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If You Can't Find Me in the School Room: Oral Histories of African American Educators and Students During the Albany Movement

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IF YOU CAN'T FIND ME IN THE SCHOOL ROOM: ORAL HISTORIES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS DURING THE ALBANY MOVEMENT

by

MAQUETA N. GRISWOLD

(Under the Direction of Ming Fang He)

ABSTRACT

This is an inquiry into oral histories of four African American educators and students who experienced the Albany Movement which began on November 17, 1961. Mary Royal Jenkins, Rosa McGhee, Beverly Plummer Wilson and Ruby Nell Singleton Stroble were participants for my study. Theoretically drawing upon the work of Derrick Bell (1992), Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2001), Gloria Ladson-Billings (2003), Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate (2005) on critical race theory and methodologically upon the work of Cynthia Stokes Brown (1988), Kate Cavett (2005), David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum (1996), Vincent Harding (1981), and Elaine Latzman Moon (1994) on oral history, I explored oral histories of the African American women educators and students who experienced segregation, integration, and educational change during the Albany Movement. I reflected upon my experience as a student who integrated into the Dougherty County School System, as an African American educator, and as an administrator in a predominantly African American school. I weave freedom songs, an integral part of the Civil Rights Movement, throughout my dissertation with the intent to connect oral histories of the movement with its unfaltering and courageous spirit which made the movement protestors *keep their eyes on the prize*.

I have recognized that a sense of belonging and recognition of community spirit are key to the education and liberation of African Americans. I hope we will learn from the experience of my participants during the Albany Movement. I hope that educators and students build allies with parents, administrators, and other educational workers to organize freedom movements to battle against all forms of oppression, suppression, and repression. Teachers and educators continue to work to find ways to create hopes and dreams for students to reach their "highest potential" (Vanessa Siddle-Walker, 1996) instead of disciplining their bodies and imprisoning their minds. I call for a curriculum of caring and justice, that was lost during the process of integration, and that, I believe, helps motivate, organize, and liberate all students to become active participants and positive changing agents in cultivating a better and just human condition for all in a contested world.

Index words: Critical Race Theory, African Americans, Education, desegregation, Integration, Segregation, Oral History, Narrative Inquiry, Determination, Music, Civil Rights, Cultural Communities

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DEDICATION

Without GOD none of this would be possible. At this precise moment in time, I am where GOD meant for me to be. Each individual who has shared this journey with me is precisely where GOD meant for them to be. For some unknown reason GOD brought us together and because of our current place on this journey, I will forever be grateful. Without each of you, this road would have never been traveled. For your guidance and support, I dedicate this work to each of you.

Civil Rights Activists/Participants – This work is dedicated to you for traveling a road that has impacted not only my life, but the lives of all individuals who believe in equality for everyone. Without your commitment to the Civil Rights Movement, I would not be where I am today. Perhaps I would not have had the opportunity to attend Georgia Southern University and produce a document that allowed your stories to be shared with others. This road was traveled because of your dedication and to you I dedicate this work.

Emmett L. Griswold, III – You have been my rock since you entered into my life. You simply took my hand and never let go. Throughout this journey you have been there, loving me, supporting me and guiding me. To you, I will forever be grateful.

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Jesse and Gloria W. Peters- My wonderful parents, you have allowed me to become the person that I am today. Your prayers, your guidance and your strength have carried me

when I couldn't carry myself. Thank you for being my strength and allowing me to determine my own directions on this road.

Natasha Griffin and Josette Bynum – To my sisters who listened to curriculum book talk and pretended to understand what I was talking about, I appreciate your ears. Deep down inside, I believe that some where the information we shared helped you to make decisions about the education of my nieces and nephews.

Annie Lois Whiters- My grandmother, your stories about our history never cease to intrigue me. Your stories gave me the strength to write, you were my inspiration.

Emmett and Josephine Griswold- My wonderful in-laws, first and foremost I thank you for giving me the most precious gift a parent can give anyone, your son. You both have truly been a blessing to me. You have been supportive in everything that we have decided as a family to do to make our lives better for ourselves and our children. Thank you for being the wonderful people who you are.

Nicie Johnson- My great grandmother, although you were unable to see my travel along this road to the end, I know in my heart that your spirit is always with me.

Joe Nathan Sanders- My father, our travels together have been up and down on this bumpy road, but in the end we came together and I know that you are in heaven smiling down on me saying, "You go girl".

To my other family members and friends who have support me, guided me and gave me words of encouragement along the way, thank you, without you none of this would have been possible. Together you were the signs along the road that allowed me to make this journey. I don't know what my next journey in life will be, but I pray that each and every one of you will once again travel the road with me.

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I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Mecca Williams-Johnson, Dr. Wynnetta Scott-Simmons, and Dr. John Weaver for your encouraging words and recommendations concerning this body of work. The knowledge that you presented to me, encouraged me to think beyond what I believed to be possible. Your insight into the field of curriculum studies and methodology helped me to expand my knowledge and grow as an individual. You are truly an asset to Georgia Southern University and its student body. To each of you I would like to say thank you.

To Mary Royal Jenkins, Rosa McGhee, Beverly Plummer Wilson, and Ruby Nell Singleton Stroble without your voices this would not have been possible. The Albany Movement would not have been possible without your strength. Your willingness to fight for equality for all, by putting your lives on the line and marching on to freedom's land provided us with opportunities that we never would have had. Your dedication to the movement and its goals will never be forgotten. Merely saying thank you would not enough, buying you flowers would not be enough, the only way I know to show you my

appreciation is to continue your work in helping to make our world a better place. Your work is an inspiration and I pray that this work will allow your voices, your stories to always be told.

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I'll be studying over there

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And you can't find me nowhere
Come on down to the courthouse
I'll be voting right there

If you miss me from the Thrifty Drug Store
And you can't find me nowhere
Come on over to Woolworth's
'Cause I'll be sitting in there

If you miss me from the picket line
And you can't find me nowhere
Come on down to the jailhouse
I'll be rooming down there

If you miss me from the Mississippi River
And you can't find me nowhere
Come on down to the municipal plunge
'Cause I'll be swimming in there

If you miss me from the front of the bus
And you can't find me nowhere
Come on up to the driver's seat
I'll be driving up there

Written by Charles Neblett of the Freedom Singers

Sung to the tune of "O Mary Don't You Weep"

The Spirit of the Freedom Song Connection

Music is a central part of the African culture and when the first Africans arrived in America, they brought with them this part of their culture and it has become a dominant part of the African American culture. During slavery when African Americans were in the field, they would sing songs to communicate with each other in the fields and to tell stories of their oppressive masters; this musical connection was similar to the freedom songs that developed during the civil rights movement. During his time at the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, Guy Carawan was known for his influence on the music of the movement. "He met with groups gathered there and learned their songs, helping to adapt them to the movement activity in their communities" (Carawan, 2007, p.xix). Eventually these songs began to be heard throughout the country at various mass meetings in the community.

In black communities in the south, the church was the heart of the community and was the place where individuals came together for worship and to discuss the needs of the black community. "The black church was the heart of these communities--a source of spiritual and physical sustenance-and singing was central to the worship experience" (Carawan, 2007, p. xviii). Using the congregational hymns and the songs introduced to communities by Guy Carawan, the mass meetings became places where individuals believed that anything was possible.

Freedom songs became the inspiration and the motivation behind the movement and the mass meetings. These songs along with testimonials gave the mass of people involved in the movement the strength they needed to go out into the community and face the mobs of people who had decided that African Americans did not deserve the same

rights as Caucasian people. The meetings were powerful and full of meaning. Through these songs, individuals involved in the movement were allowed to say things that they never would have been able to say to Caucasians who wanted things to remain the same. These songs gave the participants of the movement a medium through which to tell their stories.

In 1962, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) established a singing group known as the Freedom Singers. This group was composed of Charles Neblett, Bernice Johnson, Cordell Reagon and Rutha Harris. This group of individuals would travel the country singing freedom songs and inspiring groups of people involved in mass meetings to go forth and do the work of making our society a better place for all people. Bernice Johnson Reagon said the following about singing during mass meetings:

> They could not stop our sound. They would have to kill us to stop us from singing. Sometimes the police would plead and say, 'Please stop singing.' And you would just know that your word was being heard, and you felt joy. There is a way in which those songs kept us from being touched by people who would want us not to be who we were becoming. There was a woman at Shiloh Baptist Church, who would sing one song, 'Come and Go With Me To That Land, for an hour. It was not a song anymore. (Williams, 1987, p. 177)

These songs allowed the participant to become someone who had courage, determination and was not afraid of anyone or anything. The songs made them persist with the goal of the movement and kept their eyes on the prize.

Music from the Civil Rights Movement was an integral part of the movement; therefore, it is an integral part of this study. Music from the movement will be woven

throughout this study to help tell the story of the movement and to help the reader understand the meaning behind the songs and the movement.

I am interested in these songs because they are embedded within my soul, attached to my culture, and the reasons for me being who I am. I grew up hearing these songs being sung in my great-grandmother's house and church. I understood the meaning of the songs before I even knew the words. Just as with other African Americans, music has always been a part of my environment. Music introduced me to a history that was rich with experiences of my ancestors. Music told me things about the society that my family members may have been afraid to say or refused to acknowledge. I believe that this is one of the reasons that when I think about the civil rights movement, I think of music. Freedom songs provided an opportunity for protestors to share their story. A story that it is so powerful, it deserves to be told over and over again.

PROLOGUE

I learned that if you bring black people together, you bring them together with a song. To this day, I don't understand how people think they can bring anybody together without a song.

-Bernice Johnson Reagon

I can only imagine the beginnings of the Albany Movement on November 17, 1961, in the home Dr. Ed Hamilton. I visualize a number of African Americans from all walks of life making the decision that the time had come for change. They were fed up and tired of being treated like second class citizens in a city that they had helped to build. There were problems within their communities and they wanted their needs to be addressed by the city government, but they were repeatedly denied. This meeting led to the organization of the Albany Movement. The Movement consisted of many families from the area, including the Harrises, the Jones, and the Gaines.

While the adults were making plans for change, local students were making plans also. "On November 22, three black high school students and Albany State students Bertha Gober and Blanton Hall were arrested for standing in the 'white' line to buy Trailway tickets" (Grant, 1993, p. 404). The three high school students, whose names were Julian Carswell, Eddie Wilson, and Evelyn Toney, were members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council.

In my mind I see that November 25th day, Julian Carswell, Eddie Wilson, Evelyn Toney, Bertha Gober and Blanton Hall, standing before the judge waiting for their sentence… being charged for standing in the "white only" line at the local bus station. Outside of the courthouse, I can hear 500 protesters, 300 of them being students from

Carver Junior High School, Monroe High School, and Albany State College, praying and singing:

We shall overcome.

We shall overcome.

We shall overcome someday.

Oh. Oh. Oh. Deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday!

With scenes such as these running through my mind often, making the decision to research the connection between African American educators and their students during the Albany Movement was an easy choice. I have always been interested in the history of the Civil Rights Movement and how the struggle of the movement affected the relationship between African American educators and students. Yet, oftentimes when my mind drifts back to this monumental time during the history of America, my thoughts make connections to the music of the movement. It does not matter what state or city is researched when it comes to the movement, one cannot complete a critical analysis of the movement without hearing about the importance of music during this time.

The singing of spiritual songs was essential to the mass meetings, the marches and the lunch counter sit-ins during the Civil Rights movement. These songs provided encouragement, gave protesters unheard of determination and reminded participants why the movement was important. As an African American who was born towards the end of the movement and did not directly experience the movement, but one who attends a predominantly African American church (Mt. Zion Baptist Church) on a regular basis, I can feel the importance of the movement when we sing spiritual hymns on Sunday mornings. I cannot think of a time other than when we pray that our congregation feels

more united than when Ms. Rutha Harris, one of the original Freedom Singers, stands and leads the congregation in singing *This Little Light of Mine, Walk with Me Lord* or *We Shall Overcome*. These songs are embedded in the African American culture and connect us as a people, because they remind us of the struggle and they tell our history in a way that no textbook or any book could ever tell. In his book, entitled *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement,* John Lewis discusses the importance of music to the movement and its ability to unite African Americans. Lewis and D'orso (1998) state the following:

> The traditional freedom songs remained central to our lives, as they were from the beginning. They still had the power to lift our spirits and draw us together, those old slow-paced spirituals and hymns like "Come By Here, Lord," as well as up-dated, upbeat jubilee-type songs about Jim Crow and Uncle Tom. (p. 268)

The connection between African Americans and music is strong and unbreakable, just as the connection between educators and students is strong and unbreakable.

The desire for a strong connection, a bond, an unbreakable force is what literally led me to the halls of Georgia Southern University's College of Education. I am gravely concerned about the future of African Americans. Although we are making many great gains as a race, and our future is looking brighter, I believe that it is equally important that we remember our past. Our past provides insights into our current day thoughts, our reactions to current situations, and reasoning as to why we are the culture that we have become.

Upon attending my first class in the Curriculum Studies doctoral program, I wondered if I had made the right decision, but I decided that I would use the information

that I gathered to help me develop a deeper understanding of society and schooling and that is exactly what has occurred. As I began taking courses, my views of society began to change. During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, African Americans and individuals of other races decided that African American students deserved an education that was equal to that of their white counterparts. The media coverage of education and many of the decisions that have been made in the past have had a profound impact on the education that our youth are currently receiving. I gained the desire to want to understand the experiences of educators and students during the civil rights movement when the decision was made to integrate schools. The path that education has taken and its effect on African Americans has became prevalent to me and I have decided to take a more personal and professional stand on this topic.

Although the Albany Movement focused on the integration of the entire community, school integration was one of the reasons for the development of the Albany Movement. African Americans in Albany and surrounding counties had a strong desire for their children to receive the same quality of education as Caucasian students. Four thousand individuals participated in the movement, over seven hundred individuals were arrested and too many individuals to count prayed daily for the movement to be successful. Many African Americans have fought and continue to fight for educational equality; however, as a race there are also African Americans who have forgotten the importance of the movement. Some have forgotten to tell their children how our ancestors fought and died, so that they could have a quality education.

I tell my children and my students often how we have opportunities today to receive an education that we were denied a mere four decades ago. I understand that this

goal, with its challenges, may be difficult for children to understand, but as adults we must continue to inform them of the importance of the civil rights movement until they understand what the movement did for African Americans. We must continue our fight for a quality education for African Americans and other minority students. Wanting a quality education for African American children is the responsibility of parents and teachers. Understanding past experiences of African American educators and students will provide insight for current educators.

My dissertation consists of five chapters; each chapter begins with a song from the Civil Rights Movement. These songs describe the struggles of the movement and display how dedicated African Americans were to their fight for equality and justice. Freedom songs tell the stories of the movement. The history, the determination of those involved, and the results of the movement deserve to be documented in written form; the oral stories need to be retold on a continuous basis, so that our history, America's history, will never be forgotten.

WOKE UP THIS MORNING WITH MY MIND ON FREEDOM: INTRODUCTION

Woke up this morning with my mind, stayed on freedom

Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom

Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on freedom

Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

-SNCC Freedom Song

The song *Woke Up This Morning with My Mind On Freedom* quoted above was song by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Singers and led by Bernice Johnson. "Reverend Osby made up this revamp of an old song ('I woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus') in the Hinds County Jail during the Freedom Rides" (Carawan, 2007, p. 73). This song depicts the strength of the Civil Rights participants and their dedication to the movement and its purpose.

The plight of African Americans has been a difficult one. Many individuals, male, female, black, white, young and old have fought a long battle for African Americans' civil rights that at times is only documented through oral history. One area that African Americans have fought for and struggled to improve is the equalization of education for their children. Beginning with a history of being denied the right to education, African Americans have continued to struggle academically. Reese (2005) states, "To Southerners, the specter of Blacks learning to read and write raised terrifying thoughts about the notion of human equality, and it united Whites of all social classes into a deadly defense of slavery" (p. 43). Whites wanted African Americans to remain inferior as slaves in their homes and the fields.

To keep African Americans in an inferior position, many Whites chose to deny their rights to an education. However, there were Whites who wanted minimal education for African Americans. Spring (2001) wrote, "These white Southerners supported schooling for African Americans as a means of teaching them industrial habits and keeping them on the lowest rungs of Southern society" (p. 220). African American educators were divided amongst themselves as to the type of education that their students should receive, therefore, the debate for the type of education that African Americans should receive began.

Two of the most outspoken individuals in this area of education were Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois who both believed that African Americans deserved an education; yet, they held two different perspectives on the type of education African Americans should receive. Washington thought that African Americans needed to be taught industrial skills in order to later display to society that they could prove themselves as contributors to society. Washington believed that for the time being, Blacks should accept their inferior positions within the society. "Through his writings, speeches, and work at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Washington urged blacks to avoid antagonizing whites and to shun involvement in politics; instead, they should work hard, practice thrift, and acquire ownership of their homes" (Holmes, 1991, p. 287). The problem with this theory was the possibility that African Americans would never be allowed to obtain equality.

DuBois felt that African Americans deserved the same status as Caucasians. He also believed that African Americans had a right to the same type of education that Caucasian Americans were receiving. "He also criticized Washington's opposition to

political involvement and protest, arguing that only by voting and agitating for their legitimate rights could blacks hope to win full citizenship" (Holmes, 1991, p. 288). In teaching children industrial education, DuBois believe that the importance of learning to read and write would be forgotten and African American education would focus more on skill based teaching. Watkins (1996) wrote the following:

> …the black college, in DuBois' view, should teach about social problems. Their curriculum should be infused with the problems of race, caste, and the socio-economic order. The black college should mercilessly critique every manifestation of injustice. Opposing the traditional view of the academy, DuBois felt the black college could not separate itself from politics and social reform. Speaking on the cultural mission of Atlanta University, DuBois suggested that a primary social objective of the black college should be to uplift the civilization. (p. 14)

DuBois believed that African Americans should obtain and use their education to provide them with the power to become equal to mainstream America.

The works of W.E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington led to the development of more schools for African Americans. Spring (2001) wrote, "…southern black citizens had to pay directly from their own income to build schools for their children, while, at the same time, they paid local and state taxes, which went primarily to support white segregated schools" (p. 226). Although African Americans paid their taxes for public schooling, the money went to funding schools for white children. By limiting the funding for African Americans to build schools for their children, white farmers were able to continue their hold on African Americans. "Many planters, believing that schooling

actually spoiled a good field hand, preferred their laborers illiterate or at best semiliterate" (Anderson, 1988, p. 149). This urgency to contain the progress of African-Americans eventually led to a limiting of funding for African American schools.

Despite limited funding and strong African American administrators and educators, African American schools continued to produce well educated students who made great contributions to American society. Eventually schools would become integrated and many African American students would begin to struggle both socially and academically. The field of education today still struggles to find ways to educate the African American child. What was it about education during those years when the country was segregated that made African American children have a desire to learn to be successful? What was lost when classrooms across the nation were no longer segregated?

African American educators and students who experienced the civil rights movement may provide many of the answers to the problems that began to arise when schools became desegregated. For this study, a small group of individuals, who were educators or students during the Civil Rights Movement in Albany, Georgia, will be interviewed and asked to document their experiences during the Albany Movement. Through their voices a deeper understanding of African American educators and students during these turbulent times will be developed.

Context of the Study

Get on board little children,

Get on board little children,

Get on board little children,

There's room for many a more

Get On Board, Little Children, was adapted by Sam Block and Willie Peacock members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). When I hear this freedom song, I am often reminded of the importance of my culture and how it is my responsibility as well as other African Americans to keep the stories of our culture vibrant and alive. African Americans have constantly had to struggle to be treated as equals in the United States of America. Our ancestors fought a long enduring battle that ended with many of their deaths in order to ensure that we experience a better life than they experienced. As I begin to think back on everything that I am aware of about my history and the history of the city where I was born, raised and continue to live in today, I realize that my knowledge of the civil rights movement is limited and it pains me to openly admit this. In some ways, I blame myself for this lack of knowledge; in other ways, I blame the public school setting. Through this process, my objective is to gain or enhance knowledge and understanding of African American culture. Becoming more knowledgeable in the area of education during the civil rights movement, I will be able to help present day educators connect with African American students and help the students to become more aware of African American history.

During the 1960s Albany, Georgia, was one of the communities along the Flint River with a population of approximately 50,000 people; approximately 22,000 of these individuals were African-Americans. Until the 1940' the majority of the population had been African Americans, but many African Americans had begun to migrate to other parts of the country to seek a better life. During the 1960s African Americans became upset with the way they were being denied proper treatment within their community and they decided to protest to make the community a better place for their children. Although

things have been slow to change, race relations in the city have begun to improve, but African American students within the community have continued to struggle academically. Currently the African American population in Albany has risen to the majority and African American students are the majority population within the public school setting.

Thinking back on my early years during the 1970s and 1980s, I cannot recall much about race relations in Albany, Georgia. When I was born my parents lived in an African American neighborhood. I have pictures of friends from school and they were both African American and Caucasian. It was in this complex, that I met two of my best friends and we are still best friends today. The apartments/houses that we lived in were small, but we were happy. I felt safe and would walk and play throughout the neighborhood, without incident. Eventually my family's income improved and we moved into another neighborhood.

The neighborhood where we moved was a racially mixed, working class neighborhood. The neighborhood was once a white working class neighborhood until African Americans began to move into the community. To my surprise, I learned that before we moved into this community, we had received public assistance. Yet, I remember my mother and father always working, my mother as a paraprofessional and my father worked at a local tire factory. The adults in my community worked a variety of jobs and in the afternoons I remember my friends and I would meet in the street after school and play until the sun went down. But, as more African Americans began moving into the neighborhood, Caucasian Americans began to move out.

When I entered high school, I was exposed to a new world. I became a mighty Tornado at Monroe Comprehensive High School. When I attended Monroe Comprehensive High School, it was a predominately African-American School. The faculty comprised of teachers from many different racial backgrounds, who pushed students to excel academically and socially. Teachers taught students about their cultural history as well as other cultural histories. Gay (2000) states the following, "As *cultural organizers*, teachers must understand how culture operates in daily classroom dynamics, create learning atmospheres that radiate cultural and ethnic diversity, and facilitate high academic achievement for all students" (p. 42). Many of the teachers at the school were living in Albany, Georgia, during the time of the Albany Movement; many of them were very vocal about their participation in the movement and their knowledge of the movement.

One of the teachers was a college student at the time and sang with the Freedom Singers and continues to do so today. Other teachers had just begun their teaching careers and remembered the experience as if it had happened on the previous day. I remember sitting in classes and listening to the teachers tell my classmates and me about the struggle and how we should be appreciative of our opportunities to attend any school of our choice and the opportunity to be served in any restaurant or shopping mall in the city. We were encouraged to learn everything that we could to make the world a better place for minorities.

I can vividly remember when the City of Albany did not honor the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, holiday. The third Monday of January 1986 came and many students stayed at home. Some students came to school because their parents believed that Dr.

King would have wanted African Americans to attend school and work in honor our of accomplishments; but at school that day, we were encouraged to walk out at noon and precisely at noon students began to leave campus. We felt as if we were involved in helping members of the community understand how grateful we were for Dr. King and his impact on the quality of life for the citizens of Albany, Georgia.

After high school, I attended Albany State College (now Albany State University), a historically black college for the summer semester and transferred to West Georgia College in the fall. For various reasons, things didn't go well at West Georgia College and I returned home to Albany State College. At Albany State College, I felt the connection as if it were meant for me to be there. During the Albany Movement, several students who attended Albany State College were members of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council and participated in prayer and protest. A few of the students participated in bus station sit-ins; they used the "white's only restrooms" and were suspended for their actions. It made me extremely proud to attend a college, where individuals were not afraid to fight for equality and positive change.

Presently, I am an assistant principal in the public school system in Albany, Georgia. In examining the present state of the Dougherty County School System, it appears as though once again the school system is becoming segregated. Many of the Caucasian students are leaving to attend school in predominately white private and public schools in nearby counties. The city of Albany is predominately African American as well as the local school system. Many of the African American students are excelling academically; however, some of them continue to struggle academically and socially. I

often wonder about the history of our community and its connection to the current situations we are experiencing today. I ponder over how difficult experiences during turbulent times, such as the civil rights movement, have affected our current state of education. I also question if participants involved in the movement believe that their participation in the movement was worth the outcome of the movement. I wonder what their feelings are concerning the current state of education. The movement cannot be found in any of the textbooks that our students read and study on a daily basis and rarely is the movement discussed unless it is Black History Month, during the month of February. The sharing of these experiences will provide insight into a history that for too long has been denied the opportunity to be told.

As an individual living in a city that has such a great history and attending a public school and college where students were actively involved in the Albany Movement, I am motivated to enhance my knowledge about their experiences and challenges during this time. Albany has changed in many ways, yet just as other parts of the country, there are many racial issues that continue to exist. Although many may say that Albany, Georgia, was a place that stood firm in its resistance to change in the 1960s, changes have been accomplished. The work that those 4,000 individuals committed to during the movement did have a positive impact on the community and without the struggle and the commitments; Albany, Georgia would be a different place today. I feel a strong urge to understand my community and its history and its effect on education in the south. I am hoping that this study will encourage others to become more involved in helping not only the African American community, but all communities. For this task to be understood, I need to gather data from those who participated in the movement and

learn about their experiences and analyze how their experiences impacted education, views of the south, and African Americans.

Key Research Issues

Get your rights, Jack

And don't be a Tom

No more, no more, no more, no more

Oh Ross, oh Ross don't treat me this way

Cause I'll get my civil rights one day

Oh no you won't cause it's understood

Your skin is black and you're just no good

The words for this song were created by the members of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), from the song, "*Hit the Road, Jack*" by Percy Mayfield. The song explains why there are so many issues about the culture of African Americans. Our society has been taught that *…it is understood… (our) skin is black and (we're) just no good.* Therefore, the importance of our well being, the importance of culture, and the importance of our education have always been insignificant. There are many individuals who are working to help improve the educational lives of African Americans (Delpit, 2006; Kunjufu, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). As an educator, I want to change this myth.

The overarching research issue in my study is to explore what we can learn from the experiences of African American educators and students in South Georgia during the Albany Movement. I am currently living in Albany, Georgia, and I am engrossed in the academic problems of African American students. I understand African American

students because I live and breathe their experiences every day, through my personal life, my husband's life, and my children's lives. I understand what it is like to work extremely hard for something and feel as though every time that you take one step forward, someone or something knocks you back a step or two. This is precisely what is happening to African American students. Our grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles fought a difficult battle in order for their children to receive what was deemed an appropriate and equal education, but somewhere along the way, the importance of an education, the significance of progress for African Americans and the importance of a village raising a child has become insignificant. Why?

I am currently an assistant principal in a school that has a majority population of African American students and teachers. Our students struggle academically and we get very little support from their home environments. The teachers constantly complain that the students are not motivated to learn, that the parents have little concern for the students' academics and that the majority of the students in their classrooms are discipline problems. When I talk with many of the students individually, the desire to learn is there. The students want to be successful academically, they like to attend school, but they are frustrated academically.

I seek to understand what happened to the African American educational experiences of the 1960s when administrators and educators made home visits, when parents pushed their students to excel academically, when the entire community took responsibility for each child in the neighborhood academically and behaviorally? Has integration hurt or helped our culture? What advice or wisdom can teachers and students

involved in the Albany Movement share with current day educators about the importance of their experiences during the Albany Movement?

In deciding key research issues for the study, it is imperative that I consider the type of research being conducted. This study is based on the memories and perspectives of individuals who lived in Albany, Georgia. Therefore, it is necessary to explore open-ended questions. In using open-ended questions, the participants will be able to expound on experiences that they perceived to be important during that era. These types of questions will also allow the researcher the opportunity to gather data that was not thought of as being essential to the study.

In reading *Studs Terkel, with Tony Parker, Interviewing an Interviewer*, it is understood that it is not necessary to develop research questions, but is essential to keep to the theme of the study. Terkel states the following in the article written by Parker (2007):

> One thing I'll never do is write my questions down. I'll not do it because it's false and it's unnatural and it's not what you do when you're having a conversation and it'll make them feel – here's that word again – interrogated. I want them to talk about what they want to talk about in the way they want to talk about it, or not talk about it, in the way they want to stay silent about it. It'll keep them to the theme – age or the Depression or work or whatever – but that's all (p. 125).

