ABSTRACT

REACTIONS TO BROWN V. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

By Leigh S. Andrews

This thesis demonstrates the wide array of responses to the Brown decision by examining newspaper articles from four different cities in the South. These cities are: St. Louis, Missouri (St. Louis Times-Dispatch), Louisville Kentucky (Louisville Courier-Journal), Little Rock, Arkansas (Arkansas Gazette), and Atlanta, Georgia (Atlanta Constitution). The Brown ruling is used as window to explore the subtle distinctions that make each city unique within itself. This thesis uses the reactions present in the newspaper articles to compare and contract the different reactions of the people in each city. In order to analyze the social and cultural differences imbedded within the South as a whole. This paper begins when the Brown decision was handed down on May 17, 1954 and concludes three years later in September of 1957, when President Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock to escort nine students into Central High School.
REACTIONS TO BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

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The racially charged issue of school segregation has sharply divided Americans since long before the Civil War. Many people have assumed that the North took one stand on this issue and the South another. This belief erroneously presumes that Americans within specific states, counties, and cities held common beliefs, always based on region and race, about this sensitive issue. In order to demonstrate the multiplicity of values and ideas that existed across the United States regarding race relations this paper will use the multiple responses of white southerners to Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education decision to reveal some of the different ideas that coexisted within the white South. This study of four southern cities during the period immediately following the Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown decision argues that white southern reactions to the dismantling of legalized segregation involved a range of responses, from short term acquiescence to gradual accommodation to massive resistance.

The Supreme Court’s 1954 landmark decision Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education transformed legal segregation throughout the country. This case was the consolidation of five separate cases, each from different parts of the country. The Court consolidated the five cases from Delaware, the District of Columbia, Kansas, South Carolina and Virginia because as Chief Justice Earl Warren stated, each, “are premised on different facts and different local conditions, but a common legal question justifies their consideration together.”

Thurgood Marshall, attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and future Supreme Court Justice, served as legal counsel for the plaintiffs. Marshall argued that “The question is whether a nation founded on the proposition that ‘all men are created equal’ is honoring its commitments to grant ‘due process of law’ and ‘the equal protection of the laws’ to all within its borders when it or one of its constituents states, confers or denies benefits on the basis of color or race.”

Since the 1954 decision many historians have studied the Brown ruling and the subsequent desegregation of the public schools throughout the nation. Traditionally works written on this subject have fallen into two categories: in the first historians have tracked the desegregation process in an individual city over a period of approximately twenty to thirty years. This genre often examines the hardship and adversity of an individual city as it struggled to

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comply with the *Brown* ruling. An example of works written about each of the cities examined in this study is included at the outset of each chapter. The second category of literature analyzes the general problems the entire nation faced in dealing with school desegregation. Prior to the fiftieth anniversary of the *Brown* decision in 2004, a plethora of scholarly works poured from American presses. Scholars looked to examine the impact and influence of the *Brown* decision on American society. Among these works were Peter Iron’s *Jim Crow’s Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision*, Michael Klarman’s *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle of Racial Equality* and Charles Ogletree’s *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of the Brown v. Board of Education.*³ Each of these new works provides an important framework for understanding the history of decision and the wide ranging effects of the case on American society. Peter Irons’ book begins with the history of the Jim Crow system in the South, tracing the history of racial segregation. Irons argues that present day public education has become “resegregated.” Alarmingly, he contends that that because of a backlash of conservatism the current educational system in the US is even more segregated than it was before the *Brown* ruling. Michael Klarman, professor of law at the University of Virginia, focuses his work on issues of constitutional law and the impact of Supreme Court decisions. The book examines the intersection of law and politics. Klarman argues that the *Brown* decision more than any other aspect of the Civil Rights Movement brought the issue of racial equality to national attention. He stresses that more than any other event of the Civil Rights Movement, Brown had the most impact. Charles Ogletree’s *All Deliberate Speed* examines the affects of the Brown decision through his personal experiences as an African-American, growing up in a post-*Brown* world. Ogletree argues that the ruling ultimately failed to adequately desegregate public education because the phrase “all deliberate speed” gave white southerners years to resist integration.

This thesis will take a unique approach to examining school desegregation. Understanding that the South is made up of several regions that differ culturally, demographically and economically this paper will focus on four different communities in the South: St. Louis, Missouri, Louisville, Kentucky, Little Rock Arkansas and Atlanta, Georgia. St.

Louis and Louisville will represent the Border States or the upper South and Atlanta and Little Rock will represent the Lower South. Each of these cities will be compared and contrasted in order to showcase the differences that each of these societies embodied. By taking a snapshot of the reactions to Brown in different cities in the period of three years immediately following the decision, this thesis creates a new paradigm for understanding the range of reactions that American southerners had to the news that racial segregation would no longer be condoned within the United States.

In order to demonstrate the wide array of responses to the Brown ruling I examine newspaper articles from the four cities under investigation. The newspapers will be used as a lens through which we may determine how specific communities reacted to the Brown decision. Using newspapers this thesis will uncover the subtle distinctions that made the South less monolithic in its response to desegregation. In order to obtain a more complete reaction I will examine and compare not only reporting articles, but editorials and letters to the editor as well. Often the placement of articles within a newspaper or even the absence of certain news can be important in determining popular reaction. The newspapers in each of these cities played an important role in not only communicating and gauging public reaction, but also in shaping it. Citizens looked to the local newspaper to understand what changes were taking place and how their elected officials were dealing with the situation.

In each city there are a number of newspapers that could be studied. The newspapers chosen for this project were the most prominent and widely circulated papers written for white audiences in these four cities at the time. When examining St. Louis I will look at the St. Louis Times-Dispatch; in Louisville the Louisville Courier-Journal is examined. The newspaper under investigation in Little Rock is the Arkansas Gazette and in Atlanta, the Atlanta Constitution is the most prominent paper. Through these four newspapers I will compare and contrast the different reactions of white southerners in each region. Further, I will use this information to determine the subtle differences that exist within the South as a whole.

The struggle for racial and ethnic integration still exists in 2005 in some areas of the country. Therefore, it would be impossible to track each of these areas until they achieved the goals set forth by the Brown decision. Consequently, this thesis will monitor development in these areas for just over three years, beginning when the Brown decision was handed down on May 17, 1954, and concluding three years later, in September 1957, when President Eisenhower
sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to escort nine children into Central High School. Each newspaper will be used to track the progress of each these cities as well as any attempts to sidestep or evade the law during these three years. The focus of this paper will be on the initial reaction of the aforementioned cities to the Brown decision. Closely examining these four cities during this short period of time will provide a better understanding of the differences that defined of each area. This work will look deeply into local reactions to the turmoil and distress that plagued the South as whole during this time, focusing on local reactions to a national decision, one that held the promise of dramatic social transformation.

Obviously, during this short time span none of these cities became fully integrated. The focus of this paper will be on the progression of these cities as they began to deal with the inevitable changes taking place. These four cities: St. Louis, Louisville, Little Rock and Atlanta will provide an in-depth picture of some of the subtle social and cultural differences embedded within the South. The first three years after the Brown decision proved crucial in terms of shaping the attitudes and positions of each community in the South. However, each community within the South took a different approach in responding to Brown. This thesis will center on initial reactions to the decision in four representative cities, as well as the eventual advancements made by these communities towards the goals set forth by the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court ruled on two separate aspects of the Brown case on two distinct occasions, both within the purview of this study. In the first decision, in 1954, the Court found segregation in public schools to be in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed all citizens the right of equal protection under the law. Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the unanimous opinion striking down the previously held doctrine of “separate but equal” on May 17th. He stated, “We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

This decision reversed the 1896 Supreme Court ruling of “separate but equal” in Plessy v. Ferguson. The Plessy ruling declared segregation to be legal in public transportation provided that the facilities maintained equal stature. Justice Henry Billings Brown, who wrote the majority opinion, stated, “The object of the [14th] Amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have

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been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color...”

Justice John Marshall Harlen wrote the dissenting opinion stating that, “Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.”

This ruling formed the basis of the 1899 decision, *Cummins v. The County Board of Education*, which applied the *Plessy* decision to public schools. At the time of the *Brown* ruling, the seventeen southern states and the District of Columbia mandated segregation of their public schools. Four other states operated on a system of permissive segregation. Of those states, Kansas, New Mexico, and Arizona exercised this right. Wyoming never put this system of segregated public schools into practice although it had the power to do so. The first *Brown* ruling deemed school segregation based solely on race to be unconstitutional. The majority of states affected by the decision believed this ruling to be a violation of states’ rights. However, the question of when and how to desegregate the schools remained unanswered for over a year. On May 31, 1955, the Supreme Court issued the second *Brown* ruling, declaring that states should move “with all deliberate speed.” Justice Warren wrote the unanimous opinion stating, “The courts will require that the defendants make a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance with our May 17, 1954, ruling. Once such a start has been made the courts may find that additional time is necessary to carry out the ruling in an effective manner.” Some southern officials reacted to this decision with defiance similar to that exhibited after the first *Brown* ruling. However, for the most part the South seemed pleased with the ruling.

On the whole, most southerners appeared to be relieved that the court rejected the proposal of a compliance date by which the states would be required to have their public schools desegregated. The Court left room for individual states and counties to work towards full integration within their own time frames. The reaction to the *Brown* decision varied greatly throughout the country, but the differences of opinion regarding this landmark decision were most visible throughout the South. The *Brown* ruling directly affected twenty-one states. Eventually every state and county in the country would be faced with questions of school integration. Nevertheless, in 1954, there were only twenty-one states legally forced to deal with the issue immediately and integrate their public schools “with all deliberate speed.”

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6 Ibid.
within these states differed drastically; thus they produced a wide variety of reactions in response to the *Brown* decision. Together St. Louis, Louisville, Little Rock and Atlanta illustrate the wide spectrum of reactions, from a calm and tempered reaction in St. Louis to the violent outcry of Atlanta.

**Saint Louis, Missouri**

In each of the cities examined in this thesis, a number of historians have previously analyzed the desegregation process that each city underwent. While my work is different in the sense that it looks at a short period of time and it compares the reaction of four different cities, it is important to recognize the research that has already been done in each of these cities. In St. Louis, Daniel Monti’s *A Semblance of Justice: St. Louis School Desegregation and Order in Urban America* explores the desegregation process in St. Louis and how it affected African American students.⁹ Monti, a sociologist, concludes that the integration process in St. Louis ultimately failed because African American students were not provided educational equality or a greater sense of self-esteem. Monti charges the school administration and the school board are to blame because they placed a greater value on maintaining order than actually achieving real desegregation.

In order to better understand the reactions presented in each four newspapers examined in this thesis it is important to know the history of each paper and who was in control during the period being analyzed. In St. Louis the prominent newspaper was the *Post-Dispatch*. Joseph Pulitzer Sr., the namesake of the Pulitzer Prize, bought the *St. Louis Post* and the *St. Louis Evening Dispatch* in 1872 and then merged them together. Pulitzer Sr., born in Hungary fought for the Union during the Civil War. Considered a liberal reformer, he later served in both the Missouri legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives. As owner and publisher of the *Post-Dispatch* he believed that a newspaper must, “actively seek to right injustices.”¹⁰ In 1931, his son Joseph Pulitzer, II took control of the paper and in after his death in 1955 Joseph Pulitzer, III controlled the publication. Under Pulitzer II and Pulitzer III the Post-Dispatch continued to produce and editorial page that was known for its “independent liberalism.”¹¹ According to

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¹¹ Ibid.
William H. Freivogel, a writer for the *Post-Dispatch*, the *Brown* decision had a major impact on the editorial staff of the paper. Before the Brown ruling, the paper often avoided writing about school integration for fear it would do the cause “more harm than good.” The paper did support civil rights and criticized, “poll taxes, lynching and discrimination against black artists.” After the Brown decision the editorial staff publicly supported the Supreme Court ruling.  

Immediately following the first *Brown* ruling, the City of St. Louis, like many other cities in Border States, reacted calmly, ready to make short term acquiescence and claiming to be poised to make the necessary changes required to comply with the ruling of the Supreme Court. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that city officials, including Superintendent of Instruction Philip Hickey, were proceeding with plans to end segregation in the St. Louis public schools. Hickey commented that the public schools could be integrated as early as the fall of 1954, if necessary, because the Board of Education had already prepared a redistricting plan in anticipation of the ruling. This new plan would allow all students to attend the school closest to their homes regardless of their race. City officials claimed to have known the ruling was coming and as the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction, William N. Sellman stated, “We knew we had to be prepared.” Furthermore, Sellman commented that St. Louis began preparing for the end of school segregation, “seven years ago when the Board of Education hired Dr. Hilda Taba, then a specialist in inter-group education at the University of Chicago, as a consultant.”

