Jennie's Journey: From Black and White to a Vibrant Tapestry.

Carolyn Denise Kennedy

East Tennessee State University

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Jeannie's Journey: From Black and White to a Vibrant Tapestry

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Carolyn Denise Kennedy

May 2009

Dr. Louise MacKay, Chair
Dr. Eric Glover
Dr. Elizabeth Ralston
Dr. Terry Tollefson

Keywords: Civil Rights Movement, desegregation, Northeast Tennessee, life stories, leadership
ABSTRACT

Jeannie's Journey: From Black and White to a Vibrant Tapestry

by

Carolyn Denise Kennedy

Our nation has made great strides since 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1963’s *I Have a Dream* speech, and the passage of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964. However, Jeannie and other minorities continue to endure in a struggle for true equality. A debate exists as to whether race issues are improved by discussion, or if they improve by ceasing these types of discussions and not even mentioning race.

The purpose of this qualitative biographical narrative is to vicariously relive Jeannie’s Journey and ascertain what relevance her life story has to our historical timeline. The sole participant in this study was Jeannie Hodges. Data for this study were collected through 3 in-depth interviews using an interview protocol based upon a conversational interview process.

Who we are is a direct manifestation of where we have been and the journeys we have taken. Jeannie’s journey shows us that we can look at the past and discuss history without hate, pointing fingers, or laying blame. We benefit from gaining a deeper understanding of where we as a people have been as opposed to as individual races of blacks and whites. Understanding our combined histories provides an appreciation for where we are today as well as guidance for the future. The point is to gain a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of our individual histories, like threads in a tapestry. It is crucial to our continued progress that we not cease discussions about race or about this part of our historical timeline. Can we as a nation, acknowledge our past, embrace our future, and continue the journey together?
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family. First, I dedicate this research project to my husband, Keith Kennedy, for his undying support. He has had to step in and pick up my slack for the past several years as most of my hours at home have been dedicated to the completion of my course work and this study. I also dedicate this study to my children, Jasmine, Jaleessa, and Jordan. They have been patient and forgiving, as I have divided my time between them, my job requirements, and my educational endeavors. This dissertation is also dedicated to my mother, Bernice Foster. This study caused me to dig deep to find great determination and strength in order to complete such an undertaking. My mother instilled these traits in me; had it not been for her I would have never seen it through to completion. This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Claude Foster. I am grateful that he taught me never to give up. He also taught me to dream and always encouraged me to be optimistic. Last, but most certainly not least, I dedicate this study to Jeannie Hodges. Without her willingness to share her life story this study would not have been possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I thank my Lord and Savior, with whom all things are possible. Second, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my dissertation committee. Dr. Louise MacKay, who served as my dissertation chair, provided invaluable guidance, support, and the occasionally necessary kick in the hindquarters. Regardless of illness or her other obligations, she always made time to listen to my stress-induced tirades, my thoughts of giving up, and my feelings of being hopelessly lost in a labyrinth. She was always there for me ready to provide the appropriate nudge to get me refocused and back on track. I am grateful to have had a mentor such as Dr. MacKay. I am also honored to be able to call her my friend. I am also grateful to Dr. Terry Tollefson, Dr. Eric Glover, and Dr. Elizabeth Ralston for their support and guidance through this dissertation project.

There have been so many people who have played a role in the completion of this project. I apologize if I leave out anyone’s name. Dr. Jim “Daddy” Davis encouraged me to follow my heart by abandoning my first dissertation topic and instead write about a story that needed to be told, Jeannie’s Journey. Tammie Davis provided encouragement and many of the photos included in this study. My sister, Regina Hilliard, and Karen Reed-Wright provided infinite encouragement. My dissertation support group, Barbara Gamble and Marisol Hernandez, helped weed out sources and set deadlines and held me accountable to our pact not to leave anyone behind in our quest to complete our dissertations. Thank you to Debby Bryan and Annette True who provided the editing, formatting, and transcribing that I could not carve out the time to do on my own. Thank you to my many friends and colleagues, too many to name, who located articles, proofread for me, and provided enduring support and encouragement: it is finished.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

*We are not makers of history. We are made by history*

(Martin Luther King, Jr., Brainy Quotes, 2008)

It was a beautiful spring day in a picturesque city in Northeast Tennessee. The day could not have been more perfect. The sun was shining and there was not a cloud in the sky. A gentle breeze blew the leaves creating a rustling backdrop to the buzz of excitement I encountered as I entered the school building. Anticipation filled the hallways. Teachers and staff members were whispering, laughing, smiling, and hiding around corners. Months of secretly discussing, planning, meeting, and practicing, were about to give way to a magnificent celebration.

It was March 14, 2006, and I had the honor of witnessing a tribute unlike any I had ever seen! The principal, along with the help of several significant individuals, at a moderately sized elementary school, had orchestrated the ideal homage to the woman many considered the voice and face of the school. That morning as Jeannie sat at her desk at the entry to the school answering the phone and directing children and parents to wherever they needed to go, a man in a chauffeur uniform approached her and explained that he was there on behalf of her friends and family to take her on a limousine ride. The rest of us in the office were quietly peeking out of our office doorways to watch the celebration begin to unfold. I will never forget the look on her face! She was visibly surprised, curious, and elated. The gentleman took her by the arm and escorted her out of the building to the waiting limousine. By this time, faculty and staff had come out of hiding and lined the front hallway attempting to catch a glimpse of the woman they respected and admired.
Waiting in the limousine was the superintendent of the school system, the current principal, and the school’s former principal and secretary (both had served 20 years). Jeannie, who had let it slip earlier in the school year that she had always wanted to ride in a limousine, was treated to a scenic ride of her hometown. They stopped at one of the town’s top restaurants for breakfast, allowing just enough time for the rest of her colleagues to set in motion the next phase of her tribute back at the school. As the limousine returned to the school, every student, every staff member, several school system employees, and many of Jeannie’s friends and family members were on hand to greet her. Jeannie’s face glowed as she waved from the limousine window. She returned to a celebrity’s welcome back, then to a memorable tribute in the school’s auditorium, on to the city’s mayor who declared March 14, 2006, as Jeannie Hodges Day, and finally to a quaint reception in the main alcove of the school. This celebration was talked about for months afterward and will not soon be forgotten.

Background of the Study

Why did I feel the need to write about Jeannie’s Journey? Why should this biographical study be written? After taking my qualifying exams, one of the questions continued to resound in my mind:

Please choose a level of schooling (p-12, or post secondary). Discuss two or three of the historical events of the last 100 years that you believe have had the greatest impact on education in America. Describe the events. Discuss their significance. Also, feel free to anticipate how these events may shape change in educational practice in the near future. (Mackay, 2006, p. 1)

I remembered how numerous events spontaneously came to mind: the onset of standardized testing during the early 1900s, the launching of Sputnik in 1957, the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, the passing of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1975, the horrific events at Columbine in 1999, and the passing of
the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. However, personally I felt the historical event that has had the greatest impact on education was the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the ultimate desegregation of American public schools in the 1960s and 1970s.

Until schools were forced to desegregate, equality in education did not exist nor did it appear to be desired by those in power. The 1896 decision of the Supreme Court in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case “established the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine regarding public facilities and services used by Negroes” (La Morte, 1999, p. 262). This was the first case to support segregation by virtue of law. Although this case dealt with transportation, specifically passenger coaches on a train, the courts' support of segregation in this area carried over to other areas including education. According to La Morte:

> This decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, established a legal basis for segregated public facilities and services, thereby ushering in the era of *de jure* segregation in America. Where there were no state statutory or constitutional provisions pertaining to segregation, *Plessy* enabled custom to be affirmed by also providing a legal basis for dual school systems in which black and white students were segregated. Although generally associated with the Southern states, dual school systems were operated in several non-Southern states. (p. 262)

Many other racial minorities fell victim to the idea of separate but equal. Ferg-Cadima (2004) explained that African American, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian, and Latino children were segregated in California schools. Although *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was among the most significant of desegregation cases, it was not the first successful case in the fight for desegregation of public schools. Alvarez (1986) recounted the 1931 *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* case, commonly referred to as the Lemon Grove Incident. Seventy-five children of Mexican descent who had been attending the sole grammar school in the community were told that they were no longer permitted to attend the grammar school and would have to go to the school that had been built for them. This so-called “new school” was an old two-room building referred to by the Mexican parents as “La
Caballeriza” or the barnyard (Alvarez, ¶ 9). The families Boycotted, refusing to send their students to the segregated school. The Superior Court of California in San Diego ruled in favor of the Mexican parents, as a result, the 75 children were permitted to return to the community grammar school they had previously attended. Two decades later, Linda Brown’s father, as part of a class action suit of almost 200 plaintiffs from five states, with the support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, sought to end segregation in public education (Brown Foundation, 2004). In the case of Brown v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1954 decision “reversed the Plessy doctrine as it pertained to public schools by declaring that in the field of education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ had no place” (La Morte, 1999, p. 262). Prior to this Supreme Court decision, black children had been forced to attend all-black schools where funding for buildings, materials, and teachers had been limited. However, as a result of this case, school systems could no longer legally exclude children based upon race. Despite the ruling, change came slowly. According to Kotlowski (2005), presidents were reluctant to act on or enforce school desegregation, unless pressured by the federal courts, due to the risk of offending groups or individuals on either side of the issue. This unprecedented ruling was made in 1954; however, in his legendary I Have a Dream speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. was still calling for equality in 1963: “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” (King Papers Project, 2008, ¶ 13). The following year, President Lyndon B. Johnson provided the leadership to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 “…barring discrimination in public accommodations like lunch counters, bus stations, and hotels. It also prohibited employers from discriminating by race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” (Davidson, Gienapp, Heyrman, Lytle, & Stoff, 2002, p. 865).
The end of *de jure* segregation has had a great impact on education. Minority children were slowly given equal access and equal opportunity to the same learning experiences previously afforded only to nonminority children. Only with these equal opportunities in education are there possibilities of equality outside of the school setting. According to Eakin (2000), Dewey explained that schools should mirror and cultivate the values of society. Education should be the equalizer. Sadly, in some instances, the struggle for equality and acceptance continues 40 years after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Often, today’s discrimination is less overt than it was in the past. Instead of outright exclusions based upon race, today we are often faced with unanswered questions regarding whether race was the deciding factor for a person securing a specific job, having the spot as the star athlete, being chosen as a cheerleader, or gaining admittance to an advanced program class to name a few examples. Nonetheless, in most schools across our nation today, minorities are a legitimate component of an integrated school community. This integration affects not only minority children but also everyone in education. Having an interdependent society requires that all races, religions, and nationalities learn to work together in an environment of respect and acceptance. We are able to learn from each other’s experiences, traditions, and beliefs. For years, school mission statements have purported to value diversity; however, they must do more than just value it or simply put it on a letterhead. They must embody the concept of diversity in such a way that it is not even a discussion point. We must continue to strive to develop a society of blended cultures--from black and white to a vibrant tapestry--where no isolated culture or race is valued more than another is and no culture is considered unimportant. We need not consider our nation as “The Great Melting Pot” in which individual cultures are no longer discernable. Instead, we should strive to be a great tossed salad in which each individual culture still retains
its own characteristics but the salad is made all the better by the mixing and combining of all the various cultures. By working and learning together, we may prevent the repetition of the mistakes of our ancestors and form a strong foundation of mutual respect for the generations to come.

Why write about Jeannie’s Journey? Jeannie is an individual who is not flashy, she is not a hero, nor is she the type of person who strives to be center stage. She is, however, a beautiful black woman with a generous, caring, thoughtful, selfless spirit. She is respected and admired by her community, colleagues, and friends. She has spent more than 40 years working to help open doors of opportunities for others. Jeannie worked for a school system during the desegregation process and witnessed the progress made to the state of acceptance today. The struggles she faced, the events she observed and was a part of, and her actions and reactions are all important pieces of our history. Although she, as an individual, might not be considered as historically significant, she and the journey she has experienced through her life are symbolic of the journey that blacks and other minorities have experienced. Had not it been for “the journey”, where would minorities be today? How deprived our nation’s history and future would be without the blending of cultures and experiences.

Research Questions

On the heels of the 40th anniversary of the assassination of the man who dared to dream of peace, equality, and brotherhood, we pause to reflect on where we have been, the journey we have taken, and trials and tribulations yet to overcome. It is in this mindset of reflection that this biographical narrative focuses on the following research questions:
1. What events has Jeannie encountered, endured, and overcome during her life in Appalachia that are indicative of the journey that minorities throughout our nation have struggled to overcome?

2. What specific motivators have existed throughout Jeannie’s life that have inspired her to persevere in her relentless efforts to improve not only her life but also the lives of those around her?