This statement is important in that it discusses the importance of allowing the participants the opportunity to tell the story as they remember it and inform the researcher of how they believe integration has affected African-Americans.

The study is imperative to all teachers of African American students, especially African American educators. You may ask why is this study especially important for African American educators? I believe that this study will help educators gather an understanding of how teachers in the past participated in and helped their students to understand a society that did not have the African American students' best interest in mind. Some teachers have forgotten that one of the major goals of the movement was to improve education for African American children. I believe that the time has come for African American administrators, educators, parents and students to remember the experiences of the past and work together for a better future.

Autobiographical Roots

Sometimes I'm tossed and I'm driven,

Sometimes I don't know where to roam

But on I've heard of,

Has anybody heard of,

I'm wondering have you heard of,

Of a city called Heaven,

I've started to make it my home.

The song above originally arranged by Cleo Kennedy, was rearranged by Guy Carawan. It reminds me of my journey towards a better understanding of who I am. I am the first born child of Joe Nathan Sanders and Gloria W. Peters and the stepdaughter of Jesse J. Peters, born in the city of Albany, Georgia. My father served in the military and fought in the Vietnam War, where he was eventually discharged due to a disability from being hurt during the war. My mother attended a local vocational school and began

working in the local school system. They both were from a small town about 30 miles outside of Albany, known during the civil rights movement as “Terrible Terrell”. Stephen G.N. Tuck (2001) wrote the following about Terrell County:

> After a front-page story in the *Washington Post* in June 1958, “Terrible” Terrell County had gained national notoriety for racial violence. The *Post’s* simple headline ran, “The Negroes of This South Georgia Town Are Scared.” During the course of a single week, three black men had been shot and killed by the police while numerous other black men and women were beaten. (p. 159)

Terrell County has always been known for its unfair treatment of African Americans and both of my parents grew up in this small county, experiencing segregation at its most ruthless. My mother graduated from the all Black high school in 1968 when the school system was integrated. She stated that very few African Americans transferred to the all White school and those individuals who transferred, were “treated like dogs”.

Growing up I was often reminded of the way African Americans were treated by Caucasian Americans. I can remember the saying, “Always remember White people will always be White people,” meaning I was never to trust Caucasians because they would always see my color first and not the individual who I am on the inside. I remember when my family moved into what is now my current home. The neighborhood was racially mixed, with the majority of my neighbors being Caucasian American. I rode the school bus to school and I can remember this one particular morning getting on the bus and passing by one of the white boys who lived in the neighborhood and accidently hitting him with my bookbag. He yelled something to the effect of “Watch it Nigger”, I was afraid to say anything at the time, but when I arrived at school, I told a close friend of

mine what had happened and he actually found the boy and fought him. Needless to say, that young man never said another word to me.

In this neighborhood, although quiet and safe, I have never felt that connection to my neighbors like I felt in the previous neighborhoods. While growing up in my current location, I never walked the neighborhood, I did have friends, but the relationships were not like the ones in the past. As I sit here now looking out the window, I see African American and Caucasian children walking down the street together. They also often meet at the neighborhood park and play basketball together, so I realize that there have been some positive changes in Albany, but I know that we still have a long way to go.

Purpose of Study

Ain't gonna let segregation Lord

Turn me round, turn me round, turn me round

Ain't gonna let segregation Lord

Turn me round,

I'm gonna keep on a walking, keep on a talking

Marching up to freedom land!

-SNCC Freedom Singers

"This old spiritual was first introduced in Albany by Reverend Ralph Abernathy during the summer of 1962 when mass arrests and demonstrations erupted for the second time" (Carawan, 2007, p. 57). This is one of the most powerful songs ever written for the Albany Movement. It reminded the members of the movement of the importance of the task they had chosen to take on. John Henrik Clarke is quoted as saying, "The first interpretation of African history is the responsibility of scholars of African descent." In

order for history to be shared from generation to generation, oral history must be researched, gathered and shared with cultures from all over the world. The purpose of this study, *If You Can't Find Me in the School Room: Experiences of African American Educators and Students During the Albany Movement,* is to research the experiences of African-American educators and students during the Albany Movement and to gather an understanding as to how these individuals believe segregation and integration affected African-American educators and students.

The 1960s were a turning point in the history of Albany, Georgia, beginning with the arrival of three members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The three workers, Charles Jones, Cordell Reagon and Charles Sherrod, came to Albany to encourage students and other individuals to challenge segregation in Albany. During this same period of time, the Albany Movement began in 1961 in the home of Dr. Ed Hamilton. Jenkins (2000) states the following, "Thus having tried repeatedly to obtain their rights and having been repeatedly denied, Blacks realized that they had to organize citywide and peacefully protest" (p. 13). Both students and educators marched and protested against the unequal treatment of African-Americans in Albany, Georgia, and other surrounding counties. These educators and students were arrested and placed in jail cells that were filled to capacity with not only individuals, but roaches and other rodents. These individuals marched and prayed relentlessly for change within their community. They were arrested, attacked and killed, but they continued to march, pray and sing in the effort of making Albany a better place for African-American citizens who lived during that time and children of color such as I who would be born in the future. This study will

tell the stories of some of those brave individuals who were educators and students during the time of the Albany Movement.

The experiences between the educators and students during this emotional time need to be explored. During the Albany Movement, schools were segregated. African-American teachers used their experiences to help students understand the importance of education and understand the reasons for the movement. Schools were like a family because generations of families would attend the same schools; therefore teachers knew the families and knew that the children were capable of excelling. When children entered into the classroom, the teacher became the parent. Ruby Middleton Forsythe states in *Black Teachers on Teaching* (1997):

> The first thing I do is I try to become a mother to all of them. I tell them, "As long as you are here with me, I'm your mama until you go back home, and when you go back home, you go to your other mother" (Foster, p. 31).

There was a relationship of caring, nurturing and trust between the students and the teachers. Understanding the experiences between the students and the teachers during the Albany Movement will be beneficial to the understanding of teacher/student relationships in African-American culture.

Challenges of the Study

In completing the interviews, my overall objective is to provide the participants with an opportunity to tell their stories about the movement and discuss how they believe the Movement affected the city of Albany from their perspective. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) wrote the following:

> The way an interviewer acts, questions, and responds in an interview shapes the

> relationship and therefore the ways participants respond and give accounts of their experiences. The conditions under which the interview takes place also shape the interview; for example, the place, the time of day, and the degree of formality established. (p. 110)

These interviews will impact the relationship between interviewer and interviewer with the hopes that they will feel comfortable in a familiar environment.

As with all interviews, I believe that it will be important for me to understand the importance of listening to the participants' stories and allowing them to tell their own stories. I need to keep my personal feelings to myself and allow the participants to tell their and not my interpretations of how the story took place. My questions should relate to the focus of the study, which is education, segregation and integration and not other concerns about the movement. Also as an African American, it is extremely important that I recognize that what I desire the outcome of this study to be may not be the findings of this study.

I must also understand the importance of controlling my feelings when listening and documenting this study for readers. This part of our country's history is dark and sorrowful for me as an African American; therefore, I must control the anger that I feel when I hear stories about this difficult time. I have to prepare myself to understand that although painful, these are experiences that I must acknowledge and accept. I must also understand that the difficulties I experience when listening to these stories are the same difficulties that others may experience when learning about our history, yet this is a part of history that must be heard.

Significance of Study

The study of African American educators and students during the Civil Rights movement is significant to the study of African American students because it provides an insight as to why students of African descent continue to struggle today in a way that was not the case before integration occurred. The effects of segregation and integration have always been a concern for the African American community. Morris (2006) wrote:

> Well before Brown became law, African Americans vacillated regarding what would be the most effective environment for educating and schooling Black children – separate schools or integrated schools. African Americans never overwhelmingly believed that receiving education in an "integrated" school would resolve the problems associated with inequitable education; they understood how precarious it was to favor one position over the other. If one pushed for black children to attend schools with white children, chances were great that black children and their culture would be totally ignored in the curriculum and the ethos of the school. If they were kept attending predominantly Black schools, concerns remained about the lack of resources, lack of exposure to rigorous academic curricula, and lack of facilities. (p. 132)

Before integration occurred, African American teachers were most known for the way that they cared for their students. The teachers visited their students' homes, they were vigilant within the community, provided differentiated instruction (before it was a popular pedagogical practice) and had positive relationships with their students, often encouraging and supporting them to complete tasks that the students deemed impossible. Yet when integration occurred, African American educators were deemed to be

incompetent and lost their jobs, as well as their connection with African American students. Their voices, their stories need to be told.

Parents were also involved in the educational achievement of students during segregation. They fought for funding to provide buildings, teachers, and administrators for their children. Parents pulled together their resources and provided transportation to and from school and worked hard to ensure that their children were provided the best educational opportunities available. The parents worked with the teachers and students to ensure that homework was completed and that the importance of schooling was reiterated at home.

The experiences of segregated schooling and its affect on African American students, is well documented when I discussed the Carswell County Training School, and the Dunbar School. It is important that the experiences of students and teachers during segregation and integration are noted, because they have an effect on our African American students and educators today.

Our society has changed a great deal since the 1960s when school desegregation began to slowly take its affect on our society. African Americans can now receive an education, worship, work, dine and shop almost anywhere they want to, but the struggle to achieve academically remains. For various reasons, our children are struggling academically. Many of us are not obtaining the jobs that we are qualified to achieve and many individuals still see African Americans as being inferior to the majority population. These obstacles have hindered the development of African Americans in many ways. If others take the opportunity to understand our past and research the roads that we have traveled as individuals and as a human race, they would have a better understanding of

our worldviews and why we have become the individuals that we have become. The mistreatment by the dominant society, the strength we have gained because of the mistreatment and the misconception of our race as being inferior, dangerous and lazy has taken a toll on our race. The only way that we can move forward is to provide evidence and research about how the loss of many of our values as a culture has affected our children and provide options to ensure that our children receive the quality education that they deserve.

In broad terms, those individuals who make educational decisions from the federal point of view, must understand and acknowledge the importance of race and culture when it comes to educating students, and not just African American students, but other minority students, as well. The public school curriculum is based on the worldviews of the majority population. The minority history that appears within the curriculum does not always tell the whole story of the contributions that minorities have made to the American society. Imagine the interest educators could initiate amongst students when the students realized that their ancestors contributed to this society. Imagine the discussions about race that would occur if the true history of America were told. Until our country begins to allow the discussion of race to enter into various avenues of society, we will never overcome the issues of race that permeate our culture.

The state of Georgia is seen throughout the country as the place that refused to allow racism to end. The African Americans in Georgia fought continuously for freedom. During the 1960s African Americans throughout the south began to organize sit-ins and kneel-ins in protest of segregation. African Americans in the city of Albany, Georgia longed for equality as well. The Albany Movement may appear to many as having been

an unsuccessful protest, but because of the African Americans who chose to fight the battle for integration, African American students were allowed to integrate the all white schools. Eight lawsuits were filed to desegregate the Dougherty County public schools. The parents of the students involved in the lawsuit were W.G. Anderson, Monroe Gaines, Eunice Lawrence, Jefferson Davis, Sr. Annie Pearl Mathis, Rev. Silas McKendrick and Mary P. Young. Jenkins (2000) wrote the following:

> Three months after the filing of the suit to mix schools in Dougherty County and nine years after the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on the case, the U.S. District Court Judge Robert Elliot ordered the desegregation of the Dougherty County public schools. The first Black students entered Albany High School in the fall of 1963. (p. 71)

In studying educators and students from the Albany Movement, I hope to gather an understanding of the effect of integration on African American students. Currently the Dougherty County School System's population is eighty-six percent African American and twelve percent Caucasian American. Eighty percent of the students qualify for free or reduced priced lunches.

This study will emphasize the significance of the roles played by educators and students during the Civil Rights Movement and the relationships they developed because of their roles. I believe that this study will help educators and students understand the types of relationships that educators and students had before the movement and the importance of rekindling these types of relationships with the population of students in the school system at this present time. This study is also significant in that the city of Albany, Georgia played an important role in setting the tone for the movement. It is also

believed that Dr. King and other participants in the movement used the Albany Movement as a guide for future changes.

As an African American woman, parent, educator and doctoral student, above all, I pray that this study will encourage individuals of all races to recognize the importance of our history and how history can have an effect on all future generations. Through this study, I hope that society will gather an understanding that every decision that we make touches a life and that our society is not made of one race, but many races. As educators, we are going to have to move from the back of the bus and take the driver's seat, because we must learn how to take a stand and learn everything that we need to understand the history of all of our students.

Narrating the Albany Movement with Passion

In researching the movement and interviewing the participants, I struggled with varied emotions as I researched and listened to stories of the movement. As the participants told of their experiences, oftentimes I could hear and see the anger within them; but their ability to remain strong and steadfast during difficult times allowed me to capture a deeper understanding of why their stories are important, not only to African Americans, but to all races. These women told their stories with such passion, it was often difficult to control my feelings about the movement and allow them to tell their stories. The images they created in my mind as I listened to their stories allowed me to use my visualize them on their knees in front of the courthouse praying, marching and singing for their freedom. I could actually feel the spirit of the movement as they told their stories. As the reader engages with the stories that these four individuals share, I

hope that they too will feel and visualize what I as a researcher experienced during this study.

Making Meaning of the Movement Narrative

To make sense of the information that I gathered and continue to gather on the topic of African American educators and students during the Civil Rights Movement I have constantly researched any materials that related to the topic. I attended the exhibit entitled, "America I Am: The African American Imprint", in Atlanta, Georgia. I visited the Civil Rights Museum in Albany, Georgia and actually stood in one of the churches that the marchers heard Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr speak in twice in the same night. These experiences helped not only with the task of gathering information, but the information also provided visual ideas for me to attach to the research that I obtained through reading.

The interviews helped me to place actual individuals within the movement and understand the roles and the voices of these individuals during the movement. The participants in the study provide an opportunity for me to understand gaps within the research that did not have a personal connection. Through the visits to actual places connected with the African American experiences, the research and the interviews, I was able to make sense of the movement and many events that took place during that difficult time in our history.

CHAPTER II

MARCHING UP TO FREEDOM'S LAND: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round

Ain't gonna let nobody Lord, turn me 'round,
Turn me round, turn me 'round
Ain't gonna let nobody Lord, turn me 'round,
Turn me 'round, turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep on a walkin'
Keep on a talkin'
Marching up to freedom's land

Ain't gonna let segregation Lord, turn me 'round,
Turn me round, turn me 'round
Ain't gonna let segregation Lord, turn me 'round,
Turn me 'round, turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep on a walkin'
Keep on a talkin'
Marching up to freedom's land

Ain't gonna let injustice Lord, turn me 'round
Turn me round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let injustice Lord, turn me 'round
Turn me 'round, turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep on a walkin'
Keep on a talkin'
Marching up to freedom's land

Ain't gonna let Jim Crow now, turn me 'round
Turn me round, turn me round
Ain't gonna let Jim Crow now, turn me 'round
Turn me 'round, turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep on a walkin'
Keep on a talkin'
Marching up to freedom's land

Ain't gonna let no jailhouse, turn me 'round
Ain't gonna let no jailhouse, turn me 'round
Turn me 'round, turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep on a walkin'
Keep on a talkin'
Marching up to freedom's land
-SNCC Freedom Singers

In preparing for this research, I read articles and books that addressed the issues of civil rights, African American communities, racism, Blacks in the South and education. My research actually began at Georgia Southern University when I enrolled in the Curriculum Studies program. I became interested in the history of African Americans and education. It was at this time that I was introduced to Gloria Ladson-Billings, Vanessa Siddle Walker, bell hooks and other African Americans who were working extremely hard to make a difference in our society by helping other cultures understand the lives of African Americans and how society has affected the African American community.

I have always been interested in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. For individuals who lived during that time, what gave them the strength to stand up and demand their equality? What pushed them to the point where they had had enough and were willing to die or be seriously hurt for a generation of children who often sometimes appear to forget what happened during the sixties? The new found knowledge that I received at Georgia Southern University and the interest that has always been in the back of my mind led me to continue to research African Americans and education in the South.

Blacks in the South

God of our weary years,

God of our silent tears,

Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;

Thou who hast by Thy might,

Led us into the light,

Keep us forever in the path, we pray

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee.

Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee.

Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,

True to our God, true to our native land.

-James Weldon Johnson

The Black National Anthem is a song that was written specifically to remind us of where we have come from as a race and that the road would not be easy, but it was one that we had to travel. On September 12, 2010, Daniel Simmons, Pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, preached a sermon entitled, *How Do You Stand?* At the end of his sermon he asked the members and visitors of the congregation if he could tell us a story by walking us down a street and if we listened closely, he may even stop by our house. He talked about our ancestors and how they lived during a time when they would pick one hundred pounds of cotton and go to weigh in and the overseer would only record seventy pounds. He talked of a time when he was in the eleventh and twelfth grade and a teacher told him that everything possible that could be done, would be done to keep him from graduating, but he graduated because he had grandparents who had told him stories of their history and how sometimes, you just have to stand. As he continued the sermon, I thought of my research and all the things that our ancestors have done to help our race become a better race. They fought knowing that maybe they wouldn't see changes, but someone would see the changes. Sometimes when they had done everything that they could, they just stood and allowed God to do his work. This is precisely what Blacks in the south have done. They have fought and fought and when they believed that they had done everything that they could, they stood and allowed God to his work.

From the beginning of the journeys from Africa to America, Blacks have fought continuously to be treated as humans; as a race that deserved treatment equal to that of the majority population. Vincent Harding wrote a book entitled, *There Is a River* (1981). In his book he discusses how Africans fought against those individuals responsible for bringing Africans to America. He tells of many cases where Africans fought to be returned to Africa. Oftentimes they tried and sometimes they were successful in taking over ships such as the *Robert* and *William,* they would refuse to eat and starve themselves to death or simply jump overboard to show that they preferred death by the ocean rather than by a white man. Harding (1981) tells the story of Africans who were captured and boarded on a ship called *Robert*, and developed a plan to overtake the ship. These individuals, along with their leader who was named Captain Tomba were almost successful in their journey to overtake the ship but the sound of an alarm startled the crew and they lost control of the mission. It was determined by the captain that the punishment for this crime would be death. The members of the crew cut the heart and liver out of one of the deceased crew members and made the captured African males eat the body parts before they killed them. A female African was hanged and her body was literally slashed into pieces in front of the other slaves to scare the thought of freedom out of their minds.

Voyages such as those on the *Robert* and *William* brought many slaves to the southern part of the Unites States of America. James Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia, preferred that slavery not become a part of Georgia's historical legacy, not because he believed that slavery was inhumane, but because he did not want slave labor for Georgia. The individuals who lived in Georgia during this time wanted slave labor and felt that their services would benefit the growth of the land. Eventually in 1750, slavery did

become a vital part of Georgia's history. In the book entitled, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia*, Grant (1993) tells of the contributions that Black slaves made to Georgia. They completed much of the agricultural work, built railways and operated as engineers. The survival of Georgia depended on the work of the slaves. Grant (1993) states the following:

> From early on, slavery became the most important fact of life in Georgia. It determined the political actions of the state's leaders, and its problems dominated the thinking of all, both slave and free. Though slavery was an ancient institution, Southern slavery acquired an extremely racist defense that was carried to extremes. This inhibited Georgia's development before the Civil War and laid the foundations for the brutal society that followed. (p. 43)

A brutal society developed, where Whites continuously refused to give Blacks the freedom and equality that the North wanted to change. Many slaves crossed the lines, risked lives and left families to join the Union side. For those Blacks who decided to stay in the South, Whites worked hard to keep them from gaining land and becoming independent of the dominant society.

The types of treatments that African Americans continued to receive were daunting. "The racism that grew more overt in the last two decades of the 1800s meant greater segregation, restriction, and exclusion of black men from apprentice opportunities and from higher-paid skilled types of work (Kelley & Lewis, 2000, p. 289). Blacks received harsh sentences for small crimes that they committed, while Whites committed crimes and received no punishment at all if the crime was against Blacks. The southern states began to pass laws that ensured that the races did not mix. To make sure that

people understood the differences between races, laws concerning who was considered Black were passed. Kelley and Lewis (2000) stated the following:

> Southern states divided roughly equally in how their laws defined race. Approximately half defined ‘a Negro’ as anyone with ‘a trace of black ancestry’. Nearly all the rest identified anyone with at least one-eighth ‘Negro blood’ (one great-grandparent) as ‘colored’. (p. 364)

Through these difficult times with the majority population being against them, Blacks continued to find ways to fight for equality and justice.

Many African Americans chose to participate in the Great Migration and leave the south for better opportunities in education, purchasing land and employment. Although there were better opportunities in the north, segregation, inequality and injustice were also present in the north, but in the south it appears the hatred for African Americans and people of color was deeply rooted. African Americans in the south faced lynching, a drop in prices for crops and oppression. But African Americans who remained in the south continued to fight the injustices and work hard to better their lives (Grant, 1993; Kelley & Lewis, 2000).

African Americans in the South continued to fight for equality and for stability within their homes. Due to wars and economic downfalls, white individuals began to take jobs that were once meant for African Americans. Many African American men and women served in the military to make a better living for themselves, yet they were still treated harshly within the military and once they arrived home from service. Those African American individuals who lived during the Great Depression found various ways

to continue to make ends meet for their families. Kelley and Lewis (2000) stated the following:

> African-American families took in boarders, cared for each other's children, and creatively manipulated their resources. In rural areas, they maintained gardens, canned fruits and vegetables, fished, hunted, and gathered wild nuts and berries. And blacks adapted these rural responses to the realities of life in cities. (p. 426)

The strength that African Americans endured during war times and the times of the Great Depression helped them to continue to work diligently in their fight for freedom.

All over the South many African American individuals were beyond being agitated with the way that African Americans were being treated. Rosa Parks, Ralph Abernathy, Martin and Coretta King, J.A. Delaine and others began to fight for the South. African Americans were being killed for speaking to white women. Such was the case with Emmett Till, who took a trip in the summer to visit relatives and mistakenly spoke to a white woman. He was lynched for simply speaking to a white woman. African Americans were being called names because of the color of their skin, they were spit on for simply wanting a drink of water from a local store. Although all of the previous mentioned situations were harsh and demeaning, African Americans were most hurt because their children were not allowed an opportunity to receive an equal education. The one thing that they believed would free their children, the one thing that they believed their children could be given, and it would never be taken away, was an education but White America fought hard to deprive African Americans of their right to an education.

On Monday, May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court made the unanimous decision that made it illegal to maintain separate schools for African American and Caucasian children. Robert Donovan (2003) wrote the following:

> The ruling was bitterly received by many Southerners, and some Southern leaders expressed a conviction that the states could find ways to circumvent it. Some Southern states, notably South Carolina and Georgia, had previously threatened, in the event the court held as it did today, to abolish their public school systems. Whether these threats will be carried out remain to be seen. (p. 205)

Although Georgia did not do away completely with public schools, school systems in the state did not readily accept the passing of the law. Georgia did not completely integrate all of its school systems until 1970, approximately sixteen years after the Supreme Court's unanimous decision. Many cities and counties in the state just refused to comply and ignored the law until it was impossible to do so. The governor made a decision to form the Sibley Commission. John Sibley, who was a staunch advocate for segregation, was chosen to head this study. He completed the study and was in the process of making a decision when a federal judge cleared the way for Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter to be admitted to the University of Georgia. This decision not only affected Higher Education, but K-12 Public Education as well. Blacks in the South began to demand that public school systems all over the South become integrated.

The Civil Rights Movement

Lord, hold my hand

Lord, guide my feet

Lord, answer my prayer

While I run this race

'Cause I don't want to run this race in vain

The verse above encouraged the participants in the movement to remember where the strength they needed for the movement came from. In the song, the singers asked the Lord to hold their hand, guide their feet and answer their prayers while they continued with the movement. There were many variations to this songs which included such verses as, "guide my heart", "guide my tongue", "guide my vote" and "guide my mind". This song was not as well known as the well established freedom songs, but it had a strong meaning behind it.

Before the movement began, African Americans were being treated as property throughout the United States. The majority population saw African Americans as being inferior and refused to treat them as equals. Holmes (1991) states the following:

> Though they [blacks] shared many things in common with whites, they differed so markedly in some ways as to warrant separate attention. That was especially true in the 1890s, when blacks became the victims of laws designed to relegate them to a position at the bottom of the social system. (p. 277)

Understanding that they were being mistreated with the passing of Jim Crow laws, blacks began protest. They lost their political power, their land, businesses, and rights to equal public education. Through these difficult times, African Americans continued to strive for equality in a country they helped to build. Through the Montgomery Bus Boycott, individuals began to fight for the right to be treated as equals. Bruce Hartford has a website, Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement, www.crmvet.org/tim/timhome.htm, which documents several individuals who stood against the system in order for

individuals to be treated as equals. One case which is discussed is Davis *et al v. the County School Board of Prince Edward County, Va., et al.* Barbara Johns, a student at Moton High became upset about the conditions of her high school. She developed a committee of students and began a protest at the school. Moton High School was a black school in Prince Edward County, Virginia. The school was originally designed for approximately 150 students, but during the time of Barbara's attendance held over 500 students. Barbara and the student body began their fight demanding a new school for African American students, but once the NAACP became involved, their state secretary, W. Lester Banks stated "…a new school would not mean equality "if it were built brick for brick, cement for cement" (Smith, 1965, p. 55), therefore the fight quickly changed to one to end school segregation. This action led to a lawsuit which became a part of *Brown v. Board of Education.* The whites in Prince Edward County were so determined to maintain school segregation that they closed their schools for five years.

Another example of African Americans fighting for equal treatment was the Journey of Reconciliation during 1947. In *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*, Raymond Arsenault (2006) describes an incident that the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) members encountered. A group of sixteen African Americans and Caucasian males, eight white and eight black decided to take a bus ride on Greyhound from downtown Washington D.C. to the South. The journey ride was uneventful in the beginning, but the further south the bus traveled the more difficult the ride became. Some of the volunteer riders were arrested along the way, but released because of *Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia* (the case where Irene Morgan refused to give up her seat on a Greyhound Bus from Norfolk, Virginia).Upon arriving in Chapel

Hill, the men were to stay with a well known local minister, but community members threatened to burn his home, stated that the men would not make it out of the city and called him a "nigger lover".

In his book, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, John Lewis (1998) talks about Dr. Brewer who in 1946 was active in the NAACP in Columbus, Georgia. Dr. Brewer was one of the leading activists who fought for the right to allow African Americans the right to vote. A local business man shot Dr. Brewer seven times and was never convicted of the incident. Lewis (1998) wrote, "…among the black community the belief was that Dr. Brewer had been murdered by the Klan because of his NAACP activities" (p. 51).

Throughout the history of the United States of America, African Americans from each state can account for the struggles that individuals experienced as a result of the color of their skin. Each state can attest for individuals who decided to take racism head on and stand for their equality, freedom and social justice, as well as other individuals of their culture. The history of African Americans is extensive and deserves to be documented in written form. There will always be stories that need to be told and written and these stories deserve to be heard. African Americans were mistreated, killed and jailed in order for individuals of color to be treated fairly. Clayborne Carson (1998) in his book, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, wrote, "No Negro anywhere, regardless of his social standing, his financial status, his prestige and position, is an outsider so long as dignity and decency are denied to the humblest black child in Mississippi, Alabama, or Georgia" (p. 180). Those individuals, who endured these

difficult experiences, chose to participate so that all individuals regardless of their ethnicity would be seen as a part of this society.

Although many individuals are responsible for the various civil rights movements over the United States of America, Martin Luther King, Jr., played a vital role in the movement across the southern states. Martin Luther King, Jr., experienced racism on several occasions while growing up in Atlanta, Georgia. These experiences included the ending of a friendship with a white friend at the age of six, being slapped by a white woman at the age eight because she believed he stepped on her foot and having to sit at the back of the bus so the white riders could sit in the front of the bus. Martin Luther King, Jr., stated, "I would end up having to go to the back of that bus with my body, but every time I got on that bus I left my mind up on the front seat" (Carson, 1998, p. 9). These experiences along with education led Martin Luther King, Jr. to become a preacher and advocate of equality for all individuals. His fight for freedom led him to the city of Albany, Georgia, to help the African American citizens fight for equal treatment.