It is significant to note that the days following the decision the *Post-Dispatch* calmly reported on the ruling outlining the decision and reporting on the City’s plan to comply with the ruling. In all of the articles printed and of all of the public officials who commented, not once was there a plea for citizens to remain calm or avoid violence. It seems as if this type of plea was unnecessary in St. Louis. City officials did seem to fear public outrage and therefore did not feel the need to remind their constituents to abide by the law of the land. What is more, on both May 17 and May 18, 1954, the *Post-Dispatch* ran front page articles that described the city’s plan to integrate that were strategically located next to articles reporting on other states’ pledges to maintain the institution of segregation. The placement of these articles highlighted how
different the reactions where throughout the South. The most notable out-of-state reaction covered by the *Post-Dispatch* came from Georgia, where the decision was the most violently opposed. ¹⁷ Thus, from the very start the contrast between these two areas was quite apparent.

In the wake of the Court’s ruling, many governors from the Deep South scrambled to make alliances with one another in an attempt to preserve their way of life. However, Governor Phil Donnelly of Missouri stated clearly that the state of Missouri would obey the ruling of the Court and desegregate its public schools. Donnelly cited the commitment of his people to maintain a law-abiding society as the top priority. Donnelly stated, “The citizens of Missouri are law-abiding people…and I am confident that they will always endeavor to uphold the Constitution of the United States which is the supreme law of the land.”¹⁸ Both state officials of Missouri and city officials of St. Louis appeared to be confident that they would not encounter strong opposition or many difficulties complying with the Court’s ruling. The *Post-Dispatch* clearly supported the Court’s ruling and the reactions of both the city and state leaders.

The letters to the editor from this time period reflect a similar attitude. In general, the people of St. Louis appear to praise the decision of the Supreme Court, accepting the decision wholeheartedly.¹⁹ The letters to the editor of the *Post-Dispatch* portrayed a city ready to end segregation in the public schools by the upcoming school year. One St. Louis citizen stated,

> Ready acceptance in St. Louis is indicated by the reception of the decision here. Much to its credit, the Board of Education has anticipated the results and has in hand plans for developing a single school system. It can be hoped that this program is already far enough along on paper that it can be completely worked out and put into effect next September. Three months is a substantial period.²⁰

This letter fully embodied the sentiment expressed in the *Post-Dispatch* directly following the Court’s decision. The citizens of St. Louis appeared to have anticipated this decision for some time. Thus, they had already adjusted to the idea of integrated schools and

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²⁰ “Acceptance in St. Louis and Missouri.”
were ready to put the Supreme Court’s ruling into practice.

The *Post-Dispatch* painted a unique picture of integration when compared to other regions dealing with the process of integration. The people of St. Louis and other Border States had already developed plans to end segregation before the Court’s ruling. The citizens of St. Louis believed they were ready to start desegregating their school system even before the testimony in the second *Brown* case had been heard.

Directly following the first *Brown* ruling, the reaction of the city of St. Louis was one of optimism. Yet, in all the articles, editorials, and letters to the editor printed on this topic remarkably few reactions from within the African-American community appeared.\(^\text{21}\) Only once, when reporting the NAACP’s strong approval of the decision, did the *Post-Dispatch* differentiate between the responses of whites and African Americans.\(^\text{22}\) It is apparent that the *Post-Dispatch* can be seen as a tool to sway the attitudes of the citizens of St. Louis. In this situation it was possible that the *Post-Dispatch* did not specifically cite the reactions of the African-American community because they did not believe there would be a separate reaction. It is likely that the paper assumed African Americans would have the same reaction as whites and thus, investigating the reactions of the African American community was not seen as pertinent.

Prior to the Supreme Court’s ruling the St. Louis public school system had been legally segregated since 1865 when the state constitution required that, “Separate free public schools are required for white and Negro children.”\(^\text{23}\) Furthermore from 1865 to 1952 seven school segregation laws and five miscegenation statutes had been passed in the state of Missouri.\(^\text{24}\) In 1949 however, the state approved a measure that allowed African Americans to take classes at the University of Missouri that were not offered at the African American school, Lincoln University.\(^\text{25}\) The day the *Brown* decision was handed down the *Post-Dispatch* reported that the City of St. Louis had been running a dual school system due to the mandate of the 1945 Missouri Constitution that stated, “Separate schools shall be provided for white and colored children, except in cases otherwise provided by law.”\(^\text{26}\) Furthermore, the paper reported that, “This has


\(^{22}\) Ibid.


\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) “Integration Also Being Planned for Harris and Stowe Colleges: Hickey Says Redistricting Plan Has Been Drafted and Can be Put in Effect Next Fall if Required,” *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 May 1954, p1A.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.
been taken to mean that the State Legislature could provide integrated schools if it had wished to do so.”

What is more, the Catholic schools in St. Louis had been integrated since 1947. Both the city and state projected a calm reaction, claiming they had already developed a plan to begin the desegregation process. Yet, since 1945, state officials possessed the power to end school segregation and had chosen not to exercise it.

The relatively small number of African American students who needed to be integrated into the white school system accounted, in large measure, for the calm reaction among the white citizens of St. Louis. In 1954 the state of Missouri had a total enrollment of approximately 710,000, of whom 63,174 or roughly nine percent, of which were African American. St. Louis County had 3,338 African American students in 15 elementary schools, one junior high and two high schools. The percentage of African American students increased dramatically in the city public schools where 32,175 of the 91,511 of the students were African American.

Furthermore, the 25 African American city schools employed 860 African American teachers whose futures were now in “doubt.” The Post-Dispatch argued that the ruling endangered the jobs of thousands of African American teachers because many people believed that, “Negro teachers would not be allowed to teach non-segregated classes.” Thus, the integration of African American students and African American teachers were clearly two separate issues. St. Louis appeared to be on the cusp of integrating the former, yet was not prepared to deal with the possibility of integrating the latter. Thus, it seems that because the number of African Americans students who needed to be desegregated was relatively small the community was primed to integrate them into the predominantly white school system. However, the notion that white students would be taught by African Americans teachers appeared to be a much more contentious issue. This quite possibly reflected that the citizens of St. Louis were not as prepared to fully integrate as they claimed.

The positive possibility of financial saving offered another explanation for the calm

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 “NAACP Hails Ruling Against Segregation: Leaders Say States Can’t Sidestep It—Doubtful Georgia Can Put Over Plan,” The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 18 May 1954, p1A.
31 Ibid.
32 “Integration Also Being Planned for Harris and Stowe Colleges”, “Some States May Abolish Public Schools – Negro Teachers’ Future in Doubt”.
33 “Some States May Abolish Public Schools – Negro Teachers’ Future in Doubt.”
reaction among the people of St. Louis. The *Post-Dispatch* reported that the end of public school segregation in Missouri “could reduce current expenditures $1,150,000 a year, and could realize an additional $675,000 from sale of school buildings that would not be needed.”\(^{34}\) In sharp contrast maintaining segregation would cost $17,875,000 plus an additional annual expenditure of $750,000 to bring the African American schools up to the standard of the white schools.\(^{35}\)

The financial difference between operating dual school systems required under the “Separate but Equal” statute and integration was so great that without question it played a role in the decision in St. Louis to embrace the Court’s ruling.

At the start of the 1954-1955 school year, St. Louis began its integration process. Teacher’s colleges and special schools for the physically handicapped took the first step towards a desegregated school system. Racial education of the St. Louis public school teachers delayed the opening of school for two days in September 1954. Superintendent of Instruction Philip Hickey addressed the faculty and administration of several city schools emphasizing that the success of integration was dependent on teacher’s attitudes. Hickey stated, “If you assume an apprehensive, defeatist attitude in your home or among your closest friends, that attitude will reflect itself, perhaps unconsciously, in your classroom teachings. The attitudes of you, the teachers, in the classrooms, will determine the general trend of conduct in the entire school system.”\(^{36}\) This program concluded a process which had begun in 1946 and was designed to make the transition to integrated schools easier. Other steps taken in anticipation of desegregation were the formation of teachers’ study groups on the subject of interracial relations, the formation of an integrated city-wide student council and orchestra, and the establishment of integrated track meets.\(^{37}\)

On September 9, 1954, white and African American students attended classes together at Harris Teachers College and schools for the physically handicapped in St. Louis. The *Post-Dispatch* reported remarkably little about this milestone. The day integration began there was a single article on page 3A describing what changes would be taking place.\(^{38}\) Similarly, the next day, a single article on page 3A confirmed that the start of the integration process had indeed

\(^{34}\) “Integration Also Being Planned for Harris and Stowe Colleges.”

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) “Hickey Tells Teachers of Their Role in Successful Racial Integration,” *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 7 September 1954, p3A.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) “St. Louis Public Schools Open; Enrollment of 91,250 Likely,” *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 9 September 1954, p3A.
taken place the previous day in select schools.\textsuperscript{39} This article commented briefly that everything had gone according to plan and without incident. Further, in response to readers’ inquiries, the article described that students sat where they chose, as no seating arrangements had been provided for them.\textsuperscript{40} The title of this article, “83,632 Enroll First Day in St. Louis Public Schools: Number is Short of Estimate, More Expected Next Week—Partial Integration is Started,” coupled with the lack of space dedicated to this momentous step towards equal education illustrates the calm reaction found in the St. Louis.\textsuperscript{41} The tendency of the \textit{Post-Dispatch} to downplay the integration process reappeared throughout the three year time frame examined in this thesis. By September 1954, school integration was no longer front-page news in St. Louis. The city and its citizens had been planning the desegregation process for years and the fact that it had finally begun was less surprising than the low student enrollment. At the start of 1954-1955 school year, the \textit{Post-Dispatch} portrayed the people of St. Louis as understanding the integration process and supporting it in full. Following the first \textit{Brown} ruling most articles printed in the \textit{Post-Dispatch} concerning desegregation shed a positive light on the situation.

Letters to the editor of the \textit{Post-Dispatch} in September of 1954 conveyed similar attitudes towards the desegregation of the public schools. Two general issues surfaced through these letters. The first was an attempt to appeal to the older generation of St. Louis citizens.\textsuperscript{42} One unnamed writer stated,

\begin{quote}
It is the old folks who will have to make the most serious adjustment to new ways and new days. Racial prejudice, as many studies affirm, scarcely exists at all in young children. Only when the child approaches adulthood to the point of absorbing the attitudes of the senior generation does he sometimes pick up the prejudices which express itself in discrimination.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

These writers asserted that the children of St. Louis were fully capable of creating an open and integrated school system if their parents allowed them the opportunity. One letter writer argued that “youngsters generally often seem more ready than their parents to accept one another for what they are and without prejudice.”\textsuperscript{44} These letters claimed that prejudice and discrimination

\begin{footnotes}
\item[39] “83,632 Enroll First Day in St. Louis Public Schools: Number is Short of Estimate, More Expected Next Week—Partial Integration is Started,” \textit{The St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, 10 September 1954, p3A.
\item[40] Ibid.
\item[41] Ibid.
\item[43] “Missouri Should Lead.”
\item[44] “A Halfback Walks to School.”
\end{footnotes}
were learned behaviors. Further, the writers made it clear that if parents allowed their children to approach integration with open minds, racist and discriminatory attitudes would never have an opportunity to develop in their youth. A second major theme in letters from this period was that the state of Missouri should set an example for the rest of the segregated states. One writer urged that, “Missouri can lead all the segregation states in compliance with the Supreme Court decision, as Missouri should.”\textsuperscript{45} The notion that the state of Missouri and in particular the city of St. Louis were well prepared to take the lead in attaining the goals set forth by the Supreme Court constantly reappeared in the \textit{Post-Dispatch}.

The second phase in the St. Louis school integration process commenced on February 2, 1955. A short article on page 3A on February 3, 1955, reported that the first classes conducted in integrated classrooms had taken place in the St. Louis high schools.\textsuperscript{46} Integration took place peacefully and without any disturbance. A school official stated, “I cannot speak highly enough of the manner in which our high school boys and girls of both races have accepted this step.”\textsuperscript{47} The primary focus of this article, however was the impact desegregation had on the once highly overcrowded black schools. Previously, St. Louis sent its African American students to one of two high schools. Thus, each district was forced to cover half of the city, producing extremely overcrowded schools. Principal W. G. Mosley stated, “For the first time, we have room to turn around in.”\textsuperscript{48} As a side note, the article mentioned that the adult education program also began conducting integrated classes. Thus, even before the second \textit{Brown} ruling had been announced and the timetable for integration established the St. Louis public schools had taken an active step towards desegregation.

