



## Newsletter of the Society for the History of Children and Youth Number 4: Summer 2004

### Special Issue: Fiftieth Anniversary of *Brown v Board of Education*

One day in November 1960, Ruby Bridges' mother awakened her and told her to get dressed. The first grader was going to a new school that morning, and Mrs. Bridges asked her to be a good girl and to be brave, for there might be a lot of people outside William Frantz Elementary, a school in the New Orleans public school system. Ruby was accompanied by men she later discovered to be federal marshals; she thought the noisy mob outside the building must mean it was Mardi Gras. While she and her mother waited in the principal's office, the parents of her supposed-to-be classmates marched their children out the door. For the rest of that school year Ruby was the only child in her classroom. As she told Robert Coles, in words that must evoke sadness and pride in parents and non-parents alike,

I knew I was just Ruby, just Ruby trying to go to school. . . . But I guess I also knew I was the Ruby who had to do it—go into that school and stay there, no matter what those people said, standing outside. (Coles, *The Moral Life of Children*, 9)

That courage and self-awareness helped make Ruby the most famous child of integration. Her experiences inspired Norman Rockwell to paint "The Problem We All Live With" (see it at [http://www.nrm.org/eyeopener/eye\\_problem.html](http://www.nrm.org/eyeopener/eye_problem.html)) and provided moving testimony in Coles's *Children of Crisis* (5 vols., 1967-1977). Several years ago her story was told in a television movie called, simply, "Ruby Bridges" and in a children's book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (1995) also by Coles. Ruby told her own story in a book for middle-schoolers in *Through My Eyes* (1999), and since 1999 she has headed the Ruby Bridges Foundation, which seeks to educate children about integration and tolerance (see <http://www.rubybridges.org/home.htm>).

This issue of the SHCY Newsletter commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the Supreme Court decision that sparked countless stories like Ruby's. The following articles, reviews, and commentary talk about the history and the histories of the event and of the larger civil rights struggle for which the decision was a milestone. But they also talk about the children caught up in the crisis and in the movement, and remind us never to forget the children in children's history.

--Jim Marten

## Articles

"Youngest Combatants of the Second Civil War: Black Children on the Front Lines of Public School Desegregation"	
Peter Wallenstein .....	3
“Brown as a Children’s Case and the Case for Children’s History”	
Rebecca de Schweinitz.....	20
"Simple Justice Revisited"	
Joseph Illick .....	25
"African American Children’s History and the Problem of Race: A Review of the Literature"	
Maira Hinderer .....	29
"Websightings: Two on Brown v. Board"	
E. Wayne Carp.....	32

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## **Youngest Combatants of the Second Civil War: Black Children on the Front Lines of Public School Desegregation**

**Peter Wallenstein**

In early 1965, eight-year-old Sheyann Webb and nine-year-old Rachel West were among the many African Americans in the volunteer army that battled, in its nonviolent way, for black adults' voting rights in Selma, Alabama. The violence visited upon that nonviolent army proved instrumental in generating massive support, in northern public opinion and in the U.S. Congress, for passage later that year of the Voting Rights Act. The events of 1965 punctuated a decade of change in traditional southern ways. Much remained undone, and the Civil Rights Movement persisted, but by then Jim Crow was very much on the defensive. The legal and constitutional basis of segregation and disfranchisement was coming to an end.

Much has been said and written of the roles of college-age black youth in the sit-ins of the 1960s, in desegregating higher education, and in pushing for the right to vote. Even younger were the black southerners without whom no elementary or secondary school in the region could have been desegregated. This essay explores the experiences of those youngest warriors for progressive change on the racial front during the decade and more after the U.S. Supreme Court declared in *Brown v. Board of Education* that the Fourteenth amendment did not permit a state or local government to segregate its public schools. Black participants in desegregation themselves have referred to their engagement in a war, as when one of the Little Rock Nine from 1957–1958 terms her memoir *Warriors Don't Cry*.

This essay revisits the actions—and the memories of those times—of a small sample of people who, as elementary or high school students, participated in the events of the 1950s and 1960s that brought to an end the absolute segregation that characterized public schooling in the South before 1954. In North Carolina, Josephine Boyd switched in 1957 from all-black Dudley High School to all-white Greensboro High School, where she completed her senior year and graduated in 1958, the first black graduate of a white high school in that state. In Virginia, Betty Kilby won a federal court ruling that led her to being in the cohort of black students to enroll in early 1958 in the white high school (the only high school) in Warren County, and she tells of her often harrowing experiences between then and her graduation in 1963. In September 1965, in a Deep South variant of the desegregation story, three members of the Carter family enrolled in the white elementary school, and four others in the white high school, in Sunflower County, Mississippi. This essay's final section recounts the march toward desegregation, through three iterations, in Hyde County, North Carolina, beginning on a token basis in 1965, changing in 1968 in a way designed to obliterate the black schools, and finally—after a student boycott of the schools that lasted an entire year—reaching a version of racial integration that the black community as well as the white community could find effective and acceptable. Much of the time in these pages, the young people tell their own stories, as they responded to new possibilities and challenges in the aftermath of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

## The Second Civil War

Historians sometimes speak of a “Second Reconstruction,” as the federal government took action, especially in the 1960s, to renovate the racial landscape across the American South. We could use the notion of a “Second Reconstruction” as preceded by a “Second Civil War”—like the first, a century earlier, a confrontation related to region, race, and power—when southern states and the federal government collided over racial policies, most of all whether racial segregation would persist in public elementary and secondary schools. First intimations of this “Second Civil War” came in 1948, when the Dixicrats, break-away Democrats from the Deep South, sought to unseat the incumbent president, Harry S. Truman, a Democrat who had initiated various challenges to the continued maintenance of white supremacy in American legal, political, and economic life (though not yet addressing segregation in elementary or secondary schools—that came late in his second term). The struggle became more determined and widespread after 1954, when the Supreme Court declared racial segregation in public education to violate the equal protection clause, the key provision of one of the constitutional amendments of the first Reconstruction.

The similarities between the two episodes of sectional strife and constitutional crisis—those of the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries—are many. The effort to break up the national Democratic Party in 1948 echoed the events of 1860. Central to both periods were political efforts to maintain white supremacy—in one case, represented by slavery, in the other, the various faces of Jim Crow segregation and disfranchisement. The Rebel battle flag was an icon of both periods, and the rhetoric of state rights swirled about the controversy at both times. In neither century did mainstream public opinion in the North at the outset seek a transformation of southern patterns, but in both cases a constitutional struggle led to ever more aggressive efforts at change, and in both periods tremendous change came, though in each century the degree of change remained contested and in doubt.

White southern political and cultural leaders involved in the twentieth-century episode were often acutely conscious of what they understood of the earlier time. Expressed by white southerners in the 1950s were fears of a return to what earlier historians had depicted as black dominance and white subjugation in the Reconstruction South—and a firm resolve to forestall a return of such conditions. Regardless, at both times many—even most—white southerners were committed to retaining their social privileges, their economic dominance, and their political monopoly.

Notably different, however, were the social identities of the main combatants on the frontlines of change. The battling in the 1950s and 1960s took place in many forms and venues, from litigation in courtrooms to physical assaults along back roads, but most of the combatants were nominally civilians. On both sides, the Civil War struggle of the 1860s had involved battalions of men in uniform—at first, only white men even on the Union side. By sharp contrast, the main combatants on the frontlines of progressive racial change in the decade after *Brown v. Board of Education* were boys and girls, black children, whether seventeen years old, thirteen, or six.

In Louisiana in 1960, as the federal judiciary grew more active on the desegregation front, the legislature enacted bill after bill designed to thwart all efforts at integrating education, and it appeared for a time that public schools might be shut down rather than permit any black enrollment at white schools. U.S. district judge Skelly Wright, who pushed intrepidly ahead with efforts to achieve compliance with the Supreme Court’s rulings, mused that the aftermath of

*Brown* looked like “the Civil War over again in legal dress.” When the legislature considered anti-desegregation legislation, watching the proceedings were contending groups one of which waved American flags, the other Confederate symbols. A legion of legislators took turns recounting their grandfathers’ service in the Confederate military a century before. And when the first black students approached their new white schools in New Orleans in November 1960, they found themselves heckled by crowds of whites who, to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” sang “Glory, glory segregation.”

And who were these child warriors, these pioneering black students in Louisiana, these youngest combatants in the “Second Civil War”? Six-year-old Ruby Bridges, born the year the *Brown* decision was handed down, entered the William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, and three other six-year-old girls—Tessie Prevost, Gail Etienne, and Leona Tate—enrolled at nearby McDonogh 19 Elementary School. In a stunning depiction for *Look Magazine*, painter Norman Rockwell rendered Ruby Bridges for a national audience—a tiny dark figure flanked, front and back, by the torsos of four white federal marshals—as she marched off to begin her first day of school, and in fact every day of school that year, past the hecklers. Most white students boycotted her school, and little Ruby worked alone with her teacher that first year. At McDonogh 19, the boycott was absolute, broken only when two white brothers attended for three days in January, and then other whites convinced their father’s employer to let him go, and their landlady evicted the family. All four black pioneers of school desegregation in Louisiana went on to graduate from high school in 1972, and their high school experience was more or less desegregated, but they continued even there to be harassed as “the ones who started it all.”

Across the former Confederacy, and often in the Border South as well, the black pioneers entered a hostile world when they pioneered desegregation of the public schools. For the children and their parents, getting past the administrative hurdles of petitioning for a transfer to a white school was no small feat. For the youngsters in particular, getting past the white crowds of adults and students blocking access to a school was dangerous business. Far less visible from outside the schools was the ostracism, the harassment, and the physical danger that being in the alien school almost always brought, and pressures on their parents and communities often compounded the challenge. The far more safe and nurturing segregated school they had each left supplied a constant contrast as they went out to wage a gentle war for desegregation. Their new, white classmates and teachers had little or no experience encountering African Americans on equal terms, and whites who might be inclined to be friendly and receptive could usually be cowed into abandoning their apostasy. Single-race schools had no need of separate “white” and “colored” water fountains, restrooms, or lunchrooms; when black students used the “white” facilities in their new schools, their acts were almost universally seen as compounding the affront to southern custom that the students’ very presence embodied.