Although the civil rights movement took place all over the United States, the state of Georgia, the heart of the south, the state where segregation was so embedded within the community that individuals saw it as being the norm, has a history that is as deep as the south. The history of the Civil Rights Movement in Georgia is long. Tuck (2001) wrote the following, "Overall, the movement in Georgia highlights the full diversity and complexity of the struggle for racial equality" (p. 8).

African Americans in the State of Georgia suffered inequality just as African Americans in other sections of the country. What made Georgia different from other areas in the country was that as other parts of the country began to change, Georgia as

well as other parts of the south was slow to change. The Ku Klux Klan was extremely strong in the south and lynching of African Americans was a norm. The Klan would attack anyone who, they assumed, was working towards African Americans receiving equal treatment. “During the first six months of 1948, the Southern Regional Council documented an unprecedented dozen reported attacks in Georgia” (Tuck, 2001, p. 78). Tuck (2001) wrote:

> And for all black Georgians in each region of the state, whether in peonage, independent farmer, or urban worker, the common denominator was Jim Crow, buttressed by violence. ‘Negroes born in Georgia,’ Malcolm X reflected later, ‘had to be strong just to survive.’ (p. 12)

African Americans throughout the state would try to begin NAACP chapters only to be beaten by officers of the law. They joined the military to fight for their country in World War II only to return home and be treated as property. Tuck (2001) wrote, “In two separate incidents in the spring of 1946, soldiers survived the war only to be shot by conductors in the front of the bus on a journey to their homes” (p. 27).

As things began to change in southern states surrounding Georgia, African Americans in Georgia decided to begin to initiate change. The movement began in Atlanta with a number of sit-ins and soon spread throughout the state. In the book, *A History of Georgia,* Numan V. Bartley (1991) wrote:

> Nevertheless, the movement spread rapidly, as students in Savannah, Albany, and Augusta began demonstrations. Sometimes joined by white student allies, sometimes supported by older blacks, and sometimes going it alone, young black people conducted sit-ins at a variety of stores, bus stations and lunch counters;

> kneeled-in at white churches; played-in at public parks; organized buying boycotts of individual stores and sometimes entire downtown businesses districts; picketed segregated hospitals and sports events; conducted protest marches to dramatize issues; and generally utilized direct action to express dissatisfaction, as the Atlanta student declaration stated, 'not only with the existing conditions, but with the snail-like speed at which they are being ameliorated.' (p. 368)

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* became law and Georgia resisted the change. Schools were as segregated as ever until December of 1960 when two students, Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes, integrated the University of Georgia. After the integration of the University of Georgia, nine students from Atlanta, Georgia integrated a local high school. These students were harassed and received threats, but they stood their ground and paved the way for African American students to have equal access to public education.

The 1960's brought about more protest from the African American population. African Americans were beginning to exercise their rights to vote and many were participating in lunch counter sit-ins. It was at this time that students became involved in the movement. Tuck wrote, "For example, James Brown, the Georgia NAACP youth secretary, observed in a mass meeting in October 1960 that youths in Georgia "could not see the struggle for freedom without participating themselves" (p. 110). Dr. Martin Luther King in Carson (1998) stated the following:

> I was convinced that the student movement that was taking place all over the South in 1960 was one of the most significant developments in the whole civil rights struggle. It was no overstatement to characterize these events as historic.

> Never before in the United States had so large a body of students spread a struggle over so great an area in pursuit of a goal of human dignity and freedom. The student movement finally refuted the idea that the Negro was content with segregation. The students had taken the struggle for justice into their own hands. (p. 139)

Students all over Georgia were pivotal in helping the State of Georgia to desegregate schools and businesses. African American students and educators were discouraged from joining the NAACP and other organizations associated with the movement. Teachers were fired because they attempted to register to vote and students were expelled for attempting to register to vote. Not only were the teachers and students putting their lives on the line. They also put their families' lives in danger. Spouses and parents' were informed that they would lose their jobs because of their participation.

The scenery was similar in Albany, Georgia during this time. In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1994), originally published in 1903, Dubois described the city of Albany and the county of Dougherty as he traveled. Dubois (1994) wrote the following:

> At Albany, in the heart of the Black Belt, we stop. Two hundred miles south of Atlanta, two hundred miles west of the Atlantic, and one hundred miles north of the Great Gulf lies Dougherty County, with ten thousand Negroes and two thousand Whites (p.71)…How curious a land as this,-how full of untold story, of tragedy and laughter, and the rich legacy of human life; shadowed with a tragic past, and big with future promise! This is the Black Belt of Georgia. (p. 75)

His writing continued to be true of Albany during the 1950s and 1960s when the city was segregated and African Americans and Caucasians were experiencing some of the most

life changing events in the history of the United States, as African Americans began to stand for equality.

During the late 1950's and early 1960's Albany's population was approximately 50,000. Approximately 20,000 of the citizens were African Americans. The city was extremely divided. African American citizens were made to use separate restrooms, drink from different water fountains and enter restaurants and other businesses from the rear entrance. Carson (1998) quotes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as stating the following:

> The Negroes of Albany suffered in quiet silence. The throbbing pain of segregation could be felt but not seen. It scarred Negroes in every experience of their lives. They lived in segregation; they ate in segregation; they learned in segregation; they prayed and rode and worked and died in segregation. And in silence. A corroding loss of self-respect rusted their moral fiber. (p. 153)

Jenkins (2000) wrote, "In 1955, movie actor Sidney Poiter was part of a cast filming a movie here (Albany). While white cast members were housed in the white-only Albany Hotel, Poiter had to secure accommodations at the local Black college"(p. 11).

During the 1960's the African American citizens decided that the time had come for them to begin to stand up for equality. "On November 17, 1961, in the home of Dr. Ed Hamilton, members of the Criterion Club, NAACP, Baptist Ministerial Alliance, Interdenominational Alliance, Federated Women's Clubs, SNCC, and other interested citizens, formed a coalition which was officially named the Albany Movement" (Jenkins, 2000, p.13). These brave individuals along with individuals from other parts of Georgia and the United States began protesting the treatment of African Americans in Albany. The movement focused on overall equality, which included the educational system.

Until the 1960s, every aspect of Albany, Georgia, was segregated. African Americans had their own churches, because they were encouraged to be religious, schools, their own businesses and their own places of entertainment. Kitchens and Gurr (1998) wrote:

> South Central Albany had emerged as the black commercial district even before the 1920s. It was known as the Harlem business district. It was the heart of a larger black residential district south of Oglethorpe, bound by Monroe Street on the west, the Flint River to the east, and Cotton Avenue to the south. Like many cities its size, Harlem would soon have a motion picture theater, the Ritz, which opened in the 1930s. On the east side of the 200 block of South Jackson was a two-story building that housed the Knights of Pythias, a fraternal organization. Below was the office of the *Albany Enterprise*, the city's first black-owned newspaper. The Masons met nearby in the building that now houses the *Southwest Georgian*, also a black newspaper. (p. 39)

As a part of the struggle to ensure that African American students received an education in 1928 the first high school for blacks was built, Madison High School. In 1947, Madison High became Monroe High School, and in 1960, the all black high school moved to its current location on Lippitt Drive. The African American administrators and educators worked diligently to ensure that the students received an appropriate education. In educating their students, they also made sure that the students had a thorough understanding of their civil rights and how they were being treated unfairly; one such teacher was Ms. McCree Harris. In the book entitled, *June Bug's Grocery and the Cornfield Jook: A South Albany Oral History*, Mary Lawson (2003) wrote the following:

> McCree Harris, a teacher who took her entire class in the 1960s to see a popular new movie at The Albany Theater, was asked to leave the balcony so that whites could be seated there. Not having parents' permission to do otherwise, she finally agreed, but to the dismay of the theater-owner told her class *never*, to return to that movie house. (p. 22)

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, "The young students of the South, through sit-ins and other demonstrations gave America a glowing example of disciplined, dignified non-violent action against the system of segregation" (Carson, 1998, p. 137). In Albany, the students and teachers were no different. Students as well as teachers participated in the marches, knelt in prayers, and participated in sit-ins. Many teachers who worked at Monroe High School, the all black high school, encouraged their students to become members of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). Students and educators involved in the Albany Movement were instrumental in helping the city of Albany, Georgia, to become desegregated.

The Chief of Police, Laurie Pritchett and Mayor Asa Kelley believed that the City of Albany was perfect the way that it was and that segregation was in Albany to stay. Mayor Asa Kelley, as well as other white Albany citizens, believed that the majority of Negroes were content with the way that life was in Albany. "Whites were so out of touch with attitudes in the black community that they were shocked and angry when long-simmering discontent boiled to the surface. Albany soon became a center of black protest, and events there became front-page news."(Grant, 1993, p. 403). *The Albany Herald* (December 12, 1961), a local newspaper displayed the following:

> White citizens of this Deep South community are holding themselves calmly aloof from anti-segregation incidents which began three days ago. Despite a half dozen demonstrations by Negroes, the white populace has practically ignored the incidents. There has not been one racial clash reported-no violence of any kind. Several leaders offered their explanations of the situation – in sharp contrast to the behavior of groups in similar situations at other Southern cities. Slender, quite-spoken Mayor Asa Kelley, said one basic reason was that race relations "have been excellent over the years".
>
> (p. 1)

During the protest and while in jail the protesters would sing songs and these songs would inspire the protesters and remind them of the importance of the struggle. Chief Pritchett was determined to handle the protesters differently from other counties. Chief Pritchett in order to prepare for the protest from the African Americans read *Dr. King's Stride Toward Freedom*. Tuck (2001), "In Laurie Pritchett, King met a travestied image of himself- a non-violent segregationist law officer" (p. 152).

In 1961, during the civil rights struggle, Albany, Georgia, became the first city in the United States where over 700 people were arrested for civil disobedience (Jenkins, 2000). Albany is known as the city that Dr. King could not change. Documentation states that under Dr. King's leadership, the movement should have focused on one area instead of segregation as a whole. Regardless, African Americans in Albany, Georgia decided to take a stand for freedom. They were jailed, beaten, and killed in order for their families to live a better life.

As discussed previously, many teachers and students participated in the Civil Rights Movement; their participation in the Albany Movement was no different. Although many of the teachers lost their jobs and many of the students were expelled from high school and the local colleges, they continued to protest for racial equality. One such demonstration was held on December 12, 1961, during the trial of eleven freedom riders who rode down from Atlanta. Smith (1961) wrote the following:

> The Negroes were searched and marched off to cells in the rear. The juveniles-and a sizable portion of the crowd was under 17 years of age-were separated from the others, but all were jailed…One group was especially noisy. "We got the whole Monroe (Negro high school) football team in here" one particularly loud youth proclaimed. (pgs. 1 & 5)

Equality was important to the students and these issues were addressed within the school system. The issues were meaningful to the teachers and the students and the school curriculum connected the students to the community.

Segregation and African American Educators

If you can't find me in the schoolroom

If you can't find me in there

Come on out to the picket line

I'll be standing right there

I'll be standing right there

Come out to the picket line

I'll be standing right there

-Betty Mae Fikes

The song above entitled, “If You Miss Me from the Back of the Bus”, expresses the importance of being involved in the movement by participating in the various marches that were held throughout the southern states. One verse, which is written above, depicts the importance of the movement to educators, by telling everyone, if you are missing teachers in the classroom, they are on the picket line fighting for their rights. African American educators provided a pivotal connection to their students before, during and after this difficult time for African Americans.

In her book entitled, *Their Highest Potential: An African American Community in the Segregated South*, Vanessa Siddle-Walker (1996) tells the story of the Caswell County Training School (CCTS) in Yanceyville, North Carolina. CCTS, a school developed by African Americans primarily for the educating of African American children. In her book, Siddle-Walker tells the story of how African Americans within this community were dedicated to educating their children. They found a respectable principal by the name of Mr. Dillard who was dedicated to the well being of the students and the development of the school. “He was also known to visit the homes of his students and to engage in activities that would communicate to students his interest in them as individuals” (Siddle-Walker, 1996, p. 86). African American educators who were employed to work at CCTS were dedicated to the students’ education and instilled in the students the belief that they could achieve at high levels. Because the parents within the community taught their children appropriate behavior, the children were referred to as having “home training”. Additionally, the parents respected their children’s teachers both in the schoolhouse and in the community.

African American teachers have always played a pivotal role in the educating of African American students. Many of their experiences have been documented in Michele Foster's *Black Teachers on Teaching* and in Adam Fairclough's *Black Teachers in the Segregated South: A Class of their Own*. Foster (1997) states the following:

> Black teachers' unique historical experiences are either completely overlooked or amalgamated with those of white teachers. In those few instances where black teachers are visible, their cultural representations are biased by society's overarching racism. For the most part, these cultural representations continue to render black teachers invisible as teachers of students of their own or of other ethnic backgrounds, while casting white female teachers as heroic figures. (p. XLIX)

In her book, Michele Foster (1997) allows African American teachers both female and male to discuss their perspectives of educating children. In the section of the book entitled, *The Elders*, teachers discuss the inequity between segregated African American schools and the schools for Caucasians. They discuss how they used outdated books that the white schools had done away with and how teachers would have to share equipment with each other instead of each classroom having its own equipment. Everett Dawson, one of the teachers interviewed in the book, discussed how the students excelled, even though he believed that the white population did not want the students to be successful. He stated:

> I often wonder if white folks really want black kids to be successful. I started the first advanced math class in Chatham county; this was at Horton, the all-black segregated school. The advanced math class was a course where they got

> beyond geometry and algebra two. But when the county school officials found out what we were doing, they blocked the course. They cut it out until the white school could establish the course and catch up with us. That's how determined the white folks were to be better than we were. (Foster, 1997, p. 5)

Teachers discussed how they developed relationships with the students and how they worked with students and made them understand the importance of an education. They would not allow their students to just sit around and do nothing. The students had to work hard and respect the classroom setting. These teachers taught African American students the importance of having a desire to want to learn and how to take what they learned and put it into practice. The teachers discussed how even with the shortage of materials how they were able to reach students and how many of their students graduated and attended college. Bernadine Morris, an educator, related the following to Foster:

> I think when they integrated the schools, instead of the black kids seeing themselves as people who could go in there and make progress, they got linked and then linked themselves to all the bad things that kids were doing. I can only relate to when I was in a segregated school. You'd go to high school commencement and I could see these kids walking up there with these four-year scholarships to places like Fisk and Howard or A&T or wherever. (Foster, 1997, p. 60)

African American teachers found a way to ensure that their students received the best education possible because they believed in their students and knew that they were capable of achieving the impossible.

The book *Separate Pasts: Growing Up White in the Segregated South*, written by Melton A. McLaurin, discusses the differences between the black elementary school and

the white elementary school in Wade, North Carolina, during the 1950s. He wrote the following:

> The rambling one-story frame building symbolized the status of blacks in the village. It had no kitchen; its students enjoyed no lunch program. Those with money came to the store at lunch to buy snacks and pop; others carried bag lunches; some went hungry. A row of privies on the back playground announced the building's lack of indoor plumbing. In front of the school was a sandy playfield, barren of grass, shrubs and playground equipment.
>
> (McLaurin, 1998, p. 23)

McLaurin's description reinforces the lack of importance of African American students to the white population. He continues to describe the local white elementary school which was completely opposite of the black elementary school. The white students' facility was modernized. He described the local white school as follows:

> The school possessed all the standard features of the day: a large auditorium and stage, indoor plumbing and modern restrooms, a well equipped kitchen, and a large dining room in which hot lunches were served daily. A row of foundation plants enhanced the appearance of the façade, which overlooked a grassy lawn that sloped to a fence at the highway. Like Wade's homes and churches, its schools constantly reminded members of both races of their respective positions in the society. (McLaurin, 1998, p. 23)

Segregation and African American Students

This little light of mine

I'm gonna let it shine

This little light of mine

I'm gonna let it shine

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

-Betty Mae Fikes

Education was extremely important to African Americans during segregation; African American students worked hard to achieve academic success. Reese (2005) wrote the following:

> Harriet Beecher Stowe remarked in 1879 that following emancipation southern blacks 'rushed not to the grog-shop but to the schoolroom-they cried for the spelling book as bread, and pleaded for teachers as a necessity of life.' African Americans made up for lost time, often sending their children to school at higher rates than poor whites. (p. 71)

African American parents believed that education would help their children and they instilled in their children the importance of going to school. "Though it hardly guaranteed a better life, education might potentially open new vistas to their children" (Reese, 2005, p. 75). African American parents fought hard for their children to have access to public education. Although there were Caucasians who believed in the educating of African American children and fought for their rights to education, there were many who did everything possible to ensure that African Americans never learned.

As dismal as African American schools were during segregation, when African American students attended school they performed well both socially and academically. Often times at the beginning of the school year, there would be a high number of students in attendance, but as the planting season neared, the number of students would dwindle. Kelley and Lewis (2000) wrote the following:

> By the early twentieth century most Southern black children had some access to a public school, but in rural areas that school was likely to be open for less than six months of the year-even as little as two months in some cases. White planters wanted black children in the fields, not wasting their time sitting on the crude benches of a one-room schoolhouse. (p. 376)

African American students used the few months during the year that they were allowed to attend school to increase their knowledge in the areas of academics and various skills. "African Americans looked upon schooling as a privilege-one that carried with it an obligation to use one's learning on behalf of the entire community" (Kelley and Lewis, 2000, p. 377). Many African Americans used the information they obtained to better their communities by teaching African American students the importance of giving back to the community. Students concentrated on their studies and understood the importance of an education.

Students performed well because teacher and parent expectations were high. Learning took place because in the all black schools, there was discipline. African American parents and teachers both expected the students to behave at school. "These attitudes about obedience led students to believe that if they were punished at school by their teacher, they could expect additional punishment at home" (Siddle-Walker, 1996, p.

81). During this time, parents were rarely called to the school. Students knew that administrators and teachers were required to be involved in the community and that their parents would see their teachers at various community activities. Teachers and administrators also visited the students home to discuss various happenings at the school. The home visits allowed the teachers and administrators to discuss academic performance and discipline concerns. It was rare that discipline was discussed because the majority of the African American community believed that discipline at the school should have been handled at the school and often times allowed teachers and administrators to administer corporal punishment at the school.

Corporal punishment was used as a means of discipline in many black schools. Fairclough (2007) documented the memories of William Pickens, when he wrote the following:

> "Persuasion to study and good deportment", recalled William Pickens, from the perspective of a pupil, "consisted of a hickory switch, a cone-shaped paper 'dunce's cap' and a stool on which the offender must stand on one foot for an enourmous length of time".(p. 109)

Corporal punishment as a form of discipline in schools was acceptable by most African American parents because students were usually punished this way at home. The discipline at school allowed teachers to focus on academics. With well disciplined classes African American teachers were able to push African American students to do their best and they believed that the students excelled at any task placed before them. "Indeed, some segregated black high schools, despite poorly paid teachers, crowded classrooms,

hand-me-down textbooks, and inadequate facilities, achieved miracles of academic achievement" (Fairclough, 2007, p. 412).

During segregation African American students were pushed to excel. Teachers understood that the world that their students lived in was not tolerant of people of color. Therefore, they made sure that the students understood that they could excel academically as well as any other culture of individuals. Teachers actually held conversations with students and helped them to plan for life after school. Siddle-Walker (1996) wrote the following:

> Former student Cepheus Lea remembers some of the comments teachers made to the students: "They would instill into us that education was our only hope for ever reaching progress. The less you know, the less you are going to have. The less you know, the less you are going to make. So they would always try to instill that in us. They would always teach us to aim at the stars and not the moon. Because if you miss the moon, you hit the ground. If you miss the stars, you could get the moon." (p. 121)

Teachers would not allow students to say what they could and could not do. Students were motivated to perform academically because they knew their teachers believed in them. This is not to say that all students excelled, but they were pushed to do their best.

In the book entitled, *From Dunbar to Destiny: One Woman's Journey Through Desegregation and Beyond,* Shirley Robinson Sprinkles tells the story of her life as it related to segregation and desegregation. In chapter two of her book, she talks about several of her teachers during her segregated schooling years from Miss Shaw's Nursery School to the years spent at Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary and Junior High School.

Sprinkles talks of one teacher whose name was Lucille Warner. She discusses how Ms. Warner held herself and her students accountable for their academic achievement. Sprinkles (2008) wrote:

> She taught at multiple levels of cognition in order to reach us all. There were a lot of students in her class, as there were in all of the classes at Dunbar. She did not take this as a cause to slack or to complain; she worked it out so that we were all taught. Peer tutoring and cooperative learning methodologies must have been invented at Dunbar because we students often pitched in to help each other learn. (p. 36)

The theme of accountability is commonly found when researching African American educators. African American educators constantly pushed their students to achieve with minimum materials and resources. They believed in their students and taught their students to believe in themselves.

During the Civil Rights Movement, teachers and students discuss the importance of the movement and how it could change the lives of African Americans. Through these discussions, many teachers and students became involved in the movement. Many of these individuals were educators and students. The history of African Americans is rich with stories of individuals who insisted on equality, freedom and justice. These individuals worked diligently to ensure that people of color were treated as individuals and not as property. One area of focus was the opportunity for students of color to receive the same education as white students. Spring (2005) wrote, “Racially segregated schools were widely established from the late eighteenth century until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled them unconstitutional in 1954”. Takaki (1993) stated the following:

> In the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the United States Supreme Court declared that segregated schools were unconstitutional. Nullifying the 'separate but equal' doctrine of *Plessey v. Ferguson*, the Court argued that separate educational facilities were 'inherently unequal' and that school segregation was 'a denial of the equal protection of the laws'. (p. 402)

Yet, many years after this decision, many schools in the south were still segregated. Caucasians refused to send their children to schools with African American children and many African Americans refused to send their children to schools with Caucasians because they believed that their children would be mistreated.

Integration

We're marching on to freedom's land

We're marching on to freedom's land

God's our strength from day to day

As we walk this narrow way

We're going forward

We're going forward

One day we're going to be free

-Carlton Reese

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled through Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka that it was unconstitutional to have segregated schools because the schools would not be equal. The decision by the court was not enough to make Georgia implement integrated schools. "Facing growing delay and outright sabotage in the implementation of its decision, the Supreme Court felt compelled to strengthen the original *Brown* decision

in 1955 with *Brown II*, which ordered compliance with "all deliberate speed" (Grant, 1993, p. 377). Albany, Georgia, was one of the deep south cities that continuously refused to integrate. "The school board gave a firm and definite 'no' answer to the federal government to voluntarily integrating local public schools, although the Supreme Court had outlawed segregation in public schools in 1954-almost nine years prior" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 67). Attorney C.B. King filed a total of eight law suits to integrate the Dougherty County School System. Finally in 1963, Albany High School became integrated. Mondale and Patton (2001) stated the following about integrating schools during the 1960s:

> Minority leaders brought to the campaign different cultural values and different political assumptions. Most, of course, were related to power and control over education, since they had come to view white control as the essence of racial subordination and segregation. Many minorities wanted desegregation to be a process of sharing power and control over education. They resisted attempts by local school boards to close schools located in their communities and force minority students to be bused to the formerly all white schools. They wanted assurances that minority principals, teachers, and service workers would not lose their jobs during school desegregation. (p. 129)

Fairclough (2007) in his book entitled, *Black Teachers in the Segregated South: A Class of Their Own*, discusses how integration affected teachers. He discusses how many educators were not sure of how integration would affect teachers or students. Many African American individuals outside the realm of education, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), believed that integration

would benefit both African American educators and students. Yet, educators during this difficult time held mixed feelings about the process. "Acknowledging that integration would expose both pupils and teachers to stiff interracial competition, others argued that there could be no progress without pain" (Fairclough, 2007, p. 360).

Indeed, integration brought both progress and pain to African American educators. Many were afraid that they would lose their jobs to white teachers and African American males faced a white society who refused to allow a black man to teach their white daughters. To secure their jobs, many African American educators joined the NAACP, but their membership with the association would also cause them to lose their jobs. Fairclough (2007) wrote the following:

> In Georgia, many teachers allowed their NAACP memberships to lapse-or even sent letters of resignation-after the state attorney general, Eugene Cook, ordered the board of education to dismiss anyone who 'contributes to or is affiliated with' the organization. A few teachers defied pressure to renounce the NAACP. In South Carolina, twenty-one teachers at Elloree Training School chose to quit their jobs rather than disclose their NAACP membership. (p. 370)

Due to integration, many African American educators lost their jobs and those who did not lose their jobs, were mistreated by white colleagues and students, and often chosen to teach remedial classes. These teachers were expected to do their best at all times, because they were constantly being watched by white teachers and they were there to prove that African American teachers could teach just as well as Caucasian teachers. Although many teachers had a difficult time with integration, there were some African

American educators who were received warmly at the white schools and had no major problems with the transitions.

Immediately following desegregation, African American students began to struggle academically and behaviorally. Racial tension caused many of the effects of desegregation. As discussed previously, African American students and teachers were used to structure within the classroom setting. Fairclough (2007) expressed the following:

> The contrast between the authoritarian parenting styles in many black homes where corporal punishment persisted, and the 'permissive' approach to discipline employed by young white teachers, created a cultural dissonance that exacerbated student rebelliousness, especially among African American boys. (p. 399)

Along with a lack of structure within the classroom setting, many Caucasian educators held low expectations for African American students. They did not push the students to do their best; they allowed the students to give up without inspiring them to do their best. The conversations that African American students held with their teachers during segregation were lost and there was a loss of culture with integration. African American students no longer had an environment from which to draw a connection.

In her book entitled, *Through My Eyes*, Ruby Bridges tells the story of integrating William Frantz Public School in New Orleans as a kindergarten student. Her mother was a strong believer in education and believed that her daughter deserved the best education possible. Upon showing up for class the first day of school, Ruby and her mother sat outside of the office for the entire school day. Bridges (1999) wrote the following:

> On the second day, my mother and I drove to school with the marshals. The crowd outside the building was ready. Racists spat at us and shouted things like

> ‘Go home, nigger,’ and ‘No niggers allowed here.’ One woman screamed at me, ‘I’m going to poison you. I’ll find a way.’ She made the same threat every morning. (p. 22).

On the second day of school she was escorted to a classroom where she was the only student. It was in this classroom, where Ruby spent her kindergarten year as the only student of Mrs. Barbara Henry. In her book Ruby tells the story of the differences between her first teacher, Mrs. Henry, a young, white northerner who taught Ruby during her kindergarten year and her second teacher whose name is not mentioned. Although the first teacher was white, she was nurturing and taught Ruby well. Her second teacher made fun of her and Ruby felt that this changed her forever. But Ruby’s courage changed more people than she probably ever know about. One teacher at the school stated the following:

> ‘I always thought I was a segregationist, but I never heard such language, and they became so impossible after a while that they belonged in a zoo, not on the streets. That little nigra child had more dignity than all of them put together.’ When racial unrest besieged teachers, it could force novel realizations and unpend lifelong attitudes. (Sokol, 2006, p. 142)

In his book entitled, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975*, Jason Sokol provides an insight into how White Southerners felt about the civil rights movement and integration of public places. Although some white southerners were not opposed to integration, there were many who were. Many whites did not believe in equality and believed that African Americans were inferior. Sokol writes about how some white teachers believed in segregation and chose to leave the

profession rather than teach African American children. Many of the teachers felt this way, but needed their jobs, so they chose to remain at the schools and teach, but they were treated harshly.

In reading Sokol's book, it was easily realized that many White Americans suffered during integration. Many lost their jobs and were threatened and harassed in a similar fashion as African Americans, but they were treated this way because they had to make a decision and often those decisions were not based on African Americans being treated equally. One white woman chose to send her children to a school for black children because it was too much of strain on her to keep them at home with her each day. Some families although financially strained chose to send their children to private school just because of the hatred they had for African Americans.