3. Is the “journey” over; have we arrived?

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this narrative study is to explore the journey of one individual through listening to her life story. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research empowers individuals to share their life stories. Consequently, the purpose of this biographical narrative is to vicariously relive Jeannie’s Journey and ascertain what relevance her life story has to our historical timeline. “Storytellers” such as Jeannie provide the most relevant and accurate account of the shaping of our nation through prejudice and acceptance and weakness and strengths. Jeannie belongs to that special group of ordinary individuals such as Rosa Parks who refused to be treated as “different” because of the color of their skin.

We are at another crossroads in our country with the influx of the Hispanic population who are often being treated unfairly because of their “differences.” Perhaps the story of Jeannie’s Journey marked by determination, selflessness, and quiet leadership will provide us with guidance in meeting our current challenges. Jeannie’s story is important and significant; many lives are richer, happier, and more successful because she helped pave the way.
Significance of the Study

We have made great strides since 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education*, 1963's *I Have a Dream* speech, and the passage of the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964. In 2008, East Tennessee State University honored the first African American Roan Scholar. On Super Tuesday, February 5, 2008, for the first time in our nation we had the opportunity to vote for either an African American Democratic candidate or a female Democratic candidate for the office of President of the United States. In November 2008, we had the historic opportunity to elect an African American as President of the United States or a female as Vice President of the United States. However, Jeannie and other minorities continue to endure in a struggle for true equality. We live in a nation where, according to Avakian (2002), among African American and Hispanic men between the ages of 18 and 34, by the year 2020, 1 out of 3 and 1 out of 4, respectively, will be in prison. We live in a country where the national dropout rate for whites is 6.0%, blacks 10.4%, and Hispanics 22.4% (Laird, Debell, Kienzl, & Chapman, 2007). Despite the hurdles we have overcome, our nation is experiencing the resegregating of our public schools. As indicated by Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield (2003):

> At the beginning of the 21st century, American public schools are now 12 years into the process of continuous resegregation. The desegregation of black students, which increased continuously from the 1950s to the late 1980s, has now receded to levels not seen in 3 decades. Although the South remains the nation’s most integrated region for both blacks and whites, it is the region that is most rapidly going backwards as the courts terminate many major and successful desegregation orders. (p. 4)

Jeannie’s journey is one of courage, faith, and perseverance. Nonetheless, the journey is far from the full realization of the dream.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study is delimited to one subject and will focus on discussions of her life story. As this is a biographical narrative study of an individual known to me, and because I am also a black
female, my biases and values cannot fully be separated from the writing of the study. I will rely upon literature, the subject’s recollections of her life story, and my dissertation chairperson to limit bias.

**Definitions of Terms**

1. **Biographical study**—“… broad genre of narrative writings that includes individual biographies, autobiographies, life histories, and oral histories” (Creswell, 2007, p. 233).
2. **Chronology**—the organizing and retelling of an individual’s life story based on the life stages or age of the individual (Creswell, 2007).
3. **De facto**—“In fact. A state of affairs that must be accepted for all practical purposes, but does not have the sanction of laws behind it. As distinguished from de jure” (La Morte, 1999, p. 444).
4. **De jure**—“By right. A legitimate state of affairs that has the force of law behind it” (La Morte, p. 444).
5. **Historical context**—the organizing and retelling of an individual’s life story within the context of “…the subject’s family, the subject’s society, or the history, social, or political trends of the subject’s times” (Denzin, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 234).
6. **Restorying**—“an approach in narrative data analysis in which the researchers retell the stories of individual experiences, and the new story typically has a beginning, middle, and ending” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, as cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 234).

**Overview of the Study**

This biographical narrative is a qualitative study presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 has provided an introduction, a statement of purpose, and significance. The guiding research questions, delimitations and limitations of the study, definition of terms, as well as an overview
of the study were also included in Chapter 1. A review of the literature relevant to the subject’s residence, Appalachia and Northeast Tennessee, and historically significant events occurring during the timeline of this study such as desegregation and the Civil Rights Movement is presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 includes a description of the research methods used in this study. Chapter 4 includes an analysis of data collected through multiple interviews of the subject. A summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

*History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people* (Martin Luther King, Jr., Brainy Quotes, 2008)

*Introduction*

As with any review of literature, the researcher must first determine what literature is relevant and appropriate to review in light of the study being conducted. I seek to retell the story of the life journey of one African American woman during the period related to the movement toward desegregation through present day. Her journey is presented chronologically within the historical context of desegregation in America. As such, this review of the literature focuses on some of the historically significant events preceding and following the United States Supreme Court’s unprecedented decision ordering the desegregation of American public schools. This review of the related literature cannot encompass every legal case filed that relates to civil rights and desegregation; however, some of these relevant legal cases filed prior to and after the five cases that were included in the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* will be explored. Also of importance to this research project is the state of affairs relating to desegregation today, more than 50 years after the Court’s decision. This review of literature also briefly reflects on some historically significant people involved in the struggle for equal rights for all. Finally, a brief history is provided of the area in which the sole participant of this study resides. A brief review of literature regarding servant leadership is also provided.

This review of literature is not intended to be a complete chronicle of the history of America. Instead, it serves as a historical backdrop or setting for Jeannie’s Journey. Long before the idea of desegregation could take root and flourish, our nation had to come to grips
with the issue of slavery, address abolitionism, and then broach the concept of equal rights. We had to take a journey through hate, discrimination, and ignorance to arrive at acceptance, understanding, and respect. West (2002) reported:

Historians say that their lifeblood is finding, and understanding, the voices of the past, for through them we gain insight to who we are—our accomplishments, our failures, and, perhaps, our future. But for many years, historians routinely ignored these (African American) voices—pretending either they could not hear those voices or that, when heard, the voices had nothing important to say. The deafness of historians, however, did not still these voices—they remained part of the historical record—awaiting the eyes and ears of those who wanted to know the whole story …. (p. x)

Before Brown

Africans were brought to this country in shackles and chains and denied any personal rights (Puckrein, 1998). According to the United Nations (2008), the transatlantic slave trade spanned a period of 4 centuries from the 16th century to the 19th century and included the deportation of approximately 17 million people. WGBH Educational Foundation (1999) described the 1619 arrival of a Dutch ship and the exchange of approximately 20 Africans seized from a Spanish ship at Jamestown, which was founded in 1607 as the first stable British Colony. The transatlantic slave trade included the trading of goods from Europe with West Africa for enslaved Africans, who were later sold in American and European colonies; these ships would then return to Europe with goods produced in the colonies (United Nations). The Africans, and sometimes individuals from other places, were bought, sold, or exploited as slaves or indentured servants. According to Puckrein, “By 1661 … the black, unlike the white indentured servant, was regarded as a bondsman for life, and this was the beginning of slavery in the United States” (¶ 5). The United Nations explained that French law, the Code Noir of 1685, legally organized the practice of slavery in the American colonies. The law described slaves as “movable property” and described punishments such as whipping and branding that masters could use on their slaves. The slave trade continued in the United States and England until 1807 (WGBH Educational
According to WGBH Educational Foundation, by the mid-1700s the British American colonies had reached a population of about 1.5 million, of whom approximately 300,000 were slaves.

Many slaves tried to revolt or run away to escape the inhumane life of slavery. If runaway slaves were captured, they were returned to their masters, who would typically inflict physical punishment. If revolting slaves were captured, they were typically executed (WGBH Educational Foundation, 1999). Some slaves such as Dred Scott tried to fight for their rights through legal channels. Dred Scott, who had lived for a time in both slave territory and free territory, filed suit for his freedom in 1847; 10 years later, after multiple appeals, the case was heard by the United States Supreme Court. Danzer, Klor de Alva, Krieger, Wilson, and Woloch (2008) described the findings:

Chief Justice Roger Taney made two key findings. First, it held that because Scott was a slave, he was not a citizen and had no right to sue in a United States court. (second)… by banning slavery, Congress was, in effect, taking away property. … As a result, Dred Scott intensified the slavery debate as no single event had before. In going beyond what was needed to settle the case before him, Taney’s ruling became a political act and threw into question the legitimacy of the Court. Further, Taney’s opinion took the extreme proslavery position and installed it as the national law. (pp. 166-167)

This ruling, stating that blacks could never be citizens, also provided a legal basis for repealing any personal rights that had been given to blacks living in free territories. There were individuals, both black and white, who opposed and spoke out against the injustices of slavery. Some of these individuals formed humanitarian organizations. Frederick Douglass, the son of a slave woman and a white man, escaped from slavery in 1838 and was actively involved in the struggle to end slavery (National Park Service, 2008). According to the National Park Service (2008), Frederick Douglass was “. . . the most famous 19th century African American. His life was a testament to the courage and persistence that serves as an inspiration to those who struggle in the cause of liberty and justice” (p. 1). Douglass, a slave and public speaker against slavery,
established his own abolitionist newspaper, wrote a periodical, helped recruit blacks into the military, was an advisor to President Abraham Lincoln, a U.S. Marshal of the District of Columbia, the District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds, U.S. minister to Haiti, and secretary of the commission of Santo Domingo (National Park Service, 2008). Some abolitionists, such as John Brown, were considered militant. While Douglass and Brown maintained a friendship, Douglass did not support the methods used by Brown to try to bring about change. John Brown, according to WGBH Educational Foundation (1999), was determined to end slavery. He came from a very religious and antislavery white family. John Brown reportedly gave land to fugitive slaves, raised a black child as his own, participated in the Underground Railroad, and was involved in the founding of the League of Gileadites, an abolitionist organization that helped protect escaped slaves. WGBH Educational Foundation also reported that John Brown was the leader of antislavery guerillas who fought in several violent fights and attacks; he also planned to lead a war in Virginia to free slaves. On October 16, 1859, John Brown and almost two dozen other men, some black and some white, attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. He was captured and then executed in December of 1859 (WGBH Educational Foundation).

Not all abolitionists used violence to deliver their message or to try to bring about change. Some of the abolitionist organizations worked peacefully behind the scenes to help free slaves and to further the effort to secure their citizenship. Eaton (1949) reported that Quakers formed antislavery societies that promoted the gradual emancipation of slaves. The Underground Railroad was an organized system of individuals, routes, transportation, hiding places, and funding that helped runaway slaves escape to the North during the 1800s. WGBH Educational Foundation (1999) explained, “The Underground Railroad had many notable participants including John Fairfield in Ohio, the son of a slaveholding family . . ., Levi Coffin, a
Harriet Tubman’s name is commonly associated with the study of the Underground Railroad. Tubman, an escaped slave herself, risked her life numerous times to ensure a better life for others. Tubman later worked for the Union as a cook, a nurse, and a spy during the Civil War (WGBH Educational Foundation). Unfortunately, the life of an escaped slave was not one of true freedom. Escaped slaves, fugitives from the South, faced segregation, verbal insults, harassment, assault, and even murder in the North. Black churches provided schools and assistance where they could. Some organizations, such as the American Colonization Society, wanted African Americans to be returned to Africa (Danzer et al., 2008). The push to return free black people to Africa was a point of debate among the black population (WGBH Educational Foundation). However, even in the face of vicious racism, blacks chose to stay the course for true freedom, as opposed to being sent away and dismissed.

According to the WGBH Educational Foundation (1999), during the 250-so odd years of slavery, our country was operating in a state of incongruity; “…a democracy that declared all men equal but enslaved and oppressed one people to provide independence and prosperity to another” (n.p.). This contradictory state of affairs spurred the Civil Rights Movement. Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States in November of 1860. Following his election, several states seceded from the Union. South Carolina was the first state to secede from the Union, followed by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. This was the beginning of the Confederate States of America. Lincoln declared that his duty was to preserve the Union (WGBH Educational Foundation). He further explained that he did not intend to end slavery where it already existed nor did he intend to end the Fugitive Slave Law. This position upset both African Americans and those who supported them and failed to satisfy the newly
formed Confederacy. Subsequently, the Civil War began. Once the war began, Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee also seceded from the Union to join the Confederacy.

The Civil War, also referred to as the War Between the States, the War of the Rebellion, the War for Southern Independence, and the War of Northern Aggression, began in April of 1861 and ended in April 1865. Debate continues as to whether the war was caused by the polar sides of the issue of slavery, the issue of states’ rights being dominant over the decisions of the federal government, or the ensuing threat of states leaving the Union and the need to preserve the Union (Beaver, Reily, & Snyer, 2008). This debate however, is a debate of semantics; the primary right that the seceding states wanted to protect was the right to continue slavery. Livingstone (1999) argued that with the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln was making it clear to everyone that “… the war was now about saving the Union and about abolishing slavery” (p. 203). Livingstone further argued that although it may have seemed as though Lincoln's only intent was to save the Union, he understood the interrelationship of the two issues:

The Emancipation Proclamation may have raised the moral plane of the Civil War in the eyes of many Americans, but Lincoln had never been under the illusion that the war was about any issue other than the future of slavery in the Union. (p. 203)

At the onset of the war, African Americans were not permitted to enlist in the military; however, many blacks realized that this was a war against slavery, even if it was not being proclaimed as such, it was their fight (WGBH Educational Foundation, 1999). Consequently, after continued pressure, blacks were permitted to enlist in the military. According to Beaver et al. (2008), “By running from masters to become contrabands for the Union, laboring behind the scenes for Northern armies, and risking their lives on the battlefront, the slaves centralized the issue of freedom and played a key role in the North’s victory” (n.p.). Although permitted to enlist, they were by no means considered or treated equally. Even though fighting for the Union
and their own subsequent freedom, black soldiers faced discrimination and segregation. Being free did not mean being equal. Beaver et al. reported that over 500,000 slaves escaped to the North during the Civil War.

