they wouldn't speak to a White person, and even as an adult, some, it's a, I think it's more of your learned behavior.*

*So, I went to a all Black school, elementary school, Matilda Hartley. That's on Anthony Road by the projects. By Bird City projects. It is still operating today. Now I do remember my first grade teacher in the Bibb County Public schools Mrs. Dorothy Johnson. I won't never forget her. And I sometimes see her in the grocery stores. She was so firm. And she was so positive, too. I remember her at Matilda Hartley.*

*And my middle school was partially, maybe 10% White, I'll say maybe 20 % White, but that's it. All the other students were Black. White students were bused into our schools. Only a few, though. Now I rode the bus, but it was mostly Blacks, now, based on my neighborhood. But I remember goin to school and I could see some White students on the bus. They probably were comin from like Lizella area. Then well, the White kids pulled out because they didn't really wanna be in school with the Black kids. Sayin okay they tryin to separate the White kids by*

*havin the private schools. To get em away from the Black kids. That's what it was. Yeah, we knew. Yes, it's a negative feeling.*

*Um. I look at those memories as a stepping stone for Black people, really. Since it was so hard, then you would really think that a lot of Black people would really value education more and strive to get an education more as opposed to wantin to receive handouts from welfare and all that, and stand on the corners all the time. I mean if you look back during desegregation, it was so hard for Blacks to just be in the classroom with White students. It was so hard for Black students to even go to school. I don't remember us goin out to eat either. I mean we never would go out to eat. We knew there was some things we could do and some things we could not do. So, you would think that the Black community would be really takin advantage of that now, to make sure that they get an education and that they kids get an education. I think that desegregation was the best thing that coulda happened to any race. I really do. Because you have the opportunity to get the same, equal, education.*

## Chapter VI

### Drawing the Lines, Macon in the Post-Desegregation Era

*“The hardships will be more than they can overcome. To a certain extent, the adversity that they encounter is preordained because they...do not control the material, social, and political resources that make for meaningful choices.” (Austin, 2003, p. 304).*

Exclusion. Resistance. Boundaries. Zones. These words all figured prominently in the years following the court mandate that forced the “opening up” of all public schools to children of all races. (I purposely did not say integration, because clearly that never happened.)

Interesting issues, which prior to desegregation were not prevalent, began to appear on the school board’s agenda. These included funding, discipline, drugs, closing of schools, merging schools, teacher cuts, budget cuts, school zones, redistricting, and rezoning. In 1975, the *Macon Telegraph* reported that the self-perpetuating school board (which had been so since its inception), was finally transitioning to a fully elected board (Floyd, 1975). However, that alone would not solve Bibb County’s educational woes. Floyd stated:

The criticism of the self-perpetuating board mainly was that it was too aloof and secretive. The board, by its nature, was virtually immune from criticism... Since members of the board didn’t have to answer for their actions at the polls, why should they worry if they didn’t respond to the electorate’s wishes? ... We still hear, over and over again, horror stories about incompetent teachers, lack of discipline, report cards whose grades grossly overrate the students’ achievements. Even allowing for substantial exaggeration, the stories are too numerous and too persistent to ignore. (p. 6A)

Despite having 50% of the population of Bibb County schools represented by African-Americans when this occurred, seven years later, in 1982, leaders of the Black community had to fight to



obtain at least two “safe” seats on the nine member board (Kearney, 1982). Some even suggested that rather than give up the White stronghold on elected board seats, perhaps the two seats appointed by the mayor could just be given to Blacks. In the end, the Board conceded to draw the districts so that Blacks would have three “safe” seats on the board (Kearney, 1982). The Bibb County School Board would draw and re-draw the zones and district lines repeatedly over the next 35 years, and convolute the representation of those districts to the point of chicanery.

There is not enough time or space for me to document every injustice perpetrated against the Black community by the school board, as many fall outside the parameters of this dissertation. Yet whether it was a request for funding (which was repeatedly cut), air conditioning (which according to the *Macon Telegraph* was still absent from at least 15 schools in 1988), or simply safe environments that were conducive to learning, time and again requests for improvements made by Macon’s Black community were met with delay tactics and zoning changes. To illustrate my point, I will offer a few examples. I will begin with the story of Ingram Elementary.

In 1978 Bibb County Schools settled a desegregation suit, and in doing so promised to rebuild the crumbling Ingram Elementary school, which had been built in 1931 in a predominantly Black area near the Felton Homes and Tindall Heights housing projects. In 1980, the Board of Education issued an \$11.6 million bond to fund the construction (Upchurch, 1981). Year after year there were different excuses presented by the board—30 families would have to lose their homes, it might be better to renovate than rebuild, the issue is still being studied...to where in 1983 there was a recommendation by the board to just merge Ingram Elementary with

nearby Pye Elementary (Upchurch, 1983). At that time, the *Macon Telegraph's* Upchurch (1983) quoted NAACP representative Lonnie Ronnie Miley as saying:

A bond was approved to renovate B.S. Ingram, one of the schools targeted to be closed. The NAACP feels that instead of taking this opportunity to close these schools because they have been neglected by the school board as for upkeep and modernization that a plan be devised to better utilize these neighborhood schools...Traditionally, predominantly black schools have not been given the equity or funding that the white schools have. Black high schools have been demoted to junior high schools and white schools remain the same. The school board has betrayed the public trust, and black, inner city schools tend to be the target of closings and funding cutbacks. (p. 13A)

The residents of Ingram's school zone kept fighting. They were in utter shock when, in 1984, the school board voted to close the school and indeed merge with Pye, and create what is now known as Ingram-Pye. The land on which Ingram Elementary once stood is now owned by Mercer University, and has recently been converted into a lacrosse field. At the site of Pye/Ingram-Pye elementary, new facility was finally built. A brand new, state-of-the-art Ingram-Pye opened its doors last year for the 2009-2010 school year. In other words, for 30 years the school board stalled on repairs for this historically Black school. Many of the children who were once promised a new Ingram Elementary school are now the grandparents of the students at Ingram-Pye. Many of the White citizens of Macon have forgotten (or perhaps never knew) that Ingram and Pye had been two different schools.

And as for Miley's comments above, a 1986 report in the *Macon Telegraph* confirms that "With high school integration, blacks joined whites in the formerly all-white buildings. The old black high schools became integrated junior highs, which today are called middle schools"

(Groat, 1986, p. 4A). Groat wrote this as part of an explanation of the school board's inexplicable plan to restore the former (White) names to the three high school complexes, which were renamed Central, Northeast, and Southwest during desegregation. Two years later, in yet another re-zoning of the districts, the regional names were back (Groat, 1986).

I provided, on pp. 75-78, what I believe to be the only map ever publicly offered by the school board that actually mapped out the school zones. Said map was published in the *Macon Telegraph* on February 15, 1970, on the eve of desegregation, and was designed to direct Bibb County Public School students to whichever elementary school they would attend. The map was black and white, condensed to half a page, and poorly drawn. Names of streets were almost illegible, but the zones themselves were vividly marked, and each elementary school within the zone could clearly be seen. It is not apparent, however, how these zones were conducive to integration. The map does not show bus routes, and appears to have the zones loosely drawn around neighborhoods. Perhaps this is the reason why Alethea, Merci, and Alyiah all said they did not attend elementary school with White students.

From that point on, the *Macon Telegraph* reported changes in the school zones with articles and charts rather than maps. I have provided, on the following three pages, an example that shows how families were notified of the bus that would transport their children to and from which school.







Every time a school was built, closed, or merged with another, residents were informed of their school zone either by a directive (not a map) in the *Macon Telegraph*, or later via the internet. For example, currently if one wants to ascertain the school district for a particular locale, one would have to go to the Bibb County Board of Education website and submit the address, and then the website would provide the information for which elementary school that residence is zoned. One could also access a link on the same website called “Feeder Zones,” which shows the high/middle schools and the elementary schools from which they draw their population. But the maps were never offered or published. Although realtors’ offices, banks, and libraries have old street maps, the maps of the school zones are not available. I obtained documentation from the *Macon Telegraph* that shows school zones changing in at least the following years: 1972, 1973, 1978, 1983, 1984, and 1987. In the 11 years I have lived in Macon I have had my home rezoned twice, and I have witnessed the addition of two new high/middle schools—which of course led to more rezoning.

Furthermore, the apathy of the school board toward the increasingly Black school district grew faster than the kudzu that adorns the playgrounds. For example, in 1984 a group of concerned Black parents brought before the board the issues that children were in danger walking to school or to far-from-home bus stops, classrooms still did not have enough or adequate textbooks, and that the cafeterias were so overcrowded that the students did not have time to eat their lunch once they waited in such a long line (Groat, 1984). The superintendent at the time, Thomas Hagler, assured these parents that the board would address their concerns. (Groat, 1984). They are still waiting...

As I mentioned previously, I had a map custom made for me by Bibb County Planning and Zoning, which shows the (now) six high school zones and the neighborhoods and schools

that feed into them (see p. 74). I also visited the Macon Housing Authority, at [www.maconhousing.com](http://www.maconhousing.com) to obtain the exact location of each public housing project. (Much to my surprise, there are 20 public housing projects in Macon.) I plotted out on my map exactly where each project is located, so I could see how many feed into each high school. I found that the two newest high schools, Rutland and Howard, which are both located in predominantly White areas, are zoned for one project each. Central, which is downtown, is zoned for two. Northeast, which is located in a predominantly Black area, is zoned for three. Westside, which is located in a racially mixed area is zoned for five. But Southwest, the smallest district, located in a predominantly Black area, has EIGHT projects feeding into it. It is obvious that Bibb County was trying to lure White residents (and therefore more federal and state funding) back into the public school system. Why else would they build two brand new schools in predominantly White areas, and zone but merely one housing project each? It is no wonder that Bibb County Public Schools have not offered a map of the school zones to the citizens of Bibb County. The inequity caused by their gerrymandering has helped create, and continues to perpetuate the frightening state of the public schools in Macon. My participants had plenty to say about these issues and the long-term effects said issues have had on their community.

### **Veda**

*There's an advertisement I notice on TV where they have this man who is calling, you know he disguises his voice—asking about a business or something. He disguises his voice to be oriental, or Asian, African American, White American, and Black American and all like that. And they only respond to the one, I think the man gave his name, said he was Grant Wellington or whatever he is. He sounded like he was White American. He's the only one that you know, they allowed to, and I don't know what station it was on. Next time I hear it I'm gonna write that*



*down. But that just sorta reminded me—years ago you lived just where, I mean there were just certain neighborhoods that you lived in. And that’s where you went to school.*

*Back when I started teachin you never did hear anything about boundary and zonin and all like that<sup>18</sup>. You didn’t hear that. Back when I first started teachin they didn’t draw those lines. But they purposely drew those lines to keep certain schools out. Because when I was in high school and all that they didn’t, there wattrn no lines. But over a period of time, I think it started in 88 or something, when they started drawin those lines. And see they could draw out what...well the excuse was, well we got Westside, we need to put children in Westside. Then later they had, they got Rutland, and they added Howard. See at one time, Southwest was the biggest high school in the United States. See you had over 3000 students goin. It was just like a college campus. It was. And Gloria Washington, she was the principal out there. She was the first Black principal of Southwest High School. She’s deceased now. But I can remember before she retired, you see before they started drawin those lines. And she say now, she told us, “Now I might not be here but you all need to pay attention to this. Notice how the lines are beginning to be drawn.” And she was right. You know, as to how they cut certain things out. And the cutting, you see what it is, you got the, you got those project areas right there, you know one after the other. Drawing lines—and as results, Southwest has eight projects zeroed in to go just to Southwest. Yeah, they know how to draw the lines. And behind the scenes, see they givin you all that but still, behind the scenes you got segregation. Um hmm, it is. It’s behind the scenes. It just started and you know. Every year would just get more and more. And the percentage now, I think there just a few White students out there now. Just a very precious few. Because they have fed into the private schools and to the county. The district redrew the bounds,*

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix D for maps of Bibb County School Zones.

*you know, they redrew the lines. I mean we might as well face it they do not want them to intermingle. They do not. One other thing, too, that I observed, buildings that were once predominantly one race, they destroyed those buildings. But they managed to keep the other buildings intact. And one of the reasons they tore down the other ones was cause the ones were sub, substandard in the beginning.*

*But what I am concerned about with the public schools is, it seems as if a lot of the needs are not being met. And the reason why the needs are not being met is because of the fact that people—now I'm not attacking teachers, but many of the people teaching now just have a job. That's all. And then they use teaching as a stepping stone to get somewhere else. Now you still do have a lotta dedicated teachers. You still have a lot of em on one side of the coin, but on the other side you do not. And it seem the true needs of the students we have are not being met. Now I'm goin talk about the school that I worked, now I'm not gonna call the name but you know the name of it. Um, it has not met what is called your adequate yearly progress. AYP, you've heard of that. (Indeed, I have.) And my, from my observation, the reason why we didn't, did not ever meet it, is because the needs of the students were not put first.*

*Now Westside, we know that they gotta grant. We know that they're doing what they said they were gonna do (use the grant money for technology). They are hopin that these other four high schools will do the same. Because they got to look out for the future. You know, and the computer is the future. I mean you got to learn how to operate it, and see younger people can pick up on skills, computer skills more so than somebody who's older anyway. But everybody has a phone now. Everybody got a phone. Whatever these new things are, like my phone all I can do is just call, somebody can give me a voice mail, but see they can do all these other things on the phone. But they should be able to do whatever it is. They sit em down and tell them, we*

*getting these net books or whatever it is, and teach them because they they can do it. But you got to have somebody that's going to be willing to stick with em and, you know make sure that they do it. I think it's good because that's one thing about most of em, they came from homes that did not have a desktop computer. So you still got these teenagers, anyway they can learn, but you gotta have em under control if you're goin teach em. They have got to be disciplined. Somebody got to do the instructing and ah, they can pick up on, like I said everybody have mostly have phones, but they know how to operate those phones and if you're having trouble with your DVD they I mean too—they can do that. They can do that. They can use that same computer to look at carpentry, to look at other things besides the academics. On the other hand, they don't want to do what people did 40 years ago. Ah work to have. Even the children. They don't wanna read now. You got to show them something on, they go do you have a video for this? No I do not you have to read. But that's what they want, instant gratification and everything. That's another problem right there. They don't want to read and discuss, no. They tune you out.*

*What do inner—in a setting like that, you have to be real. Now if you say that you want 50% of the people to graduate, you are gonna have to help them to do that. And there's a lotta people may not agree with me, but there's a sorta moral decline, too. And, all right an example of that would be that we have a lot of teenage mothers. If those mothers do not have anybody to keep that child, then they are not gonna go to school. Now I'm just saying, just using that number 50%, because Georgia's behind all over with graduation rates. And one of the reasons why is because we do have a lot of teenage parents. And if they, as I think back, if they do not have anyone to—okay it's Monday morning. You get up, you get ready to go to school, all right, I don't have anybody to keep my baby. I cannot go to school. I don't have anybody to keep that baby. I got to keep the baby. So, that means I don't go to school this week, I might not even go*

*next week and eventually I drop out. But they still had me enrolled when I was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, they put my name down. But now by the time I get to 12<sup>th</sup> grade I gotta child so I can't go to school. But they still, for some reason got my name, they haven't done that thing accurately. A lot of those, well I know they say we have a lot of drop-outs, but the reason why we have the drop-outs is because of the teenage mothers. Let me just say this now, when I first started teaching, parents, all parents, well I'll put it like this, the majority of parents were concerned. Now we know that, what has happened with younger parents, but it has not always been like that. Somebody need to step up to the plate now to get it back where it once was. And I, well technically in Southwest, you had so many in the period of time that I was out there, I got a chance to see the grandmother, where the grandmother was in my class, the mother and then the student. And because they were so young, the grandmother 30 something. Then you gotta mother she's 15. And then this child in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade could be pregnant, you know that kind, you didn't have ah, it just fell off, as time moved. Now I don't think it was because a desegregation. It was a breakdown in the family structure.*

*Another reason why our students are not meeting AYP is a lot of those inner city schools are being filled up with TAPP<sup>19</sup> (Teacher Alternative Preparation Program) teachers. Now, I can go back, I'm going back something like 15 years ago when more people had the opportunity to go to school, and when I say school I mean college or university, than they did 40 years ago. Okay those people who went 20, 15-20 years ago, nobody wanted, well the doors opened for them to get other jobs. Therefore all of these people who would have gone into teaching, because of their parents or whatever, didn't go into teaching. They were saying I don't have to*

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<sup>19</sup> While I could not find specific data comparing performance of students having been taught by TAPP teachers versus traditionally educated teachers, [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com) provided 2005-2006 data that showed 17% of the teachers in Bibb County Public Schools that year did not meet the "Highly Qualified" standards as laid out in NCLB. Certainly TAPP teachers would fall into this category.