Once public schools became integrated, African American students began struggling academically and socially within the school setting. Many African American students were placed in schools with teachers who did not want to teach them. Their schools once again did not have available the same resources that the majority white schools had and many African American students no longer felt positive connection to the schools in which they attended. With the implementation of desegregation laws, the question still remains as to whether desegregation has helped or harmed the African American child?

Even with the implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, school desegregation was slow to occur. There was a time during the 1980's when it appeared that desegregation was working and the black-white academic achievement gap was narrowing, but presently it appears as though public schools are resegregating. In the

book entitled, *South Resegregation: Must the South Turn Back?* Erwin Chemerinsky discusses the fact that no one has really done anything to ensure that advancement in the area of desegregation has continued and currently it appears that schools are beginning to resegregate.

There were many reasons for the delay in efforts to integrate the public school system. The main reason for the delayed process was simple, the majority of the white population believed that African Americans were inferior to White Americans and should be treated in an inferior manner. Although the issue of integration is important, the issue that is currently pressing the public school system as a result of the mistakes made during the process of integrating the public school system is the effect that the process has taken on African American students.

When integration occurred, African American students began to struggle academically. One of the reasons that the academic struggle began was because of a lack of cultural understanding of the African American child. The integration of the public school system has been a difficult process. In the beginning, it was expected for everyone to accept mainstream America's values and culture. Through the public education system, these values were placed on students of all cultures and the students' cultures and values were lost. This is what occurred with African American students during integration.

Dempsey and Noblit (1996) wrote the following about the lost of culture during school integration:

> In fact, school desegregation in many ways ignored the possibility that there could be desirable elements in African American culture worthy of maintenance and

> celebration. In practice, we seemed to ignore that there was an African American culture at all. The result was that we could not even consider that school desegregation could have destructive consequences for African Americans, and that school desegregation could actually destroy important elements of African American culture. (p. 116)

The concerns about integration were ignored because the culture of African Americans was seen as inappropriate and unnecessary. Integration for the majority of its history always consisted of African Americans leaving their places to integrate white places, because whites saw black places as being inferior. The integration of schools was no different. African American teachers were never asked about their teaching practices or discipline practices. Therefore, educators have been trained to teach all students in the same manner and this manner of teaching is actually taking meaningful experiences away from minority students. Gay (2000) wrote the following:

> Teaching is a contextual and situational process. As such, it is most effective when ecological factors, such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students are included in its implementation. This basic fact is often ignored in teaching some Native, Latino, African, and Asian American students, especially if they are poor. (p. 21)

Helping students connect their home lives to the school curriculum has shown to be beneficial in capturing students' interest during instruction.

Another issue that is of grave concern in the field of education is race. Oftentimes, teachers who are not of African descent will say that they do not see color in their students. This is absurd because whenever you see someone, the first thing that most

individuals see is the individual's color. There is nothing wrong with recognizing a student's race. What is wrong is not acknowledging the students' race. "To be worthy of our students, we as transformationist White teachers know that we must be intelligent and real about issues of race" (Howard, 2006, p. 123). This is essentially what Cornel West (2001) stated in his book *Race Matters*:

> To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society-flaws rooted in historic inequalities and long standing cultural stereotypes. How we set up the terms for discussing racial issues shapes our perception and response to these issues. As long as black people are viewed as a 'them', the burden falls on blacks to do all the 'cultural' and 'moral' work necessary for healthy race relations. The implication is that only certain Americans can define what it means to be American- and the rest must simply 'fit in'. (p. 3)

Beyond understanding the importance of connecting students' culture to the curriculum, educators must also understand the importance of connecting with their students. Educators' attitudes towards their students and their students' ability play a key role in a student's academic success. "In other words, teachers who really care about students honor their humanity, hold them in high esteem, expect high performance from them, and use strategies to fulfill their expectations" (Gay, 2000, p. 46). Good African American educators have a cultural connection to African American students. These educators understand the culture's past and values of African American students. Educators of different cultural backgrounds can have the same understandings of the African American culture if they would take opportunities to learn and inquire about the

culture. “Because of the onslaught of negative information that most Americans internalize about African Americans, particularly about black males, too many educators look for deficits instead of strengths in African American students” (Thompson, 2004, p.239). “There are no quick fixes for White teachers who educate African American children. It will first require a change of attitude followed by a change of heart” (Kunjufu, 2002, p. 32).

Integration has truly had an effect on African American males. There are African American males who have become successful in spite of the obstacles that society has placed before them. For example, Doctors George Jenkins, Rameck Hunt and Sampson Davis also known as the Three Doctors, are young African American men who made a pact when they were young to stick together, complete college and become doctors. To share their experiences, these doctors have written three books about their lives for adults and children, *The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream, We Beat the Streets and The Bond: Three Young Men Learn to Forgive and Reconnect with Their Fathers*. There is also our current President Barack Obama, who has written a book entitled, *Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. In his book he tells the story of how his father, although absent from his life, had a tremendous effect on his childhood and adult life. There are countless numbers of African American males who contribute to the American society on a daily basis, but rarely do we ever hear about their experiences. These individuals contribute to America’s society as devoted fathers, model citizens, and financial contributors.

Integration has also had a negative effect on African American males in society as well as in the educational arena. In the educational arena, African American males are

more likely to be placed in Special Education classes and be defined as having discipline problems, which leads to more school suspensions. In Jawanza Kunjufu's book entitled, *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, he discusses the importance of educators recognizing that boys learn differently from girls and that it is important to include male as well as female teachers throughout their schooling years, especially during the early years. He also discusses the importance of motivating the males to want to learn, focusing on their oral skills, relating mathematical problems to the students' everyday lives and discussing positive and negative issues in the African American community. Rarely in our present public educational settings do educators include students' cultural backgrounds or learning modalities when providing instruction to African American students.

The song entitled, *Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round,* tells the story of the determination that educators and students had towards segregation. They were determined to ensure that African Americans were treated equally in all aspects of the community. The individuals who participated in the Civil Rights Movement were threatened, hurt, and killed, but they refused to allow anyone to, "turn them around".

Negroes File Suit To Mix Schools in Dougherty County

A civil suit seeking integration of all schools in Dougherty County was filed here on the weekend in United States Court, Middle District of Georgia, Albany Division.

The suit asked that, as an alternative, the defendants, listed as the Dougherty County Board of Education and the superintendent of schools, be directed to present a complete plan for desegregation.

The Court was asked by 16 Negro children, in an action filed by their parents as next friends, for a permanent injunction enjoining the Dougherty County Board of Education, its members and the superintendent of schools in Dougherty County from continuing with their policy, practice, custom and usage of operating a compulsory biracial school system in Dougherty County.

C. B. King, Albany Negro attorney, signed the civil action as attorney for the plaintiffs, and cited Constance Baker Motley and Norman C. Amaker, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, N.Y., New York, as additional attorneys for the plaintiffs.

Names Given

The plaintiffs were listed as follows:

Dakota Anderson, William Gilchrist Anderson, and Vale Jeanita Anderson, by W. G. Anderson, their father and next friend; Shirley Gaines, Patricia Ann Gaines, Marian Gaines, minors, by Monroe Gaines, their father and next friend; Shirley Ann Lawrence, Rosa Lee Lawrence, Kevin Lawrence and Leonard Lawrence, by Ronice Lawrence, their mother and next friends; Willie James Davis and Jefferson Davis Jr., minors, by Jefferson Davis Sr., their father and next friend; Roosevelt Mathis and Henry Lee Mathis, minors, by Kimis Pearl Mathis, their mother and next friend; Eddie Maude McKendrick, minor, by her father and next friend, the Rev. Silas McKendrick; and Diane Young, minor, by Mary P. Young, her mother and next friend.

Listed as defendants in the action were the Dougherty County Board of Education, a public body corporate, and Louis A. Peacock, president of the Dougherty County Board of Education; John P. Vonbjell, Hollis Stanford, Herbert Holey, George Joiner, Ernest Reed and J. L. Davis, members of the Board of Education, and J. J. Cordele (Cordell), Superintendent of Education of Dougherty County.

Alternate 'Plan'

As an alternative, the plaintiffs "prayed that this Court enter a decree directing defendants to prepare a complete plan, within a period of time to be determined by this Court, for reorganization of the entire school system into a unitary non-racial system which shall include a plan for the assignment of children on a non-racial basis — drawing of school zone or attendance lines on non-racial basis, allotment of funds and elimination of any other discrimination in the operation of the school system based solely on race and color."

Turn to Page 15A, Col. 4

The petition asked that "this Court maintain jurisdiction of this case pending approval and full and complete implementation of the defendant's plan."

The petition for injunction stated that the jurisdiction of the Court was being invoked "pursuant to the provisions of Title 28, United States Code, Section 1343 (3), this being a suit in equity authorized by law, Title 42, United States Code, Section 1983, to be commenced by any citizen of the United States or other persons within the jurisdiction thereof to redress the deprivation, under color of statute, ordinance, regulation custom or usage of a State, of right, privileges and immunities secured by the Constitution and laws of the United States. The rights, privileges and immunities sought to be secured by this action are rights, privileges and immunities secured by the due process of equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, as hereinafter more fully appears."

"This is a proceeding for a permanent injunction enjoining the Dougherty County Board of Education, its members and the Superintendent of Schools of Dougherty County from continuing with their policy, practice, custom and usage of operating a compulsory biracial school system in Dougherty County and for relief as hereinafter more fully appears."

The petition also states:

The plaintiffs are all members of the Negro race and bring this action on their own behalf and on behalf of all other Negro children and their parents in Dougherty County who are similarly situated and affected by the policy, practice, custom and usage complained of herein. All are citizens of the U.S. and residing in Dougherty County, Georgia.

It was also stated that the plaintiffs all were eligible to attend, and were attending schools in Dougherty County under the jurisdiction, management and control of the defendants, "which are limited by the defendants to attendance by Negro children pursuant to the policy, practice, custom and usage of defendants operating a compulsory biracial school system."

The civil action pointed out that the suit was being brought not only for the 16 children listed, but for all members of the class "which are so numerous as to make it impracticable to bring them all individually before this Court, that there are common questions of law and fact involved, common grievances arising out of common wrongs and common relief is sought for each plaintiff and for each member of the class. The Plaintiffs fairly and adequately represent the interests of the class."

It was claimed that Negro students lived near white schools and that due to the maintenance of dual school zone or attendance lines some of them had to travel as much as five miles to attend a Negro school when there were white schools nearer their homes.

It also was claimed that the plaintiffs had tried to register at white schools in Dougherty County and that the defendants had been asked to cease segregation, but that they (the defendants) had continued to operate a biracial school system.

In addition to asking the Court to enjoin the defendants from operating a compulsory biracial school system the petition asked

MIX' THREAT

Albany's Schools Debated

A "yes" or "no" answer on desegrating Albany schools imminently will be given by the Dougherty County Board of Education to the U. S. Department of Justice by a deadline falling next Monday, President Louis A. Peacock said today.

The official said the board had made this pledge to the Federal Government when it asked and obtained a 10-day delay in the filing of a Federal court suit with which the Justice Department threatened local educational authorities last Friday.

However, President Peacock said a date had yet been set for a special board meeting to make a decision.

Choice Told

The board has the choice of integrating local schools to meet the Federal demands or of resisting and facing court action to compel them to do so.

Not specifically raised as an issue by the Federal threat, but apparent to it, is a possible lawsuit of

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Board's Vote Is 'Solid'

By DAN GIBSON
Herald Staff Writer

The Dougherty County Board of Education gave a firm and definite "no" answer to the Federal Government today on voluntarily integrating local schools.

After Louis A. Peacock, school board president, had presented the board's seven-man board in a prepared statement, member Ernest Reed moved "that there be no change in the method of operating the Dougherty County school system." John Vonbjell seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

President Peacock stated "that is all the business before the meeting and I declare it adjourned."

It was probably the shortest session in the history of the local school board.

Six of the seven members were present. J. L. Davis Jr., being prevented from attending by illness.

Mr. Peacock's prepared statement, copies of which he gave members of the board, read as follows:

Federal Demands

Demands have been made upon this board by the United States Government that it change the manner of operating its public schools or face a court action by the United States to compel the board to do so.

"Either alternative is not a pleasant one, and either alternative carries with it demanding implications to this community, but this board has no course to take, make a decision.

"Arriving at a decision in this matter has not been an easy thing to do. There will be many complicating problems for this community arising out of either decision. Your board has given to its duty the thorough, thoughtful and prayerful consideration of all the complicated factors involved.

"We hope and pray that the decision made will be the best one."

The U. S. Justice Department had given the Board of Education until next Monday to decide whether to provide voluntary integrated facilities for children of military

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Will School Board Resist, O

South Georgia's Metropolitan Daily Sunday, January 20, 1963 Vol. LXXII, No. 89

Negroes

(Continued From Page 1)

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Albany Negroes Appeal Decision In School Case

Albany Negroes

(Continued From Page 1)

Articles written in The Albany Herald about school integration in Albany, Georgia.

CHAPTER III

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE: METHODOLOGY

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

Paul and Silas, bound in jail
Had no money for to go their bail
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
Hold on, (hold on), hold on, (hold on)
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!
Hold on, (hold on), hold on, (hold on)
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!

Paul and Silas began to shout
Doors popped open, and they walked out
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
Hold on, (hold on), hold on, (hold on)
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!

Well, the only chains that we can stand
Are the chains of hand in hand
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
Got my hand on the freedom plow
Wouldn't take nothing for my journey now
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!
Hold on, (hold on), hold on, (hold on)
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!
Hold on, (hold on), hold on, (hold on)
Keep your Eyes on the Prize, hold on!

Hold on, (hold on), hold on, (hold on)
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!
Hold on, (hold on), hold on, (hold on)
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!

(Hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on)
(Hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on)
(Hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on)

-SNCC Freedom Singers
Original song entitled, "Keep Your Hands on the Plow"

Critical Race Theory

The Civil Rights Movements originated for one simple reason, racism. For various reasons a group of individuals decided that they were better than everyone else because of the color of their skin. This simple minded reasoning has caused many individuals of various cultures to suffer and be denied many rights as individuals. Although African Americans were denied many of their rights, they fought to ensure that their children received a quality education. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of African American educators and students during the turbulent times of the Albany Movement. Critical race theory was chosen as the framework for this study and oral history as the methodology. Through the use of critical race theory and oral history the life experiences of the chosen educators and students will provide an opportunity for current day educators and students to gather an understanding of the connections between teachers and students during this difficult period.

The framework of critical race theory is based on the knowledge that at the root of everything is the issue of racism. "Critical race theory sprang up in the mid-1970s with the early work of legal scholars Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, both of whom were distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States" (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 8). Delgado & Stefancic (2001) defines CRT as follows:

> The critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power. The movement considers many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader

> perspective that includes economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. (pgs. 2-3)

Originally, critical race theory developed from the area of legal studies. "Realizing that new theories and strategies were needed to combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground, early writers such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado …put their minds to the task" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 4).

Critical race theorists believed that the once steadfast fight for civil rights began to fade after the 1960s and that there continued to be a need for an in depth look at race relations and how race affects individuals' everyday lives. Critical race theory focuses on six unifying tenets (1) CRT recognizes that racism is a pervasive and permanent part of American society, (2) CRT challenges dominant claims of objectivity, neutrality, colorblindness, and merit, (3) CRT challenges a historicism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law, (4) CRT insists on recognition of the experimental knowledge of people of color in analyzing law and society, (5) CRT is interdisciplinary and (6) CRT works toward eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw, 1993 & Dixson and Rousseau, 2006, p. 4) Critical race theorists use these tenets to emphasize that racism has become such a part of our everyday lives until we see it as normal and acceptable.

Although the United States has made many improvements in the areas of race, racism, and power, racism continues to be prevalent, especially in the area of education. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate are known for connecting critical race theory to the field of education. Critical race theory is necessary when evaluating African

Americans and their progress in the area of academics. Although much progression has been made, has the progression truly benefited African Americans? The majority population has played a major role in the type of education and how African Americans should be educated. Decisions that have been made in the past and present are affecting the education of African American students. Many of these decisions have been made solely on the basis of race. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) wrote the following:

> In schooling, the absolute right to exclude was demonstrated initially by denying blacks access to schooling altogether. Later, it was demonstrated by the creation and maintenance of separate schools. More recently it has been demonstrated by white flight and the growing insistence on vouchers, public funding of private schools, and schools of choice. Within schools, absolute right to exclude is demonstrated by resegregation via tracking. (p. 60)

Left out of the majority of these decisions were the voices of African American educators and students. Integration played a critical role in how the voices of African Americans would be heard and what exactly would be told.

The critical race theory framework is relevant to my study because it provides an opportunity for the voices of African American educators and student to be analyzed using a relevant theoretical lens. Through the voices of the participants in this study, the effect of racism on the African American population will be documented. School desegregation's purpose was to equalize education between races, but over forty years later, there continues to be difference. African American educators and students who participated in the process of integration, lived the experience and are able to provide information that various numerical data would not be able articulate.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics 2007-2008 report (nces.ed.gov), there are currently 49 million students enrolled in public school in the United States; of the total population 7.5 million students are African American and 6.6 million students are currently receiving special education services. "African American children comprise 17 percent of the student population but constitute almost 40 percent of students placed in various categories of special education" (Kunjufu, 2002, p. vii). Even more disappointing is the fact that thirty-five percent of the total population of special education students is African American boys (Kunjufu, 2005). These students need teachers who are able to identify with the history of their culture. They need teachers who understand the various ways that African American students learn and teachers who understand their behavioral patterns.

Many of the reasons why African American students struggle academically have racial origins dating back to integration. Schools where there is a majority population of African American students continue to struggle to find highly qualified teachers, who are willing to work with students. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass_2004_18.asp eighty-three percent of teachers in the United States are Caucasian; only seven percent are African American. "For the foreseeable future, the vast majority of teachers will be White while the student population will grow increasingly diverse" (Howard, 2006, p.4). It is essential for teachers to understand the history of African Americans and understand how to implement African American history into the current curriculum.

"Today, many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use CRT's ideas to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking,

controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). All of the previously mentioned educational issues can be easily connected to the tenets of critical race theory. These are issues that are seen as ordinary and acceptable. Although there are individuals who constantly keep these issues in the forefront, there are greater numbers of individuals who are not aware of these issues.

In his book entitled, *Black Students. Middle Class Teachers*, Jawanza Kunjufu (2002) lists some of the following trends for African Americans:

- There is no staff of color in 44 percent of schools.
- African American children comprise 17 percent of the student population but constitute almost 40 percent of students placed in various categories of special education.
- Only 3 percent of African American students is placed in gifted and talented programs.
- Sixty- three percent of African American fourth grade students is below grade level in reading. Over 80 percent of inmates entered prison illiterate. States project prison growth on fourth grade reading levels. (p. vi –viii)

These trends alone explain the importance of critical race theory to our present day educational system. Is the current public educational system preparing our African American students for the American culture? " We must create an educational system that not only celebrates African and African-American culture but also imbues Black children with the skills they need to survive in this society and to contribute to its creative development" (Hale, 1982, p. 3). This study will explore the experiences of educators and

students during the Albany Movement, to gather information concerning community and school experiences, with hope that educators will become more knowledgeable about the history and culture of African Americans. Storytelling is an essential part of critical race theory. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) state:

> The hope is that well-told stories describing the reality of black and brown lives can help readers bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others. Engaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others. Engaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others, and invite the reader into a new and unfamiliar world. (p. 41)

Through storytelling readers are provided an opportunity to analyze the information being presented and gather a better understanding of history and its effects on the minority population. Through the voices of the participants in this study, I hope that readers will gather an understanding of the importance of the experiences that educators and students shared during the Albany Movement and how it has affected present day education.

Oral History

Oral history was chosen as the methodology for the study. “Memory is the core of oral history, from which meaning can be extracted and preserved. Simply put, oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 19). It provides a voice for individuals who have a story to tell. Perks and Thomson (2006) stated the following:

> Moreover, for some practitioners oral history has not just been about making histories. In certain projects a primary aim has been the empowerment of

> individuals or social groups through the process of remembering and reinterpreting the past, with an emphasis on the value of process as much as historical product. In this regard oral history has influenced and overlapped with some of the most important contemporary uses of historical memory: in the 'truth and reconciliation' projects of post-conflict societies, or in legal responses to human rights abuses, such as war crime tribunals or the land claims of indigenous peoples. (p. x)

Oral history provides an avenue for capturing the voices of African Americans, whose stories have been long lost due to a lack of importance to the majority population. The loss of these stories has had a tremendous affect on the progress of African Americans as a culture. In recent years, the importance of oral history and its role in helping minority populations tell their stories has strengthened. African Americans as well as other minority populations recognized the importance of cultural history and have begun to tell and record their history. "Memories shared in oral histories create a picture of the narrator's life: the culture, food, eccentricities, opinions, thoughts, idiosyncrasies, joys, sorrows, passions-the rich substance that gives color and texture to this individual life" (Cavett, 2005, p. xi).

African Americans have used oral history as a means of sharing community stories. Community stories provide readers with a view of the way life was through the eyes of African Americans who lived during various periods of our history. The very first book that I encountered that was written by an oral historian was *Roots*, by Alex Haley. My father enjoyed reading books written by African American authors and had a wide range of titles. Regardless of where we lived, books always lined the walls of our family

room. As a child, I would spend hours walking up and down the aisle in front of the bookshelves reading various titles and books. One day, I notice the book entitled, *Roots;* I began to read the book and became totally engaged in the story. I remember asking my great-grandmother what seemed at the time to be a million questions about our family's history. I truly believe that experience is what piqued my interest in oral history.

Alex Haley helped African Americans to understand that the stories we share from generation to generation are essential to the history of African Americans and need to be documented. Through oral history our ancestors are able to share experiences that help to contextualize their lives, individually and within the community in which they lived.

When collecting oral histories, William Baum in his book entitled*, Transcribing and Editing Oral History,* discusses in the Introduction the four steps to conducting oral history. The four steps include creating, processing, curating, and using. Creating is the process of researching and collecting materials that will be useful to process. Processing is making the information collected useful and accessible. Curating is preserving the information (tapes, transcripts, etc.). Using is finding a way to use the information and actually quoting the information. Although Baum makes it clear that there is not one specific way to collect oral history, his book offers a guide, but it is important to remember that as a researcher it is essential to make decisions as the research develops.

Narratives provide an arena for individuals to understand both individual and cultural experiences of others. Allowing stories to be told provides an opportunity to collect information that may not easily be understood in the more traditional types of research. Narratives open a door to understanding the everyday encounters and

experiences that individuals come into contact with during various times of their lives. Reading and listening to narratives allow others opportunities to gather a deeper understanding of the experience, event or community which is being documented. Grele (2007) wrote the following:

> Through the oral history interview we can marshal the evidence to begin to explore how history is constructed, not through self-conscious literary efforts but through the experience of broad swaths of the people as they struggle to situate themselves in their world and demand their rights to their own understanding of that world. (p. 81)

During the Civil Rights Movement, educators and students believed in the mission of the movement and understood the importance of building a better community. They understood how taking a stand for civil rights could affect their present day lives and the dangers that they are putting themselves in. In this study, I will examine the experiences that educators and students endured during the Albany Movement. More and more research is being conducted concerning the experiences of African American educators and their students (Foster, 1997, Ladson-Billings 2005, and Siddle-Walker, 2009). This study will focus on educators and students who lived in South Georgia in Albany, Georgia, during the Albany Movement. Understanding experiences of African American educators and students in the south during the civil rights movement is the purpose of this inquiry.

Exemplary Oral History Texts

In reading the book entitled, *Like It Was: A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History,* Cynthia Stokes Brown (1988) discusses the importance of preparing questions

when preparing to interview, but she reminds readers that concentrating on the interview is a difficult task. Preparing general questions and reviewing the questions before and after the interview is more beneficial. In collecting oral history, I believe that this method of interviewing is best suited for the research to provide the participants an opportunity to tell their story through their voice. Through this method of interviewing Cynthia Brown wrote the book entitled, *Ready from Within*: *Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement*. This book tells of the experiences that Septima Clark endured during the Civil Rights Movement.

Vincent Harding wrote a book entitled, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America*. In his book he tells the story of the plight of African Americans through their struggles, their determination and the strong belief that one day their people would reap the benefits of their strength. Harding wrote the following to express his desire concerning the importance of sharing history:

> So I write in hope that some men and women will read the words and recognize that they/we are the essential force, are the river, are the vision. I write trusting that some parents and grandparents and teachers will read aloud and share this with children, will become new sources of memory, will remind one another that our destination has always been a new, transformed humanity, a new humanized society (not "equal opportunity" in a dehumanized one), will remember that we have come this far at great cost. (Harding, 1981, p. xxv)

Oral history is a vital part of maintaining the history of a culture and it is essential for each member of the culture to take responsible in recording and sharing the history. This is precisely the role that Vincent Harding has taken on in his book, *There is a River: The*

Black Struggle for Freedom in America. He wrote this book to help others understand the history of African Americans and to help people to become involved in creating a new America.

Untold Tales, Unsung Heroes: An Oral History of Detroit's African American Community, 1918-1967, written by Elaine Latzman Moon, is an exemplary book which provided an opportunity for African American citizens of Detroit to tell parts of their life stories. Moon (1994) wrote the following:

> This project evolved because I am a native Detroiter who has written extensively about Detroit history; because I have noted that the African American community is not represented in the city's written history; because I have worked with many people in the black community and heard their stories; because many have said to me, 'People tell me I should write a book', and because they may not do it but still need to have their story told. (p. 15)

This book provides oral history to the citizens of Detroit as well as to others who are interested in the true history of America. Individuals selected to be a part of this endeavor talk about the good times and the bad times in their community. They discuss their everyday lives and how their experiences shaped their thoughts about their race and the culture in which they lived. The main goal for the conception of this book, the hope for the individuals involved in its creation was stated simply as, " It is our hope that this oral history will provide an understanding of the past and present and an insight for those who can affect the future" (Moon, 1994, p. 18).

Oral historian, Kate Cavett, created a document entitled, *Voices of Rondo: Oral Histories of Saint Paul's Historic Black Community.* This document provided an

opportunity for citizens of Saint Paul, Minnesota, to tell the story of their community which revolved around Rondo Avenue. The majority of African American citizens who lived in Saint Paul lived in the Rondo Neighborhood area. Kate Cavett, a student at Summitt-University, explored the community and found that there was an interest in documenting the history of this community and the process began. Dr. David Vassar Taylor grew up in the Rondo community and worked closely with Kate Cavett and community members in developing this document in his foreword he wrote, " It is our hope that this effort to capture the essence of Rondo community history will empower others to explore their past" (Cavett, 2005, p. xv).

The *Voices of Rondo: Oral Histories of Saint Paul's Historic Black Community*, provides an opportunity for readers to capture the true feelings of real individuals who lived, worked, enjoyed, suffered and experienced life as African Americans in a community in the United States. Residents of the Rondo Community tell the stories of the everyday experiences that they encountered and how these experiences affected their lives. David Taylor expressed the following about oral histories:

> The use of oral histories has been critical to understanding community history. Although we live in a society rich in documents that establish our official identities (census data, government records, health records, etc.), these records do not and cannot speak to the quality of our lives, our hopes, or our dreams and common experiences. The story of a community lies beneath the surface of everyday life, where personal experiences are shaped by common experience, culture, language, religion, and shared belief systems. (Cavett, 2005, p. xiii)

The individuals who participated in this study ranged in age from the mid fifties to one hundred years of age. The knowledge they share in this book provide the opportunity for those of us who did not live or experience life in the Rondo Community to develop an understanding of how life was in the community and the thoughts of African Americans during that period of time.

Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles for Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972, written by R. Scott Baker, explores the history of four institutions of learning. The institutions of learning in this study included an elementary school, a vocational and academic high school, a private preparatory college and a land grant college. Scott wrote the following:

> Unlike other historians of black education, I attribute the growing power of these institutions not simply to the initiative of African Americans parents, teachers, and students but also to the combined effects of educational activism and NAACP litigation. (Baker, 2006, p. xvi)

Scott discusses how the barriers that were taken down because of integration provided opportunities for more "rational barriers to equality and access" (Baker, 2006, p. 178).