The Emancipation Proclamation was first issued as a warning to the Confederacy stating that its slaves would be freed if it did not surrender. The final proclamation was issued almost 3 1/2 months later on January 1, 1863, stating that all slaves in the Confederate states were legally freed. Because the Confederate states were in the midst of rebellion, the Emancipation Proclamation did not have an immediate impact on the South. Nor did it have an impact for the one million slaves in Union territory whom this proclamation did not proclaim to be legally free (WGBH Educational Foundation, 1999). According to Livingstone (1999), Lincoln argued, “The proclamation was clearly a war measure directed at taking away the ‘property’ that had been of such vital importance for the South and which allowed it to put so many white men in the field against Union Forces” (p. 207). Livingstone further stated that although Lincoln agreed that slaves should be free, he did not necessarily want to free them immediately, as he did with the proclamation, instead he would have preferred to have waited until people were ready.

“Lincoln had insisted all along that under the Constitution neither the president nor Congress had the authority to touch the institution of slavery in the states” (p. 207). Livingstone went on to explain that although Lincoln fully believed the Constitution was “fundamentally at odds with slavery . . . he was constrained by the narrow opinions of his multifarious constituency to say only as much as could be tolerated without fracturing northern commitment to the war” (p. 208). Regardless of the underlying reason for the proclamation, whether as a war tactic or as an intent to free slaves for moral reasons and although the Emancipation Proclamation did not completely end slavery, it was a significant start. Subsequently, four million African Americans were free
because of the passing of the 13th Amendment in January 1865 that abolished slavery in the United States and the Confederate army surrendering and ending the war on April 18, 1865 (WGBH Educational Foundation). Lincoln however did not live to see the end of the war. He was the first president to be assassinated and died on April 15, 1865.

According to Davidson et al. (2002), “Emancipation immediately released slaves from the most oppressive aspects of bondage—the whippings, the breakup of families, the sexual exploitation” (p. 466). This freedom also provided blacks the ability to travel freely without permission or paperwork and to work for their own benefits. One truly defining aspect of this new freedom was the choice to adopt a full name. Davidson et al. explained that most blacks maintained first names given to them by their parents and took on the last name of their family’s first master; others chose different names for various reasons. Free but far from equal, life for blacks continued to be a struggle. Abolishing slavery and abolishing opinions are two very separate things. Blacks continued to endure violent racism.

Packard (2002) maintained that after the war, a white quasi army evolved to keep blacks subservient to whites. Six men in Pulaski, Tennessee formed such a group in 1866 calling themselves the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Packard reported:

Before long these Klansmen transformed themselves from pranksters into their very own ‘Invisible Empire of the South,’ purveyors of terrorism who aimed at suppressing—by violence up to and including murder—any black who offended white sensibilities and any white who defended black aspirations to achieve full citizenship. (pp. 57-58)

The KKK was not alone. Other groups followed their example: the Knights of the White Camellia, the Pale Faces, the White Brotherhood, the White League, and the White Rose. The KKK and like groups responded to legislation that provided for increased voting rights for blacks in the early 1900s with violent measures including burning of blacks’ homes, torture, beating, and lynching. Packard reported that these measures “met with nearly universal official and
public approval in the South—and most often, nearly universal official and public indifference in the North” (p. 85). The Klan experienced a sort of rebirth in 1915 and then an explosion of growth in the South and across the nation. Packard reported that by the mid 1920s, fear of waning Americanism and growing hatred for blacks, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants resulted in a national Klan membership of 4 million. “The Ku Klux Kreed stressed ‘pure Americanism’ and declared that the ‘distinction’ between the races was ‘decreed by the Creator’” (Packard, p. 128).

Congress passed the 14th Amendment in 1868 overriding President Johnson’s veto. The 14th Amendment granted citizenship to all individuals whether born or naturalized in the United States, forbade states from denying any individual “life, liberty, or property without due process of law,” and provided for equal protection of law to all individuals (Library of Congress, 2008). The 14th Amendment overruled the finding of the Dred Scott case concerning blacks being citizens. In 1870, during Grant’s tenure as president, the 15th Amendment was passed ensuring all men regardless of race the right to vote except in those states that required males to be literate property owners to vote. Amendments 13, 14, and 15 were considered the Civil War Amendments (Jamar, 2007). In addition, the Civil Rights Acts of 1875, “prohibited racial discrimination in public accommodations, transportation, places of amusement, and juries. At the same time, Congress rejected a ban on segregation in public schools, which was almost universally practiced in the North as well as the South” (Davidson et al., p. 472). They further reported that during the Grant years, corruption was rampant in both the North and South with Southern whites using any means necessary to overthrow the Republican state governments, resulting in the end of Reconstruction. Davidson et al. reported:

In heavily black counties, newspapers published the names of black residents who cast Republican ballots and urged planters to discharge them. But terror and violence proved the most effective means to overthrow the radical regimes. A number of paramilitary organizations broke up Republican meetings, terrorized white and black Republicans,
assassinated Republican leaders, and prevented black citizens from voting. The most notorious of these organizations was the Ku Klux Klan, which with similar groups functioned as an unofficial arm of the Democratic Party. (p. 473)

In many areas, especially in the South, civil rights laws were not enforced (Puckrein, 1998). The Supreme Court, in the 1883 Civil Rights Cases, ruled that the Civil Rights Act and the 14th Amendment applied only to government-run institutions and not to privately owned businesses. In their place, states passed Jim Crow Laws or Black Codes to enforce segregation. Access to public places such as restaurants, hotels, public transportation, and places of entertainment was restricted or barred for blacks. According to Davidson et al. (2002), the main intent of the Black Codes was to keep African Americans in a position of inferiority. Pollak (2005) reported that the Jim Crow laws gave legal backing to the words of those driving buses, operating trains, prohibiting entrance to theaters, and even to thugs in the streets. West (2002) reported:

The legal forms of segregation, quasi-legal forms of restrictions on civil rights, and extralegal forms of subordination and violence replaced radical democratic reforms of the 1860s that enfranchised freedmen, established free public education for all children and established the civil rights of African Americans. Nationally, lynching reached record highs in the 1890s. … Additional laws permitted separate but equal facilities but ignored the gross disparities between the facilities for one race and the other. Throughout the South, new laws restricted the access of African American men to the ballot and then to the registration rolls. (p. 245)

During this same period, the late 1800s, the federal government began providing aid to states to support higher education. According to the U.S. National Archives & Records Administration (2008), Senator Justin Morrill sponsored a land grant act in 1862 to meet the need for education in agriculture and mechanic arts. The Morrill Wade Act of 1862 provided for the development of a system of state colleges and universities. However, due to segregation and discrimination, African Americans did not reap equal benefit from this initial federal aid for higher education. Harris and Worthen (2004) explained, “It was not until 1890, however, with
the passage of the second land grant act, the Morrill-McComas Act, that provisions were made for this kind of education for African Americans” (p. 447). The 1890 land grant act provided for the development of historically black land grant institutions.

In the watershed case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, the Supreme Court endorsed the notion of “separate-but-equal”. This ruling supported a Louisiana Law that mandated passenger coaches on trains within the state to provide separate but equal accommodations for blacks and whites. Plessy had boarded a train in Louisiana and sat down in a coach designated for white passengers. When told to move to a coach designated for blacks, he refused and was subsequently sent to prison (Howard University School of Law, 2004). Zimmerman (2008) reported, “The arrest of Homer Plessy on June 7, 1892, was part of a planned challenge to the 1890 Louisiana Separate Car Act by the Citizens’ Committee to test the Constitutionality of the Separate Car Law” (¶ 2). Homer Plessy, who happened to be one-eighth black and seven-eighths white, sued under the basis that he was entitled by law to all rights, privileges, and protection afforded to other white citizens because he was, in principle, of the white race. However, according to Louisiana state law, he was considered black. Albion Tourgée, legal representative of the Citizens’ Committee, represented Plessy. He argued that the Louisiana state law requiring separate passenger cars on trains designated by race was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court found that this law was constitutional. According to the Howard University School of Law, Justice Brown gave the following opinion:

In determining the question of reasonableness, it is a liberty to act with reference to the established usages, customs, and traditions of the people and with a view to the promotion of their comfort and the preservation of the public peace and good order. Gauged by this standard, we cannot say that a law which authorizes or even requires the separation of the two races in public conveyances is unreasonable, or more obnoxious to the fourteenth amendment than the acts of congress requiring separate schools for colored children in the District of Columbia, the constitutionality of which does not seem to have been questioned, or the corresponding acts of state legislatures. … The argument also
assumes that social prejudices may be overcome by legislation and that equal rights cannot be secured to the Negro except by an enforced commingling of the two races. We cannot accept this proposition. If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other’s merits, and a voluntary consent of individuals. (¶¶ 30-31)

As recorded by the Howard University School of Law, Justice Harlan dissented in the Plessy case:

If evils result from the commingling of the two races upon public highways established for the benefit of all, they will be infinitely less than those that will surely come from state legislation regulating the enjoyment of civil rights upon the basis of race. We boast of the freedom enjoyed by our people above all other peoples. But it is difficult to reconcile that boast with a state of law, which, practically, puts the brand of servitude and degradation upon a large class of our fellow citizens, -- our equals before the law. The thin disguise of “equal” accommodations for passengers in railroad coaches will not mislead any one nor atone for the wrong this day done. (¶ 52)

According to the Howard University School of Law (2004), in delivering his opinion, Justice Brown stated that the constitutionality of segregation in Washington DC’s public schools had not been questioned, it had, however, been questioned in other states. In fact, he cited the case of Roberts v. the City of Boston as precedent for his ruling in the Plessy case (Howard University School of Law). The 1848 Massachusetts case of Roberts v. the City of Boston was one of the earliest court cases to support segregated schools. The lead plaintiff in this community effort was Mr. Benjamin Roberts. African American parents claimed that their children had been denied enrollment in white schools. The African American children were instead required to attend one of the city’s two black schools. Roberts’ lawyer argued that segregation was both illegal and wrong, that the law required equal treatment of all citizens, and that the existence of segregated schools created a caste system thereby denying equality under the law (Net Industries, 2008). Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw concurred with the petitioner’s lawyer that all were equal before the law. However, he contended that being equal did not ensure equal treatment, such as between men and women, adults and children, and between
whites and blacks. Shaw dismissed the case. He declared that segregation was in the best interest of both races and that if prejudice did indeed exist, nothing would be resolved by forcing the two races to attend school together. Melton (2008) explained the impact of the Roberts case, stating, “Throughout the rest of the 19th century, courts in other states, both North and South, cited the Roberts opinion to show that separate white and black school systems did not violate principles of equality before the law” (¶ 5). Ironically, as Melton explained, the Roberts case was cited in the Plessy case and in numerous other cases for half a century; however, in 1855, just 6 years after Roberts v. City of Boston, Massachusetts legally eliminated segregated schools and the practice of basing enrollment on color, race, or religion within the state (National Park Service, 2007a). Regardless, the ruling in the Plessy case provided federal constitutional support to apply the “separate-but-equal” doctrine, which was the law of the land in most states, without restraint, to all aspects of life from marketplaces to education. “The majority decision in Plessy v. Ferguson served as the organizing legal justification for racial segregation for over 50 years” (Zimmerman, 2008, p. 7).

Brown

Separate but equal was a misnomer. In truth, separate facilities could not be equal. In agreement with the common thought that education is the key to a better future, education was one of the primary arenas in which blacks adamantly fought for equality and justice. According to the National Park Service (2007a):

Religion, education and community have proven to be the cornerstone of self-determination on the part of African Americans. One of the most prominent examples of this cornerstone concept can be found in the early unrelenting challenges to segregate public schools. These school cases typify the ongoing struggle for civil rights, social equality and racial justice in the United States. (¶ 1)

Black schools were underfunded and unprepared to provide an education comparable to that provided in white schools. The path to desegregation was one wrought with prejudice,
humiliation, violence, courage, faith, and determination. As stated before, although Brown v. Board of Education was not the first case in the struggle for desegregation, it was and continues to be one of the most significant. There were numerous cases preceding the legendary Brown case. National Park Service (2007a) stated there were 11 cases related to desegregating public schools in the state of Kansas alone between the years of 1881 and 1949 and well over 200 cases across the nation following Brown.