*be a teacher anymore. I can go into finance or I can go get a job at a corporation. I can go to law school. And that left a lot to be desired as far as you didn't have that many people goin into teaching. They had to go and pull them from these other sources. And if people were not going into it, then you had—on the college level, you had a shortage. And the population grew; it grows every time. We have more people now than you had 10 years ago. And we are seeing the results of that now. I think that they took them, ah the TAPP teachers, because there was a shortage of teachers. And people just, 15 to 20 years ago they were not goin into teachin because there was something else that they could do. And when they needed teachers they pulled from where they could get. Cause there used to be advertisements and articles in the paper about, people willing, well encouraging people who were in other fields to come, even people who had retired from corporate America. And some of those, they encouraged them. They started em out as being an educator for a day. And you know they would go into school or something for a while, and then someone would encourage them and say, "Oh why don't you ah, have you ever thought about teaching?" You know that sort of thing. And they would go into it.*

*And Brown & Williamson<sup>20</sup> just happened to be a lucky spot for Macon. Brown and Williamson closed, lotta people were outta jobs, they went into, they went to, came into education but they have not had the training. They're given, they're getting what is called on the job training. On the job, you get something, you know a supervisor'll come by observing, and see well you need to put this down the next time you do it and ever thing. Now you have workshops, yes. They had good intentions. They had workshops for them. They had to do profiles and what have you. But they to me, they were lacking. Many of them were lacking the in the control of students. Now see there are some young ones now, who were in other fields—*

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<sup>20</sup> Brown and Williamson was a cigarette factory, and a mainstay of Macon's economy. B&W closed in 2005.

*they got them a job when they could. When they went to college they didn't take education courses. But when they when to this town or that town, they say well we don't have any employment, and they say we ought to be teachers. So people said, well I'll try. Now you have to have workshops and all that—they try to train you, but that basic desire and willingness is missing in many of your TAPP teachers. They have not had that down, I call it that down home training, about getting the student's attention. You are not having training. And those people, they might have it in they heart, but you gotta have some skills. First of all you gotta control the students. You might have travelled all over the entire world, but no one is going to listen if they are not disciplined to be quite when you start talking about the culture is in Asia, India, Africa. That kind of thing. I don't have anything against TAP teachers or anything it's just that they are not prepared. They are not prepared as a regular teacher because they were in some other field, you know, but when they needed a job they would hire these people as teachers but they were from another field. [can you get some information to see if these teachers are ill-prepared and what impact they have had on the school system?] They have all the equipment, they have all the computers or whatever it is, but if you have not if that person didn't discipline enough to work with what you have on that computer, or what you have put on the overhead projector, or that PowerPoint, then you wasting your time. That's what I have been able to observe. Now it might not be in all areas but I know it's in some areas, in a lot of your critical areas, people need the training before they get there.*

*And I'm going to bring this in too, the availability of substance abuse. Well, drugs changed the whole culture of the Black community. We might as well face that. And see parents, years ago used to tell the boys and the girls, if you get on drugs one thing, two things needen to happen to you. You can either lose your brain or you're gonna be dead. And you just gotta*

*mass of children not bein—parents not caring about what they doin, and that's not what they supposed to do. And those who really realize it, what can you do? Well if you're addicted—you can't function if you are addicted. And as results, people morally just broke down. And this 16 year old mother cannot do anything with the baby due to the fact that the grandmother, her mother, is well involved in the moral decay of what drugs did. And the, I hate to say this but, other Blacks, it whatn just the blacks who brought the drugs in. But I think that it was a part of this, if we can't get em one way, we can get em another way. The blacks couldn't afford to send a ship over...*

*Now in addition to drugs, older people are saying that, and we can only speak for African-Americans, religion or quote the lack of religion has influenced our moral decay. Many, many years ago Black, well let's go back to slavery time. They depended upon a power greater than they are. That's why they had the Underground Railroad. That's why they sang the songs and what have you, to encourage them. And for a while that followed them through. And they were able to make it durin the thirties, and during well the twenties and thirties and somewhat the forties. But after Brown vs. Board of Education everybody I mean, they abandoned—they thought they could, this is what the old folks tell me now, thought that they could do things on they own and they could not. And they got weak, and you had the drugs and what have you. Now when I was in college you would hear of somebody smoking something and very, I mean maybe uh, once uh every ten years. But then uh, during the sixties, then it just really took over. You know it was a breakdown in the culture. And the Blacks are gonna have to get back on. Somebody's gotta do something. I know these people gotta be treated first, and all this and get their minds right, if you can ever do that. But you know there was lack of morals, moral*

*decline, and then certain practices and customs were sorta, you know, left out. Then now anybody can get a weapon.*

*And I tell you the way it is now you – someone calls you outta you name, you got to really be thinking as to not let it take over your behavior. Cause this is what happens. I noticed in the school system they really don't take anything now. Which might not be good because somebody always getting hurt or they losin they life. But some things now have changed. Because everybody know the rules, everybody know the regulations, they know civil laws, and what have you. Supreme Court decisions and what have you have been passed and we have to do what is right, now. Things are not perfect, because you still find some discrepancies everywhere you go. Just like that (pointing at my maps) like that part. But people are more aware, and I think stand up and demand rights. Although progress has been made now as far as the integrating and the blending of the races. Lemme just tell you one thing though, that my church is doin. My church is, the pastor of my church is a Lonzy Edwards. He's one a the County Commissioners now. That's basically where your leadership came, in studying past generations and what have you, leadership emerged from the church because that was a major part of African-American life. Ah, we have strayed, many people have strayed away from that. And consequently you do not have the strong, if you will look at the leaders of the past, most of them came outta the church. They came out because that's where they got their training, that's where they got their courage, that's where they felt safe, you know, in doing it. But now every year in February Lonzy Edwards establishes what is sorta called a dialogue, where we have all races comin together for four Tuesdays, and we sorta put out on the table what can we do to unify the community. And what came from this year's February's talking, we are beginning to meet once a month. We didn't, we just didn't drop it after February. Everybody who was involved, Black and White,*



wanted to continue. So we had our, we had a meeting this past Thursday. Where the groups, we have Whites and Blacks. We're coming, we're tryin to blend together to learn more about each other, so that perhaps we can help to unify that way. And it is not over. We got a long way to go. But you gotta start, yeah you gotta start settin up relationships and in order to build on. You gotta start small with relationships, and what we'll find is, maybe as time goes by it can rub off on someone. Our children and other people who are livin. You still, even though we got crime and poverty and all like that, we still need to have the law behind everything so no one would be able to get the mindset that humans, that human beings are inequal. But in this given area, you have a lot a long way to go.

### **Ruth**

*I have volunteered this year. There's such a need there. There is such a need there. It's a situation where you need more one-on-one, you have so many special needs students, you have so many medicated students. And it's most frightening. You have students that are crying. I went to school where there is one that's yelling. He's kickin on doors and walls. Kicking at the teacher. He did it last year and the year before I understand. And I was there to just volunteer. You could hear him up this hall and way down the next. Everybody's out lookin. The teacher's put him outside and closed the door and he's kicking the wall until someone comes and carries him outside. And he's beatin on the outside door you know. And I'm sayin, who can learn in a situation like this? Somebody from the board of education need to go into those schools and be there. It would not even hurt to involve them to have their offices there. You know there are things at the board that could be in the schools. But I don't know. It's bad. It really is. Always has been, and there is nothing that we have to work for. Many of them.*

*Now you do still have the student population that have focus and goals, and they know where they're going if they didn't have any schools. But a vast majority of our students just don't seem to grasp, or see the need and grasp, educational opportunities. And it has, I've seen our schools have to struggle to meet standards. And the negatives that they live with, the broken homes, so many of em, so many issues they have, that I don't think they can adequately equip themselves, many of them, for the future. So it it makes you wonder where are we going, getting along, just social skills. Just those things, which play so much in to the future. So it kinda makes you worry about where we are going. Or the hands we are gonna fall in into, you know. That part is disturbing to me. It could keep you awake at night. It keeps you awake at night. It keeps you with locks on your doors, it keep you—not all now—you are always gonna have that population that's gonna make it regardless. But you have so many, you see, that can have such a pull on those that's movin forward. You know, and it really impacts our society in a bad way, I think.*

*If you go into a school now, and that's just almost anywhere you go in our society, it seems that you have more that seem to have some special needs or special attention that you can't get a handle on, versus the one that self-disciplined and know where he's going. To get students where they need to be, sorta make them accept a challenge, I seen it go from where parents are more supportive to less supportive. You don't have a lot of parents that are there when you need them. But first you gotta let me know, hey, I'm okay. And then folks are you know, more comfortable with you, and even I with them. Because you never know how people are gonna react or respond to you. But you saw so much that wasn't there that you might have thought to be there, even in your parents, because they were so glad to just work with you, you know, for you to be a part of them. One story I remember, and this is when I was working in my*

*last years at McEvoy Middle School, there was an assignment that I gave to students. And we were doing Georgia history at the time. They had a notebook to compile and a lot of things to do. When I sent the assignment home with the student, I got a call from the mom. She said, "Will you sent that assignment to me? I wanna do it too." Okay. And there were a number of things that they were to do. So I sent the assignment to the mom and she called me and told me that she sits in her area, and her daughter sits in hers, and each one does (her) own. And she even sent her notebook to me for grading.*

*But we noticed the transition, though from being integrated—I mean from being segregated to integrated, and history seems to repeat. For example, once they integrated, Ballard remained for many years. And of course you had Ballard High School that became Ballard B and Ballard A. It was high school, and when it became Ballard B and Ballard A it was changed from High School to Middle School. You had Ballard A and Ballard B. Made into two schools. Ballard A, which is across Anthony Road down near Key Street, was closed up. And you had Ballard B. So you had two, now, they called em junior high schools I believe it was at that time. You know it was just the student population, having to feed all the students in to one of the Ballards, one was not large enough so you had a A and a B. And our schools now, our public schools now, are majority Black. There's still an outreach to have it segregated. Maybe White flight? And then again, because of community changes, you began to move from predominantly White, a lot of em, Blacks couldn't afford to live there. To maybe an equal mix of Blacks and Whites, to the point where you have more Blacks and fewer Whites. I taught during all that time. And if you would look at the school system now, it's pretty much that way. Your population in your schools is more Black than it is White. And it may be White flight, or being able to fund students in private schools or whatever the case might be, but I saw that happen as*

*my children moved through school. I began to see over the years where students just felt where this is the way it was. To separate. I saw that unfold even, even to now.*

*But we made it through those times and you know I've looked and I've read some things recently, I think within the last year. You know where Ronnie Thompson's had some things to say as to why those things were done. Whatever the reason may have been, you know, it was not good at that particular time. If it comes to that, I guess is what I'm what I'm getting at. But for me, I can't see where anything has changed. The very things that were, that played on me at that particular time, and during the time of segregation—perhaps I can see that we're returning, somewhat, to where we were. Because we moved out of segregation, and schools were desegregated, but now you can see that the populations are kind of putting us back there. I would like to think that, at this point in time we could have seen some growth. But the best that could happen to any of us, then and now, is to get behind skin color and to see people as people—you have feelings, you have needs, and I care about you. It wasn't ever that hard for me because I grew up with the idea that you put your heart on the table and mine, you can't tell what color. Red blood, red blood. You know it's just... That sayin, what is it,? Red cow, black cow, eat green grass, and produce white milk—okay? So, what I'm saying is, when you get down to what's on the inside, there really is no difference, and that really is what matters. And we haven't gotten there yet. I don't know what the answer might be.*

*I could see that if we tried hard enough at anything. We could make it happen. And it did happen. Brown vs. Board it did happen. But then once it happens how you gonna make it, you know, continue? How you gonna make it go on so that it can get better and better and better? And somewhere I think the vision was short in that you make this happen, but you didn't look to see what happen beyond that point. Because there were situations where we were*

*different. And we were different so far as skin color. But when you actually got down to the individual, it was what you carried inside that was really you. And if we could get beyond that, which I don't think we really are...So if you see ourselves in our own little groups, or even sometimes when we come together now, as then, and you have different races or ethnic groups coming together, sometimes we tend to search out our very own. And I would wish that we could just see each other as people and look beyond that. We were not then, totally, and I don't think we're there, at this point, to the point that we really just accept each other. I think, in a community, and the community is anybody that's not you, you know. It's not just where you live. It's more than that. The love is not there as I think it should be. And you know, people don't trust each other in a lot of instances. We always can see ourselves not moving forward as we should. When we can't do so, I think that affects the community. When we are not able to just reach out to one another, and face one another, and take care of each other's needs. And we think this group should be the favored one...Hey, I'm okay, you're okay, and we've got to believe that. And we've got to move forward because all the days of my life, that is what we were taught. That's what we believed. And I never had any problems, really and truly.*

*So far as Brown v. Board Of Education and where we are now? I have been more in the, I guess, the now. You get yourself a situation. But at least we have something. Cause if not, you're gonna have the people speak out against the elected officials that you have. Why aren't you doing something? Okay, make the law. And then you make the decision about whether you wanna be a part of this or you wanna do something else. You know it didn't solve the first—that that's how these things unfold, the times that we are in. You know we are dressed for that but it certainly did not give equality. No, no not here. So those are things today that we're still juggling with. We find that we have not solved the problems. Everybody's gonna be together,*

*but it's not all gonna be great. Because to even have everybody together, those that can get out of bein together... I don't think there's a fix for it. I think when you look you have to think about the fact that you made an attempt to do something about it, and then if you choose to withdraw from the law that we have made so be it. You know, then you just take your little red wagon and go on.*

### **Alethea**

*My favorite experience in Bibb County Schools was when I was working as a para at Ingram-Pye Elementary school. I worked there for about 20 years. You know, it was so sad because even when I went into inner-city, I saw Black children. But I never saw Black children like these children. I never met a child, until I went into inner-city, that had never had an egg before, that didn't know how to crack open an egg. And, and I was lookin at him and I was getting on to him about it, and he said, "I'm tryin to get it open." But I think my 19<sup>th</sup> year I had an opportunity to start a club there, called the Exceptional Club. And this club was where, I wanted to make a difference there. And the children there I—I finally realized that there are different levels of poverty. Well, the level of poverty that these children are in is extremely low. They have low, very low self-esteem. No parental guidance, just no support. So I wanted to make a change. I wanted them to think differently about the self. Not to let the cycle go on where grandmothers are like 30, mothers are like 15, 16, um, I want it to be different for them. So I started this club, like I said, called the Exceptional Club. And it was composed of children all of 5<sup>th</sup> grade. We started out where all you had to do was do all ya homework. You didn't have to have A B honor role, it was for all of them. And the only way you would not be part of this club is that, if you didn't have good behavior. And your peers would vote you out. Because they looked at this club, once we developed this club the peers stood out. For instance, like on*

*Thursday they'd "dress for success." The girls wore dresses and heels and stockings, and the boys had ties and slacks on, and dress shoes, dress shirts. And these kids, you could see them anywhere in the building. And people would just stand back and watch them. Because they were just like their name. They was exceptional. I had people to come in, like even Mercer people came in, to talk to them about goin to college—what it's like to go to college. I had a broker come in, talk about what it's like to own ya own company. Like instead of, for instance, like buying Jordan's and Nike's or whatever, one day ownin ya own company. And I even took them on a Saturday, each faculty member at Ingram-Pye, paid for a child to eat at Willow-on-Fifth, because most a these kids had never eaten at a restaurant. Another time I even had limos to come out—I didn't pay for it. I asked called around to these limo companies. And everywhere I called, everybody refused to do it for charity. So I called Hicks & Son Funeral home, and at that time they didn't have anything on they cars that said that they was a funeral home. And they had the stretch limos, just like the other companies. And they told me that they would do it for no fee at all, just, you know, how many I needed? And so what happened, we had about three limos to come out. And they took these kids to Red Lobster for lunch, because they had never done that before, neither.*

*But to make a long story short, they grades came up, they self-esteem came up, and positive things came outta these children. So, it was really, really a nice club. And behavior was great. Even with the children that misbehaved, even when they peers voted them out the club, they begged to come back to the club. They say they would change. And I would allow the peers to be in charge of it. And they would say, well no, we don't think we should give you another chance, or sometime they would. Even the principal, cause he was just amazed at the behavior. How the behavior level went down. It ended up where, at the very end, we were in the*