Whether age six or sixteen, students—black and white—carried much of the emotional freight of their novel encounter. In one way or another, there was much pain and fear on both sides—those who, as whites, felt intruded upon, and those perceived as intruders. But the black students were few in number, sometimes utterly alone, as they entered the enemy camp. If a school was termed “desegregated” by virtue of their presence in it, it nonetheless continued to be a white school, numerically dominated by whites, controlled by whites, claimed by whites as their own, even if someone had forced them to permit a black child to attend too.

## Josephine Boyd, Greensboro, North Carolina

North Carolina responded to *Brown v. Board* not by directing the closure of public schools rather than permit any desegregation (as the Virginia legislature, for one, did), but in permitting a local referendum on the matter and, if desegregation were to proceed at all, putting white officials in charge of screening individual black students' requests for transfer to white schools. In mid-1957, three years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, and after two years of consultation and planning, three municipalities in North Carolina determined to permit token desegregation of their previously nonblack public schools. Charlotte was one, Winston-Salem another, and Greensboro the third. Rather than trying to achieve desegregation, the school boards were trying to contain it, to deflect federal court orders that might result in far more substantial change. In each of the three cities, the handful (more or less) of black students who would be pioneering the desegregation of a white school had each requested the transfer; lived closer to the white school than to the black school they would otherwise be attending; and displayed a strong academic performance.

In Charlotte, four black students enrolled at white schools in September 1957—among the forty who had requested transfers; most such requests had been denied. Fifteen-year-old Dorothy Counts had a trying experience at Harding High School. As she made her way to the school grounds, a white woman implored a group of boys, “It’s up to you to keep her out,” and directed a group of girls, “Spit on her, girls, spit on her.” She was not kept out that day, but she was spat on. Her teachers ignored her. When she went to the cafeteria for lunch that first day, boys threw trash on her plate. She went outdoors, where a miracle seemed to happen, as she was befriended by two white girls; but they drew back the next day when they were harassed by their white classmates. Meantime, threatening phone calls reached the family at home. At school she was jostled, things were thrown at her, together with slurs and threats, and her locker was ransacked. After four days of this and other harassment—for example, on the fourth day, when her brother drove to the school to pick her up, the rear windshield in the car was smashed as he waited for her—her father, a professor at nearby Johnson C. Smith University, called a press conference, where he explained:

It is with compassion for our native land and love for our daughter Dorothy that we withdraw her as a student at Harding High School. As long as we felt she could be protected from bodily injury and insults within the school’s walls and upon the school premises, we were willing to grant her desire to study at Harding.

But “a continuous stream of abuses” had, he observed, left the family no choice. She left Charlotte for Pennsylvania, where she attended an integrated school in Philadelphia. Harding High School reverted to all-white. She had chosen to transfer, but her classmates forced her withdrawal—the boys did, in the end, as the woman had implored them, “keep her out.”

As for the other three, Gus Roberts enrolled at Central High School; his sister, seventh-grader Girvaud Roberts, at Piedmont Junior High School; and Delores Huntley at Alexander Graham Junior High School. In contrast to Dorothy Counts’s experience, actions taken by school officials helped make matters relatively uneventful at those three schools, but danger and tension persisted throughout the year. Central High School principal Ed Sanders choreographed the first day of school, walked Gus Roberts through the geography of his new school, saw to it that distances from one classroom to another would be short, kept an eye out for him, and

defused a tense moment on the second day. Gus Roberts had a far easier time than Dorothy Counts did, but it took a lot of luck, a lot of pluck on his part, and careful preparation and constant vigilance by a receptive and assertive school leader.

The number of black students attending white schools in Charlotte did not grow in the next year or two—by 1959–1960, the number had dropped to one—nor did an increase take place in the number of schools that, having been “desegregated,” continued to enroll black students. Charlotte revealed patterns that held across much of the South. Pioneering the desegregation of a school carried no guarantee of either safety or success, and no certainty that a desegregated school would stay desegregated, let alone become more so. Battles might be won or lost, either way skirmishes continued, and the campaign’s outcome remained in considerable doubt. Often, children’s requests for transfer were denied; sometimes, those whose requests were accepted were driven out; and their experience deterred others from even requesting to transfer. Pioneering the desegregation of a white school, volunteering for strife, was no child’s game, though some child warriors survived and even prevailed.

In Greensboro in mid-1957, Josephine Ophelia Boyd was a seventeen-year-old rising senior who had expected to finish out her high school education at all-black Dudley High School. Such was not to be. Rather she would run the experiment as a pioneer of high school desegregation in her city.

She brought many considerations to her role. Festering were memories of a white policeman beating her father with impunity, and a white driver hitting her grandfather and leaving him disabled beside the road. Resonating were recollections of the time she tried, and failed, to discern the distinct color of “colored” water in the fountains set aside for people of her racial identity; of how she and her family and neighbors had to go to Winston-Salem to reach a swimming pool that, as black citizens, they could use; and of riding a bus past white schools to reach her assigned, more distant, black school. And of constant use to her in her year of desegregating Greensboro High School were lessons, the survival skills, that she had learned at home, at church, and at her black schools regarding seeking an education, handling conflict, and navigating her way in a segregated world. Church songs calmed her as she made her way from one classroom to another, or when classmates threw catsup at her in the cafeteria or dropped eggs on her from above—“We’ve Come This Far by Faith”; “He Knows Just How Much We Can Bear”: and “The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow.”

The decision to attend Greensboro High brought all kinds of ancillary costs. There were the economic reprisals—her father lost his snack bar; her mother her job; her brothers their yard work jobs; she her babysitting job. There were other costs to the family—the malicious killing of favorite pets, the harassing phone calls at home. And always there was the loss of her senior year at Dudley High, complete with supportive teachers, good friends, senior prom, and a rich range of extracurricular roles and activities.

Many years later, she described her first day at her new high school:

As I went to my classes, using the walkway leading from one building to the next, there was a rainfall of eggs . . . . Most of them landed on me. . . . Most of the teachers barely acknowledged my presence. . . . Some students yelled, “You know we don’t want you here. Go back to your own school. This is our school.”

Back home, she learned from the newspapers and television news that, in Charlotte, Dorothy Counts had gone to her new school alone, too, and had met with a similar reception.

Unlike Dorothy Counts, Josephine Boyd survived her year in hostile territory. Making a huge difference were four white female classmates—Ginger Parker, Julia Adams, Kitty Groves, and an exchange student from Germany, Monika Engelken, all of whom maintained the friendship despite pressure from white classmates, church members, and school personnel. In November, she and other black students involved in school desegregation that year were invited to the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, and in April she attended the second Youth March for Integrated Schools, led by A. Philip Randolph in Washington, D.C. At the end of the year, the *Greensboro Daily News* reported that 482 students had received diplomas, among them Josephine Ophelia Boyd, “the first Negro ever graduated from a previously all-white public school in North Carolina.”

### **Betty Ann Kilby, Warren County, Virginia**

Betty Ann Kilby was nine years old when the *Brown* decision was handed down. Her two older siblings were ten-year-old John and twelve-year-old James. All were in elementary school, and they continued to attend a black school near their home in western Virginia through the seventh grade. When each graduated from the elementary school, Warren County still had only one high school, and black students could not enroll there. The state of Virginia had responded to the decisions in *Brown* by enacting Massive Resistance legislation, according to which any school that desegregated would be immediately shut down. In accordance with a companion law, Betty’s father, James Wilson Kilby, signed a “pupil placement” form in 1956 as James was finishing the seventh grade, so young James could attend the all-black Manassas Regional High School (the only option made available on the form), located sixty miles away in Prince William County and requiring that James board there and return home only on weekends.

The following year, John finished grade seven, and Mr. Kilby insisted that the Johnson-Williams school in Berryville, thirty miles away, be made an option on the pupil placement form. The days would be long, but his children would return home each night. So the two boys began attending the Berryville school, and Betty figured she would begin attending that school with her brothers in 1958. That did not happen.

In spring 1958, thirteen-year-old Betty Kilby brought her pupil placement form home for her father to sign. He scratched out the only options listed, the Manassas school and the Berryville school, and wrote in “Warren County High School.” Her teacher rejected the form filled out in that fashion; she rejected Mr. Kilby’s second version with the same content; and someone from the school board phoned him at home after he did the same thing a third time. Years later, Betty recalled the exasperated words he spoke into the phone that evening in May 1958:

This is Kilby, yes I did. Your form asked where I wanted to send Betty to high school. Well in 1956 I sent my son James to Manassas to the boarding school. Sixty miles away was too far even if it is only a weekly commute, and besides, James was too young to be away from home. He was just a little shy farm boy that the big boys picked on. Manassas didn’t work for Jimmy or me. In 1957, I sent James and John to Berryville. Berryville was a 60 miles a day trip with the school bus picking my sons up at 6 AM and sometimes they didn’t return until 7 or 7:30 PM. My boys had to walk half a mile to meet the “colored bus,” while the bus carrying white kids drove past my boys walking. . . . I wasn’t satisfied with that option either. . . . I will not subject my kids to this kind of

environment any more. You have the form. I wrote in my option of Warren County High School.

Later that evening, she heard him tell her mother, “Catherine, get ready for a fight because Betty ain’t going to Manassas or Berryville, she is going to Warren County High School. Don’t you remember what Rev. Frank said about separate not being equal? Besides, we are not alone. John Jackson is going to turn in a form tomorrow to send his daughter Barbara to WCHS too.”