In May 1955, the announcement of the second \textit{Brown} ruling was neither hailed nor held in contempt by the people of St. Louis. If fact, the decision received little press in the \textit{Post-Dispatch}. The populace of St. Louis appeared to be unable to predict how the ruling would affect the nation as a whole. The \textit{Post-Dispatch} reported: “Reaction to the decision included predictions in some quarters that desegregation throughout the country would proceed without delay and in others that segregated schools would be maintained for generations.”\textsuperscript{49} The letters

\begin{flushleft}45 “Missouri Should Lead.”
46 “First classes on Integrated Basis Meet in High Schools: Overcrowding is Eased at Sumner, Vashon—‘Room to Turn Around,’ Principle Asserts,” \textit{The St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, 3 February 1955, p3A.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Edward Woods, “High Court Rule on Segregation May Stir Years of Litigation,” \textit{The St. Louis Post-Dispatch}, 1\end{flushleft}
to the editor reflected the citizens’ uncertainty of the effect of the ruling on the segregated states, while maintaining that St. Louis and the state of Missouri should continue to lead the way in the battle for integration.50 One writer charged that the Supreme Court “[h]as complicated the matter.”51 This writer believed that the decision would probably fail to enforce the Court’s previous ruling in the Deep South, allowing the proponents of segregation leeway. Another writer claimed that the ruling reinforced the Court’s commitment to end school segregation as soon as possible. The writer stated, “Missouri school officials it seems to us, have been given a mandate by the Supreme Court to end segregation within the next year or so.”52

The second Brown ruling was received with a level of uncertainty in St. Louis because they had already begun to desegregate their school system. The Court did not set a clear date by which the school had to be desegregated. Instead it rendered a relatively vague ruling that communities needed to move “with all deliberate speed.” Cities throughout the nation debated the meaning of this phrase, however in a community in which the integration process was well underway it seemed particularly perplexing. In the end the ruling was perceived as a green light to finish the process it had begun. Similar to the approach taken with the first ruling the articles printed in the Post-Dispatch generally conveyed the belief that integration was not just the lawful thing to do, but the right one as well.

The next step in the desegregation process took place at the start of the 1955-1956 school year. On September 8, 1955, the Post-Dispatch printed a short article on page 3A reporting that integration had been carried out in the elementary schools on the previous day.53 This step completed the 12-month desegregation plan. The article commented that only the upper grades of the technical high schools still remained segregated. Reportedly the elementary school districts had been rearranged and new boundaries had been drawn to help the integration process. Further, the article reported that even with a sharp increase in elementary school enrollment, the average class size had been reduced around the city. Throughout the desegregation process in St. Louis, the Post-Dispatch ran short articles buried within the paper on the progress being made. For the most part these articles focused on classroom statistics: class size, number of new

June 1955, p1A.
50 “The Second Decision,” The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1 June 1955, p2C; “Mandate for Missouri Schools,” The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 2 June 1955, p2B; Doris Fleeson, “Ruling on Race Issue Pleases Politicians,” The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1 June 1955, p1C.
51 “The Second Decision.”
52 “Mandate for Missouri Schools.”
53 “Public Schools Open, Rolls Rise,” The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 8 September 1955, p3A.
teachers, and new cost estimates. Information pertaining to the racial integration process was limited. For the most part the articles stated what schools had been integrated and how they had redrawn the district lines. By September 1955, the *Post-Dispatch* claimed that St. Louis was completely integrated aside from the technical high schools.

A year later, at the start of the 1956-1957 school year, the *Post-Dispatch* articles about the St. Louis school system did not mention integration, but instead focused on class size and bus costs. During this period, however the *Post-Dispatch* shifted its gaze beyond the city of St. Louis and the state of Missouri. Several articles reported violent outbreaks in other southern cities that were attempting to gradually desegregate their public schools. Cities in the states of Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina all began the process of gradual integration at the start of the 1956-1957 school year. It is useful to note that the *Post-Dispatch* devoted little time and space to each of these stories reporting only the basic facts of each incident without any analysis and further continuing the trend of bumping integration news to the back of the paper. Almost as if the *Post-Dispatch* needed to report the news but still wanted to dismiss the issue as quickly as possible to avoid the ongoing integration debate that was taking place in other cities.

Given the lack of news on integration in the *Post-Dispatch*, it can be presumed that the people of St. Louis believed the integration process to be over in their city. The 12-month plan had been carried out without incident and thus, their goal had been achieved. Whether or not this line of thinking was correct, it is certain that the city of St. Louis achieved the goals set forth by the Supreme Court and carried them out more quickly and efficiently than other segregated cities.

Throughout the next year, the *Post-Dispatch* did not run any major stories pertaining to the integration of the city’s public schools. In September 1957, the *Post-Dispatch*, like other papers across the country, devoted its attention to the integration crisis in Little Rock. At the start of the 1957-1958 school year, Little Rock attempted to begin a gradual process of school integration beginning at Central High School. Prior to the start of the school year, the Federal

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Court ordered the process to begin, and the school board set the plan in motion. The day before school was scheduled to reopen, Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas called out the Arkansas National Guard and refused to allow African Americans into the school building. Whereupon, President Eisenhower sent in the national guard to integrate Central High School. The Post-Dispatch did not, however, use this event as an opportunity to reevaluate the integration process in St. Louis. School integration, it seemed to the people of St. Louis school was a thing of the past. The citizens of St. Louis were left with a sense of pride that they had already achieved integrated schools, while other cities were just beginning the process. But, it seems this was not exactly the case. In 1983 Justice Gerald W. Heaney of the Eighth Circuit Court ordered bussing in the city of St. Louis. Thirteen thousand African American students from the inner city were bussed out to suburban schools in an attempt to achieve more than token integration that was accomplished during the scope of this study.

For the first three years after the Brown ruling, the people of St. Louis saw themselves as a model for the rest of the states struggling with segregation. The Post-Dispatch constantly reported that each step in the integration process had been carried out quickly, effectively, and without disturbance. By September of 1957 the citizens of St. Louis and the Post-Dispatch viewed the situation to be over. The focus of their attention shifted to the struggles going on in the other states battling with the issue of desegregation.

Louisville, Kentucky

George C. Wright’s book A History of Blacks in Kentucky: In Pursuit of Equality, 1890-1980 provides an overview of the history of race relations in Kentucky. Wright examines the effects of the Brown ruling from 1954 when the decision was handed down to 1975 when a district court ordered the implementation of a massive bussing plan in order to carry out the Supreme Court’s ruling past the stage of token integration. Furthermore, Wright explores the social and political conditions in Kentucky before and after the Brown ruling, thus putting the reactions to the decision in context. While this book provides important information on the nature of race relations in Kentucky, it does not go into great detail about Brown. My work

offers a more in-depth analysis of the white reaction in Louisville to the Supreme Court's ruling in 1954.

During the time of this study Barry Bingham, Sr., owned and operated the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, Bingham Sr., inherited the paper from his father Robert Worth Bingham, a former Mayor of Louisville. Bingham, Sr. took over the paper in 1937 serving as the president and publisher. Under his leadership the *Courier-Journal* won six Pulitzer Prizes, was ranked among the top ten newspapers in the United States and became known as the “New York Times of the South.” Bingham Sr. served in the Navy during World War II and was a strong supporter of human rights. Under his editorship the liberal *Courier-Journal* was a supporter of civil rights and often aimed to influence politics and public opinion regarding this issue. In the early 1950s, Louisville was cited as one the South’s most progressive cities. The *Courier-Journal* played a large role in shaping this image by supporting the African American fight for equality. Today Bingham, Sr. is the namesake for the Bingham Fellowship, an award presented to an educator in the field of journalism who has made substantial contributions to minority journalism students. In 1971 Bingham’s son Barry Bingham, Jr. took control of the newspaper and in 1986 sold the paper to the Gannett Co.

The initial reaction to the *Brown* decision in Louisville and more generally in the state of Kentucky fell in between the reactions of the Deep South and those of the other Border States. The day the decision was handed down, Kentucky Governor Lawrence W. Wetherby declared, “Kentucky will do whatever is necessary to comply with the law.” In the days and weeks following the ruling it became clear that reactions of both the city and the state were mixed. Members of the Kentucky Congressional Delegation responded with mixed reactions as well. Kentucky Senator James S. Golden stated, “I don’t think it will make any difference in Kentucky. The white folks and the colored folks get along well in Kentucky. I think we have some of the best colored folks in the country in Kentucky. There’s a happy relationship between the two races in Kentucky.” On the other hand, State Representative Frank L. Chief expressed

57 Kristina Goetz, “News Family relieved, One of its Own is Safe,” The Cincinnati Enquirer, 2 April 2003.
his disappointment in the ruling stating,

“This is a most unfortunate decision. I had hoped that the Supreme Court would have had
the wisdom and the judgment to have allowed this vital and deep-rooted matter and,
incidentally, one of the most basic problems, not only of our generation but of past
generations, to have been settled and decided by the people themselves…As I see it, in
any problem as grave and important as this, no man or set of men in a position, high or
low, can take it upon themselves to tell or instruct the people as to how they should lead
and conduct their lives.”63

The initial reaction to the Brown decision in Louisville, while mixed, still appeared to be
tempered. In general, city and state offices seemed confident that the appropriate steps would be
taken to comply with the law at a future date.

In order to more fully comprehend the initial reaction of the people of Louisville and the
state of Kentucky, it is important to understand the segregation laws the Brown decision
nullified. Prior to the Brown ruling, segregation was legally mandated in the state of Kentucky
by Section 187 of the Kentucky Constitution, “which required that separate schools must be
maintained for whites and Negroes.”64 Further, the ruling voided Kentucky’s Day Law enacted
in 1904. The Courier-Journal explains that the Day Law, “made it illegal for whites and
Negroes to attend schools together…It forbade mixed classes and imposed heavy penalties for
persons who taught or attended mixed classes.”65 However, in recent years the State legislature
had allowed mixed classes in certain situations. For example, mixed classes of nurses and
doctors were allowed at General Hospital in 1948 and in 1949 the Federal District Court ruled
that African Americans had to be admitted to the graduate and professional schools of the
University of Kentucky. In 1950 the legislature approved the admission of African American
students to both public and private colleges and universities in the state.66 Furthermore, earlier
in 1954 the House of Representatives passed a bill to outlaw mandatory segregation in the
elementary public schools, but the bill never came up for a vote in the Senate.67 Thus, even
before the Brown ruling the state of Kentucky slowly began moving towards an integrated pubic
school system. It can be argued that this trend played a large role in shaping the state’s calm
reaction to the Brown decision.

63 Ibid.
64 “Decision Voids State’s Day Law: Portion of the Constitution Nullified; Wetherby is Ready to Comply.”
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid. 
In the days following the Supreme Court decree, several issues regarding the state of the public schools in Louisville presented themselves in the *Courier-Journal*. One of the most pressing issues in the state of Kentucky at the time of the *Brown* ruling was the financial state of the public schools. At the very time the Supreme Court publicized its ruling, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Wendell P. Butler, was leaving for Washington, D.C., to testify before a congressional committee on the need for federal aid for school construction.\(^{68}\) Furthermore, following the *Brown* decision state officials claimed the need for federal funds to improve the school system increased dramatically. Speaking before the Senate Subcommittee on Education of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee about the current conditions of the public schools, Kentucky Senator Earl C. Clements stated, “One third of our school population—receiving their education under adverse conditions are, to say the least staggering…We have reached a Pearl Harbor in our school construction. We must declare war in the face of this emergency.”\(^{69}\) It is also important to note that not only was the condition of the public schools “deplorable,” but, the number of students in attendance at public schools in Kentucky was rising each year.\(^{70}\)

An editorial appearing in the *Courier-Journal* a week after the *Brown* ruling posited that the state’s request for federal funds was likely to be granted in light of Kentucky’s pledge to comply with the Supreme Court ruling. The author stated, “One of the incidental results of this ruling seems now likely to be stronger pressures and larger support for programs of federal aid to education generally.”\(^{71}\) In addition, the editorial suggested that prior to the *Brown* decision many Southern states had refused to ask for federal funds for fear they would be required to desegregate in exchange for the funding. Thus, the appalling financial and physical condition of the public schools at the time of the *Brown* ruling played an integral role in shaping the state’s response to the decision. The need for federal aid to improve the schools served as motivation for the timely integration of the public school system.

A second topic that appeared frequently in the weeks after the ruling was the demographics of the African American population throughout the state. Several articles were

\(^{68}\) Ibid.
\(^{70}\) “Kentuckians Ask U.S. Aid For Schools: Clements Says Desegregation to Raise Need.”
quick to point out that integration in Kentucky should not be as problematic as it was likely to be in other southern states, principally because only seven percent of the state population was African American as opposed to forty-two percent of the Mississippi population. Furthermore, a third of the school districts in the state (71 out of the 227 school districts) did not have African American schools. What is more, in 39 of the 227 districts there were not any African American school age children, and in 19 districts there were fewer than five African American students in each district. Approximately forty-eight percent of African American children in Kentucky lived in five percent of the school districts. As the Courier-Journal stated, “Most Kentucky Negroes live in a few groupings.”

Several articles gauged the likelihood of problems with integration by the number of African Americans living in the given area. For example, Superintendent of the Central City Schools, George Taylor, commented, “We will not encounter the problems that face other cities. Central City has lost much of its Negro population in recent years….We can handle the situation adequately.” In contrast Superintendent of the Hopkinsville Schools Gladstone Coffman, stated, “We'll face a much greater problem than most school systems in Kentucky because of our large Negro population.” In the city of Louisville and in Jefferson County officials did not foresee extensive problems with integration because “The county’s Negro population is concentrated in a few areas…. It is very possible that some schools now used exclusively by Negroes will continue to be used exclusively by Negroes. The same goes for some schools now set aside for white students.” The people of Kentucky understood there to be a direct correlation between the number of African Americans in a given district and the number of problems that could be anticipated in the desegregation process. It is useful to note that many district officials in one breath proudly announced that their given area would be able to peacefully comply with the law and in the second they commented that their given district did not have any African American school age children.

A third issue discussed frequently in the Courier-Journal following the Brown ruling was

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72 “2-Third of Kentucky Districts Have No Negro Schools,” The Louisville Courier-Journal, 23 May 1954, p1 s3.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
the impact integrated schools would have on African American teachers. Many articles commented that the desegregation of the public schools could cause African American teachers to lose their jobs. Superintendent Butler commented, “The same parent who might not object to his children attending school with colored children might object to having them taught by a Negro teacher.” Butler continued on to state that African American teachers are “not so well prepared.” However, Allan M. Trout, a columnist for the Currier-Journal, stated, “On the percentage basis, Kentucky’s Negro teachers are better qualified than its white teachers. That is because teaching is one of the few professions fully opened to Negroes.” This debate about the integration of African American teachers in Louisville continued for the full scope of this paper. In the state of Kentucky the desegregation of African American students appeared to be far less problematic than the desegregation of African American teachers, regardless of their education level.

The mixed reaction to the Brown ruling from city and state officials was mirrored among the general public. Editorials and letters to the editor written shortly after the Supreme Court handed down its decision revealed mixed emotions among the citizens of Louisville. In some instances the issue of integrated schools served as a gateway to other racial issues. Some Kentuckians reacted with outrage and hostility, yet the basis of their fear and anger did not come from the integrated schools, but rather from the idea that the desegregation could lead to interracial marriages or as one writer stated, “a mongrel race of Americans.” On the other hand, many readers responded to the argument that integrated public schools could lead to mixed marriages with disbelief. One writer commented:

I doubt that there will be wholesale intermarriage as a result of the Supreme Court’s segregation ruling. The Supreme Court did not give a ruling on the mixing of races by intermarriage, but on the mixing of races in schools because of the contradiction of segregated schools to our Constitution. Many northern states have been operating non-

79 “Butler Says Difficult Problem Raised by Integration of Negro Teachers: Doesn’t Know the Answer.”
80 Ibid.
81 “Kentucky Must Be Careful Lest Integration Lower School Level.”
segregated schools for 50 years or more and there has been no wholesale intermarrying of the races in those states.\textsuperscript{83}

Other readers debated the effect the ruling would have on the public school systems in the South. Noel H. Parsons of Stamping Ground, Kentucky, argued that the \textit{Brown} ruling would cause many parents to pull their children out of the public school system and thus utilize private and religious schools. Parsons stated, “There are millions of white people throughout the South who will not patronize desegregated schools. The old generation was mainly educated in private and church schools. The South will meet the issue of race equality in her traditional way.”\textsuperscript{84}

However, the reality of this prediction was impracticable in Louisville because the vast majority of private schools were not accepting new students due to overcrowding.\textsuperscript{85} Still another reader, Roland V. Pearson, commented that African Americans were tax paying citizens who did not seek social integration but equal opportunities. Pearson continued, “If the separate but equal policy had been practiced, I doubt if the problem before this democratic land would exist today.”\textsuperscript{86} There was no consensus among The \textit{Courier-Journal}’s readers; some used God and religion to argue that African Americans and whites should not be mixed and others argue that, “Folk may differ, but the higher virtues are found in all colors the same.”\textsuperscript{87} It appears that the \textit{Courier-Journal}’s readers and thus the citizens of Louisville differed widely in their reactions to the \textit{Brown} decision. It is significant to note that remarkably few articles or even letters to the editor were printed from an African American perspective. The vast majority of reactions seen in the \textit{Courier-Journal} were from a white point of view.

Similar to the mixed reactions among state and city officials to ruling, there appeared to be a mixed reaction about when and how the State would go about desegregating the public schools. Sam Taylor, supervisor of Negro education in the State Department of Kentucky, commented, “Kentucky probably would have to work out some solution before schools reopen

\textsuperscript{83} Joe W. Gilliam, “Readers’ Point of View: Meanings of Integration Decision Still Argued,” \textit{The Louisville Courier-Journal}, 8 June 1954, p6 s1.
\textsuperscript{84} Noel J. Parsons, “Readers’ Point of View: Meanings of Integration Decision Still Argued,” \textit{The Louisville Courier-Journal}, 8 June 1954, p6 s1.
\textsuperscript{85} “Possible Shifting to Private Schools is Ruled Out by Their Being Full: Four Queried in Louisville,” \textit{The Louisville Courier-Journal}, 18 May 1954, p6 s1.
\textsuperscript{87} Lillian M. McKinley, “Readers’ Point of View: Scriptures Enter the Argument on Segregation,” \textit{The Louisville Courier-Journal}, 17 June 1954, p6 s1.
this fall." However, the majority opinion was expressed by Superintendent Butler who announced “There is little Kentucky can do until the Supreme Court actually does hand down its detailed orders and decrees. These are not expected, at the earliest, until sometime this fall.” Many officials expressed their gratitude that the Supreme Court was not mandating immediate compliance, but allowing the South some time to develop and implement a plan for desegregation. Just over a month after the Brown ruling was handed down, in the middle of June 1954, the State Board of Education advised local school boards, “To plan their 1954-55 term under Kentucky law requiring segregated classes.” The school districts were told not to make any changes regarding integration until the Supreme Court issued a final ruling.

In September 1954, at the start of the school year, the city of Louisville maintained its segregated school systems, awaiting the Supreme Court’s second ruling. The Courier-Journal ran strikingly few articles regarding the city schools or the integration process. Nevertheless, a number of articles appeared during September of 1954 discussing the continued financial problems the school districts in Kentucky faced. A school district in Jefferson County was forced to make cuts in school bus routes due to lacking funds, creating a serious controversy where parents held their students out of school in protest. The city of Louisville announced once again that the enrollment for the new school year would be the highest ever, the first day’s enrollment yielded an increase of approximately 2,215 students over the previous year.

The few articles that addressed the issue of integration commented on situations outside of Kentucky. Some reported the steps other southern states were taking to avoid the desegregation process, while others reported on the violence that had erupted in areas where school boards attempted to carry out integration. The presence of these articles, illustrating the problems other states were having with the Brown ruling, is particularly noteworthy when

88 “Decision Void State’s Day Law: Portion of the Constitution Nullified; Wetherby is Ready to Comply.”
89 Ibid.
91 “200 Parents Vow to Keep Pupils at Home Until Buses Are Back,” The Louisville Courier-Journal, 9 September 1954, p1 s2.
92 “First-Day School Enrollment Tops Last Year’s by 2,215,” The Louisville Courier-Journal, 3 September 1954, p1 s2.
coupled with the lack of articles describing the desegregation process of the Kentucky public schools. It appears that the state of Kentucky was operating in a wait-and-see mode, waiting for further direction from the Supreme Court before making decisions regarding integration.

The reaction in Louisville to the second ruling somewhat mirrored the dominant national response by white Americans. Many state and city officials appeared pleased that “the court devised a flexible formula for carrying out the court’s ruling of last year.” Furthermore, most people in Louisville agreed with the Supreme Court’s decision to bring the issue back to a local level. Louisville officials claimed they could now get to work developing a plan to gradually desegregate the public schools. The process of developing and implementing an integration plan rested in the hands of the local school boards. Each district was free to develop a plan that best suited its individual situation as long as they proceeded with “all deliberate speed.”

Following the second Brown ruling officials in the city of Louisville and in Jefferson County announced that September of 1956 would remain the target date for the partial integration of the public schools. Morton Walker, the president of the Louisville Board of Education, stated that, “the fact the court’s final decision came so late in the school year indicated the court did not intend [de]segregation to begin this fall.” City and county officials publicly defended their decision not to begin desegregating the schools until the 1956-1957 school year. Richard Van Hoose, Jefferson County School Superintendent, argued that the budget had already been set for the 1955-1956 school year, making integration unfeasible. Paxton Wilt, the president of the Jefferson County School Board, commented on the lack of school facilities by stated He didn’t see how “a terrific housing problem” would permit the County system to integrate by the fall. However, both city and county personnel reaffirmed their commitment to integration. Wilt commented, “We’re law-abiding people and we’ll abide by the law.” It is interesting to note that the school systems’ financial situation and the deplorable state of school properties are cited as the reasons for delaying integration until 1956, as opposed to anger, hostility or unwillingness among the citizens of Louisville.

On June 1, 1955, the day after the second Brown ruling, the Courier-Journal ran a series

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94 Luther A. Huston, “High Court Doesn’t Fix Deadlines,” The Louisville Courier-Journal, 1 June 1955, p1 s1.
96 “High Court Doesn’t Fix Deadlines.”
97 “September, ’56, Is Still Integration Target Here.”
98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
of articles under the headline “End of School Segregation Within A ‘Reasonable’ Time Ordered; Day Law Held Dead.” These articles announced the Court’s decision and explained how the ruling would affect Kentuckians, marking the second time in a year the Courier-Journal proclaimed the death of the Day Law. Further, it is interesting to note that similar to the coverage of the first ruling the Courier-Journal highlights the death of the Day Law, implying the high court’s ruling will most significantly affect the people of Kentucky by the abolition of this law. Immediately following the second ruling, Allan M. Trout of the Courier-Journal announced, “The decision instantly nullified the Day Law…it follows that any local board desiring to do so may integrate pupils in the 1955-56 school term beginning this fall.”

Furthermore, reasons previously stated by city and state officials quickly disposed of the idea the schools could be desegregated by the fall of 1955 and announced their intention to delay the integration process until the fall of 1956.

After the first Brown ruling, articles in the Courier-Journal debated the fate of African American teachers after the schools began integrating, but after the second ruling, Louisville City officials declared, “No teachers, white or Negro will lose their jobs because of integration.” Moreover, Louisville City School Superintendent, Omer Carmichael, stated that both pupils and faculties would be integrated. He continued, “When new teachers are employed under integration, consideration will be given first to the child and then to teachers…It is probable that more new white teachers than Negroes will be employed. Competence will be the standard used.”

It seems as though city officials were publicly announcing that African American teachers and white teachers were going to be integrated along with the students, though the superintendent’s statement creates some doubt as to the reality of this issue. The idea that consideration will be given to the students before the teachers appears to be similar to the argument presented after the first Brown ruling that parents may have a problem with their children being taught by African American teachers.

The Courier-Journal ran remarkably few editorials and letters to the editor following the second Brown ruling. A single editorial printed on June 1, 1955, appeared to mirror the sentiments found in other sections of the paper. On one hand, there appeared to be relief that the
Court did not set a deadline for the integration of the public schools and on the other an understanding that the process must take place. The writer stated,

The Supreme Court has sensibly undertaken to set no deadline, but has left with the Federal District Courts the determination whether ‘action of school authorities constitutes good faith implementation of the cover constitutional principles.’ These principles are perfectly clear. A citizen is a citizen whether rich or poor, black or white. He deserves the same protection under the law as his fellow, his children deserve the same education in the same tax supported school system as the children of his neighbors.\textsuperscript{104}

In general, the people of Louisville received the second \textit{Brown} ruling with a similar variety of reaction as the first decision. Yet, the overarching theme that ran throughout the paper was that the people of Kentucky would abide by the law and not make an effort to sidestep the ruling.

In the fall of 1955 the \textit{Courier-Journal} ran very few stories on the issue of school desegregation. On September 1, 1955, however, the paper reported that the Kentucky School for the Blind in Jefferson County would be desegregated when its fall term opened, integrating 16 African American students into the previously all white school with 135 pupils. But, the students would have to live in separate dorms and eat in separate cafeterias because Superintendent Paul Lang argued the \textit{Brown} ruling did not apply to housing.\textsuperscript{105} Nonetheless, for the most part the coverage in the \textit{Courier-Journal} dwindled as the second \textit{Brown} decision faded into the past.

In September 1956 many school districts in Kentucky including the Louisville district began the process of slow, gradual desegregation. On September 10, 1956, a front page article in the \textit{Courier-Journal} stated, “Segregation died quietly here today. Its peaceful passing created no more than a token ripple of protest. The democratic process was seen working at its best.”\textsuperscript{106} Of the city’s 12,500 African American students, approximately 2,810 of them attended previously all white schools. In Jefferson County about 200 African Americans enrolled in 13 formerly all white schools.\textsuperscript{107} The only protests came from five members of the Kentucky Citizens Council

\textsuperscript{104}“Integration Become the Job of the Local School Board,” \textit{The Louisville Journal Courier-Journal}, 1 June 1955, p6 s1.
\textsuperscript{105}“Kentucky School for the Blind to Integrate Classes Here,” \textit{The Louisville Journal Courier-Journal}, 1 September 1955, p1 s2.
\textsuperscript{107}“No Race Trouble Reported, But Segregationists Picket City Hall and Board Offices,” \textit{The Louisville Courier-Journal}, 11 September 1956, p1 s2.
who picketed outside of the Louisville and Jefferson County Boards of Education for one hour each. An article reporting on this protest even poked fun at the picketers who misspelled the word “oppose” in their sign reading, “We appose race mixing in the schools.”

While the integration of the city and county schools was peaceful, it is important to note that Superintendent Carmichael stated that the enrollment in the city schools was down 46 students from the previous year, this despite his earlier prediction that there would be an increase of about 1,200 students. Although protesting was relatively insignificant it is apparent that many parents were clearly unhappy with the decision to desegregate. Carmichael noted that while he was surprised, he believed many parents, “In connection with integration may be waiting a little before enrolling their children.” Thus, it seems that many parents were unsure of the city’s reaction and possibly fearful of the eruption of violence due to the integration process and wanted to hold off enrolling their children until the transition had taken place.

The peaceful desegregation process in Louisville garnered praise from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who hailed Superintendent Carmichael stating, “I think Mr. Carmichael is a very wise man…I hope to meet him and I hope to get some advice from him as to exactly how he did it, because he pursued the policy that I believe will finally bring success to this.” In his statement, Eisenhower referred to Carmichael’s decision to delay the integration of the public schools for two years in order to plan out the process and give the community time to adjust.

Similar praise came from New York Times writer Benjamin Fine who lauded Louisville stating, “When the history of this proud Southern city is written, this day will undoubtedly go down as a historic landmark. Even in the South, it was shown here, integration can be made to work without violence.” Thus, the peaceful integration of the Louisville public schools was acclaimed nationally, indicating a clear path for other cities to follow.

This peaceful and even uneventful partial desegregation process in Louisville was mirrored in several of Kentucky’s 221 school districts in the fall of 1956. The Lexington area schools desegregated without incident, citing a “common-sense approach” as the key to success. Several districts in the western half of the state reportedly partially desegregated

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
111 “Segregation Ends Here A Landmark, Fine Says.”
112 Joe Reister, “Lexington-Area Schools Integrating Smoothly,” The Louisville Courier-Journal, 3 September
without a problem.

The speed with which these districts anticipated proceeding caused tension between school officials and the NAACP. For example, the NAACP argued the Hopkins County plan to integrate one grade a year for the next twelve years “violates the spirit if not the intent of the Supreme Court ruling.” Furthermore, the eruption of violence approximately 160 miles outside of Louisville in Sturgis, Kentucky, preventing the integration of nine African American students became national news. A mob of 500 white people protested the integration process for a week. Finally on September 10, 1956, the same day the Louisville public schools integrated without an incident, seven African American students attended classes at the previously all-white Sturgis High School. That same day, 260 white students refused to attend school in protest. This story about the difficulties encountered in Sturgis ran on the same page as the articles about the successful integration of the Louisville schools clearly contrasting the two areas.

The peaceful integration of the city schools of Louisville can be attributed in part to the careful planning by the school board and the “school system and a school-community relationship” as stated by Superintendent Carmichael. It can also be attributed to influence of the church and its clergy. The Courier-Journal reported that several clergymen in churches surrounding Louisville were quietly “preparing their people to accept integration in public schools.” From the pulpit, many clergy members used their sermons as a plea for desegregating in an orderly fashion. Reverend Perry Ginn preached to his congregation “that the principle of government is God-given… Whether we like it or not, the law says that segregation is unconstitutional, and it is therefore our Christian duty to obey.” The influence of messages such as this can be understated. Throughout the integration process church clergy played a large role in creating a path towards desegregation, moreover using their influence to help ensure a peaceful transition.

By the end of 1956 the Louisville public schools had successfully started the integration
process. While many other areas of the South remained entrenched in an attitude of defiance, Louisville had peacefully integrated several of its schools. Although only certain schools had been desegregated and the process had just begun, it occurred without incident, a feat many school districts in Kentucky were unable to achieve.

Throughout much of 1957, the Courier-Journal did not run any major stories pertaining to the integration of the public schools. In September of 1957, the Courier-Journal, like many other papers in the United States, focused its attention on the developing crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas. With all eyes on Little Rock, the Courier-Journal paid little attention to the continuing integration process in Louisville. A single article ran in the Courier-Journal regarding the status of the integration process in Kentucky on the day the crisis in Little Rock broke. The article outlined the mixed response to desegregation claiming that in Kentucky the process had been “marked by harmony and riot” and attitudes had “ranged from indifference to fear”\(^{119}\) The article stated that in the 177 previously segregated school districts, ninety-two “have achieved some level of integration.”\(^{120}\) Yet the author was quick to point out that the level of integration in these districts varied widely. Furthermore, as early as September 1957, there were 63 school districts in which no steps had been taken to begin integrating the public schools. There were fourteen districts in which there were plans for desegregation at a future date and eight districts which planned to begin the integration process at some level at the start of the 1957-1958 school year.\(^{121}\) The only statement that directly involved the Louisville school system pointed out that the city schools used a system by which students were able to attend the school in the area where they lived.\(^{122}\)

By the end of 1957 the integration process in the state of Kentucky varied widely depending on the area of observation. The state did not have a single integration pattern but rather each community developed its own process for dealing with the Court’s ruling. Yet, similar to St. Louis, the process in Louisville appeared to be well underway in 1957. The coverage in the Courier-Journal had steadily declined and the focus moved from the Louisville schools to schools in other parts of the state such as Sturgis, as well as to other states, most notably Little Rock, Arkansas.

\(^{119}\) “New Chapter Starting In School Integration Status Varies Over Kentucky Atmosphere,” The Louisville Courier-Journal, 3 September 1957, p1 s1.
\(^{120}\) Ibid.
\(^{121}\) Ibid.
\(^{122}\) Ibid.
Little Rock, Arkansas

In response to the crisis at Central High School many historians have examined the Little Rock case. Over the past 45 years historians have explored the situation from multiple angles. One of the best examinations of Central High School and more generally the battle for integration in Little Rock is a series of essays produced for a conference at the fortieth anniversary of Little Rock Crisis. *Understanding the Little Rock Crisis: An Exercise in Remembrance and Reconciliation* edited by Elizabeth Jacoway and C. Fred Williams takes a critical look at the integration process in Little Rock before, during and after the situation at Central High School.123 These essays provide insight into the social and political situation in Little Rock as well as in Arkansas that created the conflict. This book uses the Central High School Crisis as the central focus to understanding the nature of racial relations in Little Rock. In my thesis I use Central High School as the conclusion of my period of study because it is an historical landmark. However, my major focus is on the period prior to Central High School.

The *Little Rock Gazette*, established in 1819, is the oldest continuously published newspaper west of the Mississippi.124 Long considered a progressive and liberal newspaper it was a pro-union paper until Abraham Lincoln called for troops during the Civil War.125 John Heiskell, born in Tennessee in 1872, served as editor and president of the *Gazette* publishing company from 1902-1972. Heiskell, a champion on Arkansas’s image was strong supporter of education and libraries.126 Under his control the *Gazette* became an honored newspaper winning two Pulitzer Prizes for its editorial policy during the Central High School Crisis of 1957. Unlike its counterpart the *Arkansas Democrat*, the *Gazette*, under editor Henry Ashmore, openly spoke out in support for the school board and publicly criticized Governor Faubus for calling in the Arkansas National Guard. This decision won the paper awards but ended up costing millions of dollars in revenue when thousands of people cancelled their subscriptions.127 In 1991 the

123 Eds. Elizabeth Jacoway and C. Fred Williams, *Understanding the Little Rock Crisis: An Exercise in Remembrance and Reconciliation* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 1999).
**Democrat** purchased the *Gazette* and today is published under the name the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*.

Similar to St. Louis and Louisville, the initial reaction to the first *Brown* ruling by the city of Little Rock was remarkably calm and tempered. The *Arkansas Gazette* portrayed a city that not only anticipated the ruling, but was willing to begin working towards the goals set forth by the Court. The day after the Supreme Court ruling, the *Gazette* ran a series of articles looking at the effect the *Brown* ruling would have on Little Rock, and Arkansas as a whole.\(^{128}\) Like the *Courier-Journal*, the *Gazette* reported a wide spectrum of responses to the ruling. Closely following the Court’s decision, most articles written on the topic in the *Gazette* conveyed the message that the people of Arkansas prided themselves on living by the laws of the land. Thus, if the Supreme Court found the segregation of schools to be illegal they would change their school system accordingly. Speaker of the Arkansas House Carroll Hollensworth stated, “We’ve got to live with it. We might as well do what we have to do with as little fuss and as much thought as possible.”\(^{129}\) Reactions throughout the state, though, did vary, some state officials stated they were shocked, surprised or disappointed at the Court’s ruling. Initially many state leaders, including Governor Cherry, refused to comment. Yet, within the following week, the overwhelming comment was that the outcome was expected and the state was ready to begin the long process of creating a single school system.”\(^{130}\)

The *Gazette* continued to run articles that depicted acceptance among state officials in accordance to the *Brown* decision the week after the ruling. In general state leaders might not have been personally happy with the ruling, but they wished to align the state with the law of the nation.\(^{131}\) As was the case in both St. Louis and Louisville many articles in the *Gazette* bragged that Little Rock would in fact be the place in the South that would find it easiest to desegregate its public schools. These articles claimed that Little Rock had the best race relations among the southern states.\(^{132}\) Nevertheless, Governor Cherry expressed his fear that the decision could

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\(^{129}\) “Arkansas Looks at Integration: It’ll Cost Money.”

\(^{130}\) “Arkansas Leaders are Calm, Cautious in Views on Ruling.”

\(^{131}\) “State Editors View School Ruling Calmly,” *The Arkansas Gazette*, 20 May 1954, p2A.

\(^{132}\) Cherry Says Arkansas to Obey Law,” *The Arkansas Gazette*, 19 May 1954, p1A; “Arkansas Looks at Integration: It’ll Cost Money”; “Arkansas Leaders are Calm, Cautious in Views on Ruling.”
negatively effect the advancement of African Americans in the city of Little Rock. Cherry claimed that rapid desegregation could cause ill feeling among the races and set the state back in its progress towards equality. Yet, he proceeded to say, “There is a better relationship between the races in Arkansas than in most other states…. I think it will continue.”  It was the overall feeling that Arkansas had a great advantage over all other southern states in the desegregation process.

The Gazette ran articles expressing the reactions of both African Americans and whites. African Americans’ response to the Brown ruling could readily be found in the weeks following the decision. Some African Americans in high positions refused to comment on the decision, possibly not wishing to anger those that were vehemently opposed to the ruling. Many, however, openly expressed their delight with the ruling believing it brought them a step closer to the ultimate goal of equality. Many conveyed a sense of tempered optimism, not wanting to get excited before any action had been taken. A third reaction among the African American community surfaced in the Gazette. L.C. Bates, the publisher of a weekly African American newspaper in Arkansas, stated, “If the South hasn’t learned in 91 years to respect the rights of all of its citizens, the decision doesn’t mean much.” Bates raised the point that laws and decrees cannot change the hearts and minds of people. While Arkansas state officials appeared to take the Supreme Court’s words to heart, Bates was correct in charging that if the people of Arkansas had wanted to create an equal environment it would have happened years earlier.

All articles printed in the Gazette closely following the Brown decision conveyed a positive, optimistic message about the ruling. Yet, the majority of the letters to the editor expressed a very different opinion. One writer stated, “Any thinking person must realize that this decision is an evil one. Which cannot by any stretch of the imagination avoid stirring race hatred, revenge and recriminations in many sections of our land.” Another writer, Elder Jerry Shrieves, claimed that God created different races of people and thus intended them to be separate. Shrieves stated, “But God said it is better for us to do what God says than obey laws of the land. I don’t think these judges are able to prove that their decision pleases God.” The differences between the general articles of the paper and the letters to the editor are striking. It is

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133 “Cherry Says Arkansas to Obey Law.”
134 “Arkansas Leaders are Calm, Cautious in Views on Ruling.”
135 Concerned American, “Readers React to the Ruling on Segregation,” The Arkansas Gazette, 21 May 1954, p4A.
136 Elder Jerry Shrieves, “Readers React to the Ruling on Segregation,” The Arkansas Gazette, 21 May 1954, p4A.
possible that the *Gazette* used these letters to show the wide variety of reactions to the ruling among the citizens of Little Rock. Furthermore, it seems that the state officials and leaders who were forced to deal with these issues immediately chose their words carefully, understanding that mutual cooperation between the races was necessary to achieve the goals laid out by the Court. Those not in positions of power were more free to express their true feelings about the ruling. Thus, similar to the situation in Louisville, the immediate reaction to the ruling was mixed. Further, the *Gazette*, like the *Courier-Journal*, attempted to influence public sentiment about integration. The *Gazette* took a very liberal stand on the issue, framing each of its articles in a positive light. Hence, the newspaper attempted to reach out to the citizens of Little Rock, helping them to see the positive responses to the ruling and helping to maintain a calm environment.

Prior to the Court’s 1954 ruling the state of Arkansas had passed seventeen Jim Crow Laws requiring segregation in education, transportation and public places. The first of these laws in 1866 required that, “No Negro or mulatto would be allowed to attend any public school except one reserved for ‘colored persons.’” Between 1866 and 1958 five education statues passed. In 1947 segregation of the races was required in public schools. In 1957 the State declared that no child would be required to attend a racially mixed school and finally a 1958 statute declared the Governor could close a public school due to integration by election. Thus, even after the calm reaction of the Arkansas State Officials to the Court’s ruling the debate over school integration raged for years.

Yet, as was true in St. Louis and Louisville, one of the reasons Little Rock may have had such a calm initial reaction to the *Brown* ruling was because they had fewer African Americans to integrate than in other areas of the South. Twenty-one percent of the state’s population was African American. Only four southern states, Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma and Kentucky had a lower percentage of African Americans. Furthermore, the African American population in Arkansas, and particularly in Little Rock, had dropped drastically beginning in the 1940s. From 1940 to 1950 the African American state population declined 11.6 percent and in Little Rock the African American population dropped from 38.4 percent in 1900 to 23 percent in 1950. What

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138 Ibid.
139 “How Arkansas Stacks Up.”
140 Ibid.
is more, in 1954 the State of Arkansas had 1,450 white schools and 816 of those schools did not have any African Americans living in their districts.\textsuperscript{141} Further during the 1952-1953 school year the \textit{Gazette} reported that, “of the 100,322 Negroes enrolled in Arkansas schools, only 14,052 were above the eighth grade.”\textsuperscript{142} In 1954, the Little Rock School District had 17,460 students of which 4,144 were African American.\textsuperscript{143} Thus, the number of African American students who needed to be integrated into the school system was comparatively low, making the prospect of desegregation less difficult.

As in Louisville, the issue of the financial cost of integrating the public school system surfaced in Little Rock immediately following the ruling. The \textit{Gazette} estimated that ending segregation in the Arkansas school system while maintaining the level of education white students received would cost taxpayers approximately $21,000,000.\textsuperscript{144} This amount was taken from a study conducted in September of 1953 that estimated that, “$21,000,000 was needed to provide the Negro school children — and teachers — facilities equal to those that existed for white children.”\textsuperscript{145} A front-page article further noted that even if the Supreme Court had upheld the separate but equal doctrine Arkansas taxpayers would still be required to spend the same amount of money to equalize the two school systems. Moreover, it is interesting to note the alternative presented was to cut “the level of educational plant, operations and instruction down to that existing in the Negro portion of the traditional dual system.”\textsuperscript{146} This type of discussion that debated the logistical issues of the integration process was only possible in a place that is seriously considering integration. This type of conversation did not take place in cities and states that were unwilling to abide by the Court’s decision. The mere fact that this article was printed demonstrates that the people of Little Rock are realistically considering the prospect of integration.

In the fall of 1954, as the Little Rock Schools began the new school year the few articles that ran in the \textit{Gazette} focused on the record number of students enrolled in the area schools. In the three districts that made up the Greater Little Rock Area, Little Rock, North Little Rock and Pulaski Country Special (Rural) District, the number of students enrolled in the public school

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} “Arkansas Looks at Integration: It’ll Cost Money.”
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{143} “School Enrollment at Record 28,608,” \textit{The Arkansas Gazette}, 8 September 1954, p1A.
\item \textsuperscript{144} “Arkansas Looks at Integration: It’ll Cost Money.”
\item \textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
had increased by almost 2,000 since the previous school year.\textsuperscript{147} Other than breaking down the number of white and African Americans students enrolled in each district there was no mention of race or integration. The school year started just like any other in the Greater Little Rock Area. The schools maintained the same segregated system they had operated under before the Court’s ruling.

Although Little Rock had not begun the desegregation process, at the start of the 1954-1955 school year the cities of Charleston and Fayetteville, Arkansas began integrating their public school systems. Located 133 miles from Little Rock, the city of Charleston in Franklin County admitted eleven African American students into its system on August 23, 1954, making it the first school system in the former Confederate States to integrate.\textsuperscript{148} On September 7, 1954, Fayetteville High School became the second school system to desegregate in Arkansas by enrolling nine African American students.\textsuperscript{149} But, in November of 1954, the people of Arkansas overwhelmingly elected former State Highway Commissioner, Orval E. Faubus, Governor of Arkansas by pledging to maintain the institution of segregation.\textsuperscript{150} Thus, the state elected a Governor who took a much harder stance on the issue of segregation. Faubus, a segregationist, was a stark contrast to former Governor Cherry who maintained that “Arkansas will observe the law.”\textsuperscript{151} Furthermore, just as two Arkansas cities took the first step towards desegregating their public schools, the state elections demonstrated that the majority of people in Arkansas were not ready to comply with the \textit{Brown} ruling.

In Little Rock, the response to the second \textit{Brown} ruling in 1955 was met with a mixed reaction similar to the first ruling. The Gazette reported a wide variety of responses, ranging from excitement to anger. As with the first decision, letters to the editor from both whites and African Americans appeared in the \textit{Gazette}. Like much of the South, most Little Rock citizens seemed to be pleased with the Supreme Court’s decision to bring the issue back to a local level. Again the central theme that ran throughout the \textit{Gazette} was that the people of Arkansas were law-abiding citizens. Whether or not they agreed with the ruling, they understood the decision to be the law of land, and thus they began the process of planning for integration. Educational

\textsuperscript{147} “School Bells Today Toll End of Vacation,” \textit{The Arkansas Gazette}, 7 September 1954, p1A; “School Enrollment At Record 28,608.”
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{151} “Cherry Says Arkansas to Obey Law.”
Commissioner Arch Ford stated, “Professional educators will of course obey the law; they could not do otherwise without violating their own code of ethics…”  

Educational professionals, like many others, refused to state their own personal feelings on the issue. They simply commented that they understood the law and reiterated their promises to abide by it, regardless of their personal beliefs.

The Gazette ran a series of articles portraying the reactions of the African American community. The local chapter of the NAACP hailed the ruling, seeing it as further backing to the first Brown decision. The NAACP commented, “Today’s opinion makes a clear-cut determination that the Negro school children must be given their rights as soon as practicable on a non-discriminatory basis.”  

African Americans stated they did not see the ruling as slowing down. Quite the contrary, African Americans commented that without a strict time frame, counties were obligated to comply with the Court at the soonest possible date. Although partial integration had already been achieved in Charleston and Fayetteville, African Americans and whites alike continued to agree that integration would be easiest in Little Rock, due to the positive race relations.

Newly elected Governor Faubus refused immediate comment on the Court’s decision. Upon examination of the decree he stated, “It appears that the Court has left some degree of decision in these matters to the Federal District Courts…. We must recognize that this now legal precedent may ultimately pose serious social problems in many communities of the state.”  

Faubus proceeded to comment that he believed the Court’s ruling lacked a solution and passed the problem onto the lower courts. He further called upon the good relations between the races to work together to avoid suffering of the public schools.

As the 1955-1956 school year began, Gazette articles reporting on Little Rock schools again focused solely on the record number of students enrolled in area schools. The Little Rock Public schools opened to an increase of almost 900 new students. Yet for the second year in a row there was no mention of integration or a plan for the integration of the school system.

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152 Sam G. Harris, “State Pattern to be Set by District Tribunals: Decision Lauded by Most,” The Arkansas Gazette, 1 June 1955, p1A.
153 “NAACP Praises Decision, Plans Fight Against Any Delay,” The Arkansas Gazette, 1 June 1955, p11A
154 Sam G. Harris “State Patterns to be set by District Tribunals: Decision Lauded by Most.”
155 “Court’s Decree Lacks Solution, Faubus Asserts: Governor Says Ruling May Pose Serious Social Problems,” The Arkansas Gazette, 2 June 1955, p1A.
156 Ibid.
157 “Enrollment Soar to New High at Greater Little Rock Schools,” The Arkansas Gazette, 7 September 1955, p1A.
However, the day the public schools reopened, an article ran on page 4A that chronicled the integration situation throughout the South. The Southern Educational Reporting Service in Nashville collected the research for the article and it reported that, “At least 326 school districts and counties in eight southern and Border States will begin the new school year with white and Negro children attending mixed classes.” Among them was Hoxie, the third Arkansas district to desegregate. The city enrolled twenty-five African American students in the summer of 1955, which was met with substantial protests. The article reported that simultaneously “opposition is ‘hardening against’ desegregation in the seven state areas of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.”

At the start of the 1956-1957 school year, the Little Rock School Board announced a plan for slow, gradual integration beginning with the high schools in the fall of 1957, and eventually working down to lower grades. Little Rock was in the process of building a new school building, West Side High School, to serve students of both races at an undetermined date. Furthermore, once integration at the high school level was “running smoothly,” junior high and then grade school integration would begin. The NAACP and other members of the African American community were unhappy with this gradual process. The NAACP appealed to the federal courts, claiming the process could be achieved with greater speed, but they lost the case. The NAACP argued that the surrounding areas tackled segregation problems in a more effective manner, citing Hoxie, which was finally able to desegregate during the summer of 1956 as an example. The Hoxie School Board announced, “It’s coming anyway, its right and it costs the school district less money.” The city of Hot Springs opened a single auto mechanics class to members of both races in the fall of 1956 as the start of their “gradual but moderate program of integration.”

In September of 1956, a Gazette reader, Merrill Taylor, wrote a letter to the editor questioning what Governor Faubus was going to do to prevent school integration. Taylor argued that at least 95 percent of Little Rock, both white and African American, were opposed to

159 “362 Districts in South, Boarder Areas.”
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 “Negroes Enroll in One Course at Hot Springs,” The Arkansas Gazette, 5 September 1955, p11A.
desegregation, yet were forced by law to conform to the standards set forth by the Court.\textsuperscript{164} Taylor’s letter was a plea to Governor Faubus to keep his campaign promise and prevent integration in the Little Rock Public Schools. In this letter Taylor asserted that most African Americans did not wish to integrate, stating,

\begin{quote}
I am acquainted with many Negroes, and they tell me they do not like the trouble this integration is bringing everybody. Their attitude, as far as I can make it out, is that they wish everybody would shut up and leave them alone. In other words they would be glad if the agitators of both races would go North or drop dead, and let them mind their business the way they always have.\textsuperscript{165}
\end{quote}

This letter claimed that African Americans were just as strongly opposed to integration as most whites were. The \textit{Gazette} produced material demonstrating African American enthusiasm for desegregation for two and a half years. The wide spectrum of attitudes of the people of Little Rock in combination with the somewhat naive belief that they could integrate easily set the stage for the integration disaster of 1957. The majority of school and state officials accepted the Court’s decision and worked towards compliance. But, as Taylor’s letter demonstrates, many citizens were still very much opposed to integration.

On September 1, 1957, the Little Rock School Board issued an appeal to the citizens of the city to help create a peaceful, cooperative transition throughout the integration process. Days earlier, a Federal Court upheld the school board’s plan of gradual integration beginning with the reopening of the city’s public schools on September 3, 1957. The White Citizens Council of Arkansas attempted to block the desegregation process from the beginning. The \textit{Gazette} reported that Governor Faubus testified for the White Citizens Council stating that, “He had heard rumors of possible violence from unspecified sources and urged that integration be delayed.”\textsuperscript{166} On the eve of opening desegregated schools Faubus called out the Arkansas National Guard to surround Central High School and prevent school integration.\textsuperscript{167} The

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{164} Merrill Taylor, “Reader—‘What Will Faubus do on Integration?’” \textit{The Arkansas Gazette}, 6 September 1956, p4A.
\textsuperscript{165} Merrill Taylor, “Reader—‘What Will Faubus do on Integration.’”
\textsuperscript{166} Gene Foreman, “School Board Issues Call for Cooperation and Understanding: Goes Forward with Tuesday Opening Plans,” \textit{The Arkansas Gazette}, 1 September 1957, p1A.
\end{footnotes}
Governor argued that threats of violence were too great, and he made an executive decision to maintain order and thus, segregation. He stated, “the inevitable conclusion therefore must be that the schools in Pulaski County, for the time being, must be operated on the same basis as they have been operated in the past.”

The Governor’s unprecedented action was of great surprise to the Little Rock community. Neither the school board nor the police department had any advance knowledge of Faubus’s plan.

The armed guards stationed outside of Central High School prevented integration even after Federal Judge Ronald Davies reordered it to begin. Faubus again claimed he was protecting the city’s students from threats of violence. Other governors called upon the National Guard to suppress angry mobs during school integration. But, Faubus was the first to call the soldiers to protect against the fear of an uprising and to prevent a court order. A September 4, 1957, editorial argued that Faubus’s fear of a violent uprising was unfounded and that his crusade against integration was only representative “of a small but militant minority.” Further the editor argued that Governor Faubus’ action was “one he must now live with, and the rest of us must suffer under.”

Central High School was only able to integrate after the city’s Mayor, Woodrow Mann, asked President Eisenhower to send federal troops to escort nine African American students into the building, making Little Rock a national news story. This issue of school integration sharply divided the city of Little Rock. Many people believed that the transition was inevitable and thus, should be accomplished in a quick efficient manner. Other members of the Little Rock community remained bitterly opposed to integration in any form. This clash in ideology contributed to the desegregation crisis at Central High School in 1957. Little Rock, like many other cities of the Moderate South, wished to remain aligned with the laws of the nation. Although many of the citizens of Little Rock did not agree with the Supreme Court’s ruling, they respected the law and thus attempted to abide by the decision. The mere fact that the school board approved the plan to desegregate and moved forward with the plan meant that they

168 “Here’s What the Governor Said About His Action,” The Arkansas Gazette, 3 September 1957, p1A.
169 Jerry Dhonau, “Arkansas National Guard Moves in Without Any Advance Notice.”
171 “The Crisis Mr. Faubus Made,” The Arkansas Gazette, 4 September 1957, p1A
172 Ibid.
believed the community was ready to desegregate. Because of Faubus’ actions Little Rock had come to symbolize racial struggles of the South. In many respects, however Little Rock’s reputation was unjust. Although the reaction to integration was mixed, enough people believed desegregation could be peacefully accomplished that they moved forward with the process. In 1957 while Little Rock attempted to desegregate, many areas of the country refused to even consider the possibility. Instead several states, one of which was Georgia, were working to actively sidestep the law and avoid integration even if it meant closing down their public schools.

**Atlanta, Georgia**

Jeff Roche’s 1998 book *Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* provides helpful insight into the integration process that took place in Georgia.\(^\text{173}\) Roche examines the how the face of school segregation changed in Georgia and particularly Atlanta after the 1961. He argues that even though Georgians were among the first to rally behind the idea of massive resistance, it ultimately failed in Georgia because it required the willingness to eliminate the public school system. Roche posits that the prospect of economic power in Atlanta created the necessity to abandon the massive resistance movement in favor a more subtle form of segregation in order to preserve business. Thus, a form of token segregation was achieved in the Atlanta public schools in 1961. However, Roche argues that Georgians merely restructured their resistance to segregation and developed a new pattern of segregation, modeled after Northern geographic segregation. This work begins where my thesis leaves off, providing an understanding of how Georgians dealt with the *Brown* ruling after 1957.

During the years examined in this thesis, the *Atlanta Constitution* was under the control of Ralph McGill. Although McGill was born in Tennessee his family members were members of the Republican Party and supporters of Lincoln during the Civil War. McGill joined the *Constitution* staff in 1929 as the Assistant Sports Editor. He served as Associate Editor and later editor from 1942-1961. In 1961 he became the Publisher of the Constitution. McGill has been called Georgia’s most influential journalist of the twentieth century and “the conscience of the South.”\(^\text{174}\) With the *Constitution* McGill won a Pulitzer Prize in 1959 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964. In 1938 McGill traveled to Vienna and heard Hitler speak. In her


biography of McGill, Barbara Barksdale Clowse, comments that upon his return to Atlanta, “He vowed to fight hatred, intolerance and especially racial prejudice for the rest of his days.”

After the Brown ruling was handed down McGill moved slowly to advocate integration. However, in later years his columns questioned segregation and challenged those who supported it. He was often attacked as an “apologist” and even considered a “traitor to the South.” In 1957 McGill’s column was syndicated and his work appeared in sixty papers nation wide. He also wrote a number of books speaking out in favor of civil rights.

Immediately following the announcement of the Brown decision the most violent and hostile reactions came from the Deep South, in particular from Atlanta, Georgia. Within hours of the ruling Governor Herman Talmadge publicly blasted the Supreme Court decision. Talmadge issued a statement later that day in which he said,

The U.S. Supreme Court by its decision today has reduced our Constitution to a mere scrap of paper. It has blatantly ignored all law and precedent and usurped from the Congress and the people the power to amend the Constitution and from the Congress the authority to make the laws of the land. Its action confirms the worst fears of the motives of the men who sit on its bench and raises a great question as to the further course of the nation.

Talmadge’s words expressed the harsh and bitter reaction of the people of the Deep South. Many Southern leaders joined Talmadge in expressing their disappointment and unhappiness with the Supreme Court ruling. The considerable time lag given to meet the Supreme Court’s decree appeared to moderate the reaction of many outside of the Deep South. But, the reaction of Georgian officials went beyond mere disagreement. Talmadge, joined by a number of the other elected officials of Georgia in condemning the Court and pledging to defy its ruling. This outright defiance of the Court’s decision stood in stark contrast with Talmadge’s plea, “to all Georgians to remain calm and resist any attempts to arouse fear or hysteria....” This dichotomy between a pledge of disobedience and a plea for calm, cool thinking marked an extensive period of ambiguity among the citizens of Georgia.

175 Ibid, 3.
177 Clowse, Ralph McGill: A Biography, 2.
Following Talmadge’s cry, the *Atlanta Constitution*, “For 86 Years the South’s Standard Newspaper,” ran numerous stories vowing that segregation would be maintained in Georgia’s public schools. In sharp contrast to the cities examined thus far, the most common topics on the subject of school integration in Atlanta were pledges of a continued dual education system and articles regarding African Americans’ desire to remain in schools of their own. Editorials, letters to the editor and standard articles all reflected a stated consensus among white Atlantans that both races wished to maintain the present system of segregation.

Three editorials that ran in the *Constitution* shortly after the *Brown* ruling contained a common theme which can be best described as the expectation of unwanted change. These editorials made it clear that the *Brown* decision was not a surprise. In fact, in Atlanta as in St. Louis, Louisville and even Little Rock, this decision had been expected and anticipated for years. Yet unlike the cases in the previous cities examined, these Atlanta editorials advocated retaining segregated public schools and thereby sidestepping the Court’s decree. Moreover, each author offered specific advice for dealing with the situation. The most significant of these proposals came from the Schley County School Superintendent, Raymond Duncan. Duncan acknowledged that he, like all other southerners, recognized that segregation in the public schools would one day come to an end. Therefore, he devised a plan to maintain the institution of segregation within the boundaries set up by the Court. Duncan’s proposal entailed opening some of the public schools to all students in a given district regardless of race. The remaining schools would be sold or leased to private interests and opened as private schools. Duncan stated, “In practice Negroes would go to the public schools and the whites to the private schools, and the Supreme Court could not object to that.” Duncan’s plan incorporated a proposal that had been widely discussed throughout the South. Georgians, like many others forced to deal with the issue of integration, declared before the *Brown* ruling that they would turn their entire school system over to private investors before they would allow racial mixing in the schools. However, as Duncan pointed out, the courts would not have accepted this as a step towards integration. Thus, Duncan’s plan half-heartedly combined the goals of the Court a agenda to

183 Duncan also served as editor of *The Eilaville Sun*, a local newspaper in Schley County, approximately 114 miles outside of Atlanta. His editorial about the *Brown* ruling served as a special edition to the *Constitution*.
184 “Raymond Duncan, “Schley County Educator Proposes School Plan.”
avoid integration.

Closely following the *Brown* ruling, a fair number of letters to the editor appeared in the *Constitution* regarding the impact of the decision on the Georgia schools. These letters fell into two categories. The first showed support for Governor Talmadge and other state officials who attempted to resist the decision. The second group of letters argued that the majority of African Americans wished to see their children in separate schools. As stated previously, throughout the South, the majority of people understood that segregated schools would eventually be ruled unconstitutional. However, when this day finally came, many people followed the example set forth by their elected leaders and either maintained calm, as was the case in St. Louis and Louisville, or reacted with contempt and disobedience as was the case in Atlanta. Early letters to the editor demonstrated that the people of Atlanta used this section of the *Constitution* as a public forum to bolster support for Governor Talmadge and other defiant officials.\(^{185}\)

Letters to the editor that revolved around the theme of African Americans’ presumed desire to maintain segregated schools appeared frequently in the Atlanta paper. The *Constitution* used a strategy of publishing letters from African Americans to reinforce its ideology. Almost every letter to the editor printed closely following the *Brown* ruling commented on this subject. Letters written by both African Americans and whites echoed the notion that neither race wanted integration. A letter from a African American parent stated, “In all this talk about segregation, is anybody thinking about the Negroes themselves? It won’t happen here in the South for a very long time. I am convinced, and one reason it will not is because the Negro does not want it. Not, at least, in the schools.”\(^{186}\) The idea that African Americans were content remaining in their own schools led to the idea of voluntary segregation. Furthermore, a letter written to the editor suggested polling African American parents to determine their true feeling on the subject. Thus, if a majority of African American parents wished to keep their children in segregated schools then that county would not be forced to desegregate.\(^{187}\) A large majority of letters to the editor and editorials in the *Constitution* reflected the idea that both races wished to maintain segregation in the public schools, sharply differentiating Atlanta from both St. Louis and


\(^{186}\) “Negro Father Asks About Court’s Decision ‘Is Anybody Thinking About the Negroes?’” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 20 May 1954, p4

Louisville. It could be that this was the prevailing idea of the time. However, it is more likely that those people who believed contrary to this position did not wish to spark a violent reaction from segregationist who already believed their way of life was in danger. Although the *Constitution* was a fairly moderate newspaper it was most likely exceptionally careful regarding what it printed, not wanting to upset the state legislature and many of its readers.

In the days following the *Brown* ruling, the front page of the *Constitution* ran articles proclaiming the Supreme Court decision to be unconstitutional and neglectful of states’ rights. These stories contained themes similar to those of both the editorial and letters to the editor sections. Articles of pure defiance and articles predicting the continuance of school segregation in the public schools of Georgia made up the majority of the stories related to the *Brown* ruling. The authors of these articles succeeded in conveying two messages. The first was a reassurance to white readers that the legislature of Georgia was doing all that it could to prevent integration in the Georgia public schools. This succeeded in calming the fears of white citizens who worried about eventual integration of the schools. Secondly, these articles demonstrated to the African American community that many parents in their position did not want integration, as they were content with the present system. Further, these stories appeared to serve as a warning to African Americans that the system of dual education was not going to change. Moreover, these articles seem to be a direct threat to anyone who would dare ask to change. The *Constitution*, just like the other newspapers in this study, can been seen as a tool, in this case used to advocate African American contentment with segregated schools.

Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, the Georgia public schools had been legally segregated since an 1872 statue that determined that any racially mixed schools would not receive money

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189 “Segregation to Survive, Cherry Says.”
from the public school fund. An 1877 amendment to the state constitution declared, “Schools shall be free to all children of the state, but separate schools shall be provided for white and black children.” From 1895-1945 four other education statues were passed requiring segregated schools. In 1957 a seventh and final education statue stated that allocating public funds for integrated schools was a felony.

It is important to note that in each of the other cities examined in this paper shortly following the Brown ruling, the city papers published a series of demographics, which reported the number of students in each school system. Often these numbers were broken down by race and age. In Louisville, the Courier-Journal also published the number of teachers that would need to be integrated. St. Louis and Little Rock even reported the estimated cost of integration as opposed to maintaining the “separate but equal” doctrine. However, none of these figures were presented in the Constitution and their absence speaks loudly. It seems that there is no reason to publish those figures if neither the state nor the city had any intention of integrating. What was the point of reporting the number of students that would need to be integrated if there is no possibility of integration? The same holds true for the status of teachers and the financial cost of desegregation. Why even bother to run the numbers if your position was that there would never be integration? The Constitution did not publish these figures because in 1954 integration was not a reality in Atlanta regardless of the Supreme Court ruling.

The months following the first Brown decision were marked by an attitude of “wait-and-see.” The state of Georgia passed an amendment to the state constitution in fall of 1954 as a precautionary measure, making it easier for the state to give money mandated for education to individuals instead of the public schools. For the most part, however the people of Atlanta waited to see what would happen during the second round of the Brown trial. Most segregationists believed their way of life would prevail because Georgia’s newly elected Governor Griffin promised he would maintain segregation, “come hell or high water” during his campaign. Further, the Constitution frequently pointed out that Georgia did not have a case pending the Supreme Court’s decision. Thus, it reassured its readers that the Brown ruling

191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
193 “Governor Stands Pat on Schools,” The Atlanta Constitution, 1 June 1955, p1.
194 Ibid.
would not directly affect the people of Georgia until a case moved through the courts.\textsuperscript{195}

Most advocates of segregation received the second \textit{Brown} decision favorably. The majority of those in Atlanta accepted the unspecified time frame given by the Court to combat decades of segregation as a victory. Atlantans and other Georgians alike hailed the Supreme Court’s decision to bring the issue back to the local level, believing that with the decision left in local control the city and state controlled their own fates. The Fulton County school superintendent Paul West stated, “I do think it is a wise thing to refer the problem to our local courts. It brings it closer to home and local courts can make a more judicious decision since they are familiar with the cases.”\textsuperscript{196}

In general, most people in the Deep South were satisfied with the second \textit{Brown} ruling, viewing it as an indefinite extension to action. Like the first \textit{Brown} decision, the most violent and defiant reaction came from Atlanta. Governor Griffin stated, “Georgians will not accept the U.S. Supreme Court’s desegregation ruling no matter how much the court seeks to sugarcoat its bitter pill of tyranny.”\textsuperscript{197} State officials throughout Georgia echoed this reaction. Lt Governor Vandiver responded similarly as did Attorney General Eugene Cook, who stated, “The Court has realized the grave problems attendant to enforcing its psycho-political decision and in a gesture calculated to be magnanimous but dictated by expediency, tossed a hot potato to the district judges.”\textsuperscript{198} This reaction continued to reassure the many segregationists in Georgia that the legislature would not allow integration for many years.

A year after the first \textit{Brown} ruling attitudes had changed very little in Atlanta. The state continued to search for ways to avoid the desegregation ruling at all cost.\textsuperscript{199} The state government vowed to maintain its way of life, and thus the people of Atlanta continued the fight as well. Most people accepted the second ruling as a minor correction to the original decision, and thus continued on without any valid attempt to begin the process of desegregating their public schools. Likewise, articles demonstrating African American contentment with the second

\textsuperscript{196} “Favorable to the South, School Officials Assert,” \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, 1 June 1955, p1.
\textsuperscript{197} “Governor Stands Pat on Schools.”
\textsuperscript{198} “Cook Rips Segregation Ruling as ‘Hot Potato,’” \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, 2 June 1955, p1.
\textsuperscript{199} Gladstone Williams, “Georgia Congressman Predicts Endless Chain of Segregation Litigation,” \textit{The Atlanta Constitution}, 2 June 1955, p18.
ruling continued to appear frequently in the *Constitution*, convincing whites of their own cause. White segregationists were comforted by the idea that African Americans in Atlanta did not wish to force school integration. The day after the second decision, an article appeared on the front page of the *Constitution* with the headline, “Ruling Gets an Approval by Negroes.”\(^{200}\) The topic of voluntary segregation by African Americans was not as prevalent in the 1955 edition of the *Constitution*. But, the apparent acceptance of the second decision by the African American community can be likened to this notion. Again the *Constitution* attempted to manipulate the attitudes of its readers by printing articles that conveyed such distinct messages. To whites it served as reassurance that the African American community was content with the decision and the slow process of gradualism. For African Americans it demonstrated the acceptance of the present system by their own community, signifying the toleration of further delay.

Following the second *Brown* ruling, Georgia officials remained focused on preserving segregated public schools. The *Constitution* continued its heavy printing of articles in support of maintaining segregation. However, the paper intermittently began running articles voicing the opposing point of view.\(^{201}\) On June 4, 1955, the Constitution ran an article reporting that nine African American parents filed a petition for early school integration in the Atlanta public school system. The petition asked for the school board to take immediate steps towards compliance with the first *Brown* ruling.\(^ {202}\) This was the first petition of its kind to be filed in Georgia. For the first time, the *Constitution* cited African Americans actively seeking to integrate the schools. In the state of Georgia the desegregation issue no longer became abstract. The African American citizens of Georgia were joining their counterparts across the South in taking the necessary steps to reach the goals set out by the Supreme Court. This event also ended the series of articles designed to demonstrate African American contentment with segregated schools.

At the start of the 1955-1956 school year the *Constitution* ran a number of articles that reported that the Atlanta metropolitan area school systems were experiencing enrollments at record highs and serious overcrowding in many schools.\(^{203}\) The *Constitution* estimated that the state had approximately 31,000 new students and over a third of them would be attending

\(^{202}\) “Steps Taken as NAACP Chiefs Gather.”
schools in the greater Atlanta area. Due to the large increase in enrollment many schools were overrun with students and forced to hold classes outside of the school buildings. The only mention of integration came in a letter to the editor in which the author commented that at long last the people of Georgia could be proud because the goal of equalizing African American schools with white schools was finally “becoming a reality.” To put this letter in perspective, at the same time that Georgians were congratulating themselves for complying with the 1896 “separate but equal” doctrine, the St. Louis school board declared its 12-month desegregation plan complete. Furthermore, a few days after the school year was underway, an article ran on the second page of the Constitution that declared, “Negroes Who Signed School Mix Plea in Ala. Said Fired.” The article reported that at the Selma, Alabama, city council’s urging African Americans who signed a petition for integrated schools were fired from their jobs. It was the council’s policy that “economic pressure” be put on anyone who took part, “in a campaign to break down the segregation bars.” This article almost appeared to be a forewarning for anyone else in Atlanta who would dare to sign a similar petition.

Little changed regarding school desegregation in Atlanta during 1956. State and city officials continued to actively oppose the integration of the public schools. The coverage in the Constitution dwindled as the second Brown decision faded into the past. As the school year began in the fall of 1956, the Constitution devoted a great deal of space to stories about integration battles taking place in three other southern cities. Clinton, Tennessee, Mansfield, Texas, and Sturgis, Kentucky, were all ordered by local courts to desegregate all or part of their school systems. However, each of these cities experienced race riots that brought the integration processes to the attention of the nation. The Constitution covered the events taking place in each of these cities until the disturbances subsided or attempts to desegregate were postponed. Yet, the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia were never mentioned. As Atlanta’s schools reopened the only news was again an increase in enrollment and overcrowding in the buildings. Coverage dealing with Brown shifted to places outside of Georgia, giving the
impression that Georgia had everything under control.

The trend of focusing integration coverage outside of the state continued into the 1957 school year. In September of 1957 Little Rock’s attempt to begin the desegregation process became national news. When Governor Faubus called out the Arkansas National Guard and refused to allow African Americans into the building, Georgia’s Governor Griffin spoke out in support of the Arkansas Governor. The Constitution reported, “Gov. Griffin declared he would call out the National Guard to preserved segregation in Georgia if it ever became necessary.” Griffin had traveled to Little Rock to address a White Citizens Council meeting two weeks prior to the event. While being interviewed on the ABC television network, Governor Faubus credited Governor Griffin for “contributing to the situation” that took place. Griffin refused to comment upon the events leading up to the National Guard’s seizure of Central High School. Yet it can be presumed that Governor Griffin was quite outspoken about the Federal Court’s order to desegregate immediately.

While integration news about Atlanta remained light, the topic was still making the front page via the Little Rock crisis. Three years after the first Brown ruling was handed down, very little had changed in Atlanta. The majority of white citizens made it clear that their city was not ready for such a transition. As time went on and other southern cities became forced to integrate, the people of Atlanta clung to their segregated lifestyles, refusing to change. Atlantans used the problems and eruptions of violence experienced by other cities as evidence that that desegregation could not be accomplished in their city. Yet as other cities slowly begin to desegregate, Atlanta continued its path of massive resistance, upholding the old traditional values of the Deep South.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the South differences in attitudes, beliefs and traditions existed. Using the Brown decision as a lens to examine different areas of the South reveals a number of subtle differences in cultural and societal attitudes that would otherwise to difficult to see. The reaction in the border areas such as St. Louis, Missouri and Louisville, Kentucky was calm. In the three years examined in St. Louis the Post-Dispatch never ran an article, which portrayed integration in a negative light. City and state officials worked to institute a per-planned program to

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desegregate the city schools in a 12-month process. Standard articles, letters to the editor, and editorials all attempted bolster support for the desegregation process. As the city began the 12-month plan and gradually desegregated, the number of articles about integration dropped as no instances of violence or disturbances were reported. A year before the crisis in Little Rock erupted the city of St. Louis proclaimed to have desegregated its schools. Thus, any focus on school integration shifted to outside the state of Missouri.

The people of Louisville, Kentucky responded to both *Brown* rulings with mixed reactions. Differences in attitudes and beliefs existed throughout the state, making even the assertion of a standardized reaction difficult. While citizens were in disagreement about the desegregation of their public schools, city and state officials pledged to comply with the decision, continually commenting that the people of Kentucky would obey the law. The fall 1956 target date to begin the integration process gave the city almost ample time to develop a plan to desegregate the schools in a calm peaceful manner. City officials also used the time to slowly prepare the citizens of Louisville for the transition. By September of 1956 the desegregation process had begun with incident and President Eisenhower called for other cities to model their integration processes after Louisville.

As in Louisville, the people of Little Rock responded with mixed reactions the *Brown* ruling, yet even if they did not agree with the decision they were united in their will to obey the law of land. State officials of Arkansas consistently worked toward achieving the goals set forth by the Supreme Court. The *Gazette*, unlike the *Post-Dispatch*, continuously included the reactions of African Americans, who appeared to be excited by the ruling, yet optimistically cautious. For the most part the people of Little Rock disagreed bitterly about school integration. The *Gazette* reported both sides of the debate. While the citizens of Little Rock were not in agreement about the desegregation of the public schools, many city and state officials believed it was important to obey the laws of land as quickly as possible. The lack of uniform support for school integration coupled with the unwarranted actions of the Governor led to the 1957 Central High School disaster. The citizens of Little Rock continuously responded to the process of integration with mixed reactions. However unlike in Louisville, the Governor was able to play on the dissent among the people to halt the integration process.

The reaction in Atlanta, Georgia was completely different from St. Louis, Louisville or Little Rock. The people of Atlanta responded to the *Brown* ruling with bitter and violent
opposition. White citizens and state officials used every means necessary to preserve the institution of segregation. Like other places in the Deep South, Atlanta established a defense known as “massive resistance” to combat the threat of integration. The newspapers became tools to help maintain segregated society. A large majority of the articles printed in the Constitution during the three years examined in this thesis possessed deep segregationist beliefs. According to the Constitution, in Atlanta, unlike in Little Rock, African Americans wished to maintain segregated schools. Integration was not a possibility to be considered during the three years examined in this paper. Little changed in Atlanta and throughout much of the Deep South. In open defiance, the citizens of this region refused to accept the Supreme Court’s decree and explored a number of ways to sidestep the ruling.

When describing the response to the Brown decision among the people of Kentucky a reporter commented it was a mixture of “harmony and riot.” Yet this varied reaction could be seen not only in Kentucky, but also throughout the South. The mixture of peace and violence marked much of the South as it attempted to transition from segregation to integration. The reactions to the Brown decision varied from state to state, county to county and city to city. There was no geographic determinism for gauging reactions to the Brown decision. Each community was left to deal with its own set of local circumstances; issues such as government leaders, demographics and financial situations shaped each city’s response to the Court’s ruling. It is impossible to see the South as politically or culturally uniform, and just as no single reaction could be found in any of the states examined in this thesis, no one reaction could be found throughout the South. Each community faced unique challenges and shaped its own responses to the Brown ruling.

Fifty years after the Brown ruling many historians have argued that in fact Brown did little to change the educational situation in this county. Furthermore, it has been posited that in some locations educational systems may even be more segregated today than in the 1950s. Yet, this argument does not begin to illustrate the full scope of the ruling. In many ways Brown failed to create the integrated school systems that were envisioned by the Supreme Court. Yet nonetheless, the ruling ultimately transformed American society and brought the issue of race to the forefront of American consciousness creating a new and different culture for those people

growing up in a post-	extit{Brown} world.
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