*newspaper and we were on TV. And it was so good until they hired a person in Bibb County to come in...because inner-city had so many discipline problems. They was tryin to correct it. And the guy that was in charge of it, he came to speak to me. He told me he had heard so much about me, he want to know how in the world did I do it. And I just thought of it one day, to try and change the behavior. And to me that was the most important thing that happened that got done because that will be something that will live on with these children in they lives. That's something that they will never forget.*

*Other times were not so good. For example, at Rosa Taylor I was asked to take on a position as a teacher for a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class. And I worked very closely with these two ladies, these two 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. They appeared to be very nice when I worked with them, very supportive, but I knew it was a hidden agenda. I just didn't know how much. Well, at the end of the school year, I had one White teacher to walk up, and she had her reasons for doin it, she said, "You're a parapro, and if your child was in that classroom would you be happy?" And I understood why she said that because yes, at that time I was not certified. But I knew I had given those children the best that I could give them. So at the end of the year, I never heard anything about the scores. The CRCT scores. So I had to ask. Eventually I said, "Well how well did the children do?" And they did well across the board. At that time I didn't score 100%, I really couldn't tell you what I scored, but I can tell you I did well because no one said a word. No one said thank you, no one said you did a good job. But I stayed there and worked until they hired a teacher from Mercer that had graduated that Christmas. And she walked in the door and the principal introduced her to the children and told em that this would be their teacher. And the ladies from across the hall that I had worked so hard with, they came over and they just showered her, and they sent a letter home—um because I was gonna work with the children until*



*January—they sent a Christmas letter home sayin they was goin have a Christmas party. And that she would be the new teacher, and signed her name at the bottom. Didn't mention me, not one time. And after all I did, and the time came when I left and went back to my position—they treated me like I was a piece of dirt on the floor. Even when I went back to this school, they came to me one particular teacher, she said, "I thought about you last night. And I know it must be hard for you to go back as a paraprofessional." The one that I worked so closely with. And the way she looked at me, you know, it was almost of disgust. But while I was doin the job, I was the most wonderful person there was. And, I don't know. I have mixed feelings. And they're not good. Because I could say maybe she didn't like me. But I know she was prejudiced. And even during that year it was almost every time, it was, they used me. The whole year. Because the teacher came in, she couldn't handle the children, they put me back in there with that, with her, for the rest of the year. But I didn't have time to worry about it. I took it and I went on. I guess in a sense, knowing that they didn't want me to be there, that gave me more energy to become who I am. Saying that you know, what you can't do, what I don't expect, always bein looked over, it motivated me to show them that I will be somebody. And at that time I had no idea I would become a teacher. But, I made up in my mind that I would become something. And I would be successful. So when I graduated from Mercer that was the first place, I decided to put in for an application, for a job there. And they went on, should I hire her and you know. And at the end of the day, they never once, never once, offered me a job, say they couldn't hire me or either, not even a interview. Um hmm. And I'm gonna tell you this, no one really have ever looked at the school, at Rosa Taylor, but when I was in the school for two years, there were only one Black teacher. Now how they got away with it, I don't know. Because I've never seen that in Bibb County. But I was just sitting in a meeting and they said that the reason that our test*

scores are so awful, is because of the minority majority<sup>21</sup>. Well who's in the majority? And I almost became livid when she said it because she only had one Black teacher in the whole staff. The whole staff, now, one Black teacher. And you gonna sit here and say that the reason you did not make test scores, AYP, (clapping each syllable) is because of minority majority children? Who's in the majority? Minority? Majority? Now I had a real serious problem with that. But I couldn't say anything. I worked at Ingram-Pye 20 years, I worked at Heritage for one, and I worked at Rosa Taylor for two years. And it's different in every school. But it's segregation. Now when I was at Heritage, not callin a name, but when I worked at Heritage, the principal want to make it plain and clear which—there were African-American paras, and some White paras, and the custodians. You stay in your place. It happened back then, it exists right now. Right now. And I remember more of now than I do than I do then. People, they don't open their eyes.

Even that it came down to the point of sayin okay...it was a time when my child could go to Springdale because of a M-to-M transfer. And she (my daughter) was in the minority. And I remember she was in kindergarten. And it was back in, let's see, (counting) 2001. And we were walkin down the sidewalk. I was just walkin down the sidewalk getting her to the trailer where she was gonna be, where her class was. And this White guy, he was walkin down, he was comin that way and I was comin this way, he moved over because he didn't want to be close to me. And he turned his shoulder to keep from touching me. Like I had a plague. Yeah. Even, and even there I had to deal with it. With my child. And another time, um, I got very upset. She had to go to school early one day, she and my nephew. And she went into the computer lab, because that's where they told her to go. And when she, when they went to the computer lab, instead of her and

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<sup>21</sup> M-to-M transfers were available to any student zoned into a school in which she would be in the racial majority, to transfer to a school in which she would be in the racial minority. M-to-M transfers no longer exist in Bibb County.

*my nephew sitting at the, in chairs, the teacher told them to sit on the floor. So, I went to the school. Because I wanted to know, why couldn't they sit in a chair? And um, the principal said, you know, "She really didn't mean any harm about it." But I knew that she did. Because they asked her, "May we sit in chairs?" And she told them in a firm voice, "I told you to sit on the floor." And I have a problem with that. So it (prejudice) exists right today. It's just covered up. I mean, even wit teachers teaching our children that are White, they all don't like our kids. And it's a sad thing, really, you know? I see it, how they talk to them, some teachers, and I have witnesses this year, talk to em like they dirt on the floor.*

*Then Springdale parents got sick of M-to-M transfers. Well, who were they? That's the White community. They had many White kids over there then. And Hispanics. I would say maybe I would say they had maybe 60%. Whites. They said no, we don't want them out here. So what happened? It stopped. It went in and it went out the door. And I beat the pavement and said look, look what they're telling you. They're telling you it's segregation. It happens all over the school system. It's still prevalent right now. They're telling you that you can't go to the same school. I just see where they took them outta public school and put em in private school to keep them from being with Black children. But there are some Black kids that are just as fortunate as they are, and they put em in that school (private school). Now why they were running, I don't know. Why African-Americans decided I will I will put my child in a private school...but, well you think of it now, and I can understand. Cause when you look at the schools right now, you got Burghard, Bruce, Burke right here, you got Ingram-Pye right here—majority Black. You might have one (White). I mean they all Blacks that attend those schools. And the sad thing about it is that when you look at the good teachers, um, the teachers at Springdale, or Lane (where I teach), Vineville Academy, you say okay, let's make a change and you all go over*

*to inner city. The first thing they say, "I'll quit first. I will not teach there. I will not go there. Right now." And they don't. And they won't.*

*And the kids that graduated from Heritage, they left to go to Weaver and Westside. And what the White people did, they said they were moving. So they moved that summer so their children didn't have to go to Weaver and Westside. And that's when Howard popped up. The Whites are very influential. They know that they can say basically, we don't want our children with them. And if they are with them we are gonna pull them out. So what do you do? You want their children to attend public schools, so you gonna make em happy. So, that's what they did. They came over and they started popping up with all these schools to keep them from being with us. And they only had one Black school to feed into that Howard. One Black school (Brookdale) feeds into that school, and they have them separated. I want you to know that. They have them separated. Those children are separated. They say it's with the test scores. And the ones that come from Springdale, they are separate from the others. Because of their test scores. And they can do it. They know how to separate them. And you might not think so, and you might say okay, test scores, they're not important, but I'm telling you—they are important. Test scores are important as well as grades. This is how they segregate you. If you're not good enough and you're not doin your work, I'm telling you, they put you in a cluster. And that's everywhere you go. And that's whether they Black, White, green, purple, or yellow. And the same with Central, now. Central was a predominantly White school right? Um hmm, you go over there now it's predominantly Black. And the only reason they have White students over there now is because of that IB (International Baccalaureate Program). If they ever take that IB program outta Central, Central will become entirely Black.*

*Honestly, I look at things in this perspective. I'm just gonna say this. I look at Ingram-Pye school. You take Burke School, you take Hamilton School, and you take Ingram-Pye. And you build this fabulous building, and you wanna change. But you put the same kids, even more of the same kinds of students, in that same building, and it's supposed to change them. How? How can it change them when they play together? They have learned the good and the bad together. And then you put them in a school hopin that they're gonna do better. That they're values and morals are gonna change. It can't because they hadn't seen a difference. Some African-Americans, their standards are different. Because honestly, I wouldt'n take my child to Ingram-Pye. And yes, that's a school filled with Black children, African-American children, but my values and my morals are different. Um, for my child to go there and be educated...how can she be, or how can he? When a classroom teacher gotta spend most a her day discipline because they're not getting that discipline at home. They don't have the support, and I can't say all of them, but most of them. And I think that some of them just might not know any better and some of them just don't care. And the African-American that want the best for her child or his child, they look for ways. They leave that community and say, you know, I can't rear my child up in this kind of environment. And then that's when it seems like we say okay we wanna go into the White areas. But when you think about it, where else can we go?*

*And at Ingram-Pye, expectation is very low. Very very low. They, they don't perform because they are not expected to perform. They're poor children. They're Black kids. I feel like they get the worse teachers because a good teacher is gonna say I can't go over there and work with them. And spend all day discipline. Then you go to Heritage and you can walk down the hall and you can hear a pin drop. And they have Black kids, Hispanic kids, White kids...You go to Rosa Taylor, same way. Now what's wrong? How is it that you can put a whole*

*neighborhood of children in the same school—nothing is expected of them? Sigh. It's so bad that...And truly, how I feel, they build these schools. They say okay, we gonna build you a pretty building, and we gonna give you everything in that building to make y'all happy. You can't complain because we gave you more technology. We gave you more paper and pencil. We buy you crayons, we give you books, we give you pointers, we give you markers, we give you everything. You got the state of the arts. You got every, and a this is no lie, Ingram-Pye had everything. I mean computers, dictionaries, whatever. If it was a pointer, a crayon, whatever. They had it. But they did it to say okay, I gave you this. You can't say that you're not equal because we have given you more. Because some things that Ingram Pye would have, Springdale wouldn't have. Now what you gonna complain about? But they gave it to them I believe, because, this is a way to say, you can't say we're not treating you equally. Because you have that and more here. So what can you argue about? It's a hidden agenda, a cover up. And that's still, and that's still, if you look at it, it's segregation. It has not changed.*

*And when you go there, even now, and I'm gonna be honest with you, it's not a Black White issue. Because I can tell you this, just like there are good White teachers, there are good Black teachers. Just like there are good Black teachers, there are bad Black teachers. I've seen where White teachers go in to inner city schools and make a difference. And I've seen Black teachers in a inner city where they should be able to relate to these kids more, and they don't. They ridicule those kids. And lower their self-esteem more, so um, I could tell you stories but they're so sad and ugly. They're just ugly, you know. I'm just ashamed to even say it. Things that I've witnessed that's actually come from African-American teachers. I think that they are a product of that environment. And it's a way you wanna forget that you were brought up this way. I think they actually, when they see these children, they see themselves. And that part of*

*them, they want to die. They don't want to see that again. So when they see them, it's more resentment. And so that's their way of takin in out on them. Sayin that they can't learn, and they just little niggers, and that's what it's about.*

*But I'm telling you, I taught at Ingram Pye. Well I was a para there. But, when my child was in pre-k, she went to Ingram Pye. But when she went to kindergarten she left Ingram Pye. Because I wanted her—I know that her education is very important. And so if you don't make your child learn and you don't think it's important—when it comes to their education, you're settin em up for failure. Because if you don't attend these good schools, if you want me to put it like that, if you don't put your child in a school that you know the environment is set up for learning, then you're setting your child up for failure. And that's one reason I sent her to Springdale. I said if they get a new book, she'll get one. I said whatever they get, she'll get. If they get a good education, she'll get a good education. And she did. And I just hate to say it that way, but that's what it is. Because they're gonna make sure that their children are taught. And they're gonna make sure that they're there to support their children. And at Ingram Pye, they're not like that. The parents don't support their children. Because you got more parents that are children. That are tryin to be parents, and we're buddies. And in African-American communities, it's like a cycle where girls are havin babies, young. And they continue to have babies, then their children—grandmas are like what 30? And then the daughters are like what, some of em are 15? You know. And it's just a little cycle where she has a baby, and then she grows up and get maybe 13, 14, and here's the same cycle again. And I don't know what to change. How to make the change. You know? I think it really has made the Black community worse. I really do. Because I don't remember or recall comin up where Blacks killed each other like they do now. And rob and steal and, it's like they have no morals, no values. I don't know. I*

*just don't know. I remember there was more love toward each other, more family. All a these children, it's like everything goes. Everything and anything goes. That's just what I see. And it has caused me to look at things differently.*

*And where are the African-American males? You got half of them saying that the reason I'm like this is because you know, the White man. You got some of them sayin the reason I don't have a job, or they got food stamps... But they don't wanna do that. You have a lot of people, a lot of African-Americans that say I don't wanna work for minimum wage. So, if I don't work for minimum wage then whatcha gonna do? You don't have the education to go and say well, this is what I would like. This is the kinda salary I want. So, what do you do? So education is not important there. But I don't believe that a long time ago that parents were like that. They did care about their children's education. Now where it went wrong, I don't know. But education for the Blacks right now, it's in serious, serious condition. It's almost sad.*

*But I'm like, what happened? What, was it because they, you know, was it because of desegregation? Was that the reason that parents stopped caring? No. No it was not. But I do think that if there weren't the private—if we didn't have the private schools, maybe they would be more stern with these inner city schools, and be more visible, see what's really goin on. I think that as long as there there's not a tragedy that occurs in these schools, that it's gonna stay this way. I don't think it's gonna be a big change. Instead of moving forward where our ancestors wanted us to be—to be able to go to a restaurant and eat, to go to school with Whites, to be able to just go anywhere, and just have a normal life. We didn't reach out and take advantage of that. Some of us didn't. They gained a different way of life but they didn't grab on to it.*



*But some people tend to feel now, that if it was still (segregated), that it would be better. But I just disagree with that. I really do. Because even sitting here in your office right now, I couldn't have done that at that time. And even now, when I tell people I graduated from Mercer, it's like they take a double stare, a double look, you know, because I "spoda be at Ft. Valley." Or even at Macon State. They can appreciate me being at Macon State. But for me being a Mercer graduate, hmm hmm. When I look at us as a people group, we have a very crab mentality. I mean it's a sad thing, that they would much prefer that a White person have it because they feel like they deserve it versus a Black person. We are so against each other.*

*And we can't afford to be against each other. Because you can go in certain restaurants right to this day...and you can pretty much tell. Imma say it like this, you can pretty much tell, and I'm just goin be honest. Even at Jim Shaws, if you go in Jim Shaw's, right now, and just eat dinner or lunch, you don't have any Black servers. Now you'll have the Blacks come out the kitchen and get the stuff, you know clean off the tables. But you don't have Black servers. And that says to me, that says a lot. I mean, without them having to say, I'm prejudiced. Or I don't want Black servers. For instance, when we went this last Friday. We went two weeks ago. The waitress put her gratuity charges on the check. This time I went with the same amount of people and it wasn't done. I think she thought that since we were Black, we wouldn't goin leave her a tip. So she just go on and included it. This waitress felt like, for some reason or another, I feel that they feel as though Black people will not leave a tip. So they tend to just go ahead on and put the gratuity charges on there. And I even started to say something at that time. Um hmm. And they added gratuity charge. See, and they don't supposed to do that.*

*So I just feel like all, and you know this is just my religious side of everything, I think my steps are ordered by God. I think that I was put there for a reason and I'm glad he put that inner*

*heart in me to want to reach out to them. To want to do something for them. To let them see that just this, is not life. There is more out there to life than what you see. And even now I'm thinking about goin back into inner city. I'm not sure what I would do with my little boy. That's the only thing that's keeping me from going back in to inner city. He's at Lane with me. And I want him, he has to stay in that kinda environment. And that's what I've done for all of my children, just not him. I've done it for all of my kids. But right now I know there is a need.*

### **Merci**

*Fourth grade. Teacher. Ms. Woods. She's actually the worst teacher I ever had. But she's the reason that I want to be a teacher. Because I didn't want anybody else's children to experience what I had experienced. I mean she was awful. She was mean. She walked around the room with a ruler, she didn't want you to talk, she didn't want you to do anything. And I remember this one experience. We was taking the ITBS. And somehow I had, you know how you flip two pages and don't know it? And I had did that and didn't realize it. And when I did realize it I was erasing what I had put on there, and she came by and she snatched my book away and threw it on her desk and she called me "stupid." And ooh, I was messed up. I was thinking I wouldn't even pass that test when she finally did give me my book back. I was surprised I even passed it. And she was just so mean. And old. She was just old. And she was just mean. I never saw her smile, NEVER. The whole year we was in that classroom. I never saw her smile. And that was the first time I ever made a F. It was in science and social studies, and I was like, I don't even remember doin science or social studies. And I was telling my sister like I don't even remember doin this cause (laugh) I guess everybody got a F. Cause my brother, he even got a F. We was in the same grade. And he got a F in science and social studies. And I'm like, "I don't understand it." Nobody never looked into it, or anything. But that was the*