Voices from the Movement

Participants

The voices of this study include two African American educators and two African American students who lived in Albany and participated in the Albany Movement. The number of participants chosen to participate in the study was based on the fact that the movement occurred over forty years ago and many of the individuals who participated in the movement were teenagers and young adults who are now senior citizens. These

individuals were very involved in the Albany Movement and continue today to work diligently in the area of improving race relationships in Albany, Georgia. .

Interviews

Each interview was conducted at the home of the participants. The sessions lasted anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half. The interviewer chose to use both open-ended and specific questions. Ritchie (2003) stated the following:

> Use open-ended questions to allow interviewees to volunteer their own accounts, to speculate on matters, and to have enough time to include all of the materials they think relevant to the subject. Use more specific questions to elicit factual information, often in response to something the interviewee has mentioned while answering an open-ended questions. (p. 92)

Each interview was recorded and transcribed by the researcher. This method was chosen to allow the researcher an opportunity to gather a better understanding of the information presented by the interviewees.

CHAPTER IV

A CHANGE IS GONNA COME: VOICES FROM THE MOVEMENT

A Change is Gonna Come

I was born by the river in a little tent
Oh and just like the river I've been running ever since
It's been a long, time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

It's been too hard living but I'm afraid to die
'Cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

I go to the movies and I go downtown
Somebody keep telling me, "Don't hang around"
It's been a long time coming
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will

Then I go to my brother
And I say, "Brother, help me please"
But he winds up knockin 'me
Back down on my knees

Oh there been times that I thought I couldn't last for long
But now I think I'm able to carry on
It's been a long time coming
But I know a change gonna, oh yes it will

-Sam Cooke

MARY ROYAL JENKINS

EDUCATOR, AUTHOR

"They may make us go to school with you, but I never will invite one of you into my house".

I first contacted Mrs. Jenkins through her husband. My daughter and I attended a discussion at the Civil Rights Movement which featured author, Susan Eva O'Donovan. Her book entitled, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South*, was the topic of discussion. Mr. Jenkins was attending the night's event and I mentioned to him that I would like to talk with him about the Albany Movement, he stated, "My wife is the one who knows everything about the movement, she is the one that you need to talk to". I mentioned to him that he knew my mother and stepfather and without hesitation he provided me with his home number and stated that she would be glad to talk to me.

About a month or so later, I built up the nerves to contact Mrs. Jenkins. I called her one Tuesday afternoon and upon answering the phone, it appeared that she may have been busy taking care of some household task so I told her to contact me later on after she had time to review her schedule and see when she had some available time. After hanging up the phone, I thought to myself, "You should have at least provided a time for her, you shouldn't have left the scheduling of a meeting opened". The mistake had been made and there was nothing to do, but wait for her to return my call with a date for the

interview. Later on that afternoon, I informed my mother and she offered her advice as she always does and told me to make sure that I talked to Mrs. Jenkins at church on Sunday.

Soon Tuesday turned into Saturday and I had not heard from Mrs. Jenkins. I had begun to worry on Wednesday when I had not heard from Mrs. Jenkins and begin thinking of the names of other individuals who I could possibly interview. Sunday morning came and I looked for Mrs. Jenkins, but I could not find her. Eventually, my mother showed up and stated simply, "I talked to Mrs. Jenkins and told her that you needed to speak with her". I looked around and there was Mrs. Jenkins sitting eloquently behind me, but once again after church, I looked and she had disappeared.

The next week began to quickly pass and on Tuesday, I checked my phone messages and to my surprise, Mrs. Jenkins had tried to contact me on Sunday afternoon. You can only imagine how excited I was about her call. I immediately contacted her and scheduled a meeting for June 25th at 11:30. Immediately I found my digital recorder and set it to make sure that it was working properly. I then grabbed a book that I had recently read entitled, *Like it Was: A Complete Guide to Writing Oral History* and reviewed notes that I written from my readings. My excitement grew as I began to write down some questions that I hoped Mrs. Jenkins would answer. I knew that my basic inquiry would be simply, "Describe your experiences as a teacher during integration".

I could hardly sleep that night anticipating the interview for the next afternoon. The next morning I must have checked my recorder ten times to make sure that it was working. I even checked it on my drive to Mrs. Jenkins's home. As I rang the doorbell and Mrs. Jenkins answer the door in her quiet demeanor, I immediately felt calmness

come over me. She welcomed me into her home, which displayed pictures of family members. She led me to a table in her kitchen which contained many articles that were dear to her heart about the Albany Movement. She was excited to see that I brought along a copy of her book entitled, *Open Dem Cells: A Pictorial History of the Albany Movement.* We began our discussion on the movement and at the end our discussion, after I thanked her for the fourth time for allowing me such a wonderful opportunity, she stated, "Anytime, I am just thankful to know that there is someone still interested in the Albany Movement".

I have known Mrs. Jenkins since I pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority in 1994. From looking at her, you could tell that she was and continues to be a woman of elegance. She is a lady who believes in the importance of the African American struggle and has committed herself to making the world a better place for African American children. She earned Bachelor of Arts degree in English, Speech and Drama from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Mrs. Jenkins also earned a Masters of Education degree from Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia. She retired as a middle school teacher in 1986. In the following, I will let Mrs. Mary Royal Jenkins narrate her experiences in first person.

Let me tell you about my first experience. My first year I worked in Baker County and it was at the end of that first year in 1954 that the Supreme Court ruled on desegregation in public education and at that time, we had a white lady who was, I guess what they called a visiting supervisor. She would come into the school and make decisions about everything; especially curriculum wise and conduct wise. I guess after she read the decision that was made by the Supreme Court, she came into East Baker

High School, that was the name of the school and had all the black teachers to assemble and she gave her opinion on the Supreme Court decision. Of course she made a lot of different statements, but there are two that stand out in my mind. One is that she didn't think that black children and white children should go to school together, but she concluded with this statement, she said "they may make us go to school with you but I never will invite one of you (that was in reference to the black teachers) into my house". Back in those days, Baker County was a difficult place to live.

I grew up in a segregated environment, but when you are young, you don't pay attention to a whole lot of things that you know are not equal, you just do what you are used to doing. I knew if I wanted to go to the movies, I knew where to sit. You just do those things that you regularly do and don't think about them too much. And I don't think they become a reality to you until, well it didn't become a reality to me until when I had children. You see when I would go downtown and I would take my kids with me and they would start squirming, I only knew of one store that had a restroom and that was when Belk's was downtown. That was the store that had the restroom and I knew I had to get there in order for them to use the restroom.

You know when I started teaching, the first thing that I had to get used to was, I understood that black people were always respectful and knew how to treat people, But I think the real problem was that white people didn't know how to treat black people. I had it pretty good in teaching, I had enough tenure, I guess you could say, so I wasn't one that they assigned to a white school when integration started, but I had friends who talked about the situations in white schools with the black teachers. For example, there was one gentleman who worked at a school; this school showed the attitude they had towards

blacks. They sectioned off an entire section of a wing of the school for blacks, in other words, it was still segregation within the school. And this is where the black teachers were so to speak were housed.

When I talked with other black teachers, they explained that what the white teachers would do, even the principals of the schools, I guess they didn't think the black teachers were qualified; they would give the white students grades. What they would do is at the end of a testing period the teachers would have to turn their report cards into the principal and then what the principal would do is decide if certain white students got the grades they thought they should get. There were things of that sort. They would change them if they thought a white child had a grade they shouldn't have gotten. So, there were a lot of abuses in a lot of different ways.

You know I think this is what was lost in education, what we don't have today, with the segregated schools you could discipline and you cannot teach without discipline. You cannot teach without discipline, you are not going to get any learning, I will say it that way. You cannot get any learning without it. And you don't have that today. I also found with principals, that if you had a problem with a white student, you didn't get the support that you would need, because, as I stated they seem to always cater to whites. So this was prevalent throughout, and especially when we first started and there wasn't an equalization of pay. They paid, now I don't have any proof of this, it was rumored now that they actually paid white teachers more or subsidized them in some way to get them to come into the black schools. See especially when you had the 40/60 law and you had to have white teachers in the black schools and they were given more money, I

understood, so that they would volunteer you know to come into the black schools. So, it was a period of stressful times.

And we are losing our children. They are not receiving the education that they deserve. They are really not getting it and I don't know, you know when you start pointing the finger, you really don't know now who to point the finger at, because it just goes all around starting with the parent and so it is really hard, but those were times that we lived through and something tells me that we are going to have some more stressful times and it might be even worse than going through that period. You know, I always say Jim Crow/prejudice, but those were some situations that existed at that time.

When we talk about the movement, it is whole different ball game, so to speak. Actually the movement could not have survived without the young people. They were the force behind much of the direct action that took place and led up to the changes. They were the ones that would go out and sit in the restaurants or the drug stores where they weren't allowed. You know we had an organization here in Albany called SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). SNCC was really made up directly and organized by young people because at that time the young people who mainly were here were Sherrod (Charles) and Cordell Reagon they were just out of college. They were really dedicated and determined to make change and they trained the young people here. They got the young people from junior high schools, high schools and the college and they trained them to be nonviolent. Of course there were one or two occasions where they were violent, but they trained them to be nonviolent. They were the ones who tried to integrate the swimming pools and the lunch counters and now there were some adults along the way, but primarily it was the young people and they were for change, so they

played an important part. There are six young girls who integrated Albany High; you know one of them attends our church. Her name is Bernice Wilson and she would be glad to share her story.

As educators at the time, we talked about the movement, but we mainly tried to talk about how not to get into trouble. You know… because young people, they are so daring and impulsive, they would do things and they could get in a lot of trouble and the point was, they were getting locked up and that meant they were missing days out of school. So, we tried to talk with them about how far they could go with some things, and how to make the right kind of decisions about what they would decide to do, but that was the extent of trying to talk to them because they would miss days. But, some of those kids would even defy their mothers, what their parents said, and they (parents) would say "don't march or don't get arrested, but they believed in what they were doing. They believed in what they were doing and they believed in those SNCC folks. I mean they indoctrinated them to a point where they would just, and sometimes I know in the first arrests that were made, some of those kids were, what they did, it was so many of them adults and young people, that were arrested that they filled up the jails here in Albany and that meant those kids were sent to jails throughout the other counties and the parents didn't know where they were. You know for days, they didn't know where the children were. It was a trying time. But we made it through and I just believe that, I believe that change would have come, but it would have been longer and much more difficult without the movement. The movement moved progress a little faster.

When the desegregation law for public schools passed, well you know they had to do what the law said. They had to have a certain number of blacks in the schools, a

certain number of blacks in the white school and a certain number of whites in black schools. So they had to follow the law and that is what they did. So gradually we begin to have more and more you know. You know they didn't want to and they tried to do a lot of different things to circumvent integration in the way they should have. That was why at first they would just send a certain number, you know, then later on they would start at sending a grade level. They made all kinds of different decisions at that time, until gradually it came to a point where they begin to just integrate classes, so students who wanted to go to Albany High could go to Albany High. It was a choice, even the six (girls who integrated Albany High School) didn't have to go, but they knew why they were chosen to go. If the law said you could go and you didn't have anyone to go you knew that would be the end of it so to speak, so those six girls were the ones that were chosen and they went into the school. After that it was gradual.

Now my daughter, what class was she in? Sharon was in the first class where the whole class went to Albany High, see that was the first class, other than that it had just been spondaic to speak. Let me tell you about some incidents. And I remember one specifically. I was waiting one day for Sharon to get off the bus and the bus came and she didn't get off. I was wondering and waiting and in my mind I said, you better get up from here and go to Albany High and see what is going on and I walked out. When I walked out a car drove up and it was her (Sharon's) Home Economics teacher and Sharon jumped out of the car all puffed up and mad and everything. The teacher started explaining to me what happened at the school. "Well, I had to keep my black girls after school because they wouldn't do what I said." This was a time when black kids really began to rebel against things you know. I asked her what did she do? And she explained

that she had I guess some cooking going on, but anyway she had assigned the white girls to cook and the colored girls to clean up and they refused to clean up, so she kept them after school. I said, "Well, perhaps a better way would have been if you had half of the white girls and half of the black girls to cook and half of the white girls and half of the black girls to clean up." But she didn't see it that way. There were a lot of incidents you know. She (Sharon) really didn't want to go to Albany High, I was the one that pushed her because I was so involved with the movement and making change and all of this, so I in a sense almost forced her to go. She went on reluctantly, but she went on and they were a group that stuck together. And it was so I don't know, but Monroe High students, if something happened at Albany High, do you know there were students at Monroe that would band together and go over there to Albany High? I don't know it was that bond that the students shared. You know if they thought the black students at Albany High were going to have trouble, they were going to help them.

Those kids had a lot of hard times, we recently had a reception to honor the six girls that integrated Albany High School. There was a white girl or a white lady I guess I should say, who was working on I think she was working on her Masters and she was in the class with the six girls and we had a reception for the six girls and I guess that was what she saw in the newspaper. She sent me a letter asking me about the six girls and how to get in touch with the girls and if they would be willing. She was studying Art and she wanted to do portraits of those girls. She was apologetic about the fact that she was in the class and she had witness a lot of things that they went through and yet she was one of the ones who never said anything, she just sat back and didn't do anything. Anyway, she did the portrait and there was a write up in the Albany Herald and would you believe

that that was 2005 and in this present age, and there was a white lady and I don't remember her name, even though I have all the clippings she wrote one of the most, I don't know how you would describe such a letter, but she felt that the girls did not deserve the recognition that they were getting.

That was in 2005, I wish I had, I didn't think I was going to talk about this, I could have gathered some of the newspaper articles, because see we got into a writing thing, editorial thing, back and forth with her saying a whole lot about the girls and I was writing and saying things for what she was saying, but it was nasty, it was really nasty and we went back and forth with that in the Albany Herald. You would think that attitudes have changed, but there are still people out there who have that same mentality, that existed during the movement, but it was awful, it was awful the things that she said about the girls. She even said that none of them graduated , and the funny thing is that one of the girls, I don't know where she was living at the time, but she wrote a letter to the herald and told them that she graduated and she was out of about three hundred students ranked number 24 or something like that. But anyway, you know it was to let this woman know how wrong she was about some of the things she said about the girls. I never thought that anyone could be so cruel. After all these years and she was still that upset about integration, but at the reception that we had, a young man who was the president of the senior class, came and he apologized for everything that had been done to those girls during that time. All of this took place in 2005. I can't remember but I have all the articles, everything that I wrote, everything that that lady wrote and the Herald had the pictures of the portrait that she made, so I guess that what excited the lady to write

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

Today's lunches are harming our students

Letter about graduates delusional, distorted

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

Civil rights activists sacrificed for us all

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

Six girls took a leap for Dougherty County

THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

Herald missed facts about AHS graduates

Letters from the Editorial Column written between Mrs. Jenkins and community members.

what she wrote, because she felt that they didn't deserve that kind of honor. But that was recent so to speak.

Well, they made the laws, you can make people follow the law, but you can't make them change their hearts and that evidently was a lady whose heart could not be changed. So, but there were letters in there and there was a girl in Atlanta who said that she had read the Herald online and she talked about me as a teacher and you know that kind of thing, because it really reached a point where they were talking about me. Yes I tell you, but I didn't stop. I mean I did not stop. For every letter that she wrote, I wrote one back. I sure did, so it was a lot. When you think about all the things that have happened, you believe that things would have changed for the better. You know even when you think about what happened to Preston King.

What happen to Preston was simply horrible. He was going to be drafted to go in to the service, they sent him this letter. The letters sent to the whites would say Mr. so and so and when they sent them to colored people, the letter would address them by their first name. And Preston was a King and all of the Kings are alike (laugh). And Preston took offense to that and so he refused to well, let us say to go along with this, so any way, … he ended up having to leave the country. I discussed that situation in my book. The thing that brings it up to date after President Clinton had cleared him of this; they were having an affair down to the Veteran's Park at the Civic Center, and they had a flag over on one side of a statue over there, but anyway there were some whites, of course who are always against things and were saying that he should not have been exonerated. So, they went to tear the flag down, I think, they were going to take it down, but the only thing I remember about it now and I remember because there is a picture of my husband and Mr.

Williams putting the flag back up and someone snap the picture of them putting it back up. But there again there were editorials in the Herald where they were saying that, well talking against fact that he would not go in the service to defend his country. They were calling him all kinds of names… I wrote an article about that too. I wrote to the Herald about that because I felt this way, they were sending black soldiers overseas to fight for freedom for other folks and when they come home they can't walk through the front door in a restaurant, you know it didn't make sense. And to vilify Preston the way that they did it was more than I could understand, but that was the way their thinking was. That's I guess how low we were in their eye sight. We can go and fight for freedom for other folks, but we didn't deserve it for ourselves.

Getting back to our involvement in during the movement as educators, the law was very specific. If a teacher was imprisoned or if a teacher marched and was arrested, she would lose her job. So a lot of us did things not necessarily opened, but we helped with the movement. Now they would ask for volunteers. I was in the mass meetings every night. I had a babysitter in my house almost every night, because my husband was following the movement and I was following the movement (laugh), so I had to have someone to take care of the children, but umm yes, when they asked for volunteers, I volunteered. Dr. Martin Luther King had set up an office in Dr. Anderson's home, so they needed people to answer the telephone and do different things in the office. Sometimes we would, if they had to have an immediate meeting, we would have to call people and commit them to meet at a certain time and a certain place, so we would do different things like that. But I was really deeply, deeply involved in the movement. And of course my passion for writing is how I did the book. As I sat in the mass meetings and

listen to people talk, talk about all the things that they had gone through when they were in jail, as well as listening to all the speakers that came in, I would make notes about all of the meetings and that resulted in the book.

The Albany Movement began here at Shiloh Baptist Church, located at 325 Whitney Ave.

I tell you, the mass meetings were exciting because even though you knew why you were there and what was behind it all it was the fact that you knew were a part of something that was going to make a big change that was going to change the quality of your life and of course when you have children you are always thinking that you want something better for your children, so that was the moving force behind many of the adults being involved in the movement. And most of them had children and they were willing to make any kind of sacrifice for them. So, I tell you, but at the mass meetings we would get so excited and of course, you know the singing, that's always emotional, you know when the freedom singers, they weren't called freedom singers at first, but they did become freedom singers and they would get up and sing the songs and they were moving. You know they would excite people. We would get so involved in the singing that we could have lined up to march while they were singing. The songs had that feeling and especially the words from the song, just think about someone singing, Ain't Nobody

Gonna Turn Me Around and there they are standing there in front of Chief Pritchett and he's telling them that if you don't turn around, I am going to have to lock you up. And they don't turn around.

The sixties was a time during the movement when black people in this community stuck together. We never could have accomplished what we did without being unified. When you think of seven hundred people being arrested and hundreds and hundreds going to jail, so they were unified and they believed in what they were doing. It takes courage, because when I think in terms of you know SNCC students, I don't know if they get enough credit for all that they did, they came in here without a roof over their head or money to buy food, they lived at first in different homes and people would feed them. Now I saw this with my own eyes, I saw Sherrod (Charles) I don't know if we were in Dr. Anderson's house or somebody else's house, because we were always somewhere, but I saw him eat half of what was on his plate and give the rest to Charles Jones and Charles Jones ate the other half. Now that was a time of dedication, determination and the kinds of sacrifice that those young folks made. They weren't always in sync with the adults of the Albany Movement, but the goal was the same, they just went about it a different way sometime.

There was another incident where a man here during the movement who was a lawyer for the civil liberty group, I believe and I overheard him say once that he was trying to do everything that he could to help assist CB King, but he could not understand why CB did not seem to want to accept what he had to offer, but when I thought about it to myself, I never talk to anybody else about it, but when I thought about it to myself, what he did not understand was that he had always had everything you know. When he

(the lawyer) walked into a courtroom, he was a white man, he had everything, he was given all the respect that they could give a human being, but when CB walked into the courtroom, he was just another nigger. And see what CB was trying to show him, I guess or prove to him was that even though you are here to help us, you still treated better than we are (laugh). They don't seem to understand that and especially a lot of young people don't know they don't have that hanging within them so to speak. But if you are like me and I say from the old school and you have experienced racism and segregation, you know the inhumane treatment, there is still something there, you know, it just doesn't leave, it just doesn't go away, disappear, its still there. Sometimes you can sense things in white people when they are not being sincere. So, I don't know, but we have come a long way and we have a long way to go. I see that we may really be losing this generation of children, really. Education is the key to their success, they have got to have it. Either they are going to be doing things that they shouldn't or they are going to have a difficult time surviving on their level of education. So, we must remind them of the importance of their history and show them that we need them to keep our culture strong.

I think my experiences in both segregation and integration affected me in a positive way. I can understand a lot of white people , you start out really having a lot of hard feelings about white people, and when I look at where I came from having to deal with them and the movement, and during integration I can see that some of them are accepting of us in a positive way and I can understand that … how do I want to say this, but some feelings that I have had, I can put them aside, I can say that because, some white people I believe they are open and honest and they want to be fair. I can accept that and I can live with that. I can see changes, I really can see changes and (quiet), but I don't

know if it is enough. I just don't know if it is enough. I don't believe that I will ever see the day when black people will be seen as complete equals. No, I won't see it, but maybe you will. Maybe you will. I think it will have to happen eventually, I pray that it won't get any worse. I would hope not, but I think change is coming, eventually down the road, it is just that our children, that is the only thing that bothers me…how much will they have lost? So, it makes a big difference. I just don't know what we can do right now, because right now is what we need to be focused on, I don't know how we make that big of a change, because all of that we did during the movement is not the way, marching and all of that is not the way,

It took hundreds and hundreds of people in the movement to make that kind of change. You know another drawback is the fact that then during the movement period we were all treated the same way, no matter what level you were on…it didn't matter what level of education that you had, it didn't make a difference. You were still just a …but now you have a lot of blacks, you might as well say they should be white. The way that they think and the way they act, so that part we have lost. That is another part that we have lost. Some of them really don't believe, you can't talk about what happened years ago, can't happen again, because they don't believe that it can happen again, but it can. You know, you can't talk that way to some black people, because they are so indoctrinated with the white ways and things until they think that is the right way.

One thing the movement taught us that I will never forget is that each hand should always be down to help someone up. I am a firm believer in that. I know that there are some people that you cannot change. You can't change them, just like you can't change me.

ROSA MCGHEE

EDUCATOR

"I told her that I enjoyed working at the school where I came from and that if it had been up to me, I would have never left."

I have known Mrs. Rosa McGhee for about eight years. She is a quiet, soft spoken woman who spent her professional years as an early childhood educator. She enjoys passing stories of her history down to her grandchildren who eagerly enjoy listening to each story unfold. I know Mrs. McGhee through her daughter and I was very comfortable during the interview. She told stories during the interview as if they happen on yesterday.

Upon entering her home on July 7, 2010, I immediately felt as if I were at a small family gathering. Mrs. McGhee and two of her grandsons were in the family room watching television and talking. As I entered the room she said hello and boys, both well mannered said, "Hey, Mrs. Griswold". Mrs. McGhee stood and led me to the dining room as the children's father arrived and the conversations grew loud, she looked at them, laughed and said, "I believe that the living room would be a quieter place for us to talk". As we settled into two chairs in the living room she easily began to tell of her experiences.

Growing up in the south during segregation was awkward in a lot of ways and in other ways it was not because it was the only way of life that black people knew, so although it wasn't an accepted way for us, we kind of adjusted to it as well as we possibly could. During that time we didn't feel well about the public places we had to attend, where both races attended the same place because the situation was that wherever we were or wherever we attended, the blacks always had the substandard part of where we had to sit or where we had to be in the separation. We were separated but it was not separate but equal. Their places were much more better than ours where we had to be. So that was an ill feeling, not a very good feeling. In a lot of cases, it would cause the blacks to not want to attend places where everybody was suppose to or could be there, but many blacks choose not to attend those kinds of events.

When I am talking to my grandchildren I often tell them that a lot of times we didn't worry about what the whites had in their communities because in Albany in particular, we had just about everything that we needed you know socially; schools, churches, restaurants, clubs, places for entertainment and that kind of thing, so we didn't have to worry about going to the places downtown or in the city, where they had black only and white only. I guess in some ways segregation didn't affect us as much as it did other people in other areas. We had blacks who had nice businesses and we had organizations that afforded places for black children to attend and play in their own parks, so it really didn't affect us that much. The only thing that really affect us a whole lot in Albany was that the schools were segregated and that most of the public places were segregated, movies and that kind of thing. But we even had in Albany, our own black theatre, so we didn't always get the first class movies, but it was better than going

up ten flights of stairs to get a chance to see the other movies. So it was, Albany was not a really bad place in that way, but it was just that we wanted equal opportunities in places where our tax money was spent and we could enjoy it like everyone else.

Our schools were segregated. The main high school that we had at that time was Madison, but during the 1960s during the civil rights movement Monroe was the black high school. It was the school where all the blacks, regardless of where they lived in town, that was the high school that they attended. They could live on the east side, south side, north side, wherever, it didn't matter, they attended Monroe High. There were several elementary schools for blacks to attend. Southside Middle School was the black middle school. When they built Monroe, the old school became Southside Middle.

As African American teachers, teaching, that was the only thing that we knew. During that time we were all in the segregated schools because the integration of schools had not started during the time of the Albany movement. Let me put it this way, it had just started. They had just started to integrate the schools, there were other civil opportunities that we didn't have during that time, but they had integrated the schools more or less. And they started first by really not integrating the students, but integrating the teacher. They moved black teachers to white schools and some white teachers to formally black schools. That's before they started the complete integration.

Before integration as teachers, we did the best that we could with what we had. More or less a lot of the books that the children used were handed down that the whites had used in their schools and they were seconded handed. Most of the teaching materials were seconded handed materials and during that time if there was other materials that the black teachers needed they spent a lot of their money buying materials that they thought

would be more beneficial for the children, then some of the materials we were getting from the white schools. We did not use that as an excuse, we worked hard and our students worked hard too. We had all types of children just like teachers do today and we worked hard to address their needs.

I think really after integration, the children to me didn't seem to do as well. It seems to me that the black teachers were really attentive to the children before integration because after integration the teachers were not used to them not having been in the black culture. The black children sometimes didn't understand the teachings and the considerations of the white teachers and having been one of the first teachers in this system that was transferred to one of the white faculties. I experienced quite a bit of difficulties with the white students. They didn't have respect for the black teachers, like they had for their own race of teachers. You just had to really demand and know how to get their respect. Then we didn't have much support from the white principals and the other white members of the faculty. A lot of them seemed to be surprised that you actually knew how to teach or knew what you were doing.

In some cases it was difficult to discipline white students. I remember having a student that accused me of using a curse word in the classroom and referring to them. The child went home and told the parent and of course the parent came out their all crying and everything and the principal called me in like I was in a courtroom. So, it was like the child's word against mine. So, they did call some students in, who did not uphold the child and what he was saying. They said, we don't recall Mrs. McGhee saying anything like that. They said we remember the occasion, but she didn't use any curse words. She was reprimanding him. They didn't say it like that. They said she was getting on him

about something he was doing and he started to say words to her and she said some things back to him, but it was never a curse word. You know the little boy's father was with the mother and he said, you know we are not going to listen to anymore of this. I told him, "In the first place, I don't even use profanity. And if I did, I wouldn't use it in front of a child and especially in the classroom. So, that's all I have to say about that. I am not going to try and defend myself in any other way." The father said, "Let's go. We are not going to listen to anymore of this, because this is not the first time that he said that about any teacher. I believe what you said, Mrs. McGhee and I believe what the other students said. So, we are going to dismiss this." After that, I also said to the principal, because she was in the room also. I said, "I am appalled at you for even calling me in for that. This is a disrespect to me." After that, she apologized.