As stated in FindLaw (2008b), one such case relating to the idea of separate but equal was Cumming v. Board of Education of Richmond County, Georgia. In this 1899 case, the United States Supreme Court confirmed the supreme court of Georgia’s interpretation of the law concluding the state was within its rights to impose taxes on all citizens, white and black, and to use these funds to provide a high school for white students only. The U.S. Supreme Court explained that the board was faced with the dilemma of whether to provide a high school for fewer than 100 black children or provide an education in primary schools for 300 black children. Of note was the explanation that the decision would be either a primary school or a high school for blacks, not both. The Court stated that the board decided in favor of the majority of the black children (FindLaw). Although the Plessy ruling called for separate-but-equal facilities, the Court did not see an issue with providing a free high school education for white students while black students wanting a high school education would have to pay to attend private schools. Interestingly, the plaintiffs in this case were not filing suit against segregation; instead, the suit was filed because the board of education refused to provide a separate and equal high school.

Berea College, founded in 1855 in the state of Kentucky, was the only fully integrated coeducational school in the South at that time (Nation Master, 2005). However, a Kentucky law passed in 1904 made it illegal to teach black and white students in the same school. The college
challenged the law in both the Kentucky Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court. It is of interest that Justice Harlan dissented in the *Berea College v. Kentucky* case in 1908 as he did in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896 (Nation Master). The Court supported the state’s finding that even in the case of private schools; the state was within its rights to disallow integrated education. The state later amended this law in 1950 to allow for voluntary integration.

Segregation was not just a black and white issue. During the mid 1900s, segregation laws and practices focused on keeping the white race separate from all nonwhite races. In the 1927 Supreme Court of the United States case of *Gong Lum v. Rice*, the school district’s refusal to allow Martha Lum to attend a consolidated high school because she was of Chinese descent was supported by the Court. The decision was based on the 1890 Mississippi State Constitution that “… divided educable children into those of the pure white or Caucasian race on the one hand, and the brown, yellow, and black races, on the other …” (Brown@50, 2004, ¶ 9). The state was required to provide separate schools for students of the white race and students of the colored races, which it did. The state was not required to provide schools for each of the colored races.

According to Puckrein (1998), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909 to fight, by means of demonstrations and legal action, against segregation and “for equal educational opportunities and complete enfranchisement of black Americans” (¶ 20). The NAACP made significant gains in ending discrimination in the areas of voting, civil rights, housing, transportation, public recreation facilities, and education. Puckrein also reported:

Interracial reform, even with the help of activist white liberals moved very slowly, and it took the extensive disruptions of World War II to shatter established patterns of segregation. Thoughtful whites became painfully aware of the contradiction in fighting
the racist philosophy of Nazism in Europe while permitting racial discrimination at home. (¶ 24)

Jamar (2007) stated, in 1948, 3 years after the creation of the United Nations and the end of World War II, “The UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that required nations to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin among other things” (¶ 5). About this same time, President Truman mandated the full integration of the military and federal government. Jamar further reported:

The United States was rightly shown to be hypocritical for promoting non-discrimination and equality around the world while allowing apartheid in a significant portion of its territory. The separate-but-equal doctrine was now adverse to the broader, international interests of the United States in fighting the Cold War and the reality of inequality was documented beyond dispute. (¶ 5)

The *Mendez v. Westminster* 1946 case, argued in a district court in California, gave reassurance that the struggle to desegregate public schools had not been in vain and hope that change was not only possible but was happening. This case was filed on behalf of approximately 5,000 American citizens of Mexican or Latin descent against school districts in Orange County, California (LearnCalifornia.org, 2008). According to Tolerance.Org (2006), in the early 1900s individuals of Mexican or Latin descent faced segregation in parks, theatres, public swimming pools, restaurants, and public schools just like individuals of African American descent. During the early 1900s, the majority of the schools in California that had large Mexican and Latino populations were segregated. Tolerance.Org reported that Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona also segregated students of Mexican descent. Southern California had numerous small farming communities where white ranch owners employed Mexican Americans to work the field. These workers primarily lived in segregated parts of the community in mediocre housing. “Like many California towns at the time, Westminster really comprised two separate worlds: one Anglo, one Mexican” (Tolerance.Org, ¶ 5). According to the school districts, the Mexican and Latino
children were segregated based on being non-English speakers; not based on race or ancestry.

One of the schools established for non-English speakers was the Hoover School. “A small frame building at the edge of a muddy cow pasture, the Hoover School stood in stark contrast to the sleek 17th Street School, with its handsome green lawns and playing fields” (Tolerance.Org, ¶ 6).

In addition to the physical differences in the facilities, there were significant differences in the curriculum. According to Tolerance.Org, instead of challenging math and science courses, the Mexican schools taught agricultural and domestic skills:

[to] help these children take their place in society. … If a man has very much sense or education either, he is not going to stick to this kind of work. So you see it is up to the white population to keep the Mexican on his knees in an onion patch. (¶¶ 9 & 10)

The Latinos did not agree that their children’s futures were limited to being field workers. If they were to have a better future, they knew they had to have a better education.

After unsuccessfully protesting and making formal requests to the school board, the Méndezes, along with four other families, filed a class action suit on behalf of the Mexican-American children forced to attend segregated schools (Tolerance.Org, 2008). The defense cited Plessy v. Ferguson as legal grounds for racial segregation and described the benefits of providing instruction in American values and cultures and language acquisition in separate schools.

However, considering that many of the Mexican American children were fluent in English and were given no tests to determine their fluency, this argument was not valid. Tolerance.org reported, “The racist underpinnings of such ‘Americanization’ programs became apparent … Under oath, Kent (one of the school districts’ superintendents) said he believed people of Mexican descent were intellectually, culturally and morally inferior to European Americans” (¶ 30). This statement outraged parents. According to Tolerance.org:

U.S. District Court Judge Paul J. McCormick was also appalled by Kent's blatant bigotry. On February 18, 1946, he ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. In his opinion, McCormick pointed out segregation "fosters antagonisms in the children and suggests inferiority
among them where none exists." Because the separate schools created social inequality, he reasoned, they were in violation of the students' constitutional rights. He also pointed out there was no sound educational basis for the segregation of Anglo and Mexican students since research showed segregation worked against language acquisition and cultural assimilation. (¶ 33)

The school districts filed an appeal. According to Tolerance.org, the nation was following this case and waiting to see how it would end. They further reported that Thurgood Marshall and other attorneys with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Japanese American Citizens League, and the Jewish Congress provided information to the court during the appeals process. Minorities across the nation were in the midst of civil rights struggles. Upon reviewing the State of California’s education laws, the court determined that the state had detailed a clear intent to prohibit division based upon race or ancestry. In 1947, the appeals court supported the decision of the district court in favor of the plaintiffs. The school districts did not appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Tolerance.org reported the following about the decision of the Méndez v. Westminster case:

Even if it would not rewrite the law of the land, Méndez v. Westminster still had a significant regional impact. Like a pebble tossed into a pond, the legal victory sent ripples of change throughout the Southwest. In more than a dozen communities in California alone, Mexican Americans filed similar lawsuits. Chicano parents sought and won representation on school boards and gained a voice in their children's education. The decision also prompted California Gov. Earl Warren to sign legislation repealing a state law calling for the segregation of American Indian and Asian American students. (¶ 39)

The legendary Brown decision was a culmination of several cases originally filed in the District of Columbia, Delaware, Virginia, South Carolina, and Kansas. In 1950, Bolling v. Sharpe was filed in the District of Columbia in an attempt to secure admission of 11 black students into a newly built segregated school. Charles Hamilton Houston, an attorney for NAACP, did not file based on unequal facilities, rather based on the actual issue of segregation. The case was dismissed by the U.S. District court citing a recent DC case, Carr v. Corning,
where the decision supported the constitutionality of school segregation. Attorneys with the NAACP filed an appeal (National Park Service, 2007b).

In 1951, because of separate and unequal conditions in facilities and transportation, the cases of Belton v. Gebhart and Bulah v. Gebhart were filed in Delaware’s Court of Chancery. Delaware’s first black attorney, Louis Redding, was the lawyer in both cases. In regard to those two cases, The National Park Service (2007b) reported the following, “In a groundbreaking decision, the Chancellor ruled that the plaintiffs were being denied equal protection of the law and ordered that the 11 children involved be immediately admitted to the white school” (¶ 3). The school system filed an appeal. Although the Chancellor ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, nothing was done to change Delaware’s law regarding segregation (National Park Service, 2007b).

Morton High School, in Farmville, Virginia was the site of a 2-week student protest organized by Barbara Rose Johns in 1951. The students sought assistance from the NAACP. The school for the black students lacked a cafeteria, gym, clinic, appropriate faculty restrooms, and space. Some of the buildings were substandard and the lack of space resulted in some students being taught in an old school bus. Attorneys with the NAACP filed suit, Davis v. County School Board, in 1951 with the intent of ending segregation in Virginia’s schools and securing the right for 117 black students to enroll in the white schools. The U.S. District Court stated that segregation was not detrimental to either race. The school board was told, however, to make repairs at the black school and to ensure that it was equal (National Park Service, 2007b).

What started as a simple request for bus transportation to the black school in Clarendon County, South Carolina turned into a lawsuit against segregation. A school principal, Reverend
J. A. DeLaine, organized a group of 20 parents and secured the support of legal counsel from the NAACP. A local lawyer, Harold Boulware, along with Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP, filed the case of *Briggs v. Elliott* against the president of the Clarendon County school board in 1950. Just like the *Davis v. County School Board* case in Virginia, the U.S. District Court ruled in favor of the defendants with an order to institute plans to equalize the black school. One of the three judges, Judge Julius Waring, filed a dissenting opinion. He was in favor of desegregating public schools. “Facing retaliation from irate segregationists, Waring left the state soon after J.A. DeLaine and Harry Briggs (the parent for whom the suit was named) lost their jobs as a result of their involvement with the case” (National Park Service, 2007b, ¶ 9).

The Topeka, Kansas chapter of the NAACP recruited a group of 13 parents whose 20 children had been refused admission to schools in their neighborhoods. The parents had been told that their children would have to attend one of the four schools designated for African American students. Consequently, the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* was filed in 1951. The group of 13 parents was represented by five lawyers, three local and two from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. It is a common belief that the case was named for Oliver Brown because his name came first alphabetically on the list of plaintiffs. According to the National Park Service (2007c), Darlene Brown would have been listed prior to Oliver Brown; however, the attorneys believed that it would be best for the case to be named after a male as opposed to a female. Interestingly, the U.S. District Court ruled in favor of the defendants, although they recorded their acceptance of the evidence presented concerning the adverse affect that segregation caused black children (National Park Service, 2007b). The National Park Service (2007b) stated the U.S. Supreme Court would later quote these findings in its 1954 *Brown* opinion.
In December of 1952, the above five cases, substantially based on the same issue: the constitutionality of the doctrine of separate-but-equal opportunities, were combined and brought before the U.S. Supreme Court. According to the National Park Service (2007c), “Ultimately, the NAACP sought to end the practice of ‘separate but equal’ throughout every segment of society, including public transportation, dining facilities, public schools and all forms of public accommodation” (¶ 10). Thurgood Marshall, along with a team of attorneys, represented nearly 200 plaintiffs in this U.S. Supreme Court case. The U.S. Supreme Court did not reach a decision when the case was first argued in 1952. Following the first round in the U.S. Supreme Court, the judges were split. Jamar (2007) reported that of the nine judges, four were firmly in favor of overturning the ruling in *Plessy*, which legitimized the doctrine of separate, but equal; two judges favored the rights of the states; the remaining three judges, including Chief Justice Vinson, were not in favor of overturning a decision that had behind it more than 50 years of court support. Accordingly, the Supreme Court decided that the case would be reargued during the following term. According to the National Center for Public Policy Research (2008), the primary reason for reargument was to consider the circumstances involved in the adoption of the 14th Amendment.

Ironically, Chief Justice Vinson, one of the judges that favored allowing *Plessy* to stand, died just prior to the reargument of the *Brown* case (Pollak, 2005). Earl Warren was appointed to replace Vinson. Pollak commented on the case being reargued:

Like Dred Scott, Brown and Bolling were argued on the merits twice. The first argument was in the fall of 1952. In June 1953, the Court ordered reargument for the following term and directed counsel to address a series of questions. The first two questions sought guidance from counsel with respect to the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment as understood by its framers and ratifiers. What evidence was there that the framers and ratifiers ‘contemplated or did not contemplate, understood or did not understand’ that the amendment ‘would abolish segregation in public schools?’ If there was no understanding that the amendment ‘would require the immediate abolition of segregation in public
schools,’ did the framers and ratifiers nonetheless contemplate that, pursuant to the amendment, a future Congress or the courts, ‘in light of future conditions,’ might abolish public school segregation. (p. 38)

With the reargument of Brown in December of 1953, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the opinion of the court, which was accepted as a unanimous decision in May 1954. The court did not go as far as the NAACP had wanted, which was to end segregation in all facets of public life, however, they did decide that within the arena of education the Plessy doctrine could no longer apply. The court agreed that in education, separate cannot be equal. Jamar (2007) noted, “Justice Warren wrote for the court, ‘We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate facilities are inherently unequal’ (¶ 15). The basis for their decision was the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment in the four state cases and the Due Process clause of the 5th Amendment in the District of Columbia case. This ruling in the District of Columbia case communicated to the federal government that it was under the same duty as the states in regard to desegregation (Jamar).