*first and only F that I ever made while I was in school. And she was just...She was like that to everybody. She didn't care, Black or White. She was like that to everybody. (And her race was???) She was White.*

*Once they enforced the integration laws, a lot of the White kids' parents pulled them out and sent them to private school. And the dropout rate kinda rose after that too. Kids felt like they wat'n wanted, so they didn't have to go, and they didn't go. They just dropped out. I had two brothers that dropped out. At the last minute. I mean they got straight A's until 12<sup>th</sup> grade. They dropped out in 12<sup>th</sup> grade and never went back. Well one of em did go back while he was in the military, got his GED. But I don't know if my other brother got his or not. In my family, my brother that graduated with me in 1980, he was the first male to graduate. We went to Miller, they called it junior high. Junior high, senior high. Yeah. And it wat'n the one that go here (current location), it was the one that was on Montpelier, the big, old building on Montpelier. That was our junior high school. Then we went down the street to Central in 9<sup>th</sup> grade until graduation.*

*When I was in high school too, nobody said anything to me, because I was quiet, I was light skinned—they told me they thought I was saved. I said ok, saved? Yeah, I was the insurance man baby for a long time, too. That was a rumor that went round through the family. But I'm not. My daddy was, he was a full-blooded Creek Indian. And I think Mama was half Cherokee and half Black. But in the South, you know, we Black. Cause Southern doctors, you know, if you dark that's what they put on your birth certificate. Like my youngest sister, with two of her kids—her daughter was born first and they put her down as Caucasian on her birth certificate. But her son was born later, and they put him down as Black, African-American, and I'm like okay—how do you do that? (Laugh) And I asked, and they say well, it depend on who*

*the doctor was. It depend on who the doctor was, and I was like okay. They still doin that too? Of course their dad's white.*

*Speakin of that, when I started at Macon State, I didn't like this English class with this professor. And I don't know what it was about me. I don't know if it was just me, because I was the only African-American in there, but no matter what I did I never got anything above a C. The highest grade I got in his class was a C. I remember this so well. It was a 78, C. This paper I had to write. And at the time I was workin at Shoney's and there was a retired English teacher that worked with us. She was a server. And I had her check my paper, go over it, make sure I had everything right. And I passed it in and that's the one paper I got a 78 on. And I was like, you know, why, why was he doin this to me? Was it just me, or what? I mean he seemed like a nice person. But it was just, I don't know. I did a speech on interracial marriages. And I made a 65. I took that same speech, didn't change anything in it, and did it in our college orientation class and got a hundred, A. So, maybe he just didnt'n like the subject. There's a lot of it (interracial marriage) in my family, though.*

*I can remember a few years back they was fightn bout takin down the, at the Terminal Station, takin down the blocks that said WHITE ONLY and BLACKS ONLY. There was a big controversy goin on about takin those blocks down. But I had a different perspective because I didn't think they should take em down. That's part of history. That's something these kids, they need to know about that. Cause a lot of em didn't know. My kids knew because we told em about it. But there's a lot of kids they didn't, they don't, see that part of history, they don't know anything about. Only part of history they know anything about is Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks sittin on the bus, not getting off, goin to jail—and that's all they remember. And that's all they're telling them. They're not telling them the things that went on here in Georgia that most*

*of these teachers had to go through. The Black teachers, you know, the stuff that they went through. I have a great respect for them. I do. But kids today don't know about the desegregation and stuff that we had to go through. They don't go through that anymore. Unless you get a teacher, a good teacher to tell you about that. Or your parents to tell you about that. They take it for granted and it is a shame.*

*Well, some of it really hadn't changed that much. Like I worked in a restaurant. I worked at Shoney's for ooh, 13 years, almost. And the thing that was goin around, a lot of the servers wouldn't want to wait on, including the Black servers, wouldn't wanna wait on Black people, because they claim that they don't tip. And the thing that would go around, when a group a Black people come in, they would try to add gratuity to the ticket. But in order for them to do that, it has to be on the menu. Before they add that to your ticket. And Shoney's didn't do that unless it was more than 13 people. Other than that, they get what's left on the table. But I say it depends on what kind of service you get. I mean, if I gotta sit there for 10 minutes and wait on a cup of coffee, your tip's gone. It's gone. I'm not goin tip you because it shouldn't take that long. You know I workded in a restaurant. I know. I know the rules and I know how things work. And I shouldn't have to sit and wait, for 10 minutes for a cup of coffee.*

*But it happen to me once. I very seldom eat at Applebee's. This day all I had was a cup o coffee and a salad. And I was wit my friend. The salad was wilted, and I asked (the waitress) to take it back and bring me another one. I never got it. I never got it. It took her forever to bring the coffee out and when she brought the coffee out I'm like, hmph, I'm not drinkin that. It took her too long to bring it back. It duttn take that long to perk a pot o coffee. You know? And I just felt like, I don't know if she had a hard day or whatever, but you understood, just like at in the education business you in the service business. You just have to take what comes. You*

*shouldn't let something that happened to you during that day affect other people that come in. They did, and I very seldom go there. I have a about a \$15 gift certificate that I won at school, and I won't use it because I don't wanna go there. I don't feel comfortable goin to Applebee's. And I mean it's not just that particular one either. It seems like every one that I go to, I have a bad experience. They're crossed off the list and I just don't go there. It's just like, it feels funny. You know when somebody don't wanna wait on you because of your skin color. I never had experienced that part when I was growin up. I didn't experience that until I was an adult. And it it's hurtful. It is. It's very hurtful.*

*And you have those older parents that, on both sides, that will not change. They don't like this race because they did this and they don't like this race because they did this. They race the "it." That's it, you know, and that's kinda hurtful too because it gets into the kids and when they get to school, it's that way. I don't like that teacher, why, cause she white. That doesn't make sense. You know, there's just a lot of, it's just true. There could be some that's still like that, set in their ways and don't believe that, you know, if Black kids dutttn get anything they just didn't get it cause they Black. I know of one, and that's just the way she is, but it takes us, and other people, to try to help that child get to where he needs to be. And it's kinda shameful to see people acting that way. But I have, Lord forgive me, but my former pastor, some things she said were that way. And she's that way. And it's like nnnnn you used to be a pastor and you know, you don't supposed to be that way. But some people that way. Because she grew up in the era. And it's just, stuff that have been done to her she sees, she haven't come to that point yet to actually just forgive it, just forget about it, don't let it bother you, and she hadn't got there yet. And she turned 50 this year. And she hadn't got there yet. And when I see her and she do stuff like that, it's kinda I'm embarrassed.*

*Ok. I know segregation is supposed to be gone but it is definitely not. Certain schools, they are predominantly Black. Like the school that I work at, I think we have like 40 Whites and they're not the prestigious Whites. They call em, which I don't label children. Children are children. You know, they call em like trailer trash and poor White kids. And maybe have two or three that have both parents work, and they have a house and a pretty good income, but (pause) let's see how can I put this in a nice way? It's just, you see...If you could see the school, it seems like it's going back the way it used to be. Because of the community and how it's like—how the community's set up really—that part of Bloomfield is predominantly Black, and most of the schools over there are predominantly Black. And got a few Hispanics comin in. I believe we had about as many Hispanics as we did White kids. Yeah, cuz I had a pre-k class that it was four. I had four in that pre-k class. And they had brothers and sisters and nieces and cousins and all of em, mostly all of em, lived in the same two houses, and all went to the same schools. So this little girl that was in my room, she's four, and she's she turnt five while I was in school. She had a niece that was in kindergarten. A niece. Who was in kindergarten. And let's see, her grandmother just had had one. And she wasn't in school yet. And her momma was pregnant, again, with another, I think she already got three, and she pregnant again and it's like all of them, live in a like, I think it's a three bedroom house. And that's a lot. And that's just the few that I knew of. They the ones that came through the school. And I think that has a lot of effect on what, on how the schools are set up. Um—like all of them—like the Hispanics, they're there, in one big household. Cause all the kids I see in my classroom, granmama had em. Granma was takin care of em. Either mama was in jail, just out on the street, or just wattrn there. And neither was daddy. So granmama had the kids.*

*There's a lot of side effects, too. I had one lil boy, I think his mom has eight kids now. She's not even 30 yet, and she has eight kids. And she's like in and out, of rehab. And Granmama has the kids. All eight of em. Every one of em, they off the chain. All of em. All of em. Something wrong wit just about all of em. Either they're ADD, or ADHD. But, one of em hadn't been diagnosed but I think he's bipolar. Cause he kinda, he out there. I mean cause, at the time he was four when I had him. The four year old tell you that when you go to sleep, Imma kill all a y'all. Something's wrong. You think? You look and they ain't never looked into it. But still they sleep with they doors locked so he can't get in. And that's just It's scary. It's scary and it's sad. Because you know of families like that that need help, and you can't suggest that something's wrong. And they have to see that, and they have to be the one to take...but she has come to the point where she just doesn't care. She doesn't care. And it's sad to say, that the only reason she has em is so she can get the money. Cause she's actually like the foster grandparent. And so yeah, she gets the money for em. That's the only reason she has em. That's the only reason she, you know. She keeping up wit em cuz she wants that money. And that's another sad part cause sure, they be dressed nice, they come to school they clean, they fed an all that. But they not getting that parent to you know, get that love that they need. To get that nurturing that they need. And I went to high school with her. I actually went to school with her. And I don't even know if she finished. I can't I can't remember if she finished. I don't know if she came out behind me or before me. But you know, if she doesn't have an education, you know the kids not goin get it. It's like I said it's sad. And there's a lotta families like that. Black and White. There are a lotta families that are the same way.*

*I told you I grew up with a house fulla family, and when I had my own it was the same way. But I made lots a sacrifices when my 3 was in school. Cause actually it was more than just*



*my three. Cause I had my niece and my nephew, really it was like 4 nieces and maybe like 5 nephews, plus my 3, and you know, and it was kinda hard. I made lots a sacrifices tryin to get them the monies they need to go on field trips and buy the candy and help sell the Girl Scout Cookies, and all that stuff. Because the public schools are not really, how do I say, advanced as the private school. I'll say the private schools have more discipline. They didn't have that many discipline problems in private schools because it's private owned and they can, you know, they can use corporal punishment. Even though you can use corporal punishment—it's still a law in Georgia. You can still use it, but most the principals don't want to because they don't wanna get sued. So they don't use it as much. But as far as the private schools, they're a lot their parents are morally supportive, and they raise money up the ying yang. They have fundraisers, raise money for just about anything they need. Whereas in the public school, you try to raise money, you can have fundraisers but, parents are not—they look at the paper and throw this in the trash. They don't, most of em don't even try. And the few that do try, you know it's kinda discouraging to them when they child can't go on the field trip cause we didn't raise enough money. But they know they put in what they could. And it's kinda discouraging. But I still don't think it was better then than it is now. Kids have a lot more opportunity to get that education, and it's up to their parents to help em get it. You know cuz what we give em while they're in school, it goes in. But once they get home, if there is nobody there to reinforce what we've already told em, and to help em, it, defeats the purpose.*

*And the funding, when they said the funding, that's what caught my ear. I was just sittin and I was like—it caught my ear they said funding was coming<sup>22</sup>, millions of dollars and I was like aw man we getting funding! And then they sendin it all to the high schools for technology.*

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<sup>22</sup> The funding to which Merci refers is a \$1.7 million federal grant allotted to Westside High School recently, with which netbooks will be purchased for all freshmen and sophomores.

*Yeah! What good is it gonna do if they don't know how to use it? I'm like okay, so they're not spending any on teachers jobs. That doesn't make sense to me at all. It's just makes me angry cause all these grammar school needs—laptops and all—you teach em in grammar school, which is the foundation for them goin to high school. You have better students. Yeah, you would think that would go through their head, but apparently not.*

*And some of the attitudes of some of the teachers, I'm not goin say all of em, but some of em have that same attitude wit, you act up, I don't care, I'm putting you out, that's it. You know, they don't work with the kids that have behavior problems. They rather just get rid of it. But where I'm at now, at Morgan at least, I don't wanna call her name, but the principal, at least tries to work with em. She won't send em home. She does everything she can to keep from suspendin em and sendin em home. Um, and I like that. Because I feel like if I was a principal thats what I would do. If you can't sit in the room and do your work like you're supposed to, I will put you to work. And you'll see what you goin have to do when you grow up. And I like that. When I first, saw her do that to a couple of kids, she had em walk around with the custodian. She was makin em help pick up and clean up, cause they wouldn't act right in the room, they wouldn't act right in ISS, so that what she did was instead of sendin em home. And it had a impact. Cause I didn't see em up there anymore.*

*But you know, my granddaughter's in first grade. And they all had the same homework sheet. Same words—same thing—every week. Just a different word, a different problem, but the same thing every week. And they give the whole sheet for the whole month. Which I'm like, it doesn't make sense. And everything was the same. I mean she had got to the point that she knew what she had to do on Monday night. She knew what she had to do on Tuesday night. She knew what she had to do on Wednesday night. And she would just leave it. It makes no sense at all to*

*me. And that's one way that they put em on grade level, and I don't like it. Because to me spelling words should be words pulled from the story they on that week. That's my opinion. That's what I thought spelling words were. And that's another thing I would go back to...I would go back to the spelling books. Remember when we had spelling books back when we was in school? And my oldest granddaughter, her spelling words were just, I don't know where she was getting her words from. Some of the words come from just the little passage they have in their literature books. That's where theirs came from. That's how they pull the spelling words.*

*On how they teach—and everybody's tryin to—that's the only thing I don't like about the public school system. They put everybody on the level. And just because Susie over here is teachin 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and I'm teachin 3<sup>rd</sup> grade...she has her way a teachin and I have my way a teachin. I don't wanna teach the same thing she's teachin. I wanna teach it my way I don't wanna go by the paper cut lesson plans. I don't believe in that. I think that's gonna be a stumbling block for me. Now I had a lead teacher when I was at Children Friends (local pre-k), and they was on the same PAQ's (as public school), but I never go by em. I did what I had to do. I mean, they can learn their colors at home. They can learn to count to 10 at home. Actually they only have to learn to 5. Which I think is kinda weird, but they only have to learn to 5. But...I'm like man, I can't do this. Cause I know what the kids can do. Cause the pre-k class I had, it wat'n even my class, we were sharing a class. Those kids came out, and I'm not braggin, but they could count to 20, in English and Spanish. I taught them the months of the year, in English and Spanish. Because they need to know this stuff. Cause there's a lot of kids that are comin in that speak Spanish. I had two or three in the classroom. And you know, to make them feel comfortable I just did it, did both ways. And they learn em. They say you don't supposed to repetition but if you don't do it every day, they're not gonna learn. Why count 1-20 Monday,*

*and don't do it anymore till Friday? What good is that doin'? It's not doin' any good at all. I guess that's just me but, I know that they can learn. I do.*

*And this teacher I know, that I work with, my granddaughter, I'm telling you it took it took all the God in me to keep from jumpin on that woman one day. My granddaughter, she just a happy mover, I mean all the time. She just a happy little girl. And when she saw me, comin through the lunch line...it duttn dawn on her, I mean I tell her all the time, walk baby walk, don't run, cause she runs everywhere. And she came runnin into the lunch line. And when she came in, she didn't see the little boy and she ran into him and knocked the tray out—out his hand, and this woman was in my baby's face. I mean she was just talking to her like she was just dirt on the floor. And I just (sigh) took a breath, I had to turn my back because if I had turned around, I wouldn't have a job today. Because nobody should talk to anybody's child like that. I have a real problem with anybody talking to a child like that. Cause when I was grown up I had older brothers and sisters, and for some reason, I guess, like I said I was smaller than everybody else, they were really mean. They really was. I mean they was just so mean to me. Even my own brothers and sisters used to talk to me so hard, and I cannot stand to see a person talk to a child like that. It's just something that comes over me and I be ready to fight. Even if they're not mine. I be ready to fight. And she does that a lot. To to African-Americans. Even to little Mexican kids. And you know half a those little kids they don't, they really do not understand what you be sayin to them because they, they're ESOL kids. Come on, learn some of the language, talk to them. And they just yell at em and ooh. It gets me. It really does. That's one of the reasons that I do, that I strive to become a teacher because I have got to, at least with the ones that I have, I can make a difference on em some kinda way.*