On behalf of his daughter Betty, so she could go to school in her home county, Mr. Kilby went to court. Much of the summer was taken up with action in federal district court in Harrisonburg, Virginia. A story in the paper that summer that led to a phone conversation with Barbara that, as Betty remembered it years later, went like this:

Barbara asked, “Do you think our parents will send just the two of us to WCHS since we are the only two . . . ?” I told her my Daddy really wanted me to go to WCHS real bad and that if he had the chance he would make me go even if it meant that I went by myself. We read excerpts from the article hoping that we would all be denied so the two of us wouldn’t have to go to WCHS.

As for white residents of the county, they began to ponder the possibilities. One white woman mused, “I am in favor of separate schools but the main concern now is to keep the schools open.” On that score, she and her white neighbors had no more say than did the Kilby family. If the federal court ordered desegregation of Warren County High School, the governor would follow the legislature’s mandate and close the school.

But the schools of Warren County did open for the 1958–1959 year, and most students returned to classes. A few children could not. James, John, and Betty Kilby had no school to go to, nor did Barbara Jackson, or some eighteen other black youngsters whose parents were taking legal action to gain admission to the local high school. Betty Kilby later remembered her sadness:

I cried when the bus went past our house and didn’t stop. I called Barbara and we cried together. I told Barbara, “I can’t believe that my Daddy wouldn’t let me go to school. He would whip my butt if I didn’t make good grades, now he is going to make me get behind in my grades.”

Events in September came in quick succession. The federal court ruled that Warren County could not, solely on the basis of their race, deny black students admission to the county’s only high school. The state appealed the ruling. The appeals court refused to grant a stay of the district court order while the appeals process unfolded. Classes were suspended while the black youngsters made the rounds of the school board office and the county courthouse to register for school. Betty Kilby later wrote, “Just as we were instructed, we acted as though we were small soldiers, standing tall, proud and dignified with no talking or complaining.” Meanwhile, the high school senior class president observed of his schoolmates that, left to their own devices, “I believe that most of us would integrate rather than see the school closed.” He continued: “We believe we could ignore” any black classmates “and go on as we always have.”

Betty began having the same bad dream, over and over:

I was going to school but I was lost. I couldn't find my classrooms, I couldn't find my class schedule and couldn't find my locker. I would end up running for the bus and I missed the bus, too. I would wake up feeling stupid because I wasn't in school. Integration, segregation, all I wanted was an education.

The desegregation order led directly to the governor's closing Warren County High School. Within weeks, arrangements had been made to supply schooling for the county's white youngsters. In the world of white Warren County, the teachers kept teaching, and the students kept going to school, just in different places, such as white churches. Arrangements for the twenty-two black youngsters took longer. As of December 11, they began living and attending school in Washington, D.C., where schools had been desegregated soon after the *Brown* decisions. As for Betty Kilby, exiled far from home, she says "I cried myself to sleep most nights."

On January 19, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that, under the state constitution, the state could not selectively close the schools, and that same day a federal court ruled that the closure violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Court wrangling continued, but on February 10, U.S. district judge John Paul ordered that Warren County High School be re-opened on February 18, this time on a desegregated basis. It was time for the Kilby children and the other plaintiffs in Betty Kilby's lawsuit to come home. She says, "We had almost forgot that we were soldiers in the midst of war."

On the morning of February 18, Betty and her brothers headed off for classes at the Warren County High School. As they prepared to leave the house, "Momma kissed us and told the boys, 'You stay close to your sister, you hear me.' I could hear the fear in Momma's voice." At the school, "a big fat white woman" yelled, "We gonna kill all you little Niggers." Betty started reciting the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm to herself. In the Kilby family, February 18 divided two epochs. Many years later, as Betty says, "Daddy talked about the day that we entered Warren County High School. Daddy admitted that he was scared as all of us children, but he couldn't show his fear."

Inside the school, only black students took classes that first day, or at any subsequent time through the end of the school year. No white student ever stepped inside the school that winter or spring. Terror outside the school began to contrast with serene times inside. There were almost as many white teachers as black students, Betty later recounted, though they "were no more accustomed to teaching Negroes" than

we were accustomed to learning from white teachers. The three-story building was beautiful and huge. . . . I felt safer in this building than I felt at home with the gunshots constantly being fired at the house, crosses burned in the yard, bloody sheet on the mailbox, the farm animals mutilated and the constant threatening phone calls.

But then, says Betty, "the summer ended and it was time to put on our armor and become little soldiers." The new school year, 1958–1959, was going to be very different, as white students returned to the high school: "Our safe environment was no longer safe." The few black students were "all spread out"; Betty had three black classmates in the eighth grade, but "I was the only Negro in most of my classes." From the start of the new year, "We knew that it was not safe to walk the halls alone, take the short cut through the auditorium from one side of the building to the other side . . . or even go to the restroom alone." Coached by adults and guided

by their own experience, the black students learned “not to trust anyone except each other. We studied each other’s schedules to team-up as much as possible to protect each other.” And they shared information about ominous students and teachers.

The teenager had a strategy, a world view, that kept her generally serene through it all. As she later explained:

Some of my classmates stared, others made ugly faces and some were downright mean and nasty. When I encountered the mean and nasty ones, I would say to myself, “I am a child of God full of grace and beauty, with God on my side, I have nothing to fear.” In the more critical times, I would make a fist and pretend that God was holding my hand. The feeling of God holding my hand made me smile. One day, as most days, someone called me a Nigger, this white girl saw me clench my fist, smile and walk away. Her curiosity got the best of her and she wanted to know how I could take the constant harassment and smile. I looked her straight in the eye and said, “Because I am a child of God full of grace and beauty.” She looked right back at me and said, “you are crazy” and she walked away.

Not only was the “desegregated” school a hostile environment, the school experience remained in many ways segregated—though one feature of that segregation helped out with some features of the desegregation. As Betty explains: “We continued to ride separate school buses. After school a bus picked up the Negro children at Warren County High School, drove us to Criser Combined Colored School where we would transfer to busses that transported colored children home.” The bus ride from one school to the other “gave us an opportunity to discuss what went on during the day at school.”

Each year, the black students who enrolled at the high school in 1958 had to take summer classes—credited with only half a year’s study during 1958-1959, they had to make up for lost time. Back at school each fall, they found themselves excluded from many activities that their white classmates took for granted. Black adults placed enough faith in the value of black children’s attending Warren County High School to dismiss as relatively insignificant the students’ exclusion from many extracurricular features of a high school education. Betty Kilby and a black classmate, Geraldine Rhodes, tried out for majorettes but were rejected. Community adults pointed out, “It would have been nice, but you are there to get an education.” Betty’s brother John and another black student, Charles Lewis, tried out for basketball. Charles, an “outstanding” player, made the team, but then he was told that if he stayed on the team, there would be no season for him or his teammates, for no team from any other school would then agree to play Warren County, so “Charles gave up his basketball dream for a quality education.” During the 1960–1961 year, James Kilby and Frank Grier were the only black seniors. Not allowed to attend their senior prom, they were told again by their elders that they were at the school “to get an education.” The two seniors endured long enough to get to graduation, the first of the “heroes” of 1958 “to officially graduate from an integrated class.”

“Besides,” says Betty, “there were larger issues.” Members of the black community found that the costs of their involvement in school desegregation kept mounting. Those costs reflected, in some ways, a displacement of the burdens of travel that black students, like Betty’s two older brothers, had borne when they had had to travel considerable distances to school. And the costs heightened the tensions children felt at home and in the community. “Our mothers couldn’t get jobs cleaning houses in Front Royal or Warren County. They had to get up at 4 AM

and ride sixty miles to the Northern Virginia area for work. Our NAACP lawyers were fighting with the local Union because our fathers who worked at the Viscose [a major industrial employer in the area] were under attack and risked losing their jobs. Our farm animals were being mutilated and poisoned.”

By 1962–1963, Betty’s senior year, only four of the original black students remained—Betty Kilby, Barbara Jackson, Matthew Pines, and Steven Travis—the others having graduated or given up. “Since there were so few of us left it was hard to maintain our buddy system. For the first time since 1958, I didn’t have one of my brothers in school to watch over me.” She nonetheless felt safer, grew less vigilant, and let some old rules lapse. “One day as I was crossing the auditorium alone, there were three boys hiding behind the stage. I was grabbed from behind, blindfolded, mouth taped and raped. . . . I passed out hoping that I would die.” Though plagued in the months that followed by an urge to commit suicide, she held on. A kindly black man she knew observed to her, “The best part of your life is just around the corner, God has given you a job, He will give you the strength to make it through. It was a big job for such a little girl like you but you can do it.” She graduated. She could not attend her prom. On graduation night, “as my [white female] classmates hugged and kissed, there were no hugs for me. I hugged myself and looked toward heaven and whispered, ‘thank you.’”

### **Ruth Carter and Her Siblings in Mississippi**

As part of the Great Society programs, school districts could count on considerable infusions of federal money under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, but Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 stipulated that receiving federal funds depended on local policies that did not engage in racial discrimination. Beginning in 1965, therefore, a new combination of federal policies, with a big carrot and a big stick, could propel desegregation along. But desegregation in each school district unfolded at the local level, and its shape depended on the roles played by local actors, including black children and their parents. No branch of the federal government required that “desegregation” result in a genuine integration of the separate black and white systems, and no federal policy required black involvement in determining such changes in practice as took place. When small numbers of black pioneers made their way to formerly white schools, they were entering what in effect remained white schools.

For the first ten years after the *Brown* decision, no elementary or secondary school desegregation took place anywhere in Mississippi. In 1964 and 1965, a combination of federal legislation and federal court orders brought the beginnings of change—but the combination also brought a new version of white resistance to change. Adopting the typical approach across the South—“freedom of choice”—jurisdictions left it up to individual black students to request transfers to white schools. Some requests were approved, some not. “Desegregation” was slow in coming, and then controlled by local whites—and revealed in small numbers of black children in a few white schools across the state. Then, as a rule, physical threats, together with economic sanctions, were directed against the black families involved in desegregation—not to mention the harassment that took place in the schools—so that many of the black pioneers requested that they be transferred back to the black schools. Black children and black adults alike were not always prepared to bear the full burden, as it became revealed to them, of battling for desegregation. But some were.