In order to determine how to implement the decision, the court ordered that Brown be further argued during the next session. The following year, in 1955, the court handed down its mandate: all schools were to be desegregated “with all deliberate speed” (Jamar, 2007, ¶ 18). Kirk (2007) reported that Brown II failed to give either specific deadlines or guidelines for accomplishing desegregation. The National Historic Site of Brown v. Board of Education explained, “The initial court ruling rendered in 1954 that determined racial segregation in public education was unconstitutional is known as Brown I. The court implementation mandate of ‘with all deliberate speed’ in 1955 is known as Brown II” (National Park Service, 2007c, ¶ 11). They further explained that later in 1979 the court was petitioned to reopen the original Brown case to determine if the local school board of Topeka, Kansas had in fact completely removed
segregational practices. This case, known as *Brown III*, resulted in the building of two magnet schools in Topeka.

With *Brown I*, blacks could see the light at the end of the tunnel. They had shown determination and perseverance and could now see change beginning to happen. The court no longer sanctioned segregation in public education. The desire was to put an absolute end to segregation in all aspects of public life. *Brown* did not accomplish this aspiration; however, it was a definite giant step toward that end. According to Kirk (2007), “Although the ruling pertained only to schools, the questioning of ‘separate but equal’ threatened the whole edifice of segregation in the southern states” (pp. 23-24). The U.S. Supreme Court handed down a mandate; however, saying it shall be so and making it so, are two definitely different things. Decades of debate and resistance followed the *Brown* decision. Kirk reported that the Supreme Court’s position was weakened not only by the individual citizens asserting that there would be massive resistance but also by the statements of individuals and branches of the federal government. President Eisenhower was reported to have said in private that his recent appointment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, who had handed down the *Brown* decision, was the “biggest damn fool mistake he had ever made” (Kirk, p. 24). Many congressional representatives refused to back the court’s decision citing it as an abuse of judicial power.

*After Brown*

“The events of the civil rights movement seemed to flow like strong rivers into a mighty ocean of justice following the *Brown* decision” (Goldfield, 2002, p. 246). According to Puckrein (1998), the modern-day civil rights movement was launched on December 1, 1955 when Rosa Parks, an African American seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama refused to give up her seat on
a city bus to a white man. Mrs. Parks was ordered to move to the back of the bus, as was common practice at the time; she refused and was subsequently arrested. According to Boyd (2000), Rosa Parks recalled being put off the bus in 1943 by the same driver. In a book he edited, Boyd included Rosa Parks' own retelling of the event from her book, *My Story*:

I saw a vacant seat in the middle section of the bus and I took it. I didn’t even question why there was a vacant seat even though there were quite a few people standing in the back. … There was a man sitting next to the window and two women across the aisle. The next stop was the Empire Theater and some whites got on. They filled up the white seats and one man was left standing. The driver looked back and noticed the man standing. Then he looked back at us. He said, "Let me have those front seats" because they were the front seats of the black section. Didn’t anybody move. We just sat right where we were, the four of us. Then he spoke a second time: "Y’all better make it light on yourselves and let me have those seats." The man in the window seat next to me stood up, and I moved to let him pass by me, and then I looked across the aisle and saw the two women were also standing. I moved over to the window seat. I could not see how standing up was going to "make it light" for me. The more we gave in and complied, the worse they treated us. … People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in. The driver of the bus saw me still sitting there, and he asked was I going to stand up. I said, "No." He said, "Well, I’m going to have you arrested." Then I said, "You may do that." These were the only words we said to each other. … As I sat there, I tried not to think about what might happen. I knew that anything was possible. I could be manhandled or beaten. I could be arrested. People have asked me if it occurred to me then that I could be the test case the NAACP had been looking for. I did not think about that at all. In fact, if I had let myself think too deeply about what might happen to me, I might have gotten off the bus. But I chose to remain. (pp. 369–370)

The Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development (2008) reported that Mrs. Parks had been active in the civil rights struggle for several years before her arrest in 1955. She and her husband Raymond had worked in the NAACP. During her lifetime, Rosa Parks was awarded numerous plaques, certificates, awards, and honorary doctorate degrees. There are museums and libraries built in her honor. The state of Michigan has honored her with “designating the first Monday following February 4, as Mrs. Rosa Parks’ Day” (Rosa & Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development, ¶ 11). In 1996, President Clinton awarded Mrs.
Parks the Presidential Medal of Freedom and later the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor in 1999 (Academy Of Achievement, 2005).

Subsequent to her arrest, blacks and individuals of other races who supported an end to this type of human injustice supported a boycott against the Montgomery bus company, as well as sit-ins and other demonstrations. Martin Luther King, Jr., a local minister, led the boycott of the city bus company. For just over 1 year, blacks refused to ride the buses in Montgomery. Initially, this boycott received little attention; however, once it reached the point of causing an economic hardship for the bus company, the protest gained much attention. The federal court and later the Supreme Court ruled that the Montgomery bus company was violating the 14th Amendment rights by denying equal rights to all citizens. “The boycott ended, and it thrust into national prominence a person who clearly possessed charismatic leadership, Martin Luther King, Jr.” (Puckrein, 1998, ¶ 33). King would be a vibrant thread throughout the struggle for civil rights.

In 1957, nine black children in Little Rock, Arkansas, commonly referred to as the Little Rock Nine, made their mark on our historical timeline. Kirk (2007) explained that Daisy Bates, an NAACP leader, had arranged for the nine students to meet her, her husband L.C. Bates, and two white and two black church ministers who would act as chaperones to the students integrating Central High School on September 4, 1957. One student, Elizabeth Eckford, did not get the message. As a result, she boarded a bus and attempted to enter the school alone. Elizabeth Eckford recalled the enraged crowd of approximately 400 people and being screamed at, taunted, spit on, pushed down the stairs, and people threatening to lynch her simply because she tried to go to the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas (Delbanco, 2007; Kirk). She fled to a nearby bus stop escaping physical harm. Three years after the landmark
Brown case, which made it illegal to force children to attend segregated schools based upon their race, Arkansas’s Governor Orval Faubus continued to refuse to integrate Arkansas’s public schools. He went so far as to order the National Guard to prevent the desegregation of Central High School.

According to Delbanco (2007), “After a few weeks, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent 1,000 armed soldiers to the scene. …the Little Rock Nine finally attended a full day of classes at Central High School on September 25, 1957” (p. 4). This military escort to and from school became the students' daily routine. Although they made it inside the school, the battle continued. The nine black students were subjected to threats, insults, and being surrounded and bumped. Kirk reported that white students were encouraged to make life inside the school as unbearable as possible with the intent of getting the black students to leave. One black student was expelled for fighting back. The remaining eight students, however, finished out the school year with Ernest Green becoming the first black graduate of Central High School. It was not until 1972 that public schools in Little Rock were fully integrated (Delbanco).

According to FindLaw (2008a), Arkansas reportedly amended its state constitution in 1956 with a directive to oppose, within the Constitution, the unconstitutional U.S. Supreme Court decision to end segregation in public schools. In the 1958 Cooper v. Aaron case, the governor and legislature of the state of Arkansas claimed that they were not bound by the U.S. Supreme Court’s interpretation of the United States Constitution (Find Law, 2008b). It was further claimed that:

Due to actions by the Legislature and Governor of the State opposing desegregation, and to threats of mob violence resulting therefrom, respondents were unable to attend the school until troops were sent and maintained there by the Federal Government for their protection; but they attended the school for the remainder of that school year. Finding that these events had resulted in tensions, bedlam, chaos and turmoil in the school, which disrupted the educational process, the District Court, in June 1958, granted petitioners’
request that operation of their plan of desegregation be suspended for two and one-half years, and that respondents be sent back to segregated schools. (FindLaw, 2008b, ¶ 2) The U.S. Supreme Court gave an immediate response; they declared that the Constitution was the “supreme law of the land,” that the U.S. Department of Justice had the responsibility and authority to interpret the law, and that Article VI of the Constitution bounds the states to the judicial department’s interpretations of the “supreme law of the land” (Find Law, 2008b). The Supreme Court agreed that public education was primarily the responsibility of the states; however, it also said that this responsibility must be applied in compliance with federal requirements. According to Kirk (2007), “On September 12th, in the landmark ruling of Cooper v. Aaron, the Court said that violence and disruption were not justifiable reasons for delaying school desegregation” (p. 29). Governor Faubus was still not ready to comply; he refused to desegregate and chose instead to close the city’s schools. The schools remained closed from September 1958 until August 1959 (Kirk).

The schools in Little Rock, Arkansas were not the only schools closed in defiance of the U.S. Supreme Court’s mandate to desegregate. Instead of integrating their public schools, from 1959 to 1964, Prince Edward County Schools in Virginia were closed by the school board in defiant protest of the desegregation mandate (National Park Service, 2007b). Even after re-opening those schools, the fight for and against desegregation continued. There were also numerous white parents across the nation who withdrew their children from schools that were forced to integrate, instead, enrolling them in private white schools: a phenomenon termed “white flight” (Kirk, 2007, p. 30).

In 1960, public schools in New Orleans were ordered to desegregate. Ruby Bridges, now Ruby Bridges Hall, recounted her experience in integrating an elementary school in New Orleans. Hall (2000) explained that as a result of the desegregation mandate black
kindergarteners in New Orleans were administered a test by the city school system to determine which black children would be chosen to integrate the first grade. The city’s desegregation plan called for integrating one grade level per year at two of the city’s white elementary schools. Six black children “passed” the test and were told which of the two formerly white elementary schools they would attend. Of the six children, only four would actually attend; the parents of the other two decided not to send their children. On November 14, 1960, Ruby Nell Bridges made history as she and her mother were escorted to and from William Frantz Elementary by 14 federal marshals. Ruby, who was 6 years old at the time, faced a mob of white protestors who yelled at her, threw things, and made threats. Riots broke out all over the city. On the 1st day, Ruby and her mother did not leave the school office; however, on the 2nd day; Ruby met her teacher, Mrs. Henry. There were no other students in the class with Ruby because the majority of white parents had withdrawn their children from the school (Hall). PBS Online / WGBH (2006) stated, “By the end of the week, only three white families remained in the Frantz school; all white parents had removed their children from McDonough” (¶ 3). Hall reported that her father lost his job, her family was refused service at a grocery store, and her grandparents in Mississippi were asked to leave the land that they had sharecropped for 25 years. Hall recalled how Mrs. Henry had explained integration to her, “It’s not easy for people to change once they have gotten used to living a certain way. Some of them don’t know any better and they’re afraid. But not everyone is like that” (¶ 21). By the end of the school year, the daily mob waiting for Ruby outside the school had shrunk to just a few. According to PBS Online / WGBH, the other three black children who integrated New Orleans’ McDonough Elementary had similar experiences to that of Ruby Bridges.
Hall (2000) went on to explain how the following year was very different. There were no federal escorts, no protestors, no Mrs. Henry (she was not rehired), but there were other students, white and a few black. PBS Online / WGBH (2006) reported that concurrent with school integration was the mass exodus of white students and their families from the city to the suburbs resulting in an increasingly black majority in the public schools. Ruby and her first grade teacher Mrs. Henry were reunited in 1995. They often attended speaking engagements together.

Individuals made significant impacts in the postsecondary arena as well as individuals in elementary and high schools. College students were a significant factor in the civil rights movement. One case in point, in 1960 four black students in Greensboro, North Carolina attempted to place an order at a local lunch counter. Instead of leaving or becoming violent when they were refused service, they simply remained seated at the lunch counter until closing time. According to Puckrein (1998), their peaceful defiance began the sit-in movement that moved swiftly through large portions of the nation.

Another facet of the civil rights movement was the freedom rides. An interracial direct-action group founded in 1942, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), began sending black and white activists called "freedom riders" by buses into the South in 1961. These freedom riders served as test subjects to examine the segregation laws and practices in interstate transportation (Puckrein, 1998). The freedom riders often came under physical attack by segregationists. According to Goldfield (2002), “The bloody freedom rides of 1961 exposed the violence that had been hidden from national publicity, ended segregated travel on interstate highways, and created an awareness that segregation was a brutal system of denial and oppression” (p. 247).