## Aliyah

*When I was in middle school, Ballard A Middle School, there was a teacher that, she just made you believe you can make it. And I hadn't ever thought about going to college. Miss Lilly Rocher (crying). But she really encouraged me. And, that's when I really started thinking about it. But before then, I didn't really. Cause I actually said I was going in the Air Force. And I know I had a hard time in math. And I had another teacher, I can't remember her name, but she was not encouraging at all. She would make you come up to the board, and make you try to do your math problems, and she was like, "Just sit down. You're never gonna amount to anything. Just sit down." I was so discouraged. She was really mean. But I finally got it. And teachers talked like that to us a lot. Oh yes. Oh yes. I got mine, you gotta get yours. Um hmm. But that really made me learn, to do it better. To finally get it. But I was, I hated going to that class. So I mean, I had good teachers. And I had some bad ones. But it was until high school until I ever had a White teacher. That's the only one I remember. His name, I can't remember his name, but he was our band teacher.*

*I went to Southwest High School and it was, at that time I would say probably 40% White and 60% Black, maybe. Cause there's still a lot of Black kids over there. But if you made Bs and Cs, you were just in regular classes. So they assume you don't wanna go to college. Now that's a whole nother issue—being tracked. I was tracked in high school. And the advisors were Black, the teachers too, because like I said the majority of the school was Black. Maybe I didn't apply myself enough to make As and Bs, but still I made Bs and Cs. And I wasn't looked upon as a college prep student. They said well you'll probably go to tech school or whatever. Or you may never go to college. But the students who made As and Bs, oh they were college prep. So they were preparing them to go to college. So what happens is that this group of students, that*

*did not take college preparatory classes, or did not make As and Bs, when they went on to college, if they got into college, they had to take developmental study classes. Reading and writing and math. Because they couldn't pass the preparation test that you have to take. Those college entrance test you have to take to go to college, they couldn't pass the test. So you're stuck in these classes...Well I'm in these classes with these big time football players that were on the field succeeding, but were not succeeding in class. So I'm thinkn okay, what happen to them? They didntn make good grades either? Why they gotta take these developmental study classes wit me? So I feel that even though you make Bs and Cs, I mean you shouldn't be labeled that you not gonna go to college. It wattrn pushed on us to go to college. Maybe we shoullda had some additional help. Maybe some tutoring or something. And it left us wit—when you go off to college you're not prepared to pass the entrance test that the college have you take. So you stuck in these developmental studies class till you pass em. And they have to take the Regents test. And if you don't pass the Regent test you gotta stay in these classes till you pass it. I wasted a year takin developmental studies classes and passin the Regents. A whole year. And before I could take my core classes, I was stuck in those classes. And you wanna know why? Because I wasn't prepared. I have a lot of friends that fall in the same category. And the only way, the only way they really came up outta this was they had to go to technical school, or they had to study a lot, read a lot, and buy these little manuals like preparing for the SAT. And just like REALLY apply themselves, and teach themselves to get to the point where they need to pass the test and go on.*

*But I got stuck in those classes and look where I am now<sup>23</sup>! I mean I had to work harder than anybody else, it seem like, to get where I'm goin but—I didn't take no college prep classes.*

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<sup>23</sup> Aliyah will graduate in December 2010 with her Masters degree in business education.

*I wattrn even given the opportunity to take any. When you have your advisors, they didn't give me any. They assumed I watn goin to college because I didnt'n make As and Bs. I don't remember anybody ever asking me if I wanted to go to college. No. And even like, I'm not ashamed to say, my SAT scores were not that good. Nobody ever said well let's take it again, or let's go get a manual or lets get some extra help to pass. A lot of our Black students, I don't know, I'm not gonna say if it's Black and White, but a lot of Black students, it's been my experience, have to do developmental studies, and they have low SAT test scores goin into college. And oh yeah! Everybody encourage to take the SAT. Before you graduate everybody had to take it. No matter how well you did everybody had to take it. It was a blessing I even got into college.*

*Now when I went to college I went to a all Black college at first—Fort Valley State. And I really didn't focus like I should have. So my parents snatched me out after two years of fooling around in the band and not makin good grades. They snatched me out and sent me to Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville. Now that's where I really learned about integration. Cause I was the only Black. Maybe me and another Black student, in all my classes. So, it was like a rude awakening because I was used to being around more Blacks. But then I found out that the White kids were just as nice as the Black kids. But that was really my first time being around so many White students at one time. And having to live in the same dorm with em and everything. I was nervous at first. But then I noticed that under the skin we all the same color. And they haven't done anything to me. Even though you think I have about slavery and ancestry and on down, they haven't done anything to me, so why should I be afraid of them, or why should I feel inferior to them? You know what I'm saying? So it was a rude awakening*

*for me, and it was hard at first. But I found out that we all have to meet in groups. We all have to do our work, and they were really nice. I mean so, there really wasn't a difference.*

*It's really what you been taught. Cause a lot of Black people got a preconceived notion that all White people are out to get them. That they'll never get ahead. And that's not really true. Cause I believe if you work hard in school you can get a doctorate degree just like anybody else. It doesn't really matter about the color of your skin. You just have to apply yourself. So, it's what you been taught. It's...see a lot of Black kids back then were not taught to accept White people. They don't realize that slavery was back then, and it doesn't have anything to do with now. I mean you have to learn how to just deal with it. You can't be in a community with just Blacks—you gonna be in the grocery store with White people...I mean it's, you can't get away from it, so you have to learn—it's what you been taught by your parents. You just have to apply yourself. I mean, it didn't really discourage me. Because everybody's not like that. I think that it starts at home where they get the encouragement they need. And then I think they need, teachers have to have the love and patience for the kids, you can't just have em be in it just for a job. You have to encourage them as well. Because you are moldin students. I mean these are little children you are molding to be adults one day. So if you're downing them and givin em negative feelings now, they're never...they're goin always have that pessimistic feelin.*

*And that is affecting the community. Because look at the private schools. In most of the private schools you have more White students there than Blacks. Or any other race. So it's like they still tryin to separate themselves from us...to some degree. And it is not discussed, not really, they don't talk about it. They just know. It's obvious and we just tolerate it. Most people tolerate it and just move on. But see the only, the only way a Black child can attend one of the private schools, if you can afford it. Because my preacher, his daughters went to Mt. de Sales,*



*but he could afford it. I can't afford to send mine there. There probably still is (an entrance test) to say, well if the black student is not capable of passing the test, does that mean they can't attend? Suppose they're not prepared enough to pass the test. You see they would publicize Mt. de Sales and how this school was so wonderful. And every time you see an advertisement you really didn't see a lot of Black kids on it. Just white kids on it. Or Stratford Academy and all those, and you look at one of those schools and you thought, "Oh wow, I wish I could attend one of those schools." But being Black, the only way you could attend one of those schools if you have good grades, and you have parents that can afford to send you. But we, in the community—oh no, you'll never get to go to one of those schools. Some of them had a lot of money and they tried to get their kids in one of those schools. And they couldn't get in. They would say...for various reasons. They wouldn't specify. But they couldn't get in. Until later on, like when the integration really start bein publicized and in the news, they start letting some Blacks in then. And that was later on, like maybe high school, for sports. But then, but I got something to say about that. Even though they letting the athletes into private schools, what about the students? Are they really applying themselves and makin good grades or are they just being floated along because they athletes? And that's another issue probably. But Imma be honest, I really believe they're getting a better education over there.*

*But my kids are in public schools. My eight-year-old year son's at Vineville Academy. But I think you can still get a good education if it's a team. You got the student, you got the parent, and you got the teacher. And I think parents need to do more, to see what they can do to get more involved, so they can see what their student is learning. I just think they need to get off they butts and really spend some time, I mean I take off time to go eat lunch with my son sometimes at school. I'll go sit in the classroom all day and just help her (the teacher) or watch*

him, just to see what he's doin. Not that he's bein bad or anything, just to go spend time with him. He love it. And other little students, they runnin up on me. I go out to play time with em and lunch time with em and help her (the teacher) pass out papers and all that stuff you know, just try to be active. And he loves that. My schedule's very tight but I can make time, if it's just a hour. But on my birthday, every birthday I go and spend my whole day in school with him. Now Vineville's a great school. And I wanna say that's maybe 50/50. I mean cause he has a lot of White kids in his class. And he's doing exceptionally well. I feel better for him to be over there then to be at, say Matilda Hartley—even though I went to school there, and that's where, that's in my district. For some reason, I just feel that he's learning more. He's and he's in a better environment and as far as technology, cause I have been over there visitin the school, they have great technology, newer computers. As opposed to some of the other public schools. And they're still under the public school but maybe for some reason they have more grants or something because of their scores.

And my older two kids, they're at Central High School. Now, if I had the money, I would send em all to private school. Cause they're getting, the private schools are givin the kids a better opportunity. I really do. I think they're learning more...I think they're better prepared when they go to college, and everything. I would do it in a heartbeat if I had the money. Because it's based on money. But the public schools...Now I do know when my oldest son attended Westside two years ago, they had a lotta White students there. Okay, that was when they were started building Howard High. All right. When they started talking about building Howard High what happened? All the White kids? Most of em at Westside pulled out and went to Howard. So now Westside is predominantly Black, and that was a surprise to them. Cause that community was White out there by Lake Tobesofkee. And now most of em are Black. A lot

*of Blacks don't live way out Forsyth Road. So most of the Whites are going to Howard High and Howard Middle. They pulled out of Weaver Middle and Westside into Howard Middle and Howard High. I went out to Howard one day and it is so far out it don't make no sense. There are no Black people out there for sure. I didn't see any. It was way out, I mean waaaaay out Forsyth Road. Um hmm, it's way out there. Way out there where there whatn anything else. But then Southwest got Felton Homes, Bird City (which is Anthony Homes), Tindall Heights, Pendleton Homes—all goin to Southwest.*

*You see what they do, they apply for grants, and it's supposed to be to help the Black students. It's a cover up. It's a cover up for real. That's why they rebuilt Ingram, that's why they added on to Hartley, made it look better. Then their technology is better, they have better books, and everything. And that's to keep us quiet so they can say we built you a new school with everything, but I don't think money's being allocated properly. And that comes from the head office. I really don't think it's being allocated properly. So it's still going on today. The community that I'm around—we don't neglect it. Deep down we know that there are some White people that still don't want they kids going to school with Black kids. Just be real about it. That's all that is. And any opportunity they can get—if they can send em to private school, if they can send em to public school and not be around so many Blacks then they'll do it.*

*And most of the reason I would say, gang-related. I would say maybe that's most of it, or they just don't want their kids to learn around Black kids, I know. But I had to snatch my son out of Central High School and send him to Westside because of gangs. They were tryin to get him. And he was denying em and sayin he didn't wanna join the gang. And we lived, that was before I moved, we lived by this guy that was in the gang who harassed my son so much to the point that I snatched him out and sent him to Westside. It wasn't as bad at Westside, but they still had*

*gangs, but nobody was tryin to get him to be in the gang. And I actually just had to keep him in the house to protect him. He couldn't even go to the little corner store. And I'd have to drive all the way out there, every day for a year. Until the boy got in trouble, and I think he went to juvenile court. Then I moved (my son) back to Central, right. He's still at Central. And he's not having any problems. It was just that one guy.*

*But you gotta get a education and stay in school. And I think it all starts in the home. You have some students that's in gangs and they're droppin out. And you have teenage girls that's pregnant and they droppin out. It still go back to the parent. I mean you have to instill in your children that they need to be successful in life and not fall to all this temptation. And I keep telling my kids, "You don't have an option. When you graduate from high school, you have to go to college. Or you have to go in the armed services or you have to go to tech school. You have to do something." They have to get it. I'm not takin no for an answer. They have to get it.*

*And a lotta kids are in a bad environment. I mean you have some mothers don't come home at night, some mothers on drugs, some daddys in prison, it's hard. And I'm not just sayin for one race. It's a lotta people are havin a hard time. But still, your children only live once. You really should push the issue, that they get a good education, some kinda way because it's hard out here. And then you have some parents that don't even come home, that don't make sure they kids eat or do they homework. They in the street partying, or influenced by drugs or alcohol or whatever, and the children are almost raising themselves. And if you were to study the, what the effects of drugs and what have you, it affected the family first of all. Now you think about it, I remember when drugs was out real bad. They would get on the corners and try to get Black people to sell em. And Oh! It's fast money. You can make this money. And they would send it to, they had it in the high school. They were dishin it out to all the students. And they egged on*

*the drugs, you know what I'm sayin? So basically, that's how it got all messed up in the schools and everything. Then you got the parents, all these people on these drugs, wantin this fast money or this fast high or whatever, and then they not seein about they kids. I live by a project and I am telling you. I saw so much it don't make no sense from Tindall Heights. How can it be wintertime and your child barefoot? Okay. How could it be that they asking me for money for food, they don't know where they momma at? They aint seen they momma. Momma sell the food stamps to get the drugs. So I mean the kids don't have no food. So I, I mean it's bad. It's a crisis. And the students, the children are gonna suffer, if they don't get it together education wise. They're really gonna suffer.*

*Okay, so the people that's on drugs need some kinda help to get em off drugs or whatever. I agree with that. But my thing is, how they gon get some help if they don't have money and they don't have jobs? Because it's not like they have a treatment center here in Macon that's free for these people that's on the streets, that need help. They're stuck. The majority of them don't have money, don't have jobs, and their family have just wiped them out and said okay, I'm not fooling with you no more, cuz you done stole money from me, you just can't get yourself together. So what's gon happen? How they gon get themselves together?*

*You say where the African-American men? The men is here but some of em most of em are gay, and some of em dead, and some are in jail. The ones that still livin here. Now my thing going back to the schools, if they gay or they on drugs, they're not contributing to the household to help these kids as role models. You know what I'm sayin, right? It's a domino effect. Because you got the daddy's on drugs, or selling the drugs. Then you got the children watching the daddy, and they're not bein a good role model. They're gonna wanna sell drugs and then be on drugs. Pride over our work is dead. Back in the old days they went out there and tried to find*

*jobs. Okay? The job not gon come knock on the door and say here I am I'm a job. You got to do something. You got to do something. You can't tell me there aren't any jobs here in Macon. You can find something to do. I don't wanna hear that. There are some jobs here in Macon.*

*And there is an opportunity for Black students to get a good education. Even to be mayor. Although the only black mayor I remember was Mayor Jack Ellis, and the Whites didn't want him in from the beginning. They did everything they could to keep him out but they couldn't. And then when he did make it they criticized him about everything. And they gave him such a hard time. And there was always something scandalous about him in the news paper or on the news, it was like they were just waiting for him to mess up. They have him a hard time—his personal life, takin the trips, doing the housing opportunities over here and all this for Black people, and everything else. But I do know that he worked very closely with the Macon Housing Authority to allow African-American families to own their own homes. I was a part of that program. So that was something that we needed in the community as well, and it was more like a program that helped you get your credit together, and then you were able to buy the home. So I think that was good for the community. But then my parents gave me the house I grew up in. And I'm livin in that house now. And that's near a project called Anthony Homes, but we call it Bird City, because all the streets in the project are named after birds.*

*It is so racially motivated in certain areas here. Cause you still have, and this is just a prime example. I went in the grocery store, and this little White girl was standing by me. And she was real pretty and I said, "Hi. How are you doin?" And she turned er head. She wouldn't even speak to me. So I'm like, this child has been taught not to talk to Black people. And this is what, just last week. It's pathetic. So I was like, wow. I know it would have to be a team effort for everybody to change. But some people are naive, they are in denial that there's even a racial*

*issue here. They deny it. They say no, there is no racial issue here. But it is. It depends on who you talking to. White people may not see it bein a issue. Black people may see it bein a issue. The Mexican people who are here or whoever, the Asian, may see it bein a issue. I mean it just depends on who you talking to. Even in some stores they don wanna touch ya hands and they put the money down on the counter. Like if they give you change, instead a putting it in your hand they put it down. Yes. And that still happens now. At restaurants, grocery stores, and whatever. And also they follow you around the store if you're Black. You may see White people in the store as opposed to Black, and they would follow the Black person and watch you more often than they do the White.*

*Now I took my family to Wild Wing Café, the new one. But, and I don't have a problem with bein around White people, I don't. Because I work around White people and I been in college around White people. It's fine. (We're not all bad.) You're right. But when I went in there, there were no Blacks in there. Just our little group. And the atmosphere was a little different. Because, you know everybody was lookin and you know, it kinda reminded me, wait a minute, this 2010 right? You know, so we sat down and there's no black waitresses or servers or anything. And it took us forever to get our food. And noticed that a White couple over here, they got their food before we got our food. And I was like, this a new restaurant and this is 2010, what is goin on? So I still was nice and I got my food and whatever. But I don't think I wanna go back because it felt funny. It was awkward to me. Oh yeah! And they added the tip into my ticket. Now I know that's what happened because when I got my bill I said \$67? What for? We had the wings, and the, I don't even think we ordered drinks but, it was \$67. There was just three kids with me? They added 15% gratuity at the bottom. And I didn't make a big deal about it, I was like I'm gonna just pay it and get outta here. But they assumed I wattrn goin tip. And*