Like other jurisdictions in Mississippi, Sunflower County had to go through the motions of conceding an end to completely segregated schools. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare stipulated that at least three grades would have to be open to desegregation, and so confident were the leaders of Sunflower County that nobody would seek to change schools, they threw open all twelve grades to freedom-of-choice. They had not counted on the Carters—Matthew, Mae Bertha, and their seven school-aged children. In 1965, those seven became the first black children in the white schools of Sunflower County. Ruth, Larry, Gloria, and Stanley enrolled at Drew High School. Pearl, Beverly, and Deborah began attending the A. W. James Elementary School. They stuck it out that entire year, and the next, the only black children in either school during either year.

The Carters' considerations were many. Ruth, at sixteen the eldest Carter child still living at home, led the way—she wanted to go to a better school, with newer books, on a nice bus, for full days rather than split sessions and a full school year like the white kids. And she had spent a year with relatives in Ohio, so she knew that life did not have to be what she saw all around her in Mississippi. When the freedom-of-choice forms arrived in the mail in summer 1965, she wrote her mother, who was away visiting relatives, “Come home. You have some papers to sign saying what school we want to go to. We want to go to the all-white school.” Mr. and Mrs. Carter told the children: “If you want to go, we want you to go.” Mrs. Carter later explained her own considerations:

Why I decided I wanted them to go was I was tired of my kids coming home with pages torn out of worn-out books that come from the white school. I was tired of them riding on these old raggedy buses after the white children didn't want to ride on them anymore. I was just tired, and I thought if they go to this all-white school they will get a better education there.

And there was more. Mrs. Carter later recounted how the children in the black schools got lunch only once or twice a week,

And see, them white children was eating lunch every day. So that's why we signed the papers. We had seven children to go, three to the elementary school and four to the high school. So we integrated both of those schools.

Moreover, some of the Carters had been active in the events of Freedom Summer 1964 and summer 1965, including Ruth's going to Jackson and being among the many young people arrested for participating in demonstrations there. As Mae Bertha Carter explains:

So we really was in the movement. Going to these mass meetings and marching and going to jail and singing and talking about you ain't gonna let nobody turn you 'round. So that's why we was already motivated when the school integration came.

But until the new school year began, the Carters, who did not have a telephone in their rural home, had not known that no other black students would be attending either school. Ruth later pointed out: “I didn't think we were going to be the only ones—my friend Nettie who'd been in jail with me, I thought she was going, too. But something happened—I think her parents changed their minds, and she wasn't there in September.” The Carter children had no friends or

allies around them when the school bus brought them into town the first day of the new school year, and crowds of white hecklers screamed from outside the bus: “Go back to your own schools, niggers.”

Parents and children alike were haunted by what did happen and by what they constantly feared might happen. Ruth recollected:

After we started to school, because I was the oldest, I thought maybe the younger kids were looking up to me and that I was there to protect them if something happened—if something went wrong. . . . We had to ride the school bus with all those white kids and they would throw spitballs and call us all kinds of names, and I’m sitting there and can’t do a thing. And there’s my little sisters and brothers, and Deborah, only six years old and so sweet and precious to me, being mistreated, and there was nothing I could do.

And their mother remembered being petrified to the point of paralysis, especially in the early weeks. That first day of school in September 1965, she said,

When the bus pulled off, I went in and fell down cross the bed and prayed. I stayed on that bed and didn’t do no work that day . . . and when I heard the bus coming, I went back to the porch. When they came off one by one, then I was released until the next morning. But the next morning I felt the same way, depressed, nervous, praying to God . . . ; just saying, “take care of my kids.”

Ruth and her mother pushed ahead. Ruth remembered that, especially at first, she

hated everything. Then we started having these little session at home in the afternoon after school. It was almost like therapy. We would sit down and Mama would say, “How did things go today at school?” We would talk about what happened and a lot of times we would cry together. After we’d talk and sit down and cry together, things would seem a little better.

If Mama heard me say, “I hate white people, I just can’t stand them,” she always answered, “Don’t you ever say that. Don’t you ever say that you hate white people or anyone—it’s not right.”

And I answered, “How would you know, Mama? We’re the ones who have to stay in school with them all day. We have to ride the bus with them and go to the lunchroom with them where they won’t sit next to us. We’re the ones they throw spitballs at and call ‘nigger.’”

But she got on us every time we said we hated them.

She concluded her reverie on a positive note: “At least I got out of the cotton fields, so I guess dreams can come true.”

Larry, like some of his siblings, remembered their math teacher as fair, but not the history teacher. He found that he “hated history class when we covered the Civil War and the teacher said ‘nigger’ and allowed the students to say it like I wasn’t even there.”

None of the white students ever associated with us and we weren’t involved in any activities. Basically we just went to school there. . . .

Once toward the end of the first semester, we were in the field picking cotton after school, and I told Mama that I was going back to the other school. Then we had a discussion. She told me about how she and Daddy had committed themselves to the choice and how Daddy had sacrificed so many things so we could go and how I should try and stick it out. She never did say I couldn't change schools, she just explained things to me. That was the last time I ever thought about leaving—that conversation in the cotton field took about thirty minutes.

Things didn't change much in the tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grades. I just separated school from my personal life. I went to school, studied, 3:15 came, school was out, I did my homework and chores, and I had black friends at the other school, and we went to football games and events there.

When he graduated in 1968, he recalled, "My father put his arm around me and walked with me . . . and told me how proud he was of me."

The other children had similar experiences and similar memories of their time as pioneers. Pearl, born in 1955, was in the fifth grade when she enrolled in the white elementary school in 1965. She later told an interviewer, Connie Curry, about her time as a lonely pioneer: "How can I describe it? Five years of hell?" Her teacher that first year, the worst year, was "really cruel to me." But though Pearl wielded no sword, she had a shield and wore her armor that year. As she later said:

I knew they had to be mean to show us they didn't want us there, and I kept thinking, "I deserve to be here just like you." That's the one thing Mama always preached. One time we said something about the white school, and she said, "That school is not white, it's brown brick, and that school belongs to you as well as it belongs to them—always remember that."

Gloria, two years older, has said:

It just hurt. I'd go home after school and pray about it and say, "Dear Lord, don't let this happen tomorrow—let tomorrow be an okay day. Don't let anybody hit me with a spitball." . . . It's not like the seventh grade was okay and by the eighth you adjusted so you didn't mind. You *never* got used to it.

But we never once thought of quitting. I kept saying, "I can't quit. They can't make me leave. We are not going to lose—we are not going to let 'em run us away. . . .

You know, up until a few years ago, I was still having nightmares about being in Drew High School, and I would wake up sobbing.

Each of the children pointed out that, when "full integration came," things greatly improved. Carl, the youngest, had not begun first grade until 1967, so most of his schooling took place in the 1970s. His first two years, "the worst thing was not having playmates," but then a court order came that brought a whole new era in desegregation—the suit was brought in 1967 by the Carters, and the ruling in 1969, reflecting a recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, threw out the "freedom of choice" tactic. "All the black kids came" to the formerly white schools, joining Carl and his school-age brothers and sisters; and "from the fourth grade on I went to games and activities." Revealing the importance of what his parents and siblings had

accomplished, he concluded: “I certainly didn’t have the hardships that my sisters and brothers went through.”

All eight young Carters graduated from Drew High School. Seven went on to the University of Mississippi, where, under federal court order in 1962, James Meredith had become the first black student.

### **“Desegregation”: More Than a Black Student Entering a White School**

In eastern North Carolina, Hyde County moved in 1965 to desegregate its public schools. In much the manner in which Charlotte and Greensboro had begun operating eight years earlier, Hyde County employed the state’s “freedom of choice” program, which required initiatives by black families to seek the enrollment of black children in formerly white schools. In Hyde County, twenty-one black students transferred that year to Mattamuskeet, the consolidated white school (as elsewhere, not a single white student transferred to either of the black schools, Davis or O. A. Peay). When school buses began the new school year rumbling along country roads, they carried both black and white students, and they dropped them off—black and white alike, though most of them white—at Mattamuskeet.

Inside the school, though, the two groups did not have the same experiences. The black students found themselves isolated, they missed having black teachers, and they missed the school activities they had been involved in at the black schools. White students who attempted to be welcoming were pressured into abandoning the effort or face shunning themselves. Moreover, their families faced all kinds of social and economic pressures. White customers refused to continue to patronize black businesses, or they were forced by other whites to do so. As one local person reported years later, “If you couldn’t be touched, then they would get your sister or your mother or your cousin. You might not even know they did get you, but you would always wonder why you didn’t get that loan, or why your brother was sent to Vietnam.” The Klan, in particular, did what it could—and that was a lot—to coerce whites as well as blacks to curtail school desegregation. Pressures on the black pioneers at Mattamuskeet, in combination with pressures on their families, reversed the change that had begun in 1965. Black enrollment at Mattamuskeet dropped to seven in 1966–1967 and then three in 1967–1968. Reassignment of teachers revealed similarly skimpy numbers—one black teacher at Mattamuskeet, one white teacher at one of the two black schools.

In 1967, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare increased the pressure on southern school districts to move more energetically toward desegregation. A key event was a federal appeals court ruling in 1967—*Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia*—that outlawed the kind of freedom-of-choice pupil placement policy that Hyde County was employing. It was widely expected that the Supreme Court would uphold that decision, and it did so in 1968, saying: “The burden on a school board today is to come forward with a plan that promises realistically to work, and promises realistically to work *now*.”