I had previously asked to be removed from the faculty for many reasons. One was that I had been working in the reading clinic before I went there. I was working in the reading clinic part time and on my regular teaching job for the rest of the time. I believe during the integration process they had selected the teachers they wanted to go to the white schools. I guess they got with the principal or whatever, I don't know how they did it, but anyway after they transferred me to the other school , which was one of the most prestigious white schools in the community at the time, an elementary school, the people wanted me back at the reading clinic. So, they kept after the principal to ask her to release me to let me go back to the reading clinic. When they moved me, I was one of the reading supervisors at the clinic and it was run by federal funds, so the principal just didn't want to let me go. At the end of the year, they had to go to the superintendent and the superintendent said that the program was of such that if they needed the teachers who

needed to be at the school, that he would grant that request. The principal called me in and she talked with me a long time and she told me that I was one of the best teachers that she had ever had. She apologized if I had experienced any bad feelings about what had happened. She admitted that she was not use to working with black people and that at her age, she didn't think that she would be able to get use to it. So, she was going to retire at the end of that year anyway. She stated that she understood that I had requested to return to my previous school. I told her that I had not requested to return to my previous school, but that I would like to go back, because I would rather be there than here. She wanted to know why. I told her that I really didn't feel comfortable at the school and that I couldn't do a good job, if I didn't feel comfortable in the environment. That's when she continued to apologize and she stated that she wished I would stay because I was one of the best teachers that she had ever had. This was at the end of the school term.

The principal thought that I would want to stay at her school because it was a predominantly white school and one of the most prestigious white schools in our community. When I first arrived there and I had been there about six weeks, she said, "What do you think about working over here?" Well it was one of the better white schools. I said that it was okay. She asked me how did I compare it with the school where I had come from. I told her that I enjoyed working at the school where I came from and that if it had been up to me, I would have never left. She said that she could understand that, but I wanted her to understand that her school was no better, than the schools where I had taught previously. I wanted her to know that her teachers who were white were no better than the teachers I had taught with previously. All her teachers were white except for one and they had a lot of respect for that teacher. Anyway she apologized and she said

you go where you feel that you can better serve. At the end of that year, I went back to the reading clinic as a reading supervisor. It was difficult, black teachers were not well received.

When the integration of schools began, they wanted to transfer the teachers first, I guess to get a feel of how it would be. I guess they wanted to see how the teachers and parents would work together. I must say this not all the parents were this way, most of the parents that I came into contact with were very receptive. I received so many gifts at the end of the year. Some of those people became my friends and they are still my friends today. You know it wasn't all of the whites, it was just some of them, but the others just sat back and allowed things to happen, because they felt it would be some repercussions. I believe that there was some kind of selection process for transferring teachers, but I don't know what it was, because in the back of mind and my principal never told me that, is that they had to give a list of teachers' names and write a little evaluation about them on what they had done, a little background. Maybe they selected them that way, but the only thing that we knew was that they were calling our names out from different schools to go. Now they didn't take them from all schools, but from some schools they did. I know actually, I don't think it was but two teachers from the school where I was teaching that were transferred to another school. I really don't know what the criteria was, but I know that it was a selective situation. I don't know how they got the white teachers to transfer, but they didn't get many. There weren't too many. Now they weren't placed in all the schools. I don't know how they selected the schools for them to be placed in either, but they were not placed in all the schools, just some of them. It was something, I tell you. Many of the white teachers did not want to work with our children. As I said

before, I didn't have any experience except for working with black students. They were students, typical students. As I worked in the integrated schools I found that all of the students were about the same from one school to another.

In the black schools we had good PTAs in the schools where I taught. The parents were the presidents and they had other officers. To me it was fairly good, not bad at all. It seems to me that we had more support during segregation than during integration. After integration there was always still that feeling that you were not quite up to par and a lot of the black parents for that reason steered away, for that reason. That is the only thing that I can think of that would be the case. Sometimes I have the feeling that segregation was the best thing for us because our students were motivated more by the black teachers. They were cared for more our students needed special attention that sometimes the white teachers realize or didn't care if they got. We were a culture and we understood our culture and what it represented. When you put cultures together you have a mixture, so the one that is supposed to be the top one kind of takes away from the other. So, since then, our children seem to be falling away from the things that we had started. Now, the children that were born during the integration period do not appear to be affected as much as the ones who were not born and had to go through that segregation period.

Then again, if those children born during integration have been told stories by their parents about the segregation period, because of their parents and the stories they remember. Before integration, we always kept our children aware of where they had come from and what we had gone through. So, it was still in their minds too. So, it was hard for them to accept the whites, I guess as they should have, or would want too, or as

we would want them too, because they didn't have that beginning. So, many things happened during that time because after the integration, things got socially worse you know. We had all the movements going on all over the country and they knew what it was all about, so they were rebellious. It did make a difference with them, the students during that period of time, because they were still rebellious and had their protests going and all that kind of stuff. So, it was really a hard time to deal with.

The movement was a good thing. I thought that it was time and I supported it. The teachers were not allowed to actively participate in it like marching, protesting or that kind of thing, but here in Albany, we had nightly meetings and discussed the procedures that we were going by and there were a group that was committed to doing the protesting. They were people who didn't work for the State or the City government, or for any of those places, because they knew they could be fired. We had been told that if we ever were seen publically protesting or anything like that, that we would be removed from our jobs and a lot of people just did it anyway and were removed from their jobs. But, we found another way to support the movement by giving them money and doing whatever else that we could do to help. For instance, when they would get in jail and they would use the money that we put into the movement to get them out of jail. We also printed signs, whatever we could do and they couldn't say we were involved publicly in the movement. We would attend the meetings and support it in that way. We could attend the meetings at night and all of that kind of stuff, but they didn't want to see you holding signs or anything. They could not keep you from attending a public meeting and it was always done at the churches and they couldn't keep you from going to church. So, we

were there every night and I had Darol and them there every night. They would go with me.

Mrs. McGhee and Darol on the way to a mass meeting

The meetings were like a pep rally. That's what they really were like. We had them before Martin Luther King, Jr. came, because the movement had already started before he came, with some of the black city leaders. It just worked up to be a big thing. We had people from all over the country coming. You remember the college students started with the bus ride and many of the students who started that came to Albany and stayed, because our movement was so affective. Charles Sherrod and all of that bunch came and stayed. Other groups from other places where they had started movements joined in and some of them remained in the city, so it was really a big thing and we were able to get Martin Luther King, Jr. to come and he stayed for the longest for months and months. That's what really got it up and off the ground, because it was seen nationwide

on TV every night, what we were doing in Albany. It was just that when you would go there, you would feel stirred up, and you would be emotionally ready for whatever it was that you had to do. A lot of time people forgot about the jobs that they were on because they would get so moved about wanting to get their freedom and wanting to get civil rights until some of them just lost their jobs and they knew they were going to lose them. That's another thing, our money that we would put in to it would help protect them and keep them moving until they could get another job. So, it was really a united organization. Even in writing about it and hearing about it, you really wouldn't know how extensive it was unless you were involved. It was really a big thing. We even had President Kennedy involved. I remember one time when Martin Luther King, Jr. went to jail with the other marchers and after a couple of days Robert Kennedy who was Attorney General at that time he called the police department and told them to release Martin Luther King and everyone who was involved with the movement at that time.

Our motivation came from the singing and the talking. It was a part of telling the history of the blacks. See a lot of young people would attend and they would tell the history of what black people went through because you some of our young people just never knew about that. What advantages we could have, it was not that we, were particular about being with the white folks, we just wanted our rights, the right to do things if we wanted too. A lot of the rights that were accorded to us, we didn't even use them cause like I said, we already had what we needed. It was just the fact that you could do it if you wanted too. So, it was just something that we needed and deserved. So, it was a lot of testimonies and a lot of speakers. A lot of famous black people would come in and talk to the groups. We used two churches, we used Mt. Zion and all of the people

couldn't get in Mt. Zion, so we used the church across the street, Shiloh. They were right across from each other, so it was just a trial from one place to the other, depending on what was going on. The black people were really involved and it really brought them together. There are always going to be some naysayers and there were some saying, "We ain't gonna to do nothing, we ain't gonna get nowhere", but after awhile everyone just kind of joined in and did what they had to do. Eventually they saw that it was the right thing to do.

Many middle and high school students participated in the movement. They went to jail and everything. They had their own protesting and marching. Darol hasn't told you about that? Well during that time, the schools had already integrated and the students, any little thing that came up after they integrated that they didn't like, they would form them a march. I was looking on TV one day and here Darol comes leading a march in front of Westover. The students had their little protest going. They had to soon do something about that because the whole city was getting involved, and it was getting to be a heated situation and they exhausted all of the police force and didn't have enough police to keep everybody intact. They had to soon end that and they didn't have enough jails to hold everybody. They put them all around in jails across South Georgia; anywhere they could find a jail.

Another thing was that we stopped doing anything publicly in Albany. We stop shopping in the stores, we stopped riding on the buses, anything that was segregated, we stopped participating in it. If people needed to shop, we would board a bus to go out of town and do our shopping. The folks in Moultrie and the other small towns would be glad to see us coming. They would say, "Ya'll come back again, okay "? They were profiting

from what we were doing in Albany. They didn't care what you were doing as long as you were coming there to spend money. Because see money always talks, so they stopped making a lot of money here because people weren't shopping here. So soon they had to stop what they were doing and go ahead and give in. Today they won't admit that they gave in, but they did, they had to because they were hurting. So, that is where it hurts the most, in the pocketbook. They needed that money.

I taught in an elementary school, so they didn't talk about it that much. They would ask questions about what they saw on TV and would want to know the reasons for it, but they already knew what we were trying to do, because before it ever started we would talk about how we were treated like second class citizens. So we didn't discuss it too much on the elementary level.

When they integrated the schools, there was another kind of selection process. What happen was that they divided the schools into zones, so there would be very few black children going into schools where they didn't want them. Then they would bus them so that you would only get a small percentage of black children in that school. Most of the time it was the blacks going to the white schools; not the whites coming to the black schools, unless they were very poor whites. They still found a way to circumvent and get who they wanted to into the schools.

It was a selective process and they zone it so that they would get a limited amount of blacks into the white schools. One of the schools on the west side of town was one of the ones that they considered a great school for white folks and they didn't want any blacks there. They started in the late sixties integrating, about three or four years after the movement, integrating the schools. Darol was going to Southside and when she got to

be in eighth or ninth grade, she went to Albany Middle School, which was predominately all white. Every year they would draw the lines some kind of way to satisfy themselves. No, she went when she was in elementary school. I sent her to Highland which was a predominantly white school and she was just about in the seventh grade. It wasn't too long, after they passed the law for it. It was in the middle sixties when they actually started. Because she went while she was still in elementary school. Then it was like a placement thing, you could request that your child be placed in a certain school. It was about the middle sixties.

Some African American teachers had a tough time when they were with the white faculties. I guess maybe they didn't feel comfortable. A lot of the white parents complained that the students weren't learning what they should have been learning under the black teachers and some of them were just not accepted. Then a lot of black teachers were reluctant to go, they just didn't want to go and whatever they could do to keep from going, they would do that. A lot of them were not well received at the white schools. Just like anything else, if people aren't treating you right and you see some things or they indicate to you that they don't want you there and you don't feel comfortable, then it is difficult to do your best. But see they weren't like me, because I would defy them. I know that usually I would walk with my students when they went to the lunchroom and just like any other students, sometimes they were pretty noisy. She came up the hall one day, the secretary did, because we had to pass her office, she placed her arm on her hip, "I knew that was this class", that's what she said. "I hear this noise everyday". I said, "I beg your pardon, you don't hear noise from my class everyday, not where it is disruptive. They are talking but it is not that loud". One of my students jumped out of the line and

said, “Why are you saying that to us? You haven’t been saying that when we were with other teachers”. I mean they would defend me. My students in that class, if anyone said anything to me like that, they would defend me. He said, “We are not any louder than any other class”. And she told him, “You shut up and get in that office”! But, my parents were really nice to me; they did a lot of things in the classroom and around the school to help me. They accepted me. They were not like that with all the teachers I am sure, but I didn’t have any discomfort, other than the incident mentioned previously. That went over alright. There were a lot of teachers that were moved, some because they wanted to move others because they had to be moved.

Well it is like any student, if you have it, you have it. I believe some of the white teachers were shocked that some of the students were smart and capable of learning so much. They just really didn’t know us. They had some feelings about how we were and I think that they found out that their feelings were not true. I think integration allowed them an opportunity to find out who we really are and what we really are about. They found out black students were just like any other students. There were some fair, there were some poor and there were some exceptionally smart. It just wasn’t that much academically difference amongst the students. Well of course there are other shortcomings that our black students experienced like our culture, but I believe in some ways, the students worked it out better than the teachers did. If there was something that they black students felt was not right, then they would let it be known, immediately. Then they would protest it. They protested lunch and other things after the movement. Anything they didn’t like they would let it be known and it has been that way since.

So what happen was they just some way worked that thing out (the board of education)until they got it just like they wanted it. They started from day one finding a way that they could get out from that system of having integration the way it was suppose to be. I understand that even in a lot of cases the banks would give the poor white people loans so that they could go to private schools. See after integration, private schools started popping up everywhere around the surrounding areas, even in the churches. About three of them finally defaulted because the whites couldn't keep them up, but some still prevail especially where they had the rich white people supporting them, like Deerfield and Sherwood, where they could use their money to put up classroom. They just slowly dragged the white students from the schools and so public school still became all black and the system was segregated, like it is today. You wonder what in the world, where are they going? They are not in the public schools, its because they had set up foundations, loans and stuff like that, so that even the white parents who were not able to pay for them to go to private school had some way to let their children go to private school. So, they still didn't have to go according with what the law said. I look around sometimes and say all these public schools are still black, it's a lot of white children in this community, where are they going? They are homeschooled and going to private schools. They have private schools everywhere, in every little town, surrounding towns and everywhere. Through private schools, they never gave public schools a chance.

That's why we have a lot of problems with the public schools now. White people have not been interested in the public schools until recently, because they don't have any children in the system, so they don't care what happens, but as soon as something comes up that they want to meddle in or something happens that they don't like here they come.

Within the last twenty years, they haven't been concerned about who sits on the board of education; you never knew anything because when one person left, they would put another person in his/her place. It was the old boy system and nobody question it, but when the blacks started getting the blacks to come in, now they want to question it and talk about their taxes. Well you have been paying taxes all the time and it didn't matter. So why does it matter now. If it was left up to them, everything would be back to the way that it was. But, it is too late for that.

I don't know if there was any change in what they had done before, sometimes I think that our teachers could be better, they could do better. I think the newer teachers and some of the older teachers have gotten a little laxed about what our students need and how to meet their needs. The other day I was saying, there is something wrong with the system when the students don't have anymore control. I mean they cannot control themselves and nobody else can control them. There needs to be a study of that to see if we can help students become more adapted to school and sometimes our teachers are not effective enough in teaching our students the way that they need to be taught. I don't know if they are not prepared enough educationally or they don't put as much into it as they should. But, I see a lack of something. I don't know what it is, I can't seem to put my hands on it, but it seems to me that teachers are not quite as effective as they used to be. I don't know what it is.

I talk to my grandchildren about school as a matter of fact the other day, we had a talk about the way students behave and the kind of respect that they should have for their teachers. They were saying what teachers they like and what teachers they don't like; so I said what about the teachers you don't like, tell me about them. One of them said, they

just don't seem to care if we learn or not. I said maybe you don't give them a chance because the students misbehave during class. He said, no, they tell us they don't care because they have theirs and we have to get ours. He said, "Grandmama, is that they way teachers are supposed to talk to us"? Of course I told him no and they said some other things. I realize that they just don't have anyone to look up to in the schools anymore. When I was in school I admired my teachers. I had someone to look up to. Not only did they teach you academics, they were concerned about your character and teachers don't seem to be concerned about that anymore. Children are inspired by who their teachers are and what they remember about their teachers. They remember how you dealt with them.

I sometimes wonder if they are performing as well as they did before integration. They are human beings and they feel as though they are still not completely accepted. There are certain things that happen within their situations and they feel that they don't have the same opportunities that the white students have. Another thing is that our people feel like that when they get in a certain position that they have come and they have reached the status quo and they don't try to move forward. Our younger parents need to instill in our students that they can be the best that they can be, but they have to try because no one is going to give them anything. A lot of them are interested in other things such as sports, but they aren't interested in anything else. They have to realize that no one is going to give them anything; they still have to work hard for it. They need to know that can be as good as anyone else, but they have to work for it. Our parental care is missing when it comes to our children. The generation of children that you have now were reared by the generation of children who were taught in integration and they don't

seem to want to care at all about it like the people before them did. They believe that they have it all, with the way that it is now.

They also think too much about worldly possessions and you know the best clothes and shoes, but those are the things that fade away. If you get a good education, it will never fade. I believe parents need to put more thinking like that in their children's minds, than worldly things like they are concerned about. We still have a long way to go. And we who accept the responsibility of caring for them need to reinforce this. Teachers used to be the best examples for this, because they could get students to see things that their parents couldn't because their parents were not educated, but now they are educated and they just don't seem to care. We need to get back to it.

BEVERLY PLUMMER WILSON

STUDENT, CERTIFIED NURSING ASSISTANT

"Someone had to go for the others, because if the six never would have gone, the others would have never gone either, they would have stayed back, somebody had to go for the others to come on."

I was introduced to Mrs. Wilson, by my mother, one warm summer day after church. I have always notice Mrs. Wilson at church because she is a very active member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church and she has always been a member of Mt. Zion. She actively praises GOD for everything that she has endured throughout her life. After meeting Mrs. Wilson she told me to contact her later in the week and we would make a date to schedule the interview. I contacted Mrs. Wilson later in the week and the interview was scheduled. Once again, I became nervous about the process, I knew that Mrs. Wilson would have a story to tell, because she was one of the six girls that Mrs. Jenkins mentioned had integrated Albany High School, one of the local schools. I was both excited and nervous!

The interview was scheduled for 1:00 p.m. and once again on my way over, I checked to make sure that my tape recording was working probably three or four times. When Mrs. Wilson greeted me at the door, she hugged me like she had known me all of her life and welcomed me into her home. I immediately felt welcome! As we talked and discuss the movement, I learned so many things about the city in which I lived, that I had

never heard before. Mrs. Wilson truly has a story to tell and I will allow her to do that in her own words.

Let me tell you some things about when I lived in segregation. First of all, where I was living at, I lived in the Washington Homes project. Before I went to River Road Elementary, I also went to Hazard. Hazard Drive, which was mostly like a little private school located on the campus of Albany State College. I went there my first year and then we moved off of Merritt Street into the Washington Homes Projects and then I went to River Road Elementary. That was where all Blacks went to school. But, I also, when I was growing up, there were white children who lived behind us on Merritt Street and I know the school they went to was down on Broadway Street somewhere. It was a school down there and I can't call the name of that school. It was an elementary school down there on Broadway. They lived right behind us and went to another school because they were white. My brother would often play with some of them, but we would just wave at them.

I was born here in Albany and when we would go into the community the separation was obvious. You know when we went somewhere, we would see the signs, white and colored signs. Like, when we would go to town shopping at Crestor and the Ten Cent store, we would see signs. They had water fountains and the signs would say white water fountain and colored water fountain. And during my growing up, you know I didn't know it was segregation because I was used to it and I was a child. So, I didn't know. All I knew was that whites were to themselves and blacks were to themselves. Growing up, we lived it, we lived during segregation. When we lived on Merritt Street, white people lived directly behind us. We were just always centered round them. After I

went to Albany High School, we moved from Shelby Drive to Lincoln Avenue and we were staying next door to white people and couldn't do some of the things that they were doing. So, really it wasn't anything new, it was just growing up as six, seven, eight, nine and ten year old children and we weren't engaged together. Even cross the street there were white people. So, we were just all surrounded by white people.

When we were in school, segregation didn't bother me early on because I didn't know it was segregated any way. Back then when we went to school, it was where all the colored people went to school. We didn't have any connection to the other school. That is until we started hearing in 1950 something about the first children were integrating over there in Little Rock, Arkansas. We heard it on the radio. And later in the 1960s with the civil rights movement, but it probably was already getting started in Albany. There were various groups already having meetings because they were seeing what was happening in other places. So, it was getting started here. So, in the1960s everything was getting started. The schools in Albany were segregated until my senior year in high school. That was 1964. In middle school, I went to Carver and it was segregated. There was no integration until 1964 in the fall and we finished in 1965. 1964 that is when things got started for me. I became involved in the movement when I was in the ninth grade.

My parents were very involved in the movement. They went to mass meetings; they were in it all the way. My mother had to work, like other parents, so the children were the front go, and the parents were in the back, because the parents had to go to work. So it was the children. You will often hear people say, well where were the parents? My mother was a participator because in our household we had the SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and they stayed at our house in the

projects, so my mother welcomed them into our house. So she was outgoing in the movement. I enjoyed the meetings, you interacted with other whites from out of town. There were whites who attended college who participated in the movement. There were a lot of college students who were coming down, white and black. We had both white and black in our house. Some would come from three months and leave and another group would come. I couldn't wait to get to the mass meetings on Monday nights. I would see it on the news at night. The speeches and the singing inspired you do something. They would raise those hymns, those sisters could sing. So many of the older generations have gone home. They would prepare food. My grandmother Mrs. Jesse Swain would prepare food and she would let them stay with her.

One of the things that I did to participate in the movement was march. That was the first thing. I was in the march when we were down at Shiloh Baptist Church across from Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Dr. King was here and I mean it was a big march. There were so many people marching; that was the first time that I was arrested. It was such a fearful time, because they had dogs and everything. People were pushing and everything and we had to go down to that place where the jailhouse was, it was raining, that place became known as Freedom Alley. That alley. The jails became full because they had arrested so many of us, so we went down to Camilla, Georgia. That's where they carried us to Camilla on a bus, to put us in jail, because Albany couldn't hold all of us. So that's where I went. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Anderson and Reverend Abernathy were also arrested and sent to Americus, Georgia. I was in jail six nights and seven days. There were top cells and bottom cells. In my cell there was Dorothy Green, my classmate, Okie

Dee, Clara Willis, my sister Lynn and my other sister Doris. It was just a whole group of us.

Jail was not a good place to be. I was in Camilla and it wasn't a beautiful sight. The food had a horrible smell to it. During that time, I just prayed and asked the Lord to give me strength and he fed me with his nutrition because I didn't eat a lot of the time and I wouldn't eat because the grits didn't have a good smell, so I mostly just had water. Then there was food coming from the people involved in the movement who were not in jail. They brought food in and it was certain people who could get the food. They called my name and my sister's name and we would go and get the food and bring it in to everybody. Lord that was some good ole food. I remember eating a chicken dressing sandwich and I remember saying ohhh, thank you Lord for this good food. It was just plenty. But the times were just rough.

We couldn't do anything but sing songs, freedom songs. My favorite freedom song is (she sings), "Come by here my Lord, come by here. Come by here my Lord, come by here."Oh and we just sat around and talked amongst each other. Now, I am not saying that everything was okay, but sometimes you had to keep down the frustration amongst ourselves as children. You had to separate yourself; you couldn't be a part of everything that was going on inside the jail, because you were dealing with all kinds of colored people. I am saying colored people because that was who was in the jail…colored people. And they were from different areas. You had to separate yourself when you saw them doing things that weren't right.

The space in the jails was tight. It was about, I know it was more than 30 of us in one cell, so the number of us in the jail had to be up there, because like I say, some were

up and some were down. Then there was a day when CB King and all of them came out there. Slater King's wife was pregnant at the time and she lost her baby during that time. Mrs. Marion King had come to the jail to give us food and other items. One of the jailers asked Mrs. King to leave and when she didn't move fast enough for him, he pushed her and when she fell two policemen kicked her. She lost her unborn child. That is how much hatred they had for Blacks.

I looked over there and I saw my mama she was over there one day. By that time, we were kind of getting bored and it was cramped in there and you had all kinds of things going on. There was nowhere to get a bath and you had to put up with that. But we did it. We made it through and I know that I did a lot of praying. They say children don't know how to pray, when you are brought up in the church and you are brought up in a church home, you know how to pray and ask the Lord and he will come. The Lord was with us. After the time in jail, I went back to jail again. I was in there again for six days and five nights. I was in there again. The first time I don't know how our bond was paid, I don't know if my mother had to pay thirty dollars, because it was three of us. Money was collected from the movement to get us out of jail.

When there was another demonstration, we went right back. I went back, because there was a purpose to go back and during that time we were fighting for our rights, civil rights, fighting to take those posters down off of that water fountain and so people didn't have to get to the back of the line. I wanted to be a part of it, I didn't want to just sit back. It was just something inside of me saying, "Hey you have got to go all the way, not just half of the way, but all the way". It is still that way today, we have got to go all the way. The second time it was quite a few of us in there. We were taken to the same place, in

Camilla. Yes, the same place. Some of the whites said, “Well they must enjoy going to jail”. It wasn’t that we enjoyed going to jail, we were protesting for our rights and we stood up for what we believed in and we didn’t want to be pushed around. It was also for voter registration. We walked miles, trying to explain to people why they needed to vote and they would say, “But why do we need to do that”? I would say mam you don’t but you need too. It was difficult getting them to vote, but we went on and it was hot, but we would go on. We would walk in Dougherty County, Sasser, Albany, Americus and all other surrounding counties.

I was a member of SNCC and very involved in it. We had meetings at Mrs. Gaines house on Holloway. Patricia Gaines, I think their daddy’s name was Monroe Gaines. We had meetings at their house. Charles Sherrod would lead some of the meetings. Other times, it would be different people and some of the people came from out of town. It was different ones who held the meetings. In the SNCC meetings, we would sit down and plan, what our next strategy would be protesting and everything; and where we needed to go. They would teach us to be nonviolent. You know if anybody hit you, then you had to turn away and we did some running. One time we had gone to Americus, Georgia and the police were behind us and they were throwing things and this black lady she opened her door and she said, “Children ya’ll just come on in come in”. We were just running. Those were some scary times, but we still had the courage and you only get that from God.

Also we had meetings at a farm in Americus called the Kionna Farm. We were there for a week, sitting down talking and planning what we were going to do. What we were going to do next. They opened up there farm to us. A lot of people treating them bad

for what they did. I was like 15 or 16 years old. We went for one week, my parents let us go, we went on a bus. Now, I didn't go to Montgomery, when they had that march, but some of them did. I didn't go with them to march across that bridge, but I watched it on TV. I was there in Spirit.

The older I got I could relate to that and you know all that we went thorough and when it came time and Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights bill. That was the bill that enabled the school system to become integrated. I believe that it was Broad Street and Albany High. Now my brother Charles, he was one of the first ones who went to Broad Street Elementary School. That old building on Broad Street, was one of the first ones that they integrated. He was a part of that. Even as a small child he went through some things, but since he was a young boy, it didn't phase him as much. If he had of been older maybe it would have. You know, I am sure that the white children said some things to him, but they were all in that class. High school was different. When they said that the school was going to be integrated, I said, "Well mama, I am going to go" and she said, "If that's what you want to do. What about all of your other friends at Monroe"? I said, "Mama, I am going to Albany High". I was in the 12th grade. I had been at Monroe since the 10th grade. That was what the fight had been about. Somebody had to go. They said that it was a long list of people who wanted to go, I don't know who they appointed to go, some said they wanted the best to go, I said, "Well, I don't know about being the best", but I went down to Attorney CB King's office and signed my name and said that I was going and I don't know if they wanted to pick the smartest ones, because I wasn't the smartest one. I wasn't the smartest one, but people tell me, I was one of the brave ones.

They said they had list and the list was long, but only six went. Only six went. I don't know about that list, I heard from some of my classmates that they wanted to stay where they were, at Monroe High School. They wanted to graduate from Monroe, so they took their names off the list and they didn't go. Like I said, I didn't know who all was going, at that time I was just concerned about myself making a difference. Through it all I can look back and say look what God has done, because he said it in his word about segregation. I went and signed my name, not my mother. And by my mother being a believer, she allowed us to go through some things, because she went through a lot of things and my father did too. One time when the SNCC people were staying with us, the police came to our house and searched our house to see what we had in our house. And my daddy said, "You can't search this house unless you have a permit or a warrant to search this house". So, they went outside and did something and came back with a little piece of paper and they searched the house. They searched and didn't find anything. They were looking to see if they saw any white people in our house. If they had found the SNCC workers, they would have arrested them and my father and mother. But, they didn't find anything, so they had to leave. There were a lot of things that went on throughout our neighborhood, because my sister and one of her friends were outside playing and they got arrested. Another incident that happen was when a black man was shot by a white man and he had some physical handicap problems, I don't know what they mistaken him for, but they shot and killed him. He died. Just anything that a white person saw and they had some animosity, because they thought they had the authority. They thought they were better and they could do anything. But, we wanted to continue on this journey.