*that's not true. Some Black people do and Black people don't. As opposed to White people. Some White people tip some White people don't tip. It's the same thing.*

*I just finished a American education class today. And not only Blacks had problems with segregation and not bein able to go to school. I found out that Mexicans, the Indians, and all that goin way back, had a hard time. Try to get an education. So I was like wow! It's not just Blacks, way way back. This has really been interesting. It has really enlightened me. Because just look at all these doctors you have, and lawyers you have, and nurses of different races and different backgrounds now—that were able to go to school with other, White students. They may have lost some of their history, background to some degree. Because I know every, that different races, like Indian, Chinese, Blacks, they have they own styles and they own rituals and traditions and stuff. Maybe they got away from that a little. But the main thing is they were able to get a good education. And I think with Obama being the president now, and he's helped instill in the young kids now that you can be anything you wanna be, and we're gonna try to work together and get past all this. You're still gonna have a few, a selected few that still not gonna wanna nudge, not gonna wanna have the Black and White kids together in schools. You still gonna have the private schools (here).*



## Chapter VII

### **The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same, An Analysis**

*“We ain’t what we ought to be, we ain’t what we gonna be, but thank God we ain’t what we was!” (Unknown slave preacher)*

Even though those words were uttered over a century ago, they seem to represent the struggle for equality that still exists today. To be sure, progress has been made. But too many people believe that because things are not as they once were, that ENOUGH progress has been made. And it has not. bell hooks (2010) said, “The persistence of racist thinking and action is the social backdrop undermining efforts to end discrimination in education on all levels” (p. 95). Her words echo the voices of my participants and all of the students in Bibb County Public schools, as here we are—more than 125 years since slavery ended, more than 50 years since *Brown vs. Board of Education*, more than 40 years since the Civil Rights Movement began, and more than 30 years since Bibb County was ordered to integrate its public schools—and for the most part, White children and Black children in Bibb County cannot and do not attend school together. The state of public schools has eroded, quite possibly, to the point of no return—which is really what inspired this dissertation. Thus in this analysis, I will revisit my research questions and discuss my findings through the lens of my theoretical framework (Critical Race Feminism), and around the themes that emerged in my research—place and choice, or the lack there of, and the seemingly unbreakable hold that those in power (White Maconites) have over the public educational system in which they are largely unwilling to allow their own children to participate.

As a refresher, I have provided below a chart that categorizes each participant with regard to her place in my study. The data in this table reflects the information in the narrative provided in Chapter III.

Table 3

*Participant Data*

Participant & Degree	Relationship With Me	Role & Approximate Age at the Time of Desegregation (1970)	Experience Working in Schools	Current Position
Veda M.Ed, Mercer University	Ruth's friend, unknown to me prior to the first interview.	Teacher Age: Early 30s	42 years in Bibb Co. Public Schools. Taught high school history in Black segregated and "integrated" schools.	Retired. Active in various community groups and affairs, including ones promoting race relations.
Ruth M. Ed. Ft. Valley State University	A friend with whom I taught at a Catholic school for 9 years.	Teacher Age: Late 20s or Early 30s	30 years in Bibb Co. Public Schools. Taught middle school math in Black segregated and "integrated" schools. 10 years in Catholic school as a resource teacher.	Retired. Volunteers at a local inner-city school.
Alethea B.S. Ed. Mercer Univeristy	A former student at Mercer University.	Student Age: Early teens	20 years as a parapro and 4 years as a teacher in Bibb County Public Schools.	Third grade teacher at a suburban Bibb Co. Public School.
Merci B.S. Ed. Mercer Univeristy	A former student at Mercer University.	Student Age: 7	10+ years as a parapro in Bibb County Public Schools.	Pre-K parapro at an inner-city Bibb Co. Public School.
Alyiah B.S. Ed. Mercer Univeristy	A friend and co- worker at Mercer University.	Student Age: 6	5 years as an adjunct instructor at Central GA Technical College	Coordinator of Teacher Certification, Mercer University

**What did historical data and interviews with five African-American women bring to light about the institution of the White private school system in Macon, with regard to how said schools impacted education for Black Maconites?**

- It has been well documented by Manis (2005), Roche (1998), hooks (2010), and many others—including the Macon Telegraph over the years—that educational

desegregation did not occur the way it should have. Before the flames on the cross burning in Judge Bootle's yard could even die out (after he mandated the schools to integrate), White Macon left the public school system, quite literally, in ruins. As Whites continued to move to other counties or to their "Segregationist Academies," the population of Bibb County Public Schools became more and more African-American. When Bibb County builds new schools in predominantly White areas, in an unspoken attempt to entice White parents to return their children to public schools, as soon as they gerrymander the districts to meet the diversity requirement, the White students either pull right back out, or they segregate within the school—aka "gifted" programs (as Alethea reinforced). Because control of Bibb County Public schools still lies, for the most part, in White hands, the aforementioned pattern speaks to the systemic oppression and institutional racism that infects the school system. When the only attempts at "improving" schools is by building new ones, the powers that be are sending a message that they do not really care whether the students in public (read Black) schools actually learn anything or not. Furthermore, knowing that the majority of teachers in schools (both public and private) are women, an interesting possibility for future study would be to look at the morale of teachers in public vs. private schools in Macon—especially since private school teachers (who are predominantly White) generally have a choice about the school at where they work and the grade in which they teach, where as public school teachers (who may be either Black or White, depending on the school) have neither.

Public school teachers are at the mercy of wherever administrators decide to “place” them.

- The archival data showed a tremendous plight of religious hypocrisy. While there *are* houses of worship for Jewish and Muslim locals, Macon is undoubtedly a Christian town. And although my experiences with the Christian church have been tumultuous over the years, I do understand the fundamental teaching of Christ to be that you love your neighbor. The direct contradiction with the religious belief (i.e. Christian—love thy neighbor) presumably held by so many in Macon...that fundamentalist Christian belief that we are all one in Christ, leaves me utterly perplexed. What I mean is, in the 1970s when Macon’s “Segregationist Academies” were born, the White men in power of the state and the city blatantly called on Biblical scripture as a justification for keeping the races separate in an educational setting (Manis, 2005). Clearly, neither Christ nor the Bible addressed racial issues in public education. (Although I do believe the Old Testament dictates that “teachers” could only be male...but that is a point for another study.) Nonetheless, one thing I learned from organized religion is that nothing ignites my temper quite like the flame of someone behaving unethically and then hiding behind the veil or the cloak of the church. Come Sunday people will dress in their finest, show up for service, and call themselves Christians—and damn to Hell anyone who does not believe what they believe in the way they believe it, and act according to their rules. And then on Monday, White children return to their “excellent” private schools, where they prepare for college; and Black children return to the “failing” public schools, where they prepare for...I

am not sure what, but Alyiah adamantly stated it was not for college. The way I see it, something you do for an hour or two once a week can easily become an afterthought. It is your day-to-day lived experiences that culminate in the essence of your soul. I think Macon needs a “come to Jesus” meeting about education.

**What specific decisions did local school boards make over the last four decades that have contributed to the perpetuation of educational apartheid?**

- Looking back, it seems as if time stood still in Macon. In the socioeconomic, sociocultural, socioeducational contexts, Macon has made very little progress over the decades since *Brown v. Board Of Education*. I know this not only because of my research, but because I experience it daily. I hear the comments of White Maconites who assume that because I am White I would share their world view. I see the abject poverty, the frightening gang violence, and the people in the streets of which many White Maconites are blissfully unaware. I understand the unspoken/unofficial Jim Crow “rules” that still exist—enabled by a school board that did not have the best interest of its entire student body at heart from its inception. Palmer (1991) wrote in the *Macon Telegraph*:

The school board was a self-perpetuating body. Its members filled board vacancies with Macon’s elite, subject to grand jury approval, and they held positions on the board until replaced by others of similar social standing. In many ways, they were honorable people. Good people. But many of them could not see why blacks wanted more than they had.

When a group of blacks went to the board in 1963 to ask that the school system be integrated, they met with an intimidating body. Wallace Miller Jr., the school board's attorney, told them, "We've got a tape recorder on and everything is being recorded." Maybe that doesn't sound like much of a threat, but in 1963 it wasn't easy for blacks to stand up against whites, much less a gathering as powerful as the school board. (p. 1A)

So I read this and I ask myself, "What has changed?" As time went on, things did not get any easier for the Black citizens of Macon. Even though the school board transformed to an elected board after desegregation—and thereby allowed Black representatives to be elected, Whites still held the majority and resorted to the same tactics. Bait and switch, or desegregation without integration (Manis, 2004; Roche, 1998). Gerrymandering (ever-changing school zones). Delay tactics and misappropriation of funds as evidenced by the Ingram Elementary School situation (Upchurch, 1981, 1983). Again and again (the examples I provided are but a few). Bibb County School Board has repeatedly shown that it does not care about the Black community of Macon by the systematic underfunding of "integrated" public schools for over four decades—that Black Maconites have been used as political pawns in a system that is designed to fail them (Stovall, 2004). On the "other side of the tracks," the White private schools are considered national schools of excellence, and college preparatory academies. The few Black students who were/are able to attend Macon's private schools were/are usually there on sports scholarships. (Yes, Macon's private high schools actually offer sports scholarships.) Public schools became so taboo that even White school board members would send

their children to private schools (*Macon Telegraph*, 1979 November 14), which charged a tuition that the majority of Macon's Black citizens could not afford had they wanted to. And now, the apathetic attitude that permeates throughout the system is "Oh well, they're just poor little Black kids. They're not gonna amount to anything anyway."

- In addition to the whole Ingram affair (Upchurch 1981, 1983), this racist attitude was most starkly evident when the board merged the Black schools into the White schools (Groat, 1986), closed many Black schools (Upchurch, 1983), and (albeit temporarily) restored the former White names to the high schools (Groat, 1986). Looking at this situation through the lens of critical theory, there is a reciprocal relationship between naming and power—as in those who do the naming are those who are in power—the signifier has the power over the signified. *White males* made the decisions about bussing, districts, and names of schools. Understanding that there was an identity attached to a school that was named after a person, they (White males in power) decided to strip the public school children of that privilege of identity by renaming the high schools with regard to their locations, thereby keeping public school students (Blacks) in their place—Northeast, Southwest, or Central. That is where they were "allowed" to be. And the economic barriers to private schools prevented any choice in the matter. When that same group of White men in power, (claiming some sense of nostalgia) restored the former names to the high schools, which were all named after Whites, they sent the message to the Black populations of those schools that

their “place” was no longer just a geographical direction, it was once again under the direct power of Whites (as if it had ever been anywhere else).

- And even now, when the board receives federal funds, it spends the monies on technology that in a year’s time will be obsolete. Richardson’s editorial in the *Macon Telegraph* (2010, July 9) reads “Even technology can’t replace a highly qualified instructor,” in reference to a \$1.7 million federal grant that Bibb County’s Westside High School received, with which the school is purchasing netbooks for the incoming freshmen and sophomores. Or on building a massive school that will combine three of the poorest performing schools in the district under one roof (the newly built Ingram-Pye).
- Apple (1982/1995), asked, “What is the relationship between education and the larger society?” (pp. vviii). When one group of people tries so desperately to keep another group of people from attaining an education, it is clear that education plays an enormous role in the larger society. I would venture to say that education—not laws, or faith, or even parenting—but education—is THE foundation of a free and democratic society. The behavior of those who denied an equal education to Black citizens were showing their true intentions, which were to keep the Black Americans in a position of perpetual and subhuman servitude. The systemic oppression suffered by those “left behind” in Bibb County Public Schools is evidenced by 2008 demographic data produced by the Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development at the University of Georgia (2010), which shows that only 58.4% of the class of 2008 completed their high school program. Furthermore, that same report showed that 22.8 of all adults in



Bibb County over the age of 25 had not completed high school. These kinds of statistics show me that Bibb County Public Schools are producing generations of students who lack basic skills in reading, writing, and math—and who are not likely to have any chance at upward mobility in their socioeconomic status. Public schools no longer have value in the eyes of the community (Black or White) if more than half of the students who begin matriculation do not finish. Education is no longer seen as a vehicle of upward mobility or a path to freedom. And without that path, the number of legal alternatives are few.

**How has the continued segregation of schools in Macon affected the Black community?**

- Macon, a relatively small Southern city, has 20 public housing projects. Why in the world does a city the size of Macon, which sits in Bibb County (2008 population estimate 156,060) need 20 housing projects (U.S. Census, 2008)? Savannah, GA, which sits in Chatham County (2009 population estimate 256,992) (Savannah Data, 2010) has only 8 (Savannah Public Housing Authority, 2010). I see the excess availability of public housing to be a trap for the Macon community, a way for certain people (read Blacks) to be forced to stay in their “place”—a way for the path to upward mobility to be blocked by generational poverty. I believe in the old sayings, “Give a hand up, not a hand out” and “If you give someone a fish she’ll eat for a day. But if you teach her to fish she’ll eat for a lifetime.” But I do not see that happening here in Macon. I see a forced dependency from which some just cannot escape. And what does that have to do with education? With Critical Race Feminism? I think they are all linked together like an evil chain. The public schools here are designed to produce either

drop-outs or uneducated graduates, so that they have no choice but to stay in the projects. I believe this is especially true for Black women, because they are the mothers (and grandmothers). If a 15 year-old boy gets a 15 year-old girl pregnant, he can walk away. She cannot. But she CAN stay in the public housing, get public assistance, food stamps, etc. The system is not set up for a Black girl/woman to succeed in public schools in Macon. I found at least five who succeeded anyway, and believe others can, too.

- Yet the overall resistance of Whites (those in power), and the measures most will take to avoid accepting Others (Blacks, in this case) has allowed Macon to remain segregated. Because those in power can and do so easily change their own rules, move out of situations they do not like, and manipulate those who have no viable means of fighting back (such as an education, money, or social capital), Macon has been able to literally do what most other places have not—and that is maintain a truly segregated educational system (with very few exceptions.)
- The apathy of the school board toward its public school students is as prevalent as ever. For instance, the week Bibb County Public Schools began the 2010-2011 school year, I received an email from a friend who teaches at one of the most economically deprived schools in town—one that is currently under investigation for having too many erasures and corrections on the CRCT. This particular school also has a new principal this year. My friend's email said the following: *This is part of an email I sent to an administrator who asked why some of us had not filled out a form on the first day of school. The items in parenthesis were the things that were changed during the day as various people rotated through my*

*room like they were in a parade. I'd just get the kids focused when... BAM!... someone would barge in bellowing "How many ----- do you have now?"*

Today I had 28 (then 25) students, 20 (then 28) desks, 15 (then 25) agendas, 25 sets of student work I planned to do but couldn't because 3 kids would have been left out, 15 (then 25) student planners, 20 (then 28) Codes of Conduct, and 20 (never more) sets of all other paperwork. Then, at the end of the day, we found out one of our buses had "disappeared." Needless to say, very little went as planned today. I am pretty proud I remained calm. I think tomorrow will have to be a little smoother, and, perhaps, we can get more things accomplished.

*Regarding the 28 students, my class got reduced to 25 students about 15 minutes after I submitted my student count to the state website. The school official who came to my room asked "Well, why do you have 28 students in your room?" I looked her in the eye and replied, "Because you all keep sending them to me with entrance paperwork that has my name on it."*

*This is the real hoot for the first day of school. At 2:30, we found out that one of our three buses serving Brookdale had been discontinued. We were told those children (some of whom lived 3ish miles from school) were walkers now. The parents had no idea. Even the kids who lived within walking distance (Remember, some of them are K, 1st, or 2nd graders) might not know which turn to take to go home. Of course, I refused to let mine go. Parents were called, and arrangements were made, but it was a big ole stinkin' mess on the first day of school...Just another manic day in public school!*

This, of course, never made the news—which tells me that either someone is engaging in

a cover-up, or that the story is so insignificant that it is not worth reporting. Perhaps it is both. I cannot help but wonder what would have been reported if something like this had happened in one of Bibb's surrounding counties (where the Whites who could not afford private school tuition fled).