The Hyde County school board came forward with a plan in late May 1968 that would, within three years, end separate schools. Grades one through three would be transferred from the black schools to Mattamuskeet in fall 1968, and everyone through eighth grade would attend the formerly white school the following year. By fall 1970, all black children in the county would attend Mattamuskeet, and the two black schools would be closed. The new program for addressing demands for desegregation reflected white control, with no effective black input, and

would result not in the integration of all the county's schools, white and black, but the death of the black schools. In early July 1968, HEW approved the proposal.

Black residents opposed the new plan, established a "Committee of 14" to organize that opposition, and came up with a counterproposal that would keep open the two black schools, Davis and O. A. Peay. Failing adoption of such a new desegregation plan, black residents planned to boycott the public schools.

The vast majority of black children in Hyde County were out of school that first day of the new school year, in fact all that year. They took over primary responsibility for maintaining the boycott and pushing an alternative desegregation plan. Explained one of them, Alice Spencer: "You walked, talked, ate, thought, . . . *lived* for the movement. It was all you did." Said another, looking back on that year, "We were all brothers and sisters then." Thomas Whitaker had expected to be a senior that year, whether at O. A. Peay or Mattamuskeet, but he was not in school. Instead, he later observed, "I felt like I was giving myself completely to something larger and more important than myself."

Hyde County's black children conducted local demonstrations, often seeking to provoke their own arrest. On one occasion, when a group prayed and sang movement songs in front of the county courthouse, eighteen were arrested, and a thirteen-year-old sang out, "Hey, wait for me, Mr. Trooper, I want to be arrested too!" And the children and their adult allies conducted two marches that took them to Raleigh, the state capital, to make their position clear and seek adoption of their proposed alternative.

Much happened during that school year and across the following summer, and, as a new school year approached, both sides were getting worn down; both sides hoped the boycott would not enter a second year. In early September, about eighty young black protesters were convicted of blocking traffic, and were sentenced to six months in prison, but were told they would have their sentences suspended if they immediately returned to school. A bond referendum was scheduled for November, the proceeds essential if Mattamuskeet were to be expanded sufficiently to accommodate all the county's children, black and white. Hundreds of black children returned to school in September, many of them prepared to leave again and revive their boycott in November if the referendum passed. By a wide margin, it did not. For a variety of reasons, Hyde County voters acted in a manner that meant that the Davis and O. A. Peay schools would remain open. The boycott was over, its major objectives achieved, but many details remained to be worked out.

During the months that remained before the start of the 1970–1971 school year, a "Student Planning Committee" worked on those details. Making up the committee were equal numbers of black and white students, among them activists in the boycott. They, as well as the "Committee of 14" and other groups (black, white, and biracial), advised the school system, participated effectively in deliberations, negotiated every aspect of the plan to achieve a genuine desegregation of Hyde County's public schools.

Davis and O. A. Peay remained open, and they as well as Mattamuskeet would have genuinely biracial student populations. At Davis and O. A. Peay, white as well as black children would attend a local elementary school that required limited bus travel each morning and afternoon. Black teachers would keep their jobs in the Hyde County system, and black principals would retain their positions. Students of each racial identity would work and study together in schools that both groups could claim. At Mattamuskeet, the student advisors and their successors saw to it that genuine integration took place in high school activities. Any candidate at Mattamuskeet for student body president, for example, had to have a running mate

of another race, and the two groups would have equal representation on the yearbook. For a transition period, each of the two groups, black and white, would have a prom queen and a graduation speaker.

Black children pioneered the “desegregation” of Hyde County’s Mattamuskeet School in 1965–1966 when, under North Carolina’s freedom-of-choice law, “desegregation” meant that only a few black students would be enrolled at a previously all-white school. Black children led the way in the school boycott of 1968–1969 that led to rejection of a fuller “desegregation,” a revised version still entirely on white terms. And black children worked with white children to formulate a third stab at desegregation, a model that suggests what might have been but rarely was, the form that went into effect in Hyde County in the fall of 1970.

### **Child Warriors for a People and a Nation**

Black parents understood that they were putting their children’s welfare on the line in the struggle for black freedom in general and school desegregation in particular. As Josephine Boyd expressed it, nearly four decades after the events she participated in as a teenager: “Those parents willing to put their children on the firing lines[,] and those children willing to go to war, were fighting to fulfill their ancestors’ as well as their own quest for freedom, identity, and self-respect.” And she spoke especially of the roles the children played: “Desegregation of public schools was a direct confrontation between black and white children. Black children who sought to desegregate schools demonstrated a strength and a stubbornness to undertake risks that others could not or would not undertake.”

Josephine Boyd called herself a “mandatory volunteer.” She stuck out her senior year in a hostile environment—far different from the nurturing one she would have experienced had she stayed at all-black Dudley High School—precisely because of the many people she believed would benefit from the pioneer roles that she and her sparse counterparts at other schools were playing that year. She said of the black children “initiating school desegregation” that they “were not unmindful of the cost to them, or perhaps they may not have foreseen the cost, but they were not about to let either blacks or whites tell them that desegregating schools could not be done.” And as they “entered the desegregation movement as tokens,” they “were faced with defining as well as assuming for themselves, new roles and positions in the affairs of their respective states, the United States and the world.” They would construct for all Americans, and especially for African Americans, a new definition of citizenship, of belonging, of opportunity, of democracy.

Because it was so new, and because it was so promising as well as dangerous, it could be heady stuff. And that—together with their elders’ urging that they finish what they had started—helped the children, black pioneers in white schools, endure. Young warriors, they grew up strong, though years later the memories of those times could still sear, could still bring tears, and the combination of those times and subsequent developments could leave them wondering how to sum their experiences and the consequences of their brave actions.

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## ***Brown* as a Children's Case and the Case for Children's History**

**Rebecca de Schweinitz**

At the beginning of the twentieth century many reformers argued that in the next one-hundred years notions of childhood would “form the point of view from which all other questions will be judged, all other regulations made.” [1] In the mid-1950s the U.S. Supreme Court at least partly based their decision on what W.E.B. Du Bois called “the problem of the Twentieth Century”—“the problem of the color line” on just such a point of view.[2] As legal scholar Robert Mnookin suggests, it was no accident that the Supreme Court chose to rule against segregation on a “children’s case.”[3] Yet if notions of childhood helped “form the point of view from which” the question of segregation was judged, and if it was indeed no accident that *Brown* was a children’s case, historians have not recognized the significance of ideas about childhood to the *Brown* ruling and the larger struggle for racial equality in America. This year, as we celebrate the “troubled legacy” of *Brown* and seek to reappraise the ruling and recover its “submerged histories” seems an opportune time to suggest a few ways in which looking at *Brown* from the perspective of children’s history might help us better understand the ruling and its significance to the civil rights movement, and conversely, to suggest the importance of children’s history.

Recently Mary L. Dudziak has made a compelling case for examining the *Brown* ruling in the context of the Cold War.[4] “*Brown* was the product of converging domestic and international developments” she argues. “Cold War concerns,” America’s concern for its image abroad, “provided a motive beyond equality itself.” As she suggests, “[v]iewing *Brown* as a Cold War case” provides “new details” and “helps us rethink” the way we tell the *Brown* story. [5] It also suggests ways that children’s historians can possibly reshape the *Brown* narrative. For example, Dudziak’s argument about the importance of the Cold War context of *Brown* leaves room for questions about how international ideas about childhood and the rights of childhood might have contributed to growing international criticisms of America’s Jim Crow practices. As Dudziak notes, public school segregation was “singled out for hostile foreign comment in the United Nations and elsewhere.”[6] Dudziak and others who have been critical of the story scholars traditionally tell about the progressive quality of American racial thought are likely right to suggest that the country’s commitment to racial equality in 1954 was not sufficient in itself to motivate the Supreme Court to outlaw segregation. But perhaps by the 1950s the Court and white Americans were committed enough to ideas about childhood and the rights of children in a democracy to reject, at least officially and in principle, segregation in the nation’s public schools. [7]

If we look at the ways that ideas about childhood and America’s Cold War influenced both each other and the *Brown* ruling we can also better understand why Cold War fears would have encouraged policy and law makers, civil rights advocates, and child-centered reformers and agencies to champion not just equality of education for America’s black children but equal and integrated educational opportunities. Such a perspective additionally helps explain why racial thinking of the period and the *Brown* ruling were so focused on the psychological health of black (and white) children. For, as my research suggests, the future of democracy required that America encourage all its children to achieve their full potential and help them to grow-up with

well-adjusted, meaning prejudice and frustration-free, personalities. Moreover, a variety of advocates and agencies insisted that those goals could best be accomplished through good schools that gave students real opportunities to develop interpersonal skills and practice democratic living.[8] A perspective that takes into account widespread beliefs about childhood and the Cold War may ultimately explain why school children were given the responsibility of desegregating American society and ending American racism, as well as why the Court, and many others, overestimated the impact of the *Brown* ruling.[9] To be sure, recent scholarship on *Brown* examines the decision in the context of postwar racial liberalism and cultural pluralism, especially the rise and influence of psychologized notions of race relations and the strategic role of the nation's schools in "the therapeutic war against prejudice." [10] Yet that scholarship virtually ignores the ways that racial liberalism and ideas about prejudice and personality development intersected with widespread beliefs and research about childhood, including beliefs and research that addressed the personality development of white children, children's roles in the Cold War, and the relative (and natural) lack of racial prejudice in young people. Moreover, new scholarship does not recognize that the convergence of interests in *Brown* included not only the federal government, racial liberals, and civil rights organizations, but also educational experts and child-welfare advocates who had long sought to extend the rights of childhood to America's underprivileged children and argued for a system of universal and equal education.