When I went to Albany High, we got out of the car, it was people standing all around; there were policemen and state troopers. That morning we were picked from home in cars and while we all went in, there were some words called out to us, but we still marched on in to that school. That first day I had to go to the office and get signed and see what teachers I would have. It was really hard, because it was a bigger school than Monroe High. I said, "I am gonna get lost in this big school". But through it all we were called niggers and told to go back, but, I can't remember the principal's name, but he kept down a lot because he didn't want anything that happened at Little Rock , to happen at his school. The fighting and the closing of the schools and all of that that happened in Little Rock, was not going to happen at Albany High School. He kept things together. I remember one time we entered into the cafeteria and they all jumped up and started calling us names and he didn't want that, so we didn't eat lunch during their time and sometimes when we didn't go into the cafeteria, we would go into a teacher's room and have our lunch. I remember the teacher's room that we went to was Mrs. Sam's room. Ruby Nell Singleton and I went to her room.

The six of us didn't have classes together as a whole. Mamie Ford and I went to a government class. In my English class I was by myself. I remember one day I went to my English class and the teacher step out and they started throwing spit balls and water and calling me nigger. I heard a voice call out and say, "Don't do that"! It was my English teacher. There were other whites that were concerned, but they had to be on their guard also. They would smile, you could see the concern and they would smile at you. I remember when we had our yearbook signing, I gave one of them my yearbook and she signed it and even wrote something in the yearbook. But there were some I would talk to,

but it wasn't like, "Hey I'll call you on the telephone", it was just at school. You know you would say something, but it wasn't a whole lot of saying something.

I remember when I participated in a speech play that we had and I was asked to do a part that I didn't agree with, I said, "Well I am not doing that part and I am not wearing no maid dress. I am not doing that part". We had something like a witchcraft play and you had the big glass that you were looking at, a play we had to do, so somebody came to the door and I had my part, I just told them it was just something that I wasn't going to do and they said, "Okay Beverly". During speech class we had to talk a lot and I learned something from that. There were differences between the schools. You had different things to study at Albany High School that they didn't have at Monroe High School. They didn't have speech at Monroe High School, so you learned how to talk. You had to get up and perform, so I did something like a pantomime I had to perform, I couldn't talk. I had to perform with my hands and everybody just clapped. So, you know, it was hard and I was scared, I am not going to say that I wasn't scared, because I was scared, but I had one who looked after me, and he had to because I didn't come home with any bruises. All I came home with was a lot of studying and the studying was different from Monroe High. It was all different. There was a difference in the way you write, you had to skip lines. Say you were getting ready to write and you had a paragraph to write about the sun. Well you had to skip lines and see they, the whites, had already been taught how to write, but by watching them I learned.

My teachers, they were helpful. They put on their best guard to try not to show anything. I imagine the principal had talk to them about keeping things down, because Mamie, Nell, Jo Ann Christian and Shirley Lawrence, they were in the chorus. They met

some children through the chorus who they talked too. There weren't any black teachers there, just white. All white, no black. First was to integrate students. After that year they added black teachers, but it was really a lot to deal with trying to keep up with everything, because things were bad. I had just heard a few years ago, because we had a gathering at the Civic Center and Nancy Presley was in charge of that, about this white lady who wrote to the paper and said that we didn't graduate until 1965 in September and some black people believed what they were saying. They believed that we dropped out of school, nobody dropped out of school, everybody went on. People still have hatred today, nothing but hate. Hatred then, like they have today. That's why we still have to keep a going.

My sister Rosemary went to Merry Acres Middle School, they were some of the first ones to integrate Merry Acres. It was about, I don't remember how many of them it was. Kerry Lawrence was with them that integrated the school. She and my sister were in that class. We had some other members from Mt. Zion, Mr. and Mrs. Junior, their daughter and son were in that class and they went to Merry Acres. They moved away from here, they attended the Mt. Zion on Whitney. After that more Blacks begin attending Albany High, but it was rough and you were fearful. I would think things like, "I wonder what is going to happen today, what have I got to face today", but I just went on and on and on. But like I said earlier, McNair, the principal, his name was McNair. He tried to keep things down, that is why he kept us separated, he didn't want it to be another outrage. Like the other places.

That day we integrated Albany High though, we just went on in. There was a bus that picked us up. I had to walk from the projects to Jackson Street, between Pop Glover

and Poteat Funeral home to catch the bus. I did that every morning, there were just six of us on that bus. Just girls on that bus, six girls. And we weren't all in the same classes, but all of us were in the twelfth grade. It was just one grade they integrate, the twelfth grade only. I have had some contact with some of the whites at the school since that day. Nancy went to Albany High and James "Bubba" Cagle. I think he is a lawyer now. I met with him over to my mom's house. He lives in Boston somewhere. He came back to Albany; he was down there when we had the activity at the Civil Rights Museum. Also, Doctor Dorsey, he's a doctor here in Albany; he was a member of that class. He came that night to the Civil Rights Museum.

That evening at the Civil Rights Museum was an evening to remember. It started that afternoon, Nancy Presley got all of this started. Charles Sherrod was there and Mrs. Carol King was invited, but she couldn't come, because someone was getting married in her family. It was quite a few blacks there, it was something that was on her; Nancy wanted to do that. There were a few whites that showed up too. I told Dr. Dorsey, "You had a nice mother". I used to go see his mother when I worked at Albany Home Health and I told him I saw your mother and she was a sweet person. It was just good to see him because during the integration of the school, I didn't remember seeing him. Come to think of it, Paula Deen, was also in my class. We had a class together. She smiled a lot and waved when she passed by. Many of the whites would smile and pass by quickly, because they were scared also. But I enjoyed what I did at that time, it was stressful, but I enjoyed it.

I only went to jail twice. We did a lot of sitting in and protesting at Woolworth and Crestor. Crestor had a counter too. We were asked to leave, but we continued to

protest until the bill signed and things started opening up. Things were kind of slow to change because the movement was going into a different direction and there wasn't a big crowd anymore and things were happening slow, but fast. There were a lot of things like CB king being hit in the head that happened. It was so much going on that wasn't printed. So much, because everybody has a story to tell that played a part in the movement. But as for us six girls, we stood together.

We are still in touch. I just saw Shirley at a Alvin Thompson's funeral. She sung the Lord's Prayer, she was in the class. She was at my mom's house when Bubba came over. Jo Ann is in Alabama, and Ruby Nell doesn't live to far from me, she doesn't get around much, but she has a beautiful story to tell. She has her part that went on, things that I may not be able to remember. It was just hard during that time, I learned a lot. The other night, I was looking at this movie about this black man who had five girls, Ditch Digger's Daughter. He noticed the difference when he attended a black school and he wasn't getting any attention. He would raise his hand up and the teacher would over look him. The teacher would would get his paper and throw it o the floor and he was watching all of this as a child. When he got in the tenth grade, he was seeing the same thing and he told his mother, "Mama they aren't teaching me nothing at those black schools, they are just passing me on". I don't know why that happened in black schools during that time, I don't know if they were scared to explore their knowledge on to black children or if they wanted to keep black children on a level. So he stopped school. He said they teach you better at those white schools. There was nothing for blacks to feel bad about, you just got better learning at the white schools. It was more for you to choose from. I had bookkeeping, they didn't have bookkeeping at Monroe, if they did only a certain ones

could take it, just like typing only a certain ones could take it. When I went to Albany High, they had plenty of typing and bookkeeping classes that you could take, even shorthand classes. They had speech classes, we didn't have speech classes at Monroe High. The man in Ditch Digger's Daughters, saw then as a child what the white schools were doing for learning, because where his grandmother lived, the white school was over there. And he saw what was going on and how they were progressing ahead of Blacks and we were so far behind, because the Whites only gave us a little bit. They wanted us to have a little bit. That was one of the reasons that I chose to go to Albany High, I said, "Hey God has passed this bill, I know Lyndon Johnson put his name on it, but God allowed it to happen, so I said I am going to Albany High". Someone had to go for the others, because if the six never would have gone, the others would have never gone either, they would have stayed back, somebody had to go for the others to come on.

That's why when I am going somewhere and I see children, I ask them, what grade are you in, and I tell them to keep it up, because school is what you need. Learn everything that you can, so you will be able to help someone along the way. Because without education, you are going to be lost, because the white man is still trying to hold you back, even with an education, they are holding you back. So, during my journey, I am glad that I was in it. There were good and bad days, but even with the bad days, I thank God for those good days out weighing those bad days. Sometimes I wanted to get out of my chair, because I was a spicy little girl, anyway. I didn't want anybody to hit me unless, I hit them back and when they threw that paper, I mean it was bubbling in me, and that water, but I remembered I was about nonviolence. But, it was hard.

You know so many people went through so much, because it wasn't just the children. I think about what some pastors went through like Rev. Grant. He received threatening letters, but he stilled didn't turn down Mt. Zion Baptist Church, they still had mass meetings there. He didn't say well we are not having a mass meeting because I got a threatening note, we still had mass meetings, still had the doors open. And it was always a packed house. I remember when Dr. King came and I went up there and I shook his hand. That man had the softest hands and I remember saying, "I am never going to wash my hands" His hands were so soft. He was just here for a little while, but he made an impact. There were many reasons concerning why he didn't stay in Albany; it was a lot of controversy. But, now as I have gotten older it wasn't his time to be in Albany. Yes, it was a learning experience. But, we tried to integrate the entire city. That alone was something to be proud of. I just thank those leaders like Slater King and Charles Sherrod. After Dr. Anderson left, Slater King just took it on and moved it to another level and he didn't back down. And CB King who was a lawyer could have been stripped of everything, but he continued in the fight. He was the only lawyer in the south, so he was every black person's lawyer. Sherrod came from out of town and just got hook up and he is still here. I remember my ex husband's brother Randolph Battle, he was a good leader. He would get up and talk and prepare us for different situations that we would have to face. He was really preparing us to integrate the schools. I didn't have anyone telling me not to do it, I just talked to my mama and daddy and said, "I want to go". I had been marching and protesting, so why stop, why not go all the way? We went all the way, my sister who lives in Albany, Rosemary and my brothers we went and a whole lot of other families. The Gaines family, the Christian family, and the Monroe Gaines family, they

were big in the movement, as well as, Victor Lawrence's family. Families, who supplied things along the way. They would have meetings, see we were children, so you know the grown people would have to plan things out. We were participating in the movement. I just thank my mother and father for allowing us to participate. I know my mother at the time was working at Bob's Candy Factory, she could have said I might lose my job if my child's name is on the list, but that didn't stop her. She still let us went and she went too.

We also went to march on Washington. That was a scary trip because they said that a bomb had been planted on the train. In 1963 we went to march in Washington with Dr. King. Everybody from Albany who wanted to go was on that train. And they said that they were praying and praying and we were going from coach to coach. We just forgot about the bomb. There were so many people there and this lady named Mrs. Jones she said that she was going to trust her daughter with us. And she did, her daughter was no more than 12, I was just 16 years old myself. She said, "I am going to trust my daughter with you all". We said, "Okay Mrs. Jones she will be alright". My mother or father did not go, so it was just me and my sisters, I think my brother went and Mrs. Jones let her daughter go. Nothing but 12 years old and she went to Washington. She went with us. You talking about people, the people from Albany had to stay together, so nobody would get lost. It was so many people. We were so far from where Dr. King was and we were in groups just singing all those freedom songs, it was just a beautiful time. We were right there, we couldn't get up there, but we were there, together. When they said that he was getting ready to speak, we all got quiet, so that we could hear the speech. I said, "Oh my goodness". We raised money so that we could go and we went on that train. Everyone from southwest Georgia, Americus and everywhere was on that train. That was exciting;

it was nothing but an event. Elders went to watch over us, yes, but we watched each other. We made it back safely. We got the threat before, but weren't going to let anyone turn us around. We were going to keep on a marching. We did, we did.

I can see the benefits of the movement. I see them. I can see some and I can see where they are trying to desegregate, because you can see it when you go to the schools and you don't see anything but black children there, because the whites have gone to private schools or have picked up and left Albany altogether. Some went to private schools, but some couldn't afford private schools, so they came up with the magnet schools. You see the majority of the white children are at the magnet schools. That's why you have to sign up early for your child to get into the magnet school. Now they are trying to create magnet schools for some of these schools that aren't even magnet schools. Because they are not doing what they need to be doing in the school and they are calling it a name and children are getting left behind.

So many children are getting left behind, because the teachers can't do what they need to do. The children come to school with so many problems that learning can't take place. I see a whole lot changes taking places in the workplace too. If it wasn't for the movement, and it was struggles before the movement, what those people were trying to do. They were setting up before we started setting it up. The white people wanted it all and they took things from black people and that is what they are trying to do now. You would think even in government, but it is so bad when it comes from a pastor's mouth. I see progress where the movement helped a lot, because out of every bad situation there is some good. Black has a name now of nobody because they only portray the bad things that we do, not the good things. That's the fear they want to put in society. You can't do

it by yourself, you have to pray. We have got to help bring our people up. I am thankful for the way things are now, but there is more to do. There is so much to tell and I know I will think of more things to tell you. The march on Washington was such an exciting time. The preparation, the talks on how to behave, it was enjoyable.

There have been people along the way who helped me at Albany High and I really appreciated that. The principal keep everything separated and we didn't eat together and the teachers watched out and made sure things didn't happen. The teachers didn't want an outburst to happen in their room. I am sure today that they students think about some of the bad things that they did. A few of them just smiled sometimes and during times like that a smile meant a great deal . From all of that white people came closer to blacks and now they can have conversations. It's the idea that if you want to go into their homes and talk, you can. Now even on jobs, you can sit together, that's what it was all about sitting, working and talking together. Now even the white churches will worship with the black churches. They didn't say when, but it is happening. You don't have to be afraid to talk now, but back then there was fear. Don't go to that white school. You can't allow fear to build up in you, you have to go forward.

RUBY NELL SINGLETON STROBLE
STUDENT, SCHOOL SECRETARY_____

"Out of all those people in Albany, Georgia they couldn't get but six to go and I was one of those six. Age and nothing else made a difference because I knew what I was fighting for and why I was fighting. "

Of the four women interviewed for this project, Ruby Nell Stroble was the one that I had never previously met. I contacted Mrs. Stroble one Friday evening and introduced myself to her. Mrs. Stroble's first statement was, "Baby, I am tired. Now, who do you say your folks are?" I once again told her who I was and explain as she stated, "Who my folks were." Her response was, "Baby, you Gloria's daughter, Gloria owned the daycare center down the street from Flintside Elementary School. I know who you are! Look here, you better come on and get what you can tonight, because I may not be any good tomorrow!" I told Mrs. Ruby Nell as she is so dearly called, that I would be there in twenty minutes.

Once again the nervousness took over and a millions thoughts begin to cross my mind. Luckily my tape recorder was in my backpack and my questions were embedded in my nervous mind. When I arrived at Mrs. Ruby Nell's home, I knocked on the door and heard, "Come on in baby." I opened the door and looked around, "Come on over here, child" she stated. I turned to the right and saw Mrs. Ruby Nell laying her bed, she had a stroke a couple of years ago and her health is up and down, but her spirits are high. She

immediately took over the conversation wanting to know how my mother was and what I was doing with my life. I answered her questions and asked her questions and we talked about her children and how they were doing. I was amazed at her spunky attitude and her willingness to share her story with me. She explained that due to the stroke sometimes her memories would come and go, but the questions would trigger her memories and remind her of information. So the story began…

I grew up here in Albany. It was segregated during that time , so we didn't go to school with the whites. I went to the regular elementary school with the other black children. I grew up over there by Arcadia Baptist Church and Jackson Street. When that neighborhood started out, there were black and white people living over there. That's how my momma and daddy got over there; they brought a home over there when it was black and white. You may find a few whites over there now. Over there we got along real good. I played with the white children and everything over there, but we couldn't go to school together. We just couldn't go to school. In my neighborhood on North Davis Street we had to move out of the projects because my parents made too much income. We had to leave because my parents had brought some property and had too much income, but the white children were just across the alley and we played every day. Back then I didn't know that blacks and whites weren't supposed to be together because I had always played with the white children. So, I really didn't know. I couldn't go over to their house, but they always came and played at my house every day. Their mother would let them come and play with me.

When we moved, my momma used to work for a white lady. She would go up there and iron her clothes and keep her house once or twice a week. She would take me

up there to play with the lady's granddaughter. We would play together often, but guess what stopped my momma from taking me up there to play with the little girl. Now my momma was a woman who believed in treating everyone fairly. I was going up there one day to play with the daughter, which was the granddaughter, because she had gotten sick or was in a car wreck or something and she couldn't come down to play with me. She had asked her grandmother if I could play with her and my mother let me go. What stopped my mother from letting me come up there was that they had some bananas and the Grandmother decided to give us a banana for a snack, well she gave me the rotten banana and the little girl a ripe banana. That made my momma mad! Honey my momma ain't took me back to this day. My momma knew what was going on and she didn't play that. I didn't know, but she did. That is why I am a fighter to this day, because my momma was a fighter, baby. After that she wouldn't work for white folks. She always worked for black people. She worked for a black insurance agency. She couldn't work for them. She knew how the whites were and she couldn't stand it. We were there cleaning, cooking their food and taking care of their children and they would not let us sit at the table and eat with them. My momma couldn't stand that. She ended her career working for black folks, writing insurance. She couldn't stand that white folks saw us as being less. My momma said if she wasn't good enough to sit with them, then she wasn't good enough to work for them. She was straight forward and that's how I am.

My momma was a good person. She would cook on holidays for the neighborhood. She would want me to stay at her house all night long and prepare turkey dressing, duck dressing and chicken dressing. We would have ham, oh my goodness, we would have ham that would last for days. Potato salad, cakes, anything you wanted, we

would have it. I remember that across the street, this lady had a lot of children that she raised by herself and they would have the necessities during cotton picking time, but after that they would struggle and my momma would feed them. I just feel that that is one of the reasons why I was the way I was during the movement and why I am the way I am today.

I would attend the mass meetings with my parents. My parents were very strong in the Civil Rights Movement. Bessie and Buster Singleton were my parents and they were very involved in the movement. My mother was a feisty woman; I guess that is where I got it from. My mother fought for what she thought was right. My momma and my daddy allowed the SNCC people and the Freedom Riders to stay at our house when they needed a place to rest and eat. Charles Sherrod still comes to see me. When he wants to talk about the movement and some of the everyday things that happen, he comes to see Mrs. Ruby Nell. When people need some information about the movement, they come see me and that is why Beverly wanted you to come and see me. I may remember some things that she forgot and she may remember some things that I forgot. Getting back to the mass meetings though, we had big mass meetings. After those mass meetings, we would march, sing, and go to jail. I went to jail so many times; I can't remember how many times I went. I went, my brother went, yes, my family went to jail many times. I went to jail here and in Camilla. Me and Beverly were in the jail in Camilla together. I was in the jail in Camilla about a week. I was there until my mother came and got me. It was terrible in there. We had to do a lot of praying and a lot of singing to keep our minds on the goal. Me, Beverly and Eddie Maud were in the jail together. When my mother thought that I stayed long enough, she came and got me. My mother knew where I was,

I'm not sure how much she had to pay to get me out of jail, but she would always come. I don't remember how old I was, but I do know that I was only a child. Age and nothing else made a difference because I knew what I was fighting for and why I was fighting. I knew going to Albany High was the only way that we would be able to get those classes that we needed. That's why we integrated to get some of things that we wanted.

Did Beverly let you see the year book with our picture and everything in it? My book is up somewhere, but there is a lot of information in that book. Call Beverly and ask her about that book, she is such a sweet person; she will let you see it. You need that book to help you understand the full story. That book has all of our pictures and things in it and that would be good for you to see. You know we lost one of the six, Eddie Maud McKendrick, but all of us are in that yearbook.

You know Beverly is always bringing folks over here. She just brought the president of our senior and the president of the junior class over here a little while ago. Bubba Cagle was his name and that man laid down here beside me, hugged me and kiss my cheek, took pictures and told me he was sorry. He was sorry for everything. I was so glad to see him. He wanted me to say what they said, but I wouldn't. See they thought that when Beverly and I and the others came over to Albany High, that we were the smartest ones at Monroe High School, but I told him, "Oh no baby", we were just the ones that went. But what I liked about Bubba, was the fact that he came back and apologized. He came back and righted his wrong. I told him that I accepted his apology because we all had done some things that we were a part of at some time or another, but we had grown and learned better. They thought that I was Slater King's daughter and that we were the smart students. I had a high ranking average, but I was just an average

student. They were always trying to figure out who was the top students and such, but honey it wasn't us; we were just the six that would go. They couldn't even get a man to go. Us six little girls had to go by ourselves.

The Black community wanted to integrate Albany High School and they couldn't get anybody to go over there and integrate the school. So, me and those other girls were the only ones that they could get to go over there to that school. Anybody could have gone, but we were the only ones that would go. Everybody else was scared and that was during the sixties, so they had reasons to be scared and sure enough, they were scared. We got up to that school that morning and there were police and state patrols everywhere. See we had tried it before (integrating the school) and they had police everywhere, but this time when we went back, they had more security, the State Patrol was there. They had heard that someone was going to try and do something, so they had extra people there.

We all went to Albany High School together that day. We were all in the twelfth grade. When we got to Albany High that morning it was like it had always been, all white! The first day of school we went to class and the students would say, "Nigger, Nigger go home" and "Nigger watch yourself" and they said all kinds of things to us, but we did what we had to do. "Nigger go back where you came from and blah, blah, blah, but we did it, we went right on in that school. We were given our classes and most of our classes were different. Beverly and I had a class together, we took accounting together. Joann took; well it was according to what you wanted to study. I think Joann was in classes by herself. Shirley and I might have had a class together, I'm not sure. Like I said,

we might have had one or two with each other, but most of the classes, we were in there by ourselves. The teachers though, they treated us really nice. They were professional.

The only difference between Monroe High School and Albany High School was black and white. Well, that's not true; the difference was that we were able to take classes at Albany High that Monroe High did not have, like typing and shorthand. See I was in the business field and at Monroe we couldn't take these classes because they didn't offer them. At Monroe, if they did have them, there were only so many people who could take the classes. See, they wanted to put it on that we were the six smartest, but we weren't, we were the only six that would go and don't let them tell you any different. We were the only ones that would go. That's what they wanted it to be like, we were the smartest ones, but we weren't', we were the only six girls who would go. I decided to go to Albany High School so I could take classes that I couldn't take at Monroe, otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to take those classes. That was the only way I could take shorthand, typing and accounting. All my business classes, I wouldn't have been able to take. That's how it was baby. We rode that bus every morning by ourselves.

The year went by okay. We did what we had to do and that was integrate that school. It was time to integrate that school. We had good days and bad days. Some days they would call us names, throw things at us, but we prayed…we constantly prayed. The next year though, more black children came. That is when the smart children came, the Blaylocks and all of them. The next year was different, we threw a bombshell in there (the school) when all the smart black children arrived. Those children grew up in the country where there wasn't much to do, but study. That's the truth. They didn't think that we were smart, but black children are smart and they showed them. Our goal, the six girls

was to integrate that school and pave the way and that is what we did, so the other black students could take those classes too!

They have thrown my tail in jail for some of everything. I went to jail one time for going into a restaurant that was for whites only. You will have to ask someone else the name of the restaurant because I can't recall the name of it right now, but it was downtown. Beverly and them can remember, but since I had this stroke, information just comes up when it wants. As good as I knew that restaurant, I can't remember now, but it was a white folks' restaurant and they wouldn't let us in there. We went in there and sat down and they wouldn't serve us. I was saying to myself, "Now what have I gotten my behind into" (laughing). It was about five of us, Shirley and Mamie. Them folks came and threw us out of there before I knew anything, we were in jail. I don't think they kept us that night; they talked to us and called our parents to come and get us. I was glad they came and got me that night cause I didn't feel like staying in jail that night (laughing). My momma came on and got me that night. We knew to obey and do what some people told us to do to keep from getting hurt. Yeah, Mrs. Ruby Nell played a big part in the Albany Movement.

What I hope came out of the movement was the urgency for people to understand that we are all that our children have and that if we don't become involved in our community then it won't get any better. We need to learn to be realistic about things and remember that everything good in our lives comes from GOD. We need to remember to treat each other right. I believe in going to battle for people period, black or white. Some of my spiritual sisters are black and some are white. I am for the right. I am going to do

what is right in GOD's eyesight. Everything we do should be about helping people. The color of our skin is irrelevant.

I believe that education today has made some improvements. Not as much as I thought that it would have, but change takes time. I don't get out much, so I don't really know a lot that is going on in the school system, but I do think that children should remember that without education they won't have anything. Education is the key to being successful. Also, teachers need to stand up for these babies and don't let nobody mistreat them and I mean nobody. We are all that the children have and we have to go to battle for them.

The movement taught me to be aware of people, because you never know and that is what Mrs. Ruby Nell does, says her prayers and be aware. I love my children and my brothers and sisters, but when things puzzle me so, I take them to GOD in prayer and let it go. Ask me some more, I done past the test. Out of all those people in Albany, Georgia they couldn't get but six to go and I was one of those six. You ask me how I feel about what I did now. I am glad you asked me that, if I had been a Jehovah's Witness then, I wouldn't have done it. I wouldn't have participated because of the fact that in due time Jehovah GOD is going to fix it all. See, you don't have to run here and run there, in due time according to his word HE is going to take care of it. At that time, I didn't know this, there were several things that I didn't know, but I made the choice to participate. I want people to remember that I have marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. and some of the greatest men who have come through South Georgia, black and white. I marched in Washington D.C. when Dr. King spoke there. I was a part of it all. I rode that train from Albany to Washington D.C. and there were a lot of people there. I was there. My mother

exposed me to a lot of history and I have been in the midst of a lot of that history and it was a wonderful history to be a part of, but what Jehovah has put in front of us is a lot better. We won't be able to go any higher. I am a Witness of Jehovah and I know that GOD is going to take care of this situation. The more I study the more I take in and it strengthens me. It lets me know that soon it is going to be over Jehovah GOD is not going to allow things to continue as they are.

CHAPTER V

WAKE UP EVERYBODY: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Wake Up Everybody

Wake up everybody no more sleeping in bed
No more backward thinking time for thinking ahead
The world has changed so very much
From what it used to be
there is so much hatred war an' poverty
Wake up all the teachers time to teach a new way
Maybe then they'll listen to what you have to say
Cause they're the ones who's coming up and the world is in their hands
when you teach the children teach them the very best you can.

Chorus
The world won't get no better if we just let it be
The world won't get no better we gotta change it yeah, just you and me.

Wake up all the doctors make the old people well
They're the ones who suffer and who catch all the hell
But they don't have so very long before the Judgment Day
So won't you make them happy before they pass away.
Wake up all the builders time to build a new land
I know we can do it if we all lend a hand
The only thing we have to do is put it in our mind
Surely things will work out they do it every time.

-Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes

Wake up everybody no more sleeping in bed

No more backward thinking time for thinking ahead

The world has changed so very much

from what it used to be

There is so much hatred war and poverty.

In this final chapter, I will use the lyrics from the song entitled, *Wake Up Everybody*, by Harold Melnin and the Blue Notes to narrate how the five findings of my study emerged from my research. As I dive into the experiences of the four African American women educators and students during the Albany Movement, I am intrigued by the five themes running through their oral histories. The themes include: (1) Educators and students should build allies with parents, administrators, and other educational workers to organize freedom movements to battle against all forms of oppression, suppression, and repression. (2) Teachers and educators must continue to work to find ways to create hopes and dreams for students instead of disciplining their bodies and imprisoning their minds. (3) We need to promote a curriculum of caring and justice that was lost during the process of integration to provide equal opportunities for all students to reach their "highest potential" (Vanessa Siddle-Walker, 1996). (4) A sense of belonging and recognition of community spirit is the key to the education and liberation of African Americans. (5) Freedom songs help motivate, organize, and liberate individuals to become active participants and positive changing agents in cultivating more robust, healthy, and invigorating human conditions in communities.

If You Can't Find Me in the School Room: Oral Histories of African American Educators and Students during the Albany Movement evolved from my interest in the

relationships between current educators and students. My concern focuses on the African American race because of my own ethnicity. I am troubled by the relationships that I see developing currently and often ponder over what understandings concerning relationships could current day educators of all ethnicities learn from educators and students during the 1960s when African Americans were struggling for equality? During this turbulent time when society was going through such a drastic change, what did the African American community lose and what needs to be done now to encourage the community to continue the fight? Howard Zinn, who played a role in the Albany movement, in *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train* (1994/2002), stated: "That always seemed to me a superficial assessment, a mistake often made in evaluating protest movements. Social movements may have many 'defeats'—failing to achieve objectives in the short run—but in the course of the struggle the strength of the old order begins to erode, the minds of people begin to change; the protesters are momentarily defeated but not crushed, and have been lifted, heartened, by their ability to fight back" (p. 54).

Currently, many African American students continue to have a difficult time achieving academic success within the public school setting. In most places in the United States school integration occurred during the 1950s and 1960s, yet our African American children continue to struggle. Students can now receive an education anywhere in the United States that they choose to do so, yet we continue to struggle. I remember when I was growing up in the public school setting during the 1970s and the 1980s, my teachers living in my neighborhoods, attending church with me and knowing my parents on the first name basis. Yet as I look at the environment in public schools now, where is the connection to the community, where are the educators who are willing to put their lives

on the line to ensure our students receive a quality education? Have we forgotten to provide examples of this connection to ensure our students will do the same when they reach adulthood?

As I began my journey into the doctoral program in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern University, I read books such as Gloria Ladson-Billings' *The Dreamkeepers* and I thought to myself, where was this book when I entered into the profession? On the first page of the book I read, "Why, in the 1990s, after decades of fighting for civil and equal rights, are African Americans even contemplating the possibility of separate schools?" This simple, yet riveting, question intrigued me so much; I wrote my first paper on a similar topic.

Mary Royal Jenkins, Rosa McGhee, Beverly Plummer Wilson and Ruby Nell Singleton were the four participants who participated in my study. During the 1960s all four of these women were active in the civil rights movements, in Albany, Georgia. The integration of the Dougherty County School System was one of the main objectives of the Albany Movement, the name given to the civil rights movement in Albany, Georgia. The findings of my study are a result of the oral histories collected from these women.

As an African American educator, the administrator of a predominantly African American school, and a product of the integrated Dougherty County School System, my study provided an opportunity for me to reflect upon my years as a student in the Dougherty County School System and the environment in which current students are being educated in by the Dougherty County School System. This dissertation is theoretically based on the work of Derrick Bell (1992), Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2001), Gloria Ladson-Billings (2003), Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F.

Tate (2005) on critical race theory. Through the lens of critical race theory and the narratives of the participants, I was able to gather an understanding of the individuals who experienced segregation, integration and educational change during the Albany Movement. He and Phillion (2008) stated the following:

> Researchers engaged in personal~passionate~partipatory inquiry have not only responded to the sixth moment by questioning whose knowledge should be considered valid and how experience should be interpreted, theorized, and represented, but also have confronted issues of equity, equality, social justice, and societal change through research and action. (p. 11)

In analyzing these narratives educators and students will be able to understand the importance of equality and social justice.

The narratives of Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McGhee, Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Stroble provided an opportunity for the themes to develop through the recollection of their experiences from the Albany Movement. As each of these women gave a detailed account of their involvement in the movement and school integration, the significance of the musical connection to the movement surfaced as a motivational reason for their involvement within the movement. Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. McGhee, Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Stroble were educators and students during a time when African Americans and some Caucasian Americans became agitated and frustrated with the way African American citizens were being treated. Across the nation, African Americans had made the decision to unite, organize and take a stand on the fruition of their dreams and hope concerning equality of all individuals (Chapter I & II). Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. McGhee used the opportunity of the movement to help teach students about the importance of standing up

for what they believe in and taking care of their community. They were nurturing to their students and discussed the seriousness of being involved in the movement. Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Stroble along with the other students during the movement were realizing that they had a voice and that they could as a group unite and come together and change the city of Albany and make it a better place for future generations of African Americans. Each of these individuals developed a role to help with the Albany Movement. In their roles they became a part of the four thousand individuals who came together as a group to integrate the city of Albany, Georgia. Each of them were learning and sharing lessons on the importance of uniting to fight not only for their freedom, but the freedom of their community and freedom for African Americans (Chapter IV).

The participants who participated in this study were born in segregation. They lived during a time when everyone knew their place in society and knew what was expected of them as blacks in the south. Just as other cities and counties in Southern Georgia, African Americans were well aware of their limitations when they visited various parts of the community. The signs were everywhere, “Whites Only” water fountains, “White Only” churches and schools and “White Only” stores and restaurants. The income of African Americans was good enough for purchase of the city fountains, good enough to build schools for whites, good enough to purchase materials, but not good enough to allow African Americans access to the way of life Caucasians experienced.

The African Americans of Albany, Georgia were different. Within the city of Albany, there was a small community called Harlem. Harlem provided African Americans access to everything the white community had, but would not allow the black

community to experience. There was the Ritz Cultural Center, barbershops, beauty salons, restaurants, a local newspaper building, a photography studio and many other African American owned businesses. African Americans saw the needs of the black community and fulfilled the needs amongst themselves. The Harlem community is what made the black community in Albany different from the other communities in Southwest Georgia. Therefore, as Mrs. McGhee stated, "I guess in some ways segregation didn't affect us as much as it did other people in other areas. We had blacks who had nice businesses and we had organizations that afforded places for black children to attend and play in their own parks, so it really didn't affect us that much" (McGhee, 2010).

Although African Americans had their needs met by the Harlem community, the schools were still segregated. These schools were dismal and had the bare necessities, but administrators and educators did their best to ensure that the students' needs were met to the best of their ability. Educators were involved in the community and conducted home visits regularly. Students were told on the regular basis that education was the way to a better life and they were pushed to excel. Yet, there was the desire for equality in education. African Americans wanted their children to receive the best education available and many of them believed that integration was the key to a better education (Chapter II).

Wake up all the teachers time to teach a new way

Maybe then they'll listen to what you have to say

Cause they're the ones whose coming up and the world is in their hands

When you teach the children teach them the very best you can.

As I listened to the stories my participants told, I began to recognize that their experience during the Albany Movement illuminated that educators and students should build allies with parents, administrators, and other educational workers to organize freedom movements to battle against all forms of oppression, suppression, and repression **(Theme One)**. I felt the passion they had for the Albany Movement.

The movement was something that was very dear to their hearts. I saw the pride in their eyes when they told their stories. They knew that they were committing themselves to become involved in a movement that could very well cause them to lose their jobs and get suspended from school, but they were passionate about the movement and what it meant for African Americans everywhere. I learned from Mrs. Jenkins that she was so passionate about the movement that she took her passion for writing and produced a book about the Albany Movement (Chapter IV). To ensure that she never missed a mass meeting, she hired a babysitter to care for her children at night, because she and her husband were both deeply involved in the movement. Mrs. McGhee understood as an educator, that she could not openly march and participated in sit-ins and prayer-ins, but she would attend nightly meetings and support the movement by providing money to help get people out of jail (Chapter IV). From Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Stroble I developed an understanding of being so passionate about something that you would defy the law of the land and go to jail because you believed so deeply in something that you had no fear for your own life. Although they were afraid, they returned to jail because they believed in equality (Chapter IV). African Americans and Caucasians came together and conducted mass meetings at local churches and community members' homes to plan activities within the community (marches, sit-ins, and pray-ins), raise money, provide motivation

and make signs to keep the movement productive. (Chapter IV). Through my analysis, I understand that the individuals in the Albany Movement learned that as individuals they could make a difference, but united together, they could change the world. The young, old, women and men, gathered together to fight oppression and make the world a better place for everyone. Through their determination,

> Eventually, their courage and determination-and blood-forced their government to defend democracy, made it possible for everyone in America to have the freedom to ride, to sit, to eat, to go to the restroom, just about wherever they wanted to (and could afford to), and with whomever they wished. (Harding, 2009, p. 49)

The research showed that many of the African American teachers during the civil rights movement had a difficult time when transitioning to the White schools. Mrs. McGhee expressed that many of the black teachers did not want to go to the White school because white parents were refusing to allow the Black teachers to teach their children and overall, they just felt uncomfortable in the White schools. In reading her interview, it is easily seen that Mrs. McGhee knew what was expected of her and believed strongly in accomplishing her task. She wanted to prove to the White administrator and teachers that she was just as good as they were and she demanded to be treated the same as a White educator.

Mrs. McGhee told the story of being summoned to the office the office by an administrator because of accusations made by a child and being treated as though she was child, but after the meeting being brave enough to inform the administrator that she would not adhere to that type of treatment. This White administrator believe that she could treat Mrs. McGhee disrespectfully because she was an African American and

should have been grateful for having an opportunity to work at the White school. The administrator believed that the White school must have been better than the Black school where Mrs. McGhee transferred from, she never expected Mrs. McGhee to have a desire to return to the Black school (Chapter II). Why would Mrs. McGhee want to go back, after all, it was a Black school? Black schools were known to have outdated textbooks that the white schools didn't want anymore and their buildings were often dilapidated, yet black educators were passionate about the academic success of their students and they wanted the best for their students (Chapter II). For black educators during the 1960s nothing was more important than providing students with academic skills that could never be taken away from them. They wanted to give their students knowledge and power and they were determine to equip the students with power and knowledge to fight oppression.

Another key point in this research was the story that Mrs. Jenkins told of her daughter, Sharon with the white teacher during her first year at Albany High School. The teacher assigned her White students to cook and her Black students to clean up. The teacher did not believe that there was anything wrong with assignment and the African American students became angry and the teacher kept them after school. This clearly described what Critical Race theorists have termed "whiteness as property" (Dyson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 32). The Black students were seen as inferior to the White students and were made to clean instead of being allowed to cook. Mrs. Jenkins explained to the White teacher why the Black girls felt as they did, but the teacher would not hear of it. Mrs. Jenkins had enough determination and dedication to African American students that she saw fit to try and explain to the White educators what she believed was a disservice

to her child and the other Black students in the class (Chapter 4). This demonstrated that when people are passionate about an issue they will stand for it even when the consequences may not be what they expect them to be. As a researcher I came to an understanding that even single acts of courage for something that I believe in will display my passion for the battle that I am fighting.

These educators had participated in the Albany Movement and knew the importance of equality and had a desire for African American children to receive the same quality education as White Americans. Therefore, they were determine that all African American children in the city of Albany be allowed to attend any school in Albany that they wished to attend. Therefore, Mrs. McGhee agreed to integrate a school as an elementary educator and although Mrs. Jenkins was not chosen to go, she allowed her daughter to integrate Albany High with the first class to integrate the school. She openly admitted that her daughter Sharon did not want to go to Albany High School with her class, but she pushed her to go because of her involvement in the movement. Because Sharon and her classmates integrated Albany High School as the first class, the students of that class united and bonded. I was impressed to learn that even the students, who stayed at Monroe High School, would come over and help the students at Albany High if they heard that trouble was brewing at Albany High School. The black students at all of the high schools knew the importance of the movement and would unite and march if they believed that any issue that dealt with inequalities was surfacing.

Individuals involved in the civil rights movement understood that the time had come for change and new way of thinking. What I gained from the research is the importance of believing in something and taking a stand for what you believe in and

fighting for it. These four women believed in equality for all people, but they took a stand for their race and their community. I remember Kathleen Neal Cleaver (2003) writing the following in *Critical Race Feminism: A Reader*:

> I was in high school when I first saw defiant young women engaged in civil rights protest. Those students who went to jail in Albany, Georgia, during the early voter registration campaigns impressed me immensely. The courage it took for them to challenge white racist laws and their determination not to let jail or mob violence turn them away were awe-inspiring. (p. 49)

In taking a stand during the Albany Movement, these four women's stories provide examples to others, showing the how being determined and passionate about issues can change the world in which we live. Current day teachers are facing a variety of local, state and federal mandates pertaining to the field of education. Scott-Simmons (2008) expressed the following, "The keys to success for all children must be placed in the hands of educators willing to transform the system by asking tough questions of themselves and placing expectations of high achievements on all of their students" (p. 87). In conducting my research, I now realize that if we want the field of education to improve, one of the first steps that we must take as educators is the need for us to become passionate, united and organized in our battle against those who do not understand the purpose of education.

Education has become a system that is based on accountability and testing, what has happened to the system that was based on helping children to understand the world in which we live, and helping students to make a connection between their lives and education? The public school arena has reached a point where we are more concerned

with academic standards instead of developing the whole child and making sure that the students have a true understanding of the concepts that they are being taught. Conducting this research has helped me and I hope that it will help others to see that if we want our world to change, we must understand the importance of coming together and working together to make a change.

The world won't get no better if we just let it be

The world won't get no better we gotta change it yeah, just you and me.

As I continued my analysis of the information gathered from the stories told by the participants, I began to realize that teachers and educators must continue to work to find ways to create hopes and dreams for students instead of disciplining their bodies and imprisoning their minds **(Theme Two)**. I also began to recognize the importance of the participants' relationships with their children and the children's relationships with their parents. The participants' stories shed light on their passion for the liberation of their hopes and dreams. For many of the participants in the movement their sole reasons for participating in the movement was the fact that they wanted something better for their children. For their children, many of the adults involved in the movement, would have made any kind of sacrifice (Chapter IV). The children of the participants understood the hopes and dream of their parents and desired the same hopes and dreams. Both Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Stroble discussed the roles that their parents played in the movement. Mrs. Wilson focused on the fact that her parents housed SNCC workers during the movement, but she did not mention if her parents marched or participated in sit-ins for the movement, but she discussed the importance of her parents working, but they allowed her to participate, because they needed the children as a "front go" (Chapter IV). Mrs.

Stroble stressed the point that jail was a part of the struggle for her family. Mrs. Stroble narrated the following:

> After those mass meetings, we would march, sing, and go to jail. I went to jail so many times; I can't remember how many times I went. I went, my brother went, yes, my family went to jail many times. (Stroble, 2010)

The educators involved with this study had a hope that one day African Americans would be treated equally. They knew the meanings behind the movement and believe with their hearts that the movement would change the world (Chapter II and IV). The participants, who were educators at the time, expressed the importance of modeling actions to express the importance of the movement and the reasons this movement would liberated the African American community. The participants who were students during the movement explained how participating in the movement, attending mass meetings and seeing their parents' involvement in the community encourage them to become active in the movement because their desires for freedom grew. Mrs. Stroble also expressed her hopes for the future by explaining the following to me:

> Age and nothing else made a difference because I knew what I was fighting for and why I was fighting. I knew going to Albany High was the only way that we would be able to get those classes that we needed. That's why we integrated to get some of things the things that we wanted. (Stroble, 2010)

As educators, the teaching and discussing of the Albany Movement can teach our students the importance of developing hope and dreams and working diligently to achieve those dreams. The individuals involved in the movement were dedicated to their freedom and they put their lives on the line to achieve those dreams not only for themselves, but

for all minorities. Dr. William Anderson, president of the Albany Movement was quoted for saying:

> There was [also] a change in the attitude of the kids who saw their parents step into the forefront and lead the demonstrations. They were determined that they would never go through what their parents went through to get the recognition that they should have as citizens. (Williams, 1987, p. 178)

Imagine the impact that educators would have on students if they discussed the movement with students. Students would see their ancestors participating in an activity that improve the lives of African Americans. Students would be able to identify with African American individuals who contributed to our country's history in a positive way. Through an understanding of the civil rights movement, students will develop a deep understanding of the movement and be able to make the connection to their current environment and find their passion and begin their journey towards liberation.

As I continued with my research, I began to think about the black community today and the black community from the 1960s. I began to recognize that we need to promote a curriculum of caring and justice that was lost during the process of integration to provide equal opportunities for all students to reach their "highest potential" (Vanessa Siddle-Walker, 1996)**(Theme Three)**. I can remember growing up in the seventies and living in a predominantly African American community and then moving to a mixed community because the needs of my family changed (Chapter I). In the predominantly African American community, I can remember playing in the circle with my friends and all of the parents having such close friendships until we could go anywhere in the neighborhood eat dinner, play and our parents wouldn't have to worry about us because

they knew that we would be okay (Chapter I). My parents knew that the people in the neighborhood cared for all the children. The same was for the school in which I attended. There were educators who lived in my neighborhood and they had a connection with the students outside of the school arena. Educators and students attended the same church, educators were involved in activities such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and educators and parents were in the same civic groups. There were connections between the curriculum and the community.

During segregation, African American educators and administrators were extremely important to the black community. Vanessa Siddle-Walker expresses this in the book entitled, *Their Highest Potential: An African American Community in the Segregated South*, she tells of how African American educators and administrators were dedicated to the students and instilled in them the belief that they could accomplish anything that the set their minds to accomplishing (Chapter II). The same could be said for the educators during the 1960s. They would purchase materials for their classrooms with their personal finances, they would encourage the students during the movement to be calm and think things through before acting and they would stand up for a quality education for the students (Chapters I, II and IV).

I noted that black communities during the 1960s were similar to ones that I grew up in the 1970s. The sixties was a time during the movement when black people in [the] community stuck together (Jenkins, 2010). Mrs. Jenkins tells the story of how the movement wouldn't have been successful if the people in the community had not come together to fight against racism. I learned from all of the participants that people in the community supported the movement through financial contributions, volunteering to

schedule meetings or make phone calls, participating in marches and sit-ins, and providing foods for those participates who went to jail and were a part of the various organizations (Chapters I, II and IV). People came together to support each other and meet the needs community. They worked hard to ensure that those individuals who lost their jobs because of the movement were taken care of and their basic needs met until they could independently support themselves.

As I stated in the Review of Literature, integration brought both progress and pain to the African American educational arena. Many African American educators felt that the African American students were not pushed to excel academically, because the Caucasian educators held low expectations for the students (Chapter II). Mrs. McGhee provided the greatest input on the aspect of caring. Most of her concerns were similar to the literature that I had gathered in this area. She discussed that before integration; black teachers were very attentive to the needs of the black students and after integration often times the white teachers did not completely understand how to educate the black children (Chapter IV). As I listened to her I was reminded of the book, *Race-ing Moral Formation: African American Perspectives on Care and Justice One,* by Vanessa Siddle Walker and John R. Snarey. In this text the meaning of care and justice to the African American community is discussed. African Americans equated justice of equality with success in the schools.

I was intrigued by the statements concerning this issue from the participants who were students during the movement. Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Stroble both stated that the teachers at the school were very kind and professional to them when they integrated Albany High School. Mrs. Wilson believed that the administrator was really kind to her

because he allowed her and Mrs. Stroble to eat separately from the other students. They ate lunch in a teacher's classroom (Chapter IV). I had a difficult time understanding this situation the same way that Mrs. Wilson understood it. I saw this situation as the students who were mistreating the black students in the cafeteria should have been suspended to set the example for the other students, but that would be the perspective of someone who did not live during that difficult period of time.

As I listened to the participants tell their stories they provided input into how they felt about the caring aspect of educators today. The saying that continued to be express was the importance of remembering that each hand should always be down to help someone up. I believed that this saying referred to the importance of African American educators as well as other races of teachers to remember the purpose of their professional occupational and for others to remember that you should always be ready to lend a hand to help someone who needs help. The importance of caring is essential to helping our students become academically successful and it is important in helping members of the community to recognize that the world won't get any better if we just let it be.

Wake up all the doctors make the old people well

They're the ones who suffer and who catch all the hell

But they don't have so very long before the Judgment Day

So won't you make them happy before they pass away.

This verse of the song reminds of the importance of remembering the importance of the black community before integration occurred. It also reminds me that a sense of belonging and recognition of community spirit is the key to the education and liberation of African Americans **(Theme Four)**. As a part of the black community, I wondered if

the information that I gathered concerning the black community was not only an integration issue, but a class issue as well. Mrs. Jenkins was the only participant that brought this issue to the light. In her interview she talked of how it took hundreds and hundreds of individuals in the movement to make it happen. The socioeconomic status did not matter, because they were all black people and the bottom line was that regardless of your status, you were still considered a black person. A statement that she made really stood out to me, "Some of them really don't believe, you can't talk about what happen years ago, can't happen again, because they don't believe that it can happen again, but it can" (Jenkins, 2010) (Chapter 4). Mrs. Jenkins was adamant that many African Americans have forgotten where they came from and what African Americans in the 1960s conquered in order for us to have the life that we live today.

When society became integrated the togetherness of the black community was lost. Or was it lost? As I consider the community that I go to work in everyday, I can visualize the predominantly African American community that I grew up in. I see African American children moving throughout the neighborhood from home to home. I often hear parents when they come to the school say in reference to another child, saying, "Oh! Tommy's mother is still at work, he can come to my house until she gets off. Let me call her so she can tell you it's okay." I see African Americans taking responsibilities for the children and helping their neighbors meet their basic needs. The school where I am employed has a free and reduced lunch population of over eighty percent.

In the racially mixed middle class neighborhood where I live, there appear to be clusters of connected neighbors. In this community I don't see the flowing of children in and out of houses that I viewed in the other neighborhood. I have noticed children of

different races talking at the school bus stop and playing baseball and basketball at the local parks. But, I don't feel the closeness here that I felt in the predominantly African American neighborhoods where I lived growing up (Chapter I)

The Harlem Community that was mentioned earlier in this chapter still exists in Albany. Most of the Black on businesses in Harlem still exist today (Chapter 5). Many African Americans still can be seen patronizing these businesses. Business is not as lucrative as it may have been in the 1960s because integration has occurred and many African Americans now shop at the local mall, dine at the restaurants in another section of town, and attend plays and shows win places where once upon a time they would not have been allowed enter. A prime example of this would be The Albany Theatre. The place where educator McCree Harris took her class in the 1960s and they were asked to leave the balcony which housed the black seating, so that the whites would have somewhere to sit (Chapter II). While African Americans now are free to use the theatre as needed, the Ritz Cultural Center, which was the entertainment center for Blacks in the 1960s, has closed.

As African Americans it is essential that we remember the importance of the black community to our culture before integration occurred. It is important for educators and students of all races to understand how integration has affected the African American community. In Albany, Georgia, this part of the community houses the Albany Civil Rights Museum, the Civil Rights Memorial, and the Old Mt. Zion Baptist Church as well as Shiloh Baptist Church. These two churches were the primary meeting place for the mass meetings. To me this community houses so much history, those educators and

students who live in the South Georgia area should be required to expose their students to this rich community history.

Wake up all the builders time to build a new land

I know we can do it if we all lend a hand

The only thing we have to do is put it in our mind

Surely things will work out they do it every time.

I know we can do it if we all lend a hand. This line in the song stresses the importance of motivating everyone to become involved in changing the world. Consistently through this dissertation process, I have documented the importance of music to movement. I have recognized that freedom songs help motivate, organize, and liberate individuals to become active participants and positive changing agents in cultivating more robust, healthy, and invigorating human conditions in communities **(Theme Five)**.

During the mass meetings, the meetings began with music, rejuvenated with music and ended with music. Just as music was essential to the civil rights movement all over the country, it was the backbone of the movement in Albany, Georgia and the surrounding counties (Chapter I, II, and IV). Bernice Johnson Reagon, one of the original Freedom Singers stated,

> Charlie Jones looked at me and said, "Bernice, sing a song" And I started "Over My Head I See Trouble in the Air". By the time it got to where "trouble" was suppose to be, I didn't see any trouble, so I put "freedom" in there. That was the first time I had the awareness that these songs were mine and I could use them for what I needed. (Williams, 1987, p. 163)

The music from the movement was used to help the participants communicate what they were feeling without saying it directly to the person or the group of people to whom they were expressing their feelings (Chapter I, II, IV). Each of the participants explained how the music would motivate the people attending the movements to get up and march after the mass meetings. Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Stroble discussed how the music would also inspire them while they were in jail. Mrs. Wilson expressed the following, "We couldn't do anything but sing songs, freedom songs. My favorite freedom song [was] (she sings), 'Come by here my Lord, come by here. Come by here my Lord; come by here." These songs gave the participants and marchers inspiration to stay strong and connected to the movement. While these individuals were being spit on, called out their names, being beaten and killed I can visualize in my head, the protestors singing to themselves and praying for strength, a strength that could only be provided by GOD.

I believe that the music of the movement gave the participants a voice. Without the music, participants may have been afraid to speak, yet when a Freedom Singer or elderly women would begin to sing a song such as "*Come and Go With Me to That Land*", the movement participants would develop a strength that they never knew they had. Guy and Candie Carawan (2007) acknowledged the following:

> SNCC field secretaries who helped start the demonstrations say that much of the success of the Albany Movement can be attributed to the role that singing played. They needed it to communicate. Through these songs they expressed years of suppressed hope, suffering, even joy and love. (p. 60)

Participants in the Albany Movement would use the songs to motivate them to accomplish what they believed to be impossible, changing the world.

As I think about the music that has been written since the movement that has encourage change, I immediately think of Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On* and Tracy Chatmon's *Across the Lines*. Recently, the song *Wake Up Everybody* was reintroduced to the music world by John Legend, Common and Melanie Fiona. Many students are listening to this song and being encouraged to go out and change the world. They are inquisitive about what they can do to make the world a better place for everyone. Educators must develop an understanding that the musical connection is important to addressing the needs of their students and teaching them about various cultures.

The Albany Movement has a significant role in teaching an abundance of information to educators, students, parents and the community. In telling the story of the civil rights movement educators and students both gather an understandings of the profound benefits of music and songs, they learn how everyday individuals participated in a movement that changed the way they would forever see the world, and the information presented about the movement provides an opportunity for questions to be raised that spark interest in young students' minds. By sparking interest in the minds of young students, I believe that not only will the students benefit from the knowledge of the movement, but educators and the community as well will benefit.

Often times educators have a difficult time addressing this time period during the history of the United States because it was filled with hope, determination, hatred, struggle, racism and commitment. In order to teach topics which revolve around the movement it is important for educators to understand the content and the reasoning behind the movements and African Americans reaction to the treatment they had endured for so long. I worry about the ability of all educators to teach the movement in a way that

will help our students rekindle some of the characteristics that African Americans displayed during these times. I worry about the ability of our students to connect with issues that they feel so strong about that they would defy their parents if it meant the issue would come to surface and be corrected. I believe that this study will provide the background knowledge and personal narratives to provide educators with essential literature and voices to introduce the movement to their students.

As I end this musical journey of collecting oral histories of African American educators and students who were involved in the Albany Movement, I begin to understand the importance of the movement to the field of education. Inviting my participants to tell their stories in a way helps free their souls. Their narratives in turn help educators and students to connect with the movement and to understand the reasoning behind their actions during that period of their lives. The readers are able to develop an idea of who the participants were through the stories they shared and are able to connect the spirit of their dedication to an issue in their lives.

The world won't get no better if we just let it be

The world won't get no better we gotta change it yeah, just you and me.

EPILOGUE

COME GO AND STAND WITH ME

Come Go and Stand With Me

Where will you stand when times are hard?
Where will you stand when the oppression comes?
Where will you stand when our freedom has gone?
Where will you stand, oh where will you stand?

Won't you come go and stand with me?
Won't you come go and stand to be free?
Come go and take a stand with me.
Come go and take a stand to be free.

What will you do when the children see you?
What will you do when the people ask you?
What will you do when they call your name?
What will you do, oh what will you do?

Won't you come go and stand with me?
Won't you come go and stand to be free?
Come go and take a stand with me.
Come go and take a stand to be free.

-Maqueta N. Griswold

Traditional song "Come By Here" words and music by Marvin V. Frey.

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