**How did this segregation affect the women interviewed? What opportunities and challenges has the situation presented to these women?**

- I was asked recently why I chose to work with only African-American women to tell my story. After about ten minutes of passionately defending my choice, I realized that the answer is simple. It all comes back to my epistemological belief, which aligns with Critical Race Feminism. *Critical*—the understanding of systemic forces that work to keep socioeconomic classes separate and static. *Race*—a social construction designed to put groups bearing certain physical and cultural traits in positions of superiority over others. *Feminism*—a branch of philosophy centered on the idea that no one ought be oppressed or discriminated against due to gender. We live in a culture that indoctrinates us all too well into that misguided image of the ideal woman. Women are told in all conduits of society which parameters dictate the constitution of feminine identity. We are shown by the insular, totalitarian media that a desirable woman is indeed finished (read thin) and polished (read well dressed, the right haircut, the proper make-up, and “White” or at least “White-ish”), and is ready-made for a world in which, in one way or another, she is simultaneously dependent upon and objectified by a man. Critical Race Feminists understand that knowledge is power, and that knowledge comes from access, exposure, opportunity, and experience. Further, Critical Race Feminists understand that access to that knowledge, or the opportunity for certain experiences, is controlled by

upper-middle class (and upper class) White males. I needed to hear the opinions and stories of working-class Black women. I already know the other point of view, I have been hearing it my entire life. On the social hierarchy, Black women have historically not been at the top. And usually it is those at the top whose stories are recorded as “history.” But there are other opinions held and other stories to be told, like the ones I have told here. So with this in mind, I asked each participant what she thought was the most pressing educational concern for Macon’s Black community, going forward. This is what each said:

**Veda**

*Now I think it should be the goal for every African-American to get, well we know we want them to get an education, but they need to be able to, within this education—they should be able to acquire workable skills that will make them productive citizens in the future. And what I’m sayin is this. At one time, not only did we have academics, but there were other areas of interest. Because even now, everybody’s not interested history, they are not interested in biology, they are not interested in foreign languages. At one time they had skills. And I know they have people who criticize Booker T. Washington when he talk about... You know Booker T. Washington is the one who said, “Cast down your buckets where you are.” He, he started what is now Tuskegee University. It was Tuskegee Institute. Uh back there, a long time ago. And not only did he put in the academic skills, he pushed for things like mechanics, carpentry, brick masonry, and what have you. And every African-American needs to be educated with workable skills. And I know we are not just looking at mechanics and all like that, brick laying and all that. Everybody needs to be computer literate. Because that’s the future, you can’t get around that. Get an education that will be inclusive of everything that will give them workable skills.*

*That's as simple as I can put it. And that can go to academics. They can go to medicine, or to marketable things like brick masonry, carpentry, banking—whatever it takes for them to be able to be productive citizens. I would like to see them as productive citizens, not just people sittin around waitin on a handout. We need people who will stay in school to accomplish the training. People who don't say, "well I'll just go and I'll drop out and go get public assistance." We don't need that. I just hope that we can educate our children in the United States, regardless of race, be able to compete globally. Cuz you know we got people coming from everywhere, and they all trying to get over here to the United States because they know you can get a free public education. If you want to, you can get it. I would want for them to get an education that they can compete for a job, whereby they would become productive citizens. That's all. I know you're tired of me talking about productive citizens. But that's what we need. Everybody need to be able to take care of themselves.*

## **Ruth**

*I worry about the fact that we still aren't where we thought we would be. Because you see history repeating itself. Then how we goin fix it after we have segregation again? If I could be the magic wand that fixed it, I probably be written off because I would go back to some of the things that worked. You were made to respect authority, ok? You understood what your responsibility in this was. You knew you couldn't run back home with things about the teacher when she had tried to make you do your best. I would go back to the basics. Technology is the in thing, but I wouldn't want to look at it like it is THE thing. Right now technology is the thing, and it's eating up your finances to the core (sad laugh). You can't keep up with the top of the line, so you're constantly changing. I've heard recently that libraries are not getting larger, but smaller because they're putting books online so you don't need as much space. I would*

*teach students to read, to write—to demand that they learn to read and write and that they understand—That you read, you write, that you go to school with a purpose. That teachers aren't babysitters. All of those things that could give you the structure that you need to teach these children, is what I would attempt. And definitely goin back to the basics would be one of those things. To learn to read, to read, to be able to read to write, to do math, to figure it out, to put the calculators on the shelf and have some time to get into these books apply yourself. You know just shelve all this other stuff and I think they need to get to the basics.*

*And I'm worried about the children. I'm worried about them because number one, it's their future. You know. Their generation, their future, and they don't seem to have what it takes to hold it together. Now there are some that's gonna make it regardless. Perhaps what I'm thinking is maybe there are not enough of em. How many you fear you have lost, that probably could help to make the future different? Well, I think we just have to keep trying. And hoping that there is some way we can get back on track. But you're finding more and more those things are pressing. Because you can run, but you can't run fast enough. Because I'm right behind you. But again, we need to have our heart right. In order to make it work. That's the thing that's gonna make the difference. Because stuff is under da rug. What's under da rug, not what's here (pointing at heart). Because if we could get this right (heart), we wouldn't have stuff under the rug. You know we could just work through things.*

### **Alethea**

*But if there is not a change, I don't know whether or not they...I'm tryin to think of a word. Whether or not they think about their lives and wanna change. Because for so long we've always said that, the White man kep us down or, you know it was always somebody. But, in actuality, you gotta come to a terms with your life and say, "What have you done to try to*

*correct this?” To make myself become better. What have I done? And I don’t think it’s enough, and I don’t know whether or not I want to say support, or enough people that crosses their path—to see that there’s a better life, a better way of doing things. Other than just this same cycle that you continue to go through. I don’t know. It’s not gonna get any better if they don’t get educations, they gonna be in more jails, I can tell you that. Because if you don’t have some sort structure, like, growing up in the household that my dad had, he said if you don’t work you will steal. And that’s basically true.*

*But all I can do is be an example, to live each day, tryin to show people that there is a better way. To let them know that if, if you want, if you dream, and you really want your dream to become true, reach out and grab it. It takes work. Nothin is gonna come. It’s not gonna fall in your lap. You gotta work for it. So, if you if you want it, it’s there grab it. And all I can be is that example. Each day when I go in and I look at those little 19 or 21 kids I have—any time I see a young person—I try I try to instill in them that it’s a it’s a life out there. And it’s a good life, if you want it. But you have to work for it. Nothing comes easy.*

## **Merci**

*Hmmm... Like in the grammar schools it would be nice to have some of that technology like the Smartboards that they have here (Mercer). The kids in grammar school would love that cause it’s hands on. And they can actually see what they’re learning. If I could change that, you know I would. I would put one in every school. In every room, if I could change that. I would, I would. I would do everything in my power to try to raise teachers’ pay. And give them a little bit more leeway on what they teach. Because if it keep goin like it is now...Hooo! And it’s just kinda sad, and there’s nothing you can do about it. Cause you can try, but you know, still, there’s nothing you can do about it. They grow up, and some of em make it, and it’s a miracle.*



*Somebody's prayin for em. Somebody like me, you know, you just keep em in your mind and you pray for em. All the time. But most of em, I've seen em, and either they're dead, or in jail, or strung out somewhere on the street. And it's really sad. I saw, one little girl, she's about 15 now, and she's just shprew, she's out there. She's not in school, she just walk the streets all day long. And you know what she doin, if she just walkin the streets all day long.*

### **Alyiah**

*I don't think it's ever goin be a time where the private schools are goin be 50/50 like they want it. That's not goin happen. Mm mm. They always goin have it separate. To be honest, I really don't see much changing. By the time my son get to middle school or high school, I think you still goin have private schools. You still gonna have the majority o white kids goin there. They are not goin change. They can pretend, they can fake it, but they are not gonna change. And I think that's gonna hurt our community here in Macon as far as the Black students. I still think that the public school system may not be up to par like they need to be. I really don't think that public school—for some reason, it's just not doin the best right now. In Bibb County you still have a lot of kids entering college that barely can write a essay. That barely can pass the SAT test. I think the best education goals would be to make sure that all Black families instill in their children that they need to get a good education. And they need to enforce that. And make sure. I mean even if your child gets in a gang or gets on drugs or get pregnant, there are so many opportunities and programs to help students get back on track, and get a good education. It really don't make no sense not to get a good education. But my last thing I wanna say—you just have to make the best of it where ever you are. And if you can't take it, get out. And that's all Imma say.*

## Conclusion

The first set of stories (Chapter IV) reflected questions I asked about the period of time when Macon was still operating under the tenets of the so-called “Separate but Equal” doctrine, just prior to the court mandate to integrate public schools—in other words, the late 1960s. In the late sixties, there were no school zones, no lines, and no districts. Children simply went to the school that was closest to their home (*Macon Telegraph*, 1967), and that matched their race.

Veda and Ruth were teachers in 1970, the time of desegregation. They had both grown up in the Jim Crow South, witnessed the Civil Rights Movement from its inception, and would arguably become pawns in Macon’s desegregation attempts (although they did not indicate that they see/saw themselves as such). For instance, I found it interesting that the school board moved teachers first. Veda and Ruth indicated that they were told it was done as such so the adults could set the example for the children of how to behave in a racially mixed environment. I wonder, on the other hand, if the school board really thought that integrating the teachers would be enough to satisfy the court. Bibb County Public Schools had successfully delayed the desegregation of schools for 16 years; did the board actually think that moving a few “token” (Black) teachers to schools where they would be in the racial minority would qualify as integration? How were these black teachers selected. Did they volunteer? How much did the teachers, both Black and White, know about this? How did these teachers, both Black and White feel about what they knew? How did those feelings then affect pedagogy? Behavior? Morale? Academic performance? These questions forge an intriguing path to follow for future research.

From the interviews, one of the most common themes that emerged from my participants was discipline—or the lack of discipline (depending on the timeframe)—and the domino effect it caused in the school system and their community. When Veda, Ruth, and Alethea (who was in

junior high at the time) talked about education in the late 1960s, they talked about discipline (which seemed to be a euphemism for corporal punishment). This appeared to be, at least in their opinions, the most important factor in determining whether a school was viewed as successful or not. They believed that to teach effectively, the teacher must have the discipline under control in order for learning to take place, and that the most efficient way for that discipline to be controlled was through corporal punishment, or at least the threat of such. They all felt strongly that paddling maintained discipline in the classrooms, and led to an atmosphere of respect. The way I understood it, Black teachers felt that corporal punishment was an integral part of the educational experience. They remembered that the threat of corporal punishment caused the students to behave in appropriate and desirable ways. Once teachers were relocated to teach in schools that were no longer segregated, corporal punishment was no longer an option for them. It was still legal, but it had to be administered by the principal. I also understand that Black teachers knew there would be horrendous repercussions if they ever dared touch a White child. (I do not know how White teachers felt about this, but this could be a possible point of future research.) This in turn, created a situation whereby they (Black teachers) also could not paddle a Black child. So their predominant method of classroom management was taken away from them. According to all my participants, without the discipline (i. e. corporal punishment) effective teaching could not take place.

As a result, according to my participants, students lost respect for their teachers, their parents, each other, and themselves. They lost hope when they realized that the system of which they had fought so very long and hard to be a part deserted them as soon as they arrived and deprived them of the opportunity to learn from each other. In the words of my participants, morale plummeted. Moral decay crept in. Dropouts, drugs (use and sales), teenage pregnancy,

guns, gangs, apathy, and self-hatred increased. Poverty perpetuated. The strong sense of faith and spirituality that had carried their people for hundreds of years and through the very worst of times disappeared, which caused families to fall apart. (Veda mentioned earlier that she did not know how people got the idea that Black teachers were inferior. Perhaps it stemmed from this situation—another domino down.) With all of these forces in play, it is easy to see how discipline affected pedagogy. Yet looking more deeply at the situation, I can also see that the school board's decision to force integration upon two unwilling groups of people, whereby one group (Blacks) was expected to assimilate into the culture of the dominant group (Whites), without any attempt by the Whites to accommodate the Black cultural and pedagogical norms into the integrated schooling system, had the disastrous effect on the Black community that they were viewed as troublemakers and *undisciplined*, when perhaps they were quite disciplined and capable of operating in an atmosphere of mutual respect—which was arguably absent in desegregated schools.

Danns (2005) talked about the importance White teachers placed on controlling the behavior of Black students during the early 1970s. Danns described how Whites controlled the schooling process for both White and Black citizens. Because, Danns said, Whites wanted to keep Blacks in their place, and had the political capital to do so, curriculum was watered down, tracking systems were implemented, and apathy soon set in. According to Henry (2005), writing about the same time period, control in this context meant assimilation into the White culture of schooling. Where in the past, the Black community had equated a quality education to one that was fostered within a culture of care and prepared the students for living an independent, productive life (St. John & Cadray)—the White community judged the quality of education by academic standards that prepared men for the university and women for married life. Through

my research I realized that while much ado has been made in the White community about working mothers vs. stay-at-home mothers, Black women were not often given that luxury of choice. I am now cognizant of the situation that was, inasmuch as the jobs available to Black men were largely agricultural and/or industrial, and quite often did not provide sufficient financial means to support a family. Thus the women, the mothers, were forced to work—quite often as maids (or help) for White women who did not want to raise their own children or clean their own houses (Manis, 2004). Certainly this was not always the case, but my point is that school was approached differently because of these realities. And because Whites were in the position of power, Blacks were expected to assimilate to the White ways of schooling or accept failure (Henry 2005, Perlstein, 2005).

Prior to desegregation, my participants remembered that in their communities students held teachers and parents in high esteem, and that attaining an education was viewed as a worthy goal. Siddle-Walker and Tompkins (2004) discussed the great respect Black students had for their Black teachers during the time of segregation—largely due to the fact that the teachers were real with the students, as in they told it like it was, which garnered respect for the teachers. My participants were willing to acknowledge the inequity that existed between the White and Black public schools, but neither Veda nor Ruth was willing to concede said inequity as a hindrance to their achieving their goals. Veda clearly stated that she was not going to let the fact that she had only second-hand materials prevent her from teaching what she needed to teach, while Ruth and Alethea both felt they could have had better experiences teaching and learning (respectively) had they had access to the materials that White schools had. And truth be told, equal access, equal opportunity education is what the Black community sought—not integration (Cecelski, 1994).

In the beginning, Veda was very pragmatic and detached from the stories she told. She could detail the awfulness of the “River Rats” and the Georgia State Fair without ever looking up from the handbag she clutched so tightly to her chest. It was almost as if she were telling the story of something that happened to someone other than her own family. But later, as time went on (and I think as she grew more comfortable with me), she was able to articulate how hurtful situations were; like when Black teachers would try to join White teachers at the lunch table, only to have the White teachers move away. Veda referenced that she knew the Black teachers were offended by the White teachers’ actions (but did not indicate that this had been her personal experience). In fact, neither Veda nor Ruth mentioned any of the racial tension that undoubtedly existed in the schools at that time (as Alethea, Merci, and Alyiah described). Rather both women expressed gratitude that they had been able to keep their positions and as such, they did not want to make waves or cause trouble. Perhaps they simply approached their “new” situations with open minds and were determined to let positivity and God lead the way. Another possibility is that they felt they had no choice. Nevertheless, I do not doubt that they experienced some race-based ugliness; I just believe they preferred to leave those particular pieces of their histories in the past.

Ruth seemed to view the world through rose-colored glasses, as she has done for the ten years I have known her. For almost a decade (when we worked together) I watched her smile in the face of adversity, greet resistance with an open hand, and teach her heart out to the children who needed her most (in the resource room). When I think of Ruth I think of warmth and friendliness. It did not surprise me that it took some time before she would really say anything negative. It is simply not her style to do so. As such, I am even more grateful for her willingness to participate.

Alethea seemed to hold nothing back. If she did not say something it was because she did not experience it. Alethea is very perceptive and attentive to the world around her, and she is comfortable enough with me to be forthright about her experiences. I know her mother died young, and it is sad to me that one of her most vivid memories of her mother is that she lived in such fear she had to carry a baseball bat with her for protection. That memory alone paints a vivid portrait of what Macon was like for the community during that time.

Merci and Alyiah did not attend school in the late 1960s, and so any memories they shared about this time (which were few) were of something they had been told by an older family member. Both women indicated that their families had sheltered them and protected them from a lot of the ugliness of the time. Alethea also felt that her parents had tried to shelter her from a great many things, but when her mother died so young (1973), exposure to the harshness of society became inevitable.

What I heard from each of my participants was that they knew racial tension permeated society (then and now), but for one reason or another they all said they were unaffected by it—although to acknowledge or do otherwise would be to let “it” win. I am sure to some extent they may have been sheltered, or protected, or too young to remember, but I sensed that they may also have been acculturated not to acknowledge pain in the face of the one who caused it—and although I am certainly not the root of the evil that is racism, I cannot discount the reality (nor can they) that I am in fact, White. Nonetheless I did not hear blame, accusations, or hatred—nor did I hear resignation, complacency, or defeat. Instead I heard adaptability, resilience, unity, and hope. I think at first all of my participants were uncomfortable discussing the wretched and painful past. And I do understand the sacrifice of opening a Pandora’s box that has been closed

for decades. Yet everything these women told me showed their willingness to forgive and move on—to try for a better day.