A children's history perspective on *Brown* also raises questions that encourages scholars to connect *Brown* with the ways that America's struggle for racial equality was presented to the American (and international) public by African-American leaders, organizations, and the press in the years following *Brown*. Did *Brown*, with its emphasis on the rights of black children and implicit faith in the ability of young people to overcome adult prejudices shape the stories civil rights activists and the national media told about desegregation struggles? Can we see more clearly the ideas that shaped *Brown* if we recognize similarities between the ruling and stories about its implementation? And, just as importantly, did ideas about childhood influence the ways the American public, black and white, responded to *Brown* and subsequent racial struggles? Even if *Brown* did not represent a complete victory for civil rights advocates, did aligning the civil rights movement with ideas about childhood encourage public sympathy and support for the movement at a crucial juncture in civil rights history? And, did connections between the movement and ideas about childhood ultimately shape and limit public support on African-American civil rights issues? Such a line of inquiry seems especially significant since, as Elaine Tyler May has shown, domestic ideals strongly influenced the nation's political culture during the Cold War, and because scholars have long been interested in gauging the limitations of *Brown* and its importance (or lack of importance) to the larger struggle for racial equality.[11]

A children's history perspective on *Brown* would, of course, also require scholars to ask important questions about how young people themselves both shaped and responded to *Brown*. Barbara Johns, who initiated and led the Moton High strike in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and other young people like her, still receive little recognition for their decisive roles in the *Brown* story specifically, and in encouraging black communities to push for racial equality generally.[12] And historians, so concerned about the impact of *Brown* on local blacks (by which they mean local black adults) and their support or lack of support for the ruling have not asked questions about how young people, black or white, felt about the decision or how it influenced their perceptions of the civil rights movement and of themselves as political actors.

But even if, as Charles Payne suggests, *Brown* “did not speak to the range of political, economic, and extralegal constraints” on the lives of black adults, it certainly did speak to the most obvious constraints on the lives of black children.[13] Moreover, it seems not unlikely, especially in light of the student activism and demonstrations of the late fifties and early sixties, that *Brown*, and the ideas about children that informed *Brown*, gave many young people a sense that they could play a vital role in the struggle for racial equality.

If these examples are any indication then clearly the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown*, converging as it does with an increased interest in children’s history, offers an ideal opportunity for scholars to re-examine the case from the perspective of children’s history and an opportunity for children’s historians to demonstrate the value of their field.

### *Notes*

1. Swedish feminist and reformer Ellen Key quoted by Lawrence K. Frank in “Childhood and Youth” in *Recent Social Trends in the United States: Report of the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1933) 753.
2. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, reprinted in *Three Negro Classics* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1965) 209.
3. Robert Mnookin, *In the Interest of Children: Advocacy Law Reform and Public Policy* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1985).
4. See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Dudziak, “*Brown* as a Cold War Case,” *The Journal of American History* (June 2004) 32-42.
5. Dudziak, “*Brown* as a Cold War Case,” 40, 34-5.
6. Secretary of State Dean Acheson quoted by Dudziak in *Cold War Civil Rights*, 101.
7. The *Brown* ruling specified that “in the field of education the doctrine of separate but equal has not place.”
8. On this and other points made and questions raised in this essay see Rebecca de Schweinitz, “‘If They Could Change the World:’ Children, Childhood, and Civil Rights Politics” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 2004). See also my article, “The ‘Shame of America:’ African-American Civil Rights and the Politics of Childhood” in *The Politics of Childhood*, James Goddard and Allison James, eds. (Pantheon Macmillan, forthcoming ).
9. Charles Payne, in his recent article, “The Whole United States is Southern: *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Mystification of Race,” *The Journal of American History* (June 2004) asks: “What does it imply about the level of understanding of the racial system” that “supporters and opponents of segregation alike overestimated the impact of *Brown*?” But perhaps we might as

well ask what it implies about ideas about childhood that both groups expected *Brown* to effect a social and political racial revolution? (See page 84).

10. See, for instance, Daryl Michael Scott, "Postwar Pluralism, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the Origins of Multicultural Education," *The Journal of American History* (June 2004) 69-82; Lani Guinier, "From Racial Liberalism to Racial Literacy: *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Interest-Divergence Dilemma," *The Journal of American History* (June 2004) 92-118.

11. See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: America's Families and the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

12. At the recent Organization of American Historians annual conference in Boston, all three panelists in a session entitled "The Revolutions In-Between; Grassroots Civil Rights Struggles in the Era of *Brown v. Board of Education*" alluded to significant youth participation in grassroots civil rights demonstrations but none of these scholars was specifically exploring or analyzing youth participation and organizing (and, in fact, had not even considered doing so).

13. See Payne, "The Whole United States is Southern," 91.

## "Simple Justice Revisited"

**Joseph E. Illick**

In 1976 Richard Kluger published *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black Americas Struggle for Equality* (Knopf), which has been reissued this year with a new final chapter surveying the fate of Brown during the half century since the decision was rendered. The book focused on black lawyers and their development of a strategy to overturn segregation via the courts, emphasizing along the way the African-American awareness of the link between the attainment of social equality and education. If this first rendering of *Simple Justice* was climaxed by the success of its protagonists, the new edition calls attention to some victories but too many defeats.

Kluger, who had been a journalist, book editor, and novelist before turning to social history, published what is now widely regarded as the definitive treatment of Brown (*Simple Justice* was a National Book Award finalist; Kluger later received a Pulitzer Prize for *Ashes to Ashes*, his study of the tobacco industry). A classmate of mine at Princeton, we spoke in the backyard of his home in Berkeley, California, in April 2004.

Our Class of 1956 included two Negroes (as they were called in polite society in the 1950s) among its 700 members. Although the Brown decision occurred in the midst of our undergraduate years, it had no immediate meaning for me, and I suspect it may have been the same for Dick Kluger. He had attended private schools in New York City, where his sole African-American classmate was the light-skinned son of James Weldon Johnson, distinguished educator and composer of "Lift Every Voice," the unofficial Negro national anthem which Kluger learned in the sixth grade. He pointed out to me that he had dedicated *Simple Justice* to his two young sons and to the two daughters of his cleaning woman, almost the only black person he knew at the time.

His awareness in the 1960s of the civil rights movement—not to mention the anti-war, environmental, consumer, and women's movements—sensitized him to his isolation from the social ferment coursing through American life. And he was convinced that the Brown decision "was one of the exceptional moments in American history." As an editor at Simon and Schuster, he began searching for an appropriate author for a book on the subject.

But the journalists he approached had neither the legal background crucial to such an undertaking nor the inclination to study law, while academics were put off by the prospect of the numerous personal interviews necessary to the project. Kluger was prepared to undertake such leg-work through his previous newspaper experience (the *New York Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*) and was well-acquainted with aspects of black literature and the sociology of racism, and thus began—in what he terms "a spasm of extreme hubris"—to consider writing the book himself.

It was critical, he knew, to gain access to relevant people and documents. He phoned the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the group that carried the civil rights cases forward. Jack Greenberg, who had succeeded Thurgood Marshall as the Director Counsel, assured him that the materials existed and he could have access to them. On examination the Defense Fund files, though loosely organized, proved a treasure trove of intra-office memos and drafts for briefs -- a virtually complete record of the activities leading to Brown, simply waiting to be mined. And the office staff was more than willing to put him in touch with the participants he would need to interview.

Kluger began his research as a moonlighting effort, but as the monumental proportions of the task became apparent, he made a major career decision: he would give up his employment as an editor and attempt to make his living solely as a writer. He was almost forty with a wife and two young children.

Working in his favor was the very recent publication of the oral arguments presented to the Supreme Court, while at the NAACP office he had found transcripts of the U. S. District Court trials brought to challenge Jim Crow schooling. He complemented these sources with extensive reading of legal texts in a kind of self-taught constitutional history course.

Simultaneously, as a former newspaperman, he was savoring the personal interviews ahead, which needed to be undertaken expeditiously, given the age of many of the interviewees. In this endeavor he wasn't entirely successful. Thurgood Marshall, the chief attorney for the Brown plaintiffs and later the first African-American justice on the Supreme Court, was unreachable until the end of the project, when his recollection was failing—or, as Kluger puts it, when it had become "somewhat selective." It might have been a very different book if I had had access to him early and throughout. But you go with the strength of your materials," Kluger reflected. But he was able to talk with many African Americans, especially attorneys, who had done the field work for Brown; no one before Kluger had bothered. (All his interviews have been transcribed and are at the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale; they are available to researchers -- and are listed at the end of *Simple Justice*.)

And he was able to interview three of the 1954 Supreme Court Justices: William O. Douglas, Tom Clark, and Earl Warren. Justices Felix Frankfurter and Harold Burton left helpful conference notes.) Warren had retired -- he would not have consented to an interview while still sitting -- in 1970 while in his late seventies. This was a deeply important get-together, Kluger believes, since without Warren the Brown decision wouldn't have happened, certainly not with unanimity nor in 1954. Rather, the Court would likely have drafted only a decree calling for equalization of school facilities without desegregation (a la Plessy v. Ferguson, the 1896 decision that laid the foundation for segregation), which would have been vulnerable to southern delaying tactics. Nevertheless, to achieve a unanimous decision ordering desegregation, Warren conceded to the foot draggers by allowing the "all deliberate speed" condition to be included in the court's 1955 decision implementing Brown (often called "Brown II"). "Deliberate" became more the watchword than "speed," leading newly-retired Justice Hugo Black to state in 1970 that the Court should have issued a forthwith decree saying segregation was unconstitutional and had to end at once. Warren, unhappy with Black's observation and convinced that the justices should have maintained their unanimity into posterity, remarked, "Why didn't he say so then?"

I mentioned to Kluger that three African-American law professors in just-published books—Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., *All Deliberate Speed*; Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants*; and Sheryll Cashin, *The Failures of Integration*—all seemed to be arguing that, in view of what has happened since 1954/55, equalization would have worked better for blacks than integration has. Kluger characterized that argument as "nonsense." He continued: "African Americans attending integrated schools, by almost every measurable yardstick, are doing better in their lives — as students, as graduates, as they move ahead in their careers."

Indeed, he makes the case in the new edition of *Simple Justice* that we are in fact moving in the direction of a more integrated America. African Americans are surely more visible to whites than ever before. Black culture is welcome in mainstream society as evidenced in our music, language, dress, behavior. African Americans are more than proportionately represented in the military, government, and arts and entertainment, though not in business America.

Yet in the integration of secondary and elementary education, there has been regression rather than progress. 1988 was the high-water mark of school desegregation, measured by black children attending white majority schools; in that year it reached 43 per cent, even though Pres. Ronald Reagan's administration opposed desegregation and took steps to reduce the Justice Department's oversight on the matter. Today that number is down to about 30 per cent.

What has happened? Kluger points out that after the Brown decision came down desegregation proceeded relatively easily in public facilities other than schools. Not only did the courts stand firm but the communities obeyed. The schools provided a different scenario. Here children would mingle all day, acquiring social habits from one another, and this very fact alarmed white supremacists and segregationists, provoking the strongest resistance, especially in the deep South.

In addition, neither the Presidents of the United States nor the Congress furthered the cause of desegregation. Pres. Dwight D. Eisenhower, in particular, failed as a moral leader in Kluger's view. He might have called upon white Americans to change the school situation not only because the Supreme Court said so but, considering the heinous treatment of blacks for such a long time, desegregation was the right way for whites to deal with their fellow citizens. But nothing like that was ever said.

Rather, the situation played out in a series of court rulings calculated to determine what was appropriate in bussing, pairing schools, and so forth. Laying out such a vast and complicated pattern took time and encouraged those who wanted to stall. While the NAACP Legal Defense Fund remained vital, it could not move the cause of school integration forward as presidential administrations and the Supreme Court moved to the right.

In 1973, in *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, the U. S. Supreme Court decided against the argument that equal protection should mean that every child in a state that has mandatory public education should have equal resources made available to him or her, regardless of the wealth of the community in which the child lived. This case was lost by one vote in the Burger Court. If the equal funding argument had prevailed, Kluger believes, the situation today would be significantly better, not necessarily in terms of school desegregation but in the availability of resources where there wasn't integration.

By the early nineties a Court majority guided by Chief Justice Rehnquist rendered three important decisions that have allowed the resegregation of the schools by directing the federal district courts, which had imposed desegregation plans on the reluctant segregated school districts, to assure these communities that once they had achieved a "unitary school system"—meaning there were no longer separate black and white schools, even though there might be black-majority schools—once they had made their best efforts to get racial balance among the schools, whether by bussing or pairing or redistricting, they no longer needed to worry about oversight from federal courts. Essentially, this meant the communities could return to the way things were before desegregation.

Of course the Court does not decide in a vacuum. The Justices are clearly aware of popular attitudes and their political implications. Even the Warren Court, which represented a high-water mark in terms of being open and eager to bring long-delayed racial justice to America, was at pains not to accuse the South. It did not, for example, condemn *Plessy v. Ferguson* as bad law, but the truth is that to discriminate against some element of the population—in this case African Americans—there must be compelling state interest. *Plessy*, while denying it, was plainly grounded in white supremacy.)

Kluger observes that a couple of decades after the Brown decision, when the consciousness

of white Americans had been raised enough for them to concede the injustice of segregation, there remained an attitude among many whites, north and south, which rejected association with blacks, who were viewed as socially, intellectually, and even morally inferior.□This was the feeling that underlay white flight to the suburbs, a reaction that was a sign both of prejudice and of frustration with reality—you can't change a culture overnight, or in a generation, even with the best of intentions.

White flight was unfair, premature and yet understandable.□But as that flight has continued from the mid-seventies to today the attitude of these same whites or their children toward blacks has altered.□Most white Americans concede that African Americans had a real grievance against the biased thinking, conduct and laws of the land.□Blatant discrimination is no longer socially, politically, or legally permissible.□Whites have admitted their guilt; now it's up to blacks to take the strides that will raise them to the white level of economic and cultural achievement. Whites hope that blacks will do so, but they must do so largely without help.

That's the Republican point of view, almost officially.□What this attitude ignores is the enormous disadvantage black people bear after generations of suffering.□This disadvantage must be compensated for in order for blacks to have a chance to reach the mainstream community, Kluger believes.□But white receptivity to such social policy has atrophied in the face of national administrations that responded to black grievances through "benign neglect" under Pres. Richard M. Nixon and, more recently, with "callous indifference" to black aspirations.

Still, Kluger sees reason for optimism.□Changes in areas other than education are taking place, though often slowly.□The poverty level among blacks has dropped from 55 per cent to 22 per cent over the past half century.□And nearly 80 per cent of African Americans now graduate from high school as compared to 14 per cent in 1950.□There are more mixed communities, more mixed marriages; 50 years ago one per cent of marriages were mixed, while today its 12 per cent.

"We run through cycles in our country," Kluger notes,□and I think were ready for a swing the other way.□We have the wealth in America to adopt social policies that attack the culture of poverty and try in a serious way to level the playing field.□It's been true of this country for a long time, that we are a wealthy society, while the left-behinds are tragically neglected.□We are compassionate and cruel at the same time."

Postscript: For a recent retrospective review of *Simple Justice* see Robert Lowe's "Richard Kluger's *Simple Justice* after 29 Years," *History of Education Quarterly* 44 (Spring 2004).

## African American Children's History and the Problem of Race

Moira Hinderer

"What does it mean to be a problem?" W. E. B. Du Bois asked this question in *The Souls of Black Folk*, as he traced his own racial awareness to a moment in a Massachusetts schoolyard. In this moment of realization he ceased to be simply a child and began his life as a "black boy." This configuration of the problem of Black childhood is quite different than the one common to American popular culture, where Black children so often appear in stories of violence, addiction, abuse, poverty, and failure. In these stories Black children no longer have a problem, they are a problem. In turn, this shift presents a series of problems for historians. There is the problem of balancing the agency and humanity of children with attention to the forces that shape their lives. There is the problem of the curious place of Black children in American society, so often pushed to the margins, while also so central to the intellectual, social, political, and economic projects of the nation. And there is the burden Black children carry as the representatives of a raced childhood. This last issue is particularly tricky for historians: how do we study a group called the Black child while taking seriously the shifting and contingent nature of race? This question suggests that Black childhood must always be examined in the context of larger issues of race and childhood. If we are to know Black childhood we must also understand the process by which all children come to know and reproduce race.

A quick browse of any bookstore reveals that educators, sociologists, psychologists and journalists rather than historians write the bulk of scholarly books specifically about African American children. Despite this imbalance, the broad narratives of American childhood increasingly include Black children, as historians emphasize the diversity of childhood experience. Books like Priscilla Clement's *Growing Pains: Children in the Industrial Age, 1850-1890* (1997), David McLeod's *The Age of the Child: Children in America, 1890-1912* (1998), Jacqueline Reinier's *From Virtue to Character: American Childhood, 1775-1850* (1996), and Elliott West's *Growing Up in Twentieth Century America* (1996) include African American children's experiences of family, labor, education, and play. Joseph Illick takes this narrative of diversity as his central organizing theme in his recent book *American Childhoods* (2002), dividing his chapters along lines of race, class, and space. This emphasis on diversity of childhood is not entirely new; Robert Bremner's *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History* (1970) includes documents on a wide range of African American child experiences including slave and free black children, family, education, youth movements, and delinquency theory. Bremner's collection shares with more recent monographs a struggle for balance, exploring both the special burdens of black children and the shared childhood experiences of labor, education, familial affection.

Children found a place in the expanding field of African American history in the 1970s, in response to both the theories and methods of social history and the broad political and social concerns of the times. Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (1976), made these latter connections most transparent, stating in the book's introduction that it was intended in part as a response to Daniel P. Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965). In the years before Gutman's book, historians had already begun to

write about slave children and families in an attempt to understand the lives slaves lived. Chapters on slave children appear in Eugene Genovese's *Roll Jordan Roll* (1972), George Rawick's *From Sundown to Sunup* (1972), and John Blassingame's *The Slave Community* (1972), to name just a few. This scholarship points to the dual experience of slave children, on one hand chattel, laborers even from birth, without the legal sanction of family, denied the education and protection of the petted sentimental child, and on the other hand, beloved members of families and communities who did their best to protect and educate, who often retained sentimental attachments despite separations by death or selling.

Wilma King's *Stolen Childhood* (1995) carries forward the theme of familial affection, while also describing enslavement of the young as a much harsher experience than that seen in earlier historical work. The analysis in King's work, as well as in Marie Schwartz's in *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (2000), is particularly useful for historians of childhood, because these authors pay such close attention to the meaning of childhood. As they examine whether slavery and childhood are concepts that can be reconciled, they ask valuable questions about what childhood is. Also of interest are David Wiggins' article "The Play of Slave Children in the Plantation Communities of the Old South, 1820-1860" in *Growing Up in America: Children in Historical Perspective* (1985) and Peter Bardaglio, "The Children of Jubilee: African American Childhood in Wartime," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (1992).

Mary Niall Mitchell's article "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So It Seemed," *American Quarterly* (September 2002) also deals with slave children; however Mitchell takes the white-looking slave child as a lens to examine the reproduction of race. Mitchell is careful not to take race as a given; instead she tracks the production of race through children. Little historical work exists about childhood as a site of making race, which makes Mitchell's forthcoming "Raising Freedom's Child" particularly anticipated. Although separated by time and space, Shawn Michelle Smith's work shares with Mitchell an emphasis on visual culture and the production of race in *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (1999).

While historians of the United States have studied the experiences of slave children and families, we have less work of the kind done by Hugh Cunningham in *Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood Since the Seventeenth Century* (1991). Cunningham explores the intersection between ideas of slavery, child labor, humanitarian sentiment, and their effect on debates over child labor.

After the destruction of slavery, childhood for former slaves retained features of both affection and deprivation. Leon Litwack's *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (1979) shares with studies by historians of an slavery attention to the agency of slaves and the struggle to define the nature of freedom. The records of the Freedman's Bureau and the extensive work of the Freedmen and Southern Society Project (<http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/>) have provided a wealth of documents that map the struggles of freed families to reunite. The selection of documents in *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African American Kinship in the Civil War Era* (1997), edited by Ira Berlin and Leslie Rowland provides a good introduction to the issues that have shaped the field. Julie Saville's, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborers in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (1994), examines the role of kinship and family

strategy in the post-war struggle over labor. The battles waged by freed parents to keep their children out of the hands of their former enslavers are examined in Barry A. Crouch's "'To Enslave the Rising Generation': The Freedmen's Bureau and the Texas Black Code," in *The Freedman's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations* (1999) and Rebecca Scott's, "The Battle Over the Child: Child Apprenticeship and the Freedmen's Bureau in North Carolina," *Prologue* (1978). The history of black family strategy in slavery and freedom continues to be one of the strongest areas of study of black children, with such recent books as Elizabeth Ann Regosin's *Freedom's Promise: Ex-Slave Families and Citizenship in the Age of Emancipation* (2002), Wilma Dunaway's, *The African American Family in Slavery and Emancipation* (2003), Noralee Frankel's *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (2003), and Dylan Penningroth in *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (2003).

With the end of Reconstruction, historians have examined the lives of African American children less systematically. Women's history is one area of study that crosses over into the study of children. In work like Tera Hunter's, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After The Civil War* and Jacqueline Jones' *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (1985), scholars address children as part of a broader focus on women and labor. Histories of reform are another area where race and childhood appear, including Linda Gordon's *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (1994), Anne Knupfer's *Toward a Tenderer Humanity and a Nobler Womanhood : African American Women's Clubs in Turn -of-the-Century* (1996) and Elizabeth Lasch Quinn's *Black Neighbors: Race and the Limits of Reform in the American Settlement House Movement, 1890-1945* (1993). Shelley Sallee's recent *The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South* (2004) examines the role of race and racism in the push for child labor reform.

In his essay, "'We Are Not What We Seem': The Politics and Pleasures of Community" in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (1994), Robin Kelley calls for more attention to child socialization as a site of black working class formation. While Kelly focuses primarily on the urban south in the 1930s and 1940s, the questions he asks are broadly useful for the historical study of race and childhood. And certainly this project of race-making is not limited to African American children. Jennifer Lynn Ritterhouse's forthcoming "Learning Race: Racial Etiquette and the Socialization of Children in the Jim Crow South" will offer further study of this process. Two recent collections of oral histories that also point to the rich possibilities for this type of research are, *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South* edited by William Henry Chafe (2001) and Timuel Black's *Bridges of Memory: Chicago's First Wave of Black Migration* (2003).

The power of contemporary images that connect black children with urban poverty and violence make urban history an important area for historians. Carl Husemoller Nightingale's *On the Edge: A History of Poor Black Children and their American Dreams* (1993), is one of the few books specifically devoted to this subject. Husemoller combines history and recent ethnography in an attempt to put the lives of children in historical perspective. Several scholars who study urban migration in the twentieth century have also examined the lives black children. James Grossman's *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* includes a

chapter that focuses on migrant children and schooling, while Cheryl Lynn Greenburg's "*Or Does It Explode?*" *Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (1991) looks at children in the context of family strategy and institutional projects. From a different perspective *Children, Race, and Power: Kenneth and Mamie Clark's Northside Center* (1996) by Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner traces both the ideas and philanthropic efforts that shaped the study of black children. The attention paid to Kenneth Clark's work in *Brown v. Board* makes this study particularly intriguing. While not exclusively about children, Daryl Michael Scott's, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996* (1997), also includes an examination of research and analysis by social scientists about black children and youth.

Challenging images that present Black youth as the perpetrators of violence are two books for a more popular audience that explore the historical relationship between African American children and racial violence. James Goodman's *Stories of Scottsboro* (1994) examines both the national dialogue about the Scottsboro case and the experiences of the accused youths. Mamie Till-Mobley's, *Death of Innocence: the Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America* (2003) is account of the murder of Emmett Till by his mother. Both books illustrate the strategies used by African Americans communities to bring these stories before the world, and to use black youth victims as a symbol of the horror of America's racial regime.

A forthcoming work that will respond to the need for a narrative history of African American children is Wilma King's "Africa's Progeny: Black Children in American History, 1600-2000." That King's book will be the first of its kind suggests there is much work left to be done as we write the history of African American children. Perhaps sadly, the question "How does it feel to be a problem?" can still provide a framework for this work. As historians we cannot control the lives children have lived, but we do have some measure of control over the definition of the "problem." Reworking the problem means challenging a seemingly self-evident world of race with the rich, complex and contrary experience of lives lived.

## Websightings: Brown v. Board of Education

### E. Wayne Carp

The *Brown v. Board of Education* **Digital Archive**, maintained by the University of Michigan Library (at [www.lib.umich.edu/exhibits/brownarchive/index.html](http://www.lib.umich.edu/exhibits/brownarchive/index.html)), is a comprehensive website containing both national and local primary sources, bibliographies, and other web pages relevant to the 1954 Supreme Court case that struck down state-sponsored racial desegregation in America's public schools. Under the heading of "Content," there are eight subject pages. The first, "Court Cases," contains the complete text of twenty-six Supreme Court cases, including the oral arguments, in chronological order from *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) through *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), to *Jennifer Gratz v. Lee Bollinger* (2003). The second and third subject pages, "Ann Arbor and Public School Integration" and "Ann Arbor and Michigan Statistics," contain archival primary sources and census data that look at the desegregation of the Ann Arbor Public School District. The fourth, "Resegregation Issues," investigates recent trends in American schools; the fifth, "Image Gallery," contains photographic images from the *Charlotte Observer* (N.C.) showing efforts to desegregate that city's Central High School in September 1957; the sixth, "Bibliography," consists of an extensive bibliography of books, newspaper stories, videos, and Web pages; the seventh, "Oral Arguments of Brown," contains the only the oral argument from Brown II; and the eighth subject page, "Oral Histories," consists of five oral histories from members of the University of Michigan community who lived through the period. The site also has a heading entitled "Sites of Interest," under which are listed twenty-seven additional websites treating *Brown*. Many of these have been created specifically to celebrate the statute's fiftieth anniversary, such as Brown University's <http://www.brownat50.org/>, or to mark an event related to *Brown*, such as Little Rock High School's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary <http://www.centralhigh57.org/>.

The site is easy to use, and for one not familiar with the subject, informative. The primary source material on the desegregation of the Ann Arbor school system is a valuable contribution to historical knowledge and ideal for the classroom. Nevertheless, except for the page containing the Supreme Court cases, there is not much depth to the site. There are only thirty photographic images; for additional photos one must have password permission from the University of Michigan. The five oral histories are short. The "Oral Arguments of Brown" subject page repeats data that can be also found on the "Court Cases" subject page.

**Brown v. Board of Education 50th Anniversary Bibliography** (at <http://www.arl.org/diversity/naacp.html>) is sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It offers an extensive bibliography for both researchers and teachers. It has a "Table of Contents" with seven chapters. Chapter one is headed "Library of Congress Subject Headings" for *Brown v. Board of Education* cases. There are twenty-nine different Library of Congress subject headings, none of which are *Brown v. Board of Education*. (The closest is "Topeka (Kan.). Board of Education-Trials, litigation, etc."). The second chapter, "Manuscript Resources," contains the names and locations of twelve manuscript collections of important individuals involved in *Brown*, such as Earl Warren, Felix Frankfurter, Thurgood Marshall, and prominent institutions, such as the NAACP. Chapter three, entitled "Images Documenting the Legal Battle to Dismantle School Desegregation in the US," identifies four photo collections from the Library of Congress:

the NAACP Photo Collection, the *New York World-Telegram and Sun* Newspaper Photograph Collection, the *U.S. News and World Report* Magazine Photograph Collection, and the Kenneth B. Clark Unprocessed Collection. Examples of specific images are provided from each of the collections. Chapter four, "Films & Video," contains an annotated list of eleven films ranging from part of a PBS four-part series on American public education (*School: The Story of American Public Education - Episode 3: Separate and Unequal, 1950-1980* (2001) [55 min.] to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1986), a ten-minute film narrated by Ramsey Clark, aimed at high school audiences. Chapter five, "Oral Histories," identifies two collections: *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* located in the Kansas State Historical Society, and the Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection, located at Howard University.

Chapter six, "Resources for Educators" is divided into six additional subject pages. The first subject page of chapter six, "Books for Young Adults," provides an annotated list of thirteen books for young adults. Some of the books are clearly labeled for children age 7-10 and 9-12. Subject page two, "Books for Educators," contains an annotated list of seventeen books on *Brown*, almost half of which are designed for students in grades 6-12. Subject page three, "Articles for Educators," contains five interpretative articles on *Brown* by influential civil rights leaders looking back at the case at eighteen, twenty, twenty-five, and forty years. Subject page four, "Magazine Special Issues for Educators," names three magazines, *The Brown Quarterly*, *Cobblestone*, and *Footsteps*, devoted to the *Brown* case. Subject page five, "Internet Sites for Educators," contains forty annotated websites divided between the subjects of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Civil Rights. They contain primary sources, legal cases, and oral histories; unfortunately a number of the sites were not functioning. Subject page six, "Lesson Plans and Classroom Activities for Educators," contains twenty annotated websites of which 25 percent failed to function; the vast majority are designed for K-12 students, not for educators. Chapter seven, "ARL Libraries with Special Collections for Civil Rights," identifies thirteen depositories (eleven university libraries, the Library of Congress, and the New York Public Library) containing manuscript sources on the civil rights movement that are accessible online.