During the late 1960s, the civil rights movement was very much a two-sided coin. On the one side were King and those who believed in nonviolent action and on the other were an
increasing number of more militant protestors speaking out for “black power” and swifter progress. By the mid 1960s, black youths were increasingly growing frustrated and impatient. Black youths, especially in the North, charged black adults with being too patient in waiting for equal rights. They wanted change, they wanted it then, and they were willing to fight for it. The black youth sought affirmation; they turned to the Nation of Islam. According to Hine and Thompson (1998), Malcolm X was the most powerful spokesman of the Nation of Islam. In stark contrast to King, Malcolm X did not speak about patience and quiet dignity; he called out for black power, anger, and violence. Hine and Thompson (1998) reported, “He spoke not of the need and right to enter the white world, but of the beauty of the African heritage” (p. 297).

Following Malcolm X’s murder in 1965, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality both grew more militant. In 1966, “The Black Panther Party was founded, promoting black pride, black militancy, black self-protection, and black self-reliance” (Hine & Thompson, 1998, p. 297). Hine and Thompson further explained that although the image of the Black Panther Party was one of young black men with guns, the organization did do some good for the black community. Painter (2006) reported that the Black Panther Party provided a free breakfast program, free medical and dental clinics, clothing, shoes, transportation, and legal advice. They also published their own newspaper and created freedom schools. Philosophically and morally, the Black Panther Party was at odds not only with the white community, but also with many in the black community as well. According to Painter, in the mid-1970s, “FBI harassment, police attacks, self-inflicted murders, criminal justice convictions, imprisonment, and internal conflicts over ideology together destroyed the organization and scattered its leadership” (p. 297).
However, Puckrein (1998) explained, “Despite this shift toward militancy on the part of black groups in the late 1960s, King never wavered in his commitment to the principles and practice of nonviolence to achieve his aims of social justice and human dignity” (¶ 56). According to Cavendish (2008), King’s role model and inspiration for his beliefs in nonviolent protest was Mahatma Gandhi. Cavendish reported King’s rebuttal in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* to those who criticized his protest, “Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue” (p. 14). King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

Garrow (2003) reported that the April 1963 demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama were intended to bring about an end to segregation in the city’s public facilities and to open opportunities for new jobs. According to Puckrein (1998), “The demonstration was notable merely because of the large number of participants, including many schoolchildren, and the large number of arrests” (¶ 45). One of the individuals arrested was Martin Luther King, Jr. During his time in prison, he wrote the now famous *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Birmingham’s reportedly racist public safety commissioner, Eugene Connor, did all he could to derail any negotiations. Four weeks into the demonstrations, African American marchers and those watching on the sidelines were victims of pummeling water from fire hoses and attacks from police dogs. The protests in Birmingham served as a catalyst for both positive national sympathetic demonstrations as well as violent demonstrations including terror bombings and other displays of retribution. Following the international attention of the protests and violence in Birmingham, King stated the time was right for a mass movement that would force the president
and congress to take action in furthering civil rights. President Kennedy did take action.

Puckrein reported:

The Birmingham demonstration did not bring the concessions that the marchers sought, but the protest was enormously important because it compelled the American people to face the problem of discrimination in a way they had never done before. For the first time in American history, the president appeared before the nation and declared that race discrimination was a moral issue. A few days later, he submitted a new and broadened civil rights program to Congress. … As Congress and the nation debated the proposed civil rights bill, black activists planned a mammoth peaceful demonstration of Americans from all walks of life aimed at hastening progress and showing interracial agreement. (¶ 47)

Civil rights, religious, labor, and civic organization leaders came together to plan the mass demonstration. On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke before a crowd of over a quarter million people who had gathered in Washington DC for the “greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation” (Garrow, 2003, p. 31). Two hundred fifty thousand individuals from different ethnic and religious backgrounds gathered at our nation’s capital and marched in solidarity from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial. Through this March on Washington, supporters hoped to bring attention to the plight minorities faced. In his speech, King cited several historical documents that fell short of the promises they made such as the Emancipation Proclamation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution. King declared that it was time to honor those promises. Garrow discussed how King had not planned in advanced to use the phrase "I have a dream." King had used the phrase in several speeches before, “but on none of those occasions had it had anywhere near the impact that it did on August 28” (Garrow, p. 35).

President Kennedy did not live to see the civil rights programs he had proposed become law (Puckrein, 1998). Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. Ten months after the March on Washington, Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law John F. Kennedy’s watershed Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to Puckrein, this act was:
The most far reaching and comprehensive law in support of racial equality ever enacted by Congress, the legislation gave the attorney general additional power to protect citizens against discrimination and segregation in voting, education and the use of public facilities. It outlawed discrimination in most places of public accommodation, established a federal community Relations Service and a federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and extended the life of the Commission on Civil Rights. The U.S. Office of Education was empowered to provide technical and financial aid to assist communities in the desegregation of schools. Finally, it required the elimination of discrimination in federally assisted programs, authorizing termination of programs or withdrawal of federal funds for noncompliance. (¶ 53)

Packard (2002) explained that until African Americans boldly exercised their constitutional right to vote, the structure of Jim Crow would continue. Tactics of all sorts were used to keep blacks from voting. Packard stated that if blacks were given the privilege to vote this would mean that they were politically equal to whites; therefore, whites had to maintain control over who was given this ultimate privilege.

King led another march early in 1965. This march was from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery to bring attention to the need for legislation for equal voting rights. According to Packard (2002), approximately 600 people, blacks and whites, gathered to participate in the march. The county sheriff ordered the protestors to stop; when they did not, the sheriff along with 200 heavily armed state troopers attacked. America's Story from America's Library (2000) described the brutal attack on the Edmund Pettus Bridge: troopers threw tear gas, spat on marchers, used clubs, whips, and trampled protestors with horses for demonstrating in demand for the right to register to vote. As a result, March 7, 1965, became known as “Bloody Sunday.”

The scenes from the event, which were televised and broadcast on radio, outraged people across the nation. President Johnson was compelled to send a voting rights bill to Congress. As recorded by Packard, Johnson addressed Congress on March 15, 1965, stating:

… rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America. There is no Negro problem, there is no Southern problem, there is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem. Every American citizen must have an equal right to vote.
There is no reason that can excuse the denial of that right. There is no duty that weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to ensure that right. (pp. 272-273)

Later that year, the Voting Rights Act was signed into law. Nevertheless, according to Garrow (2003), "In the years after 1965, the glow of the 1963 March, and of the entire 1963-65 civil rights apex, rapidly receded" (p. 35). Goldfield (2002) stated there was no immediate impact of legislative victories. Hine and Thompson (1998) reported that annually from 1965 through 1970 every major city in the United States experienced race riots. The white supremacist did not suddenly disappear, nor did the black southerners become partners with their white neighbors. However, the most obvious southern change was the dismantling of the “white” and “colored” signs that defined who was welcomed. Nevertheless, the practice still thrived long after the signs came down.

Speaking almost prophetically at a meeting on April 3, 1968, in response to death-threats, King was quoted in Cavendish (2008) as saying:

Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over and I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. (p. 14)

The next day, as he stood on a balcony at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, King was shot and killed. Although theories of conspiracy continue even today, James Earl Ray was tried, confessed, and found guilty of King’s murder. According to Ling (1998), some historians believe that King received more than his due credit. It has been argued that the civil rights movement has erroneously been attributed for the most part to King alone. Ling stated that King was truly influential and actively at the forefront of the movement for only a brief time. He explained that this time span included King’s thrust into the political scene with the 1955 bus boycotts in Montgomery through to the march from Selma to Montgomery preceding the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It was because of King’s charisma, Ling explained, that the
media put him in the forefront of the multifaceted movement and related local struggles “within which King was an occasional and sometimes marginal player” (p. 17). Regardless of his actual involvement in the planning of events of the civil rights movement, to many King was a powerful speaker, motivator, and leader. King is symbolic of the movement. King personifies the civil rights movement.

According to Rossell, Armor, and Walberg (2002), from 1954 to 1968 school systems could operate neighborhood schools and desegregation plans on a voluntary basis to meet the mandate of school desegregation. However, it was later determined that these methods did not effectively desegregate black schools. Many school districts continue to operate under court ordered desegregation plans. School systems may file to have the existing court orders ended once the school system attains unitary status. Rossell et al. provided the following definition of unitary status, “Attaining unitary status involves demonstrating not only that there is a single set of integrated schools, but that the school district has achieved nondiscrimination and equity in all aspects of the school system” (p. 3). Legal Information Institute (2008a) reported that a lawsuit was filed against the School Board of New Kent County, Virginia in 1968 because of their continued operation of segregated schools. In the case of Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, the school system argued that it should be granted unitary status because it operated the system based on a freedom of choice plan. The school system consisted of two schools, an all-white school on the east side of town, and a black school on the west side of town. They argued that though they bused children, black and white, separately across town to the respective schools, parents could file an application for their child to attend the school of their choice. If no application was filed, the students would remain at the same school they previously attended; new students were assigned to schools by the school system unless their parents filed
an application for the other school. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

Legal Information Institute (2008a) reported the opinion of the court:

The New Kent School Board’s "freedom of choice" plan cannot be accepted as a sufficient step to "effectuate a transition" to a unitary system. In 3 years of operation, not a single white child has chosen to attend Watkins School, and although 115 Negro children enrolled in New Kent School in 1967, 85% of the Negro children in the system still attend the all-Negro Watkins school. In other words, the school system remains a dual system. Rather than further the dismantling of the dual system, the plan has operated simply to burden children and their parents with a responsibility, which Brown II placed squarely on the School Board. The Board must be required to formulate a new plan and, in light of other courses, which appear open to the Board, such as zoning, fashion steps which promise realistically to convert promptly to a system without a "White" school and a "Negro" school, but just schools. (¶ 8)

In the early 1970s, the court’s decision in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* began another issue of controversy in school desegregation. Legal Information Institute (2008b) reported that in this case the school system’s plan for racial quotas was indeed a start to accomplish desegregation; however, it was determined to be ineffective. The opinion of the court in this case was rather complex. Rossell et al. (2002) summarized stating:

The Supreme Court responded to this evidence by ruling in *Swann* that racial balance, defined as each school’s racial composition approximating the racial composition of the school district, had to be achieved in all the schools, even if it meant long-distance busing. (p. 8)

Rossell et al. also reported that the mandate for forced busing was met by demonstrations and violence in both the North and the South. O'Neil (2004) summarized progress after *Brown*:

With the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1965, the War on Poverty, and subsequent court rulings mandating integration through busing and other remedies, the journey toward equity post-Brown picked up steam. Black graduation rates rose, test scores for minority students went up, and schools began to expand their curricula to recognize contributions and perspectives of ethnic minorities. In the courts and in Congress in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, and those with disabilities all won rights to improved educational services. (pp. 22–23)

Jamar (2007) stated, “By the mid-1980s and continuing through the 1990s, school districts were starting to be relieved of court supervision of desegregation plans. States did not need to force integration; they only needed not to engage in discrimination and segregation” (¶
Kirk (2007) explained that recent decisions handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court reflect thought that is much more conservative. Recent U.S. Supreme Court case decisions lean toward not using race as a determining factor for admissions or enrollment in educational institutions or programs. In theory this sounds ideal, schools cannot practice segregation based on race if race is not to be considered. Unfortunately, if integration is not forced, diversity cannot be ensured in individual schools or programs, especially when de facto segregation in suburbs and inner cities continues to swell. Ignoring the race factor also fails to ensure that underrepresented minorities are given equal access and equal opportunities. Two U.S. Supreme Court cases in 2003, *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, involved the University of Michigan. Walsh (2007) stated that the Court supported the university’s law school’s admission policies, which considered race to ensure diversity, but did not support the practice of giving extra admission points to minorities applying for general undergraduate admission to the university. According to Walsh, in two 2007 U.S. Supreme Court cases, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, the court ruled that relying on race in order to ensure diversity in individual schools is a violation of the 14th Amendment’s equal protection clause. Walsh further reported that the Court stated that race may be considered in achieving diversity; however, it cannot be the sole determinant. Walsh reported Justice Breyer’s statement regarding the two 2007 cases:

> The last half-century has witnessed great strides toward racial equality, but we have not yet realized the promise of *Brown*. To invalidate the plans under review is to threaten the promise of *Brown*. This is a decision that the court and the nation will come to regret. (¶ 12)

Rossell et al. (2002) pointed out, “When Brown was decided, most whites, and virtually all southern whites, believed that white and black students should go to separate schools. Today, only the lunatic fringe believes in racial separation” (p. 14). The authors further explained that
studies indicate significant changes in opinions of whites regarding desegregation and toward blacks in general. Puckrein (1998) agreed, “Although racial integration of schools remains a concern, today the fight for desegregation has been largely replaced by the fight for quality education” (¶ 29). However, O’Neil (2004) reported that many of the gains that were achieved during the 1960s through the 1980s have slowed; some have even reversed. Increasingly, minority students are again attending schools that are predominantly comprised of minorities. According to Kilman (2007), this trend is known as resegregation. The achievement gap for minorities compared to nonminorities is growing. While some purported that once attained, racial desegregation in schools would solve the issues of academic achievement gaps, discipline, racial harmony, and growing dropout rates, these complex issues cannot be solved simply by sitting a white child next to a black child in a classroom. According to Kirk, there has been “an ongoing struggle to deliver justice and equality for all America’s schoolchildren. Whether that will ever be achieved remains to be seen” (p. 30). Goldfield (2002) reported that today’s resurgence of segregation or separateness has been mostly due to mutual consent. However, he explained, "It is indicative of the broader problem: our inability to understand each other’s history, find common ground, and respect our differences” (p. 291). Bond (2007) stated, “A public educational system that is fully integrated and treats minorities and whites equally is the antithesis of the larger society, which has been and remains profoundly segregated and unequal" (p. 19).

True racial acceptance continues to be an issue in race relations today. As a case in point, Goldfield (2002) described the indignation and anger expressed in 1997 when the Charlotte Observer made note of the fact that there were very few blacks involved in NASCAR in any
capacity and posed the question of whether or not NASCAR should actively recruit black drivers. Some of the responses as reported by Goldfield included:

NO! We don’t need blacks in racecars. They have every other sport. Let the white people have at least one sport.” “... And maybe we could set aside five out of the first ten starting positions for black folks. I mean, we do it for everything else.” “I think you people don’t understand that the age of political correctness is past us. If black racecar drivers want to succeed, let them do it on their own. Maybe you think we should establish quotas and goals for blacks in NASCAR like we have everything else in this country.” “We already give blacks everything they want. ... I just don’t think we should have black people in racing. If you bump ‘em on the track they’re gonna holler racist. If they don’t win a race they’re gonna holler racist. (p. 288–289)

Not only is acceptance an issue, but also hate continues to be evident across our diverse nation. Hate crimes are not merely bad memories from the past. One outrageously gruesome example was seen in Jasper, Texas in 1998. James Byrd was beaten, tied to the back of a pickup truck by three white men, and dragged for two miles, resulting in one arm and his head being severed (Goldfield, 2002). The local sheriff reported that the white community and the black community were equally appalled. All three men were convicted of capital murder. Goldfield reported:

… the act itself, and the ties of the convicted men to white-supremacist groups, revealed another uncomfortable fact: the increasing tolerance and openness in the 1990s of anti-black rhetoric. This is not to say that such sentiments appeared suddenly in the 1990s, but public opinion had kept them suppressed—for the most part. (p. 287)

Some blacks actually have fond memories of living in a segregated world. There was comfort in being surrounded by those who accepted, respected, supported, loved, understood you, and shared your trials and triumphs. Painter (2006) explained that African-Americans started in this country with almost nothing, struggled, persevered against great odds, and achieved notable gains.
In speaking about the South, Ayers (2005) reported:

Given all that has been written and said about the South, we might expect that Americans would be able to think clearly about the region. Yet television, movies, novels, roadside markers, old history books, and jokes tell the same basic stories about the South over and over, even when people know these stories are not true to their own experiences or to the complexity of human life. (p. 37)

Ayers further explained that the South had been and continues to be misunderstood and trivialized by generalizations, both positive and negative. Ayers claimed, “These images of the South keep us from seeing the people of the region with the fullness and empathy all people deserve (p. 40).

The region of Southern Appalachia includes Georgia, western North Carolina, east Tennessee, southwest Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and West Virginia. The people of this region are often unjustly stereotyped as being poor and uneducated. In describing the people of Appalachia, Murray (1974) said simply, “We’re just down-to-earth people” (p. 7). Historically, Appalachia has been characterized as being a place of humble people united by character and pride in living a simple life where one still has time to stop and help his neighbor. According to the Kingsport Press (1973), “The mountains stand for a way of life–friendly, unhurried, cooperative, and deeply respectful of the rights and opinions of others” (p. 18). Appalachia experienced a shift from a frontier characterized by simple housing and people growing what was needed for the family to survive, to hillside tenant farming, to coal mining, to a thriving industrial community. “The new Appalachia is quite prosperous, with modern industrial cities and suburbs difficult to distinguish from any other region in the United States” (Murray, p. 7).

Biggers (2007) described:

Launched in 1932 in an area mired by deforestation, closed mines, subsistence farming, and widespread impoverishment, the Highlander Center celebrated its 75th anniversary … as an extraordinary American institution that recognized the ability of mountaineers and
Southerners to determine their own fate in volatile times. Highlander [Center] drew up the first curriculum in the South to prepare teachers and community members for the transition to integration and launched a series of workshops. (p. 10)

Biggers stated that in 1955, prior to her arrest in Montgomery, Rosa Parks visited Highlander, the racially integrated adult education center. She later remarked about the amazing interracial experience she had and about the remarkable Highland director, Myles Horton. Four months after her visit to Highlander, Rosa Parks “set off the civil rights movement when she refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery to a white passenger” (Biggers, p. 10). Martin Luther King, Jr. was the keynote speaker at Highlander’s 25th anniversary celebration in 1957. He commended the school’s efforts and determination in supporting the civil rights movement. A liquor raid in 1959 forced the subsequent 1961 closing of the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee. Biggers attested, “Highlander continues today on a Cumberland Mountain farm outside of Knoxville, still in the forefront of social justice movements” (p. 10).

A number of Tennesseans did not agree with the practice of slavery, especially those in the eastern portion of the state. The Quakers, according to the Center for Historic Preservation (2001), were organizing opposition to slavery in Tennessee as early as 1797, just one year after Tennessee achieved statehood. The Center for Historic Preservation further explained that religious and moral principles, as well as an economy independent of the need for a large number of slaves, fueled antislavery attitudes in East Tennessee. The valleys and mountainous terrain of the East Tennessee area was not well-suited to large plantations that could effectively use large numbers of slaves. Strasser (1999) reported, “In 1860 only 9.2% of its [East Tennessee’s] population was slaves, compared to 29% in Middle Tennessee and 33% in West Tennessee” (p.67). Of note is Strasser’s description of sentiments toward blacks:

Although the slave population was small and most of the slaves worked in households where personal contact enhanced relationships between slaves and owners, East Tennesseans were as prejudiced against blacks as were whites in other areas of the South.
East Tennessee was predominantly Unionist, but not abolitionist, and its white residents saw slavery as a necessary form of social control. (p. 83-84)

Dunn (2002) reported that Elihu Embree, the son of a Quaker minister, was an early advocate for the gradual abolishment of slavery. Dunn further explained that although as a young man, Elihu owned slaves, by the age of 30 he was a fervent abolitionist and became a leader in the Manumission Society of Tennessee. According to Eaton (1949), the primary founder of the Tennessee manumission societies was Charles Osborn, a Quaker preacher born in North Carolina. He wrote several appeals to both the state and national governments regarding putting an end to the tradition of slavery. Kozsuch and Broyles (2002) explained that in 1819, while living in Jonesborough, Tennessee, Elihu Embree began publishing the *Manumission Intelligencer*, which was largely an abolitionist newspaper. However, in 1820, he stopped publishing the *Manumission Intelligencer* and began publishing the *Emancipator*, which researchers stated was the first publication devoted entirely to the abolition of slavery (Center for Historic Preservation 2001; Dunn; Eaton; Kozsuch & Broyles). The Center for Historic Preservation declared:

> Embree’s condemnation of slavery was as harsh as any, including the better-known abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who began publishing his anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator*, in the 1830s. By the time *The Liberator* was first published, there were 25 anti-slavery societies in Tennessee, with a membership of about 1000. (¶ 2)

Eaton (1949) reported that Quakers were active operators of the Underground Railroad. The Center for Historic Preservation (2001) explained that the ridges, caves, and valleys of East Tennessee were well suited for providing secret passage from the South to the North. Stern and Stern (n.d.) reported that Elihu Embree’s former house, now a bed and breakfast operated by the Sterns, was once a part of the Underground Railroad and the site of the September 8, 1863, Civil War Battle of Limestone Station. The Embree House, located just outside of Jonesborough, Tennessee, was built in 1791, is reported as being the third oldest house in Tennessee, and has
been on the National Historic Register since 1978. According to Stern and Stern, “Several published reports state that a secret tunnel led from the slaves’ quarters to a nearby spring. The tunnel was accessed through two oak doors but no trace of the tunnel or the doors have yet been found” (¶ 3).

Tennessee’s involvement in the Civil War divided the region. According to Haden (1958), Sullivan County entered the Union with Tennessee in 1789. “Sullivan County was called ‘The Little Confederacy,’ but the area sent 30,000 troops to the Union army” (Rotary Club of Kingsport, 1986, p. 14). Strasser (1999) explained that East Tennessee’s Unionist ties were in part due to their physical remoteness in relation the rest of the state. According to Strasser, “… an internal civil war broke out in East Tennessee” (p. 67). Kozsuch and Broyles (2002) stated:

Like other northeastern counties in Civil War Tennessee, Washington County was Unionist. A number of skirmishes were fought in the county, and Jonesborough served as headquarters for both Union and Confederate troops. Evidence of the residents’ divided sentiments is readily available. The Bell-Herrin House, with its trapdoors and tunnels, is thought to have been a station along the Underground Railroad. Confederate General A. E. Jackson made his home in Jonesborough and is buried in the old cemetery. Landon Carter Haynes, a Confederate senator, lived in the former home of Colonel John Tipton. The Tipton-Haynes farm is now a state historic site near Johnson City. (¶ 7)

Strasser (1999) reported that in order to safely transport Unionists through Confederate territory during the Civil War, East Tennesseans operated an underground railroad system based on the networks that slaves had developed.

According to the Kingsport Press (1973), Cherokee Indians were the first settlers of the Kingsport area with Thomas Walker leading the first organized white expedition into the area around Kingsport in 1748, followed by Daniel Boone in 1758. By 1770, the lure of land brought both the wealthy and poor to the area that would later be Kingsport. “They sought out springs, obtained corn rights, cleared land, and traded with the Indians” (Rotary Club of Kingsport, 1986, p. 5). The Rotary Club of Kingsport (1986) stated there were numerous struggles between the
Indians, who were believed to have been in the area since the 13th century, and the early settlers. In addition to violent struggles, there were also disagreements regarding boundaries. Haden (1958) reported that Kingsport’s earlier names were the Boat Yard, the Long Island area, Christiansville, and Island Flats. Today’s Kingsport was once part of Augusta, Botetourt, Fincastle, and Washington Counties in Virginia, Sullivan County in North Carolina, as well as part of the State of Franklin (Rotary Club of Kingsport, 1986). The Long Island area was essential to the transportation of trade goods such as salt, iron, and tobacco on the Tennessee River. According to the Rotary Club of Kingsport (1986), “William King established his boatyard here, and Kingsport was named for him” (p. 13). However, Wolfe (1987) reported that there was some debate about for whom Kingsport was named, William King or Colonel James King. According to the Rotary Club of Kingsport (1986), Kingsport was originally intended to provide support for the Carolina, Clinchfield, and Ohio Railroads. The Clinchfield railroad construction began in 1836; however, it was nearly a century later in 1915 when it was completed. The Kingsport Press (1973) reported that the investors in the Clinchfield railroad came to the area in 1910 with a dream of turning the area into a model industrial city, describing: Like most dreams, the vision of a model city called Kingsport began with one man. Historians report that the man was George L. Carter, a land purchasing entrepreneur who recognized that the Holston River Valley was an ideal site for industrialized growth and acquired a thousand acres of land in the area. (p. 84)

Modern day Kingsport’s existence, according to the Rotary Club of Kingsport (1986), is credited to George Carter, John B. Dennis, and J. Fred Johnson. These three men were responsible for the completion of the Kingsport Railroad, seeking input for the city plan, the Kingsport school system, and the city charter. According to the Kingsport Press (1973), the Kingsport developers did not want the city to develop simply by chance; instead, they wanted the city to develop according to a plan. Haden (1958) reported that Kingsport was the first planned
community in Tennessee, with John Nolen, a professional planner and engineer of city design, laying out a plan for an industrial city in 1915. According to the Rotary Club of Kingsport (1998), “In 1912, there were only two farmhouses in the area, but by 1919, Nolen’s planned community had attracted 10,000 residents” (p. v). Kingsport was also the first city in Tennessee to be governed by a City Manager-Council form of government (Kingsport Press).

Of interest was the report that J. Fred Johnson, considered the father of Kingsport, according to Wolfe, “… seemed more tolerant of and charitable toward blacks than did many of his contemporaries; the same applied to females” (p. 106). Wolfe stated that J. Fred Johnson once referred to a black child as his and another white man’s first cousin. When the other man refuted the comment, Johnson was quoted to have said, “Well, Sam, that little negro boy would not have any of the blood of your Father or mine in his veins but as sure as there is a God in Heaven he is your first cousin and mine on the record book up There” (Wolfe, p. 106).

Wolfe (1987) stated that Nolen’s plan included a plan for a “model Negro Village” (p. 51). In the early 1900s, segregation was very much the law of the land; as such, the city developers along with the city planner sought to find a place to segregate blacks. The Negro Village was planned to incorporate schools, churches, stores, and housing for blacks and was originally slated to be located in the Lovedale tract on the northwest side of town (Wolfe). Kingsport appointed its first Board of Education in 1917. This board quickly made plans for building a high school, Dobyns-Bennett High School. Subsequently, the plan to segregate blacks in the Lovedale area was abandoned when in 1919 it was decided that Andrew Jackson Elementary School, a school for whites, would be built in this area and it was not desirable to have the approach to the Negro village and the school share the same highway (Wolfe). Also in 1919, the state supervisor for Tennessee schools informed the city that the Rosenwald
Foundation would match dollar for dollar up to $500 for the construction of a school for blacks.

A labor shortage was reportedly the reason that a new school for blacks was not built until much later; instead, the old Oklahoma building, a one-room schoolhouse built in the late 1800s, was used as a school for black children. Wolfe further reported:

By 1927, the city boasted five modern school buildings: the elementary schools of Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, and Central, and the high school, Dobyns-Bennett—all ‘lily white,’ in keeping with the standards of the times; Robert E. Lee School, on Wateree and Myrtle streets, served the black school population. (p. 102)

According to Kingsport Retired Teachers' Association (1997), the old Oklahoma School building had been vacated by white students when they moved to a new building. The school was reopened as the only local school for black students from 1913 through some time around 1930 when the city built a new school for black students. In the mid-1900s, the Oklahoma School was moved to a new site in an area of town known as “Black Bottom” (Kingsport Retired Teachers' Association, p. 196). The purpose for moving the school was to relocate it to the area of town where most of the black population lived. A bid of $32,250 to build Douglass School, to house black students in kindergarten through 12th grade, was accepted in October 1928 by city officials. The school was named in honor of Frederick Douglass. The Douglass High School Alumni Association (2008) reported:

During the 1930s and 1940s, Negroes were settling in various areas in cities around the country, and Kingsport was no exception. Around this time, the city proposed a new development for Negroes between the Tennessee Eastman plant and the Penn-Dixie Cement plant. Most black citizens balked at the location, which was basically dried-up swampland that even percolated in some areas. The area was bordered on two sides by railroads, and the other two sides by industrial factories. As a result, the area was the dumpsite for various surrounding industries and the flat bottom accumulated all the smells, odors and pollution from those industries. Nevertheless, the city leased the property from owner Eastman, rocked the land, put in tons of fill dirt, divided the area into lots, and established dirt streets. The land sold cheap, the government built low-rent housing businesses moved in, and ‘Riverview’ was born, although from nowhere in the neighborhood was the nearby Holston River even remotely visible. (¶ 9)
The growing black population again necessitated a new building for the education of black students. A new Douglass High School was built in the Riverview neighborhood in 1951. According to the Kingsport Retired Teachers' Association (1997), the new Douglass was the newest school in Kingsport, at that time and was very well equipped with “many showcase elements” (p. 200). In similar fashion to all the schools in Kingsport, Douglass was an accredited school with noted successes in academics, sports, and fine arts. Douglass closed in 1966 when the city integrated the public schools. “The desegregation of public schools and the integration of Negro students into other city schools in 1966 was an historical event filled with pain, adjustments, and new challenges for all concerned” (Kingsport Retired Teachers' Association, p. 203).

During the rapid growth period in Kingsport, the 1930s through the 1940s, there was a very small percentage of blacks in Kingsport. Wolfe (1983) reported that the black population of Kingsport had historically remained at or below 8%. Specifically, she reported that the 1920 census indicated there were 5,692 people living in Kingsport, with only 454 of them being black. She reported that a decade later the white population had more than doubled; however, the black population had grown by less than 40%. “During the 1920s the forging of Kingsport’s society occurred. Circumstances peculiar to the place, the time, and the cast of players produced the social structure that has retained much of its original character into the 1980s” (Wolfe, p. 84).

Kingsport, not unlike most areas, went through periods of growth and recession. Oddly, Kingsport continued to thrive and grow even during the worst of the Great Depression (Rotary Club of Kingsport, 1998). Wolfe (1987) reported that during the years of the depression and war, Kingsport experienced extraordinary growth. Large industrial companies such as the Tennessee Eastman Chemical Company, Holston Defense Corporation, General Shale, glass
factories, and paper mills have provided an economic anchor for Kingsport. As one factory or business would close, city developers would work to replace it with a new one. Citizens who believed in their city and worked diligently through rough times to ensure its continued success characterize Kingsport.

During the development of the city, Kingsport strived to be the model of quality education in Tennessee. However, across the nation, the early 1900s were characterized by segregated unequal schools. Wolfe (1983) wrote that literature promoting the city of Kingsport touted about the number of schools and the fact that it had a well-integrated system. Of course, in this sense the integration did not refer to race, instead, it referred to integrated programs. The Rotary Club of Kingsport (1986) stated that Kingsport City Schools was among the first school system to be accredited system-wide by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges. The system avidly recruits outstanding teachers from both local and out-of-state educational institutes. In addition, Kingsport City Schools Board of Education ensures that the system’s salary scale and per-pupil expenditures are among the highest in the state. In addition, graduation requirements in Kingsport exceed state requirements.

As part of the slum-clearance project to get rid of numerous substandard units, the decision was made, in 1937, to build 176 residences for whites in an apartment complex to be named Robert E. Lee and 48 residences for blacks in the Riverview Community. According to Wolfe (1983), a segregated area of approximately 50 acres located south of the railroad was designated for blacks. “… a poor substitute but the closest that the planned city ever came to John Nolen’s and Ray Dennis’s model Negro Village” (Wolfe, p. 138). During the mid-1900s in Kingsport, the social conditions for middle to upper class whites were good. However, very few blacks owned businesses in the black community or even worked in a job considered as a
profession. The few blacks who were considered professionals, such as teachers, were paid a lower salary than were whites who did the same job. There were some blacks who moved to Kingsport from areas deeper south who had assumed Kingsport was far enough north to be different from places like Montgomery, Alabama (Wolfe). Wolfe reported that there was a persuasive mentality of rewarding those thought to be at the top rung of the city. According to Wolfe, the city government was not actually, in charge, instead, J. Fred Johnson “controlled the town” (p. 104).

Wolfe (1983) reported that during the 1960s, blacks across the United States, including the small black population in Kingsport, were more and more dissatisfied with the discrimination they faced; it was time for change, time for equal opportunities. “In the wake of the Brown decision, mass demonstrations, and federal civil-rights legislation, racial inequalities in the model city became increasingly irksome” (Wolfe, p. 187). In 1960, the Board of Education explained their plan for desegregation of the city schools. Ironically, during that same year, Ayers (2005) recalled performing in a school play where his teacher covered his and another child’s faces with burnt cork and gave them tambourines to play as older children performed songs of the South. Ayers reported the acceptance of the play:

So far as I know, no one at [the] (school name omitted) elementary, segregated as it was, had any problems with a minstrel show. The civil rights movement must have seemed pretty far away from the white people of Kingsport at that point. The little city was about 5% black, the population carefully segregated. I saw black kids only rarely. (p. 15)

They planned to begin with first grade in 1961 and desegregate an additional grade each year, thus achieving full desegregation in 12 years. Inconsistently, city officials proclaimed in 1963 that discrimination did not exist in Kingsport (Wolfe, 1983). In 1964, school officials announced a change in the desegregation plan: all city schools would be completely
desegregated by 1966. Blacks in Kingsport, according to Wolfe, were not willing to wait any longer. In regards to demands for integrating the school system, Wolfe reported the following:

The Reverend John Price of St. Mark’s Methodist Church presented black demands for the immediate and complete integration of the city school system in 1965. Reminding the Board of Education that the total desegregation of pupils and teachers is taking place all around us and that it would enhance the image of Kingsport as the Model City if we would do likewise. It’s not a sound world when we can outstrip the Russians and travel millions of miles around the world in space while we can’t send our children one mile to a white school. (p. 183)

Although fully integrated, racially, by December of 1966, name-calling, fights, and near-riot conditions at the high school continued into the early 1970s. In addition to school segregation, significant discriminatory hiring practices were common throughout the city. Similarly, it was not until 1974 that Kingsport adopted a fair-housing ordinance, even though discriminatory practices had already been outlawed by state and federal legislation. Wolfe (1983) explained that although realization of human rights for blacks was a slow and painful process, Kingsport’s white population appeared to slowly change their views toward blacks, even if only on the surface.

In the late 1900s, citizens of Kingsport supported such community projects as a YMCA, a public library, a town band, the Boys Club, Girls Club, American Legion carnivals and parades, weeklong preaching missions, the Salvation Army, the Kingsport Community Chest, and Fun Fest “the ultimate community event” (Rotary Club of Kingsport, 1986). The Kingsport area, nestled in the Tennessee Valley and flanked by the Blue Ridge and Appalachian Mountains with its wooded backdrop and vibrant streams, lakes, and rivers, offers its citizens and visitors many cultural experiences ranging from theatre, music, dance, museums, historical sites, outdoor activities, fairs, festivals, arts, and crafts. Kingsport’s history is linked to that of the Tri-Cities, Northeast Tennessee, and Southwest Virginia. “It is a place which is rich in heritage, rich in natural resources, rich in people, and rich in spirit (Rotary Club of Kingsport, 1998, p. 25).”
Weaving Golden Threads

Leadership, according to Northouse (2004), is a process in which a group as a direct result of the influence of an individual works together and achieves a common goal. There are many different types of leaders. Often the leaders who are most significant in our lives are those who never sought to be leaders. They are individuals who do the right thing simply because it is the right thing. They are individuals who give of themselves until there is nothing left to give and ask nothing in return. Leaders serve those who follow. Servant leaders typically possess great integrity and are honest, charismatic, courageous, determined, and inspiring. Williams (1996) reported:

Faith plays a defining role because it assures the servant-leader that even in the midst of fear and confusion, amid turmoil and uncertainty, appropriate actions and responses will somehow be revealed. The servant-leader walks by faith and not by sight. This helps the leader remain centered in troubled times. Intuitive attributes are desirable in any leader, but the servant-leader, in particular, listens to and believes these inner qualities. (pp. 144–145)

According to Szwed (1970), today’s black man feels the need for “a significant sense of self such that he will not be easily pressured into obedient, conforming behavior” (p. 220). Hine and Thompson (1998) explained that one’s sense of self-worth has to come from inside oneself. They elaborated further, explaining that what someone else thinks of you only matters if he or she is someone you value and respect. The definition does not define you.

Northouse (2004) stated, “The way an individual emerges as a leader is by first becoming a servant. A servant leader focuses on the needs of followers and helps them to become more knowledgeable, more free, more autonomous, and more like servants themselves” (p. 309). Williams (1996) reported that servant leaders lead by example keeping their principles and vision at the forefront of all they do. Often working behind the scenes, servant leaders do not seek attention or accolades.
Some people believe that leadership is about independence, overt strength, and power.

According to the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development (2008), Rosa Parks believed in a philosophy of quiet strength: “Quiet Strength incorporates life skills which demonstrate dignity with pride, courage with perseverance and power with discipline in a comfortable environment of peace” (¶ 1). If power is evident, it should be the empowering of others. Hine and Thompson (1998) explained that, contrary to popular belief, strength and self-reliance are not indicative of one who stands alone; rather strength is drawn from one’s community. Specifically, Hine and Thompson stated:

Strength comes from being part of a community, and service to the community is the act not of a do-gooder, but of a leader. Difficult as it may be, service is not sacrifice, but part of the fullness of life. … The most powerful, respected woman is the one who finds a way to feed, clothe, and educate others. (p. 308)

A Vibrant Tapestry

O’Neil (2004) explained that our society has benefited from integrated schools by helping students to look beyond racial stereotypes, improving the degree to which students feel comfortable interacting with individuals of different races, fostering interracial friendships, and preparing students to work in an integrated and diverse world. As McCain (2008) noted, “I see, in the efforts and enthusiasm of America’s youth, that our nation’s best days are ahead of us” (p. 46). However, Bond (2007) stated:

Today’s Court has turned its back on the millions of black and Latino children currently trapped in highly segregated, underperforming schools, leaving them to hang on the ropes of racial and economic disenfranchisement. The Court has paved the way for many more children of color to join them by outlawing the modest means numerous districts have adopted to promote racial diversity and overcome racial isolation. It has denied the very notion that our nation’s schools should serve as equalizers. (p. 19)

In talking about race relations today, we must acknowledge the fact that there is still racism, hate, mistrust, and misunderstanding among individuals from every race. Our great
nation has children and families, especially minorities, who are starving and living in deplorable conditions. The minority versus nonminority achievement gap continues to grow, as does our minority dropout rate. Our jails are overcrowded with youth, especially minority youth, who will one day be our future. Obama (2008a) reported, “We are in a defining moment in our history. We’re fighting two wars. Our planet is in peril. Our economy is in turmoil. And the dream that so many generations fought for