The discussions in Chapter V were framed around questions directly related to early 1970, when the citizens of Macon were mandated by a court order to follow the law and end the practice of racial segregation in schools. The desegregation, immediately followed by resegregation (in the form of private schools) led to a return to a dual school system in Macon—a public (read Black) and a private (read White) system. With that, Macon also returned to the prior condition whereby the Black public schools, like many across the United States, face(d) underqualified/inexperienced teachers (Freeman, Scafidi, and Sjoquist, 2005), social promotion, and insufficient curricula (Stovall, 2004; Watkins, 2005).

At times the participants' memories strayed off the beaten path—toward the future or back to the past—but their asides provided context for the overall picture of society as it was then. Again Veda and Ruth were in a position to remember more about the societal issues at that time than the other participants, simply because they were already adults in 1970. But the younger participants were able to provide insight (from the students' perspective) into how Black students were received in an integrated school system (not well). Both Veda and Ruth referred to the so-called attempt at desegregation as the “big turnover.” I wish I had asked one of them exactly from where that term had come. (The term did not stand out to me during the interview process). It is a vexing choice of descriptor. When I think of turnover I think of employment—where the word refers to a person leaving one job for another. Used in this context, there are so many possible reasons why Veda and Ruth could have called the movement “the big turnover.” Teachers were moved from one school to another. Students were moved from one school to another. The entire Black school system was annihilated and assimilated into what had been the



White school system. And then the Whites pulled out and created a new White, private school system. Everything was indeed “turning over.” Perhaps this is what they meant.

At times the participants shared more with me by what they were unable to articulate than by what they actually said. For example, when Veda whispered the word “Whites” in describing the changing neighborhoods, she looked around to see if anyone else was within earshot, and she covered the side of her mouth to hide her lips from anyone who might have been able to see through my closed office door. I was especially intrigued by this because throughout all the interviews, I noticed the participants referring to White people as “them,” or even less (i.e. Alethea discussed how there were just a few in her school—but she did not say a few *what*. Merci and Alyiah talked about a handful of “em” at their schools, but never specifically identified what “em” was). This phenomenon reminded me of “He Who Must Not Be Named” in the *Harry Potter* novels (Rowling, 1999). Lord Voldemort (He Who Must Not Be Named) was so infinitely evil that those who dwelt in the world of witchcraft and wizardry could not even utter his name for fear of invoking his wrath. I sensed this same type of feeling exuding from my participants—not necessarily directed at me, but in such a way that if they dared speak the word the horrors of the past would be unleashed upon them.

Another possibility is that the memories were simply too painful. Veda was keenly aware of the issues engulfing Macon in 1970 and she mentioned certain people being “attacked” and/or “abused” by having been “called outta their names.” But she did not, could not, say what they had been called (nor did I need her too). Instead she talked about the strength the people in her community had, derived from the faith they had in God, which guided them to rise above the ilk and keep striving toward a unified society. She was always looking forward, always optimistically pragmatic. Similarly, Ruth talked about the strength of a unified community, and

that nothing needed to be said insofar as “what they would do if...” Everyone just understood that if there was a need, they would all stand together. And like Veda, she was very positive, very progressive in her thinking, and a practitioner of passive resistance despite the fact, as Reardon and Yun (2005) showed, that White flight from the public schools voided the efforts for educational equality pursued by African-Americans.

Alethea, on the other hand, appeared to me motivated more by anger rather than by hope or optimism. She did not hesitate to use the wretched epithet if she felt it was appropriate to the discussion. (Yes, I too, choose to refrain from using the word except when repeating Alethea’s stories. That word is not part of my vernacular). More importantly Alethea quite often talked about place. She talked about how as children she and her siblings “knew their place” within their household. Later she talked about how she understood Mayor Ronnie Thompson demonstrated his belief that Black citizens had no place in the Macon community—reflecting a sentiment Falk (2004) borrowed from sociologist Thomas Gieryn, “To be without a place of one’s own—*persona non locata*—is to be non-existent” (p. 175). Alethea knew, even as a child, that Macon’s White leaders wanted her to be *persona non locata*. And she seemed to understand place as a social construction, much in the way Falk (2004) described:

Thus place is not so much geography as how people come to use it and define it into existence for themselves. In this way, it is purely a social construction, established and maintained by a history of social relationships, thus given meaning by residents. (p. 174)

Alethea voiced frustration at the societal “place” she witnessed her father accept as he would say, “Yes ma’am” to a young White cashier. And she was deeply affected by her mother’s fear, her father’s acquiescence, and the injustices perpetrated by the White community of Macon as they

showed time and again that they were unwilling to accept African-Americans as equals (or God forbid, friends).

Even as young as they were in 1970, Merci and Alyiah both felt that same sentiment at the schools they attended. Although neither they nor Alethea attended integrated schools, they did attend school in a system that was supposedly integrated. All three women felt they had been discriminated against by White teachers, and knew of siblings or friends who had similar experiences. All of the participants were glaringly cognizant of the White Flight to private schools that kept them (Alethea, Merci, and Alyiah) from attending integrated schools. I have become starkly aware of the difference between desegregation and integration. Bibb County Schools, as a system, desegregated. But its schools never fully integrated. It is painful for me to look back and see that the Black community of Macon had to fight for a decade and a half to force the school board to abide by the law set forth in *Brown v. Board of Education*—and then find that as soon as the system desegregated, the Whites quickly resegregated by building a private school system into which the majority of Blacks could not afford to buy.

The questions in Chapter VI were intended to investigate the effects that Macon's predominantly White private school system had on the Black community and the now predominantly Black public school system. I wanted to examine how the actions of and decisions made by the White community in Macon forty years ago might have left the door open for some of the very serious problems the city, county, and public school system is facing today. I found that each of the participants readily acknowledged that White flight from the public schools drained funding and resources, and that it was blatantly stated at all levels of government and society that the private schools were created in the spirit of perpetuating segregated education (Manis, 2005; Roche, 1998).

Each of the participants talked about different ways their worlds had been shaped by the resistance of White Macon to allow integration. However what really needs to be said (I am aware of my repetition of this important point), loudly and clearly throughout all of Bibb County, is that although Macon's Black students were allowed to attend any public school in Bibb County, what they really wanted was an education that was equal to what the White students were getting. That never happened. It still is not happening. And those in a position to make a positive impact on the system refuse to by their participation in and perpetuation of the White private school system. I see what has happened to the public schools here as a self-fulfilling prophesy—at least in part. Anyon (2005) and Stovall (2004) both warn of the dangers of low expectations—inasmuch as children (students) will live up to what is expected of them. If no one expects them to succeed, why should they believe they would? This sentiment directly impacts the (predominantly Black) public school children in Macon, because when the White parents pulled their children out of public schools and built a private school system, they sent a strong signal to the Black community that they would not be—would never be considered equal. Anyon (2005) also questions the incentive Black children have to succeed in school due to the lack of gainful employment opportunities available upon graduation. Thus as the Black community now suffers under the shadows of abject poverty, gang violence, absentee parents, drugs, and a failing public school system that expects the worst from them—the White community can look down from their ivory towers and say, “See, I told you so. Our children cannot go to school with them. No one can learn in those schools.” But my participants did not say that. I did.

An interesting point Merci raised was that doctors (who delivered babies) decided to which race the newborn would belong. She mentioned that her sister had two babies with the

same husband/father, and one baby was pronounced White at birth and the other was pronounced Black by the White male doctor. In Chapter I I mentioned that in the South one was either White or Black—and there really were no other races. Merci's vignette certainly lends support to my argument. However I find it interesting to contrast that point of view with Wing's (2003) "Social Construction Thesis," in which she contends that race is a social construction and provides the example of how descriptions of her own race changed in various places she would visit. Given all three perspectives (my observation, Merci's statement, and Wing's thesis) I cannot see how race could be anything other than a social construction. So if race is socially constructed (Wing, 2003), and place is socially constructed (Falk, 2004), then changes to either have to take place within society. Societal change must begin in the schools (Rury, 2002; Spring, 2005). But our schools in Macon are stratified, those in position to affect change are segregated...I feel like I am going in circles.

Merci also raised the issues of "cookie-cutter method of teaching" or "one-size fits all" approaches that schools take with children (Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen, 2003), and how those who do not fit this mold are marginalized (Freire, 2007; MacDonal, 1995). The heart-wrenching examples she provided of developmentally inappropriate curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom management provide a glimpse into what today's society expects from school children. Sit down, be quiet, and pass the test. *I got mine, now you get yours.*

The story of Macon and Bibb County Public Schools is an ugly one. It is hurtful. This was never more evident than watching the expressions and body language of my participants as they bared their souls in my office. Often times they were unable to look me in the eye when they talked. Sometimes they would clutch their handbags or a tissue. Other times they were animated and excited. But at the end of it all, I have felt so intimately connected to these women

and their stories that honestly, when I was transcribing interviews, at times it was difficult for me to distinguish their voices from mine. Perhaps that is because I was listening to what the hearts said, rather than just the mouths.

The stories that these women have shared with me are so very emotional. At times it was painful for me to continue writing them. I am amazed that I had to get a doctoral degree to ascertain the information that they always understood. While I clearly comprehend, acknowledge, and accept the parameters of White privilege, the preceding statement seems counterintuitive to said privilege. That could be a whole other study, I suppose. Regardless, I am overwhelmed and eternally grateful for the pieces of themselves that they were willing to share with me. I know it was not easy for them. I feel many things coming from these women—patience, perseverance, self-efficacy, spirituality, resilience, optimism, and love. And I cannot comprehend why these women, who exude all of these positive qualities, are still oppressed by systemic and personal forces in a society in which they have more than paid their dues. Furthermore, all of these women hold college degrees in education. They believe in the power of education. They took advantage of every opportunity they could to make life the best it could be for them and their families. In turn, they expect their own children to do the same. They are also wise. They possess a wisdom that can only be attained through experience, reflection, and belief in a power higher than humans. This wisdom provided them the strength they would need to succeed in a society that did not want them to, was not structured for them to, and in many ways resents the fact that they have. Perhaps a topic for future research would be to study this resentment, especially with regard to the ways that Black teachers were undercut by White teachers. Nonetheless, the gravest issue, which came out especially through my conversations with Merci (when she mentioned the big signs at the Terminal Station) and Alyiah (when she

discussed her American educational history class), is that students today are not being taught any kind of history that would allow them to have a sense of what their ancestors went through. And this is true across all races. People live in the now, and take their present situations for granted. People do not stop to think what someone else went through for them to enjoy life as they know it. Without sounding too elementary, I would like to say that even though things are honestly rough in Macon right now, I know conditions are better than when this was a major slave market. But the debt of gratitude today's generation owes to its predecessors is glaringly absent. Unfortunately when history is glossed over, or only presented from one point of view, children will never learn to appreciate it. History becomes wars and dates. And then it repeats itself. And that is what we are witnessing now. *The more things change, the more they stay the same...*

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## Appendix

Lara's Diary

September 4

*Dear Diary,*

*Hi! It's me! Tomorrow is my first day of school, and I am so excited! My family moved all the way here - to the middle of nowhere - over the summer. I have been so lonely for a friend. I cannot wait to get to school tomorrow and be around some twelve-year-olds like me!!! I'll let you know how it goes!*

*Good night!*

*Lara*

September 5 (morning)

*Dear Diary,*

*Today is the day! I am going to start school! Seventh grade at last! And...I get to make some friends!!!!!! I hope it doesn't take too long (at least by second period)—*

*Wish me luck!*

*Lara*

September 5 (night)

Dear Diary,

Today really had it's ups and downs. It was not what I hoped it would be. First of all, I am the only white kid in the whole school! All the kids are black, and they all seemed like they didn't want me there. I hope I never made the black kids back at my old school feel like that. If I did, I sure didn't mean to, and I'm awfully sorry.

It was a very hard day. I've never been the new kid before. I had all my same friends for my whole life. I guess I never knew how lucky I was. I've also never been the only white person around before, and I didn't know it mattered. I thought I would make friends easily—like I did in my old school—with everybody. I had black friends before, but I just saw them as my friends and didn't care about the color of their skin.

But being the one on the outside is different, especially when you don't know anybody. I never had to try to fit in before. I guess I never really even knew I was white, I just knew I was Lara. I bet the black kids always know they're black though—I never thought about it before.

Back to my day...No one except teachers even talked to me all morning. It was lonelier than being alone. We're not really supposed to talk during class, and the teachers all put us in assigned seats anyway, so that part wasn't so bad. Changing

*classes was tough though, because everybody likes to talk in the halls—but not to me.*

*The worst part of the day was lunch. When I got to the lunchroom, I walked in the door and everybody looked at me like, "What is she doing in here?" I looked around to see if there was anywhere I could sit, and every time I looked at a different table, the kids sitting there kind of scooted together to let me know that I wasn't going to sit with them. (I really hope I didn't do that to anybody at my old school.)*

*All the kids were doing what I used to do—eating pizza or chicken sandwiches and catching up on the latest gossip and on what everybody did over the summer. But these people were already friends, and I didn't know any of them. Even if I sat with them, I wouldn't know what they were talking about, and I would have nothing to tell.*

*I felt so lonely. I felt lonely because I didn't know anybody. And I felt lonelier still because I was so different than every one else there. I just felt like every body was looking at me, and I felt like I didn't belong. I'm sure if we talked, we would see that we like a lot of the same things—boys, music, make-up, and clothes. But it didn't look like any of them would talk to me to find that out.*

*I wanted to shout out to the whole lot of them "Hey! I'm Lara! And I'm nice, so give me a chance!" But when I tried to smile at some kids, they looked at me like they thought I was doing something wrong. Boy, I hope I never did that to anybody, black—white—or otherwise! I wonder if I did...without even knowing. I wonder if they knew they were doing it to me. I bet I'm the first white girl to go to this school.*

*Anyway, I was hungry, so I held my head up high, and I walked up to the lunch line to get my food. I took my place at the end of the line, and some really pretty girls were standing in front of me. They were talking to each other, and then one of them saw me looking at her and she kind of smiled and told me her name was Shelby. I told her my name and I smiled back at her. Shelby's friends told me hi, too, but then the three of them went back to their conversation.*

*When they got their food, they turned around to look at me and see what I was getting. I think they wanted to know if I ate the same food they did. Shelby got pizza, her friend in the green dress got a chicken sandwich, and the girl with the purple hi-tops just got French fries. When the cook asked me what I wanted—without even thinking I blurted out "Pizza, a chicken sandwich, and French fries, please!" When Shelby and her friends heard my order, they looked at each other and burst out laughing. Much to my surprise so did I—but I was just nervous. I*

*looked at them and said, "I'm really hungry today." That only made them laugh harder.*

*As they walked away to go find a table, the girl in the purple hi-tops turned back to me and said, "See ya tomarra, Hungry Lara." And I just stood there and watched them walk away. I had hoped they would invite me to sit with them, but they didn't—and I just felt embarrassed.*

*I looked around the lunchroom hoping to find an empty table so I could just sit by myself and eat and get out of there. Instead, I saw a girl sitting all by herself.*

*She was the girl I had seen in the hall earlier who was a whole lot taller than all the other kids—even taller than most of the teachers. She was really skinny, too, and I had overheard some of the kids in the hall call her "Bones." I walked over to her table and asked her if I could sit with her. She looked at me for a minute, and then said, "It's a free country." I told her that my lunch sure wasn't free, and she looked at my plate stacked with food and just started laughing. She said, "Yeah, I know, Hungry Lara." But she said it with such a sweet smile; I knew she understood how I was feeling. Then she told me her name was Bonita, even though some jerky boys liked to call her "Bones."*

*We talked through what was left of lunch, and I told her I had just moved to town over the summer and that I had played soccer at my old school. Bonita said our*

*school here didn't have a soccer team, only football and basketball. She said that even though she was tall, she didn't like to play basketball. She liked to dance, and had been taking tap, ballet, and jazz since she was three years old. I told her I liked to dance too, and that maybe she could take me to one of her classes some time. She said, "Yeah, maybe." Then the bell rang, and lunch was over. I didn't see Bonita again for the rest of the day. Luckily, I didn't see Shelby and her friends, either. I hope I get to eat lunch with Bonita again tomorrow. She might become my friend. Maybe she already is. I'll let you know how it goes.*

*Good night!*

*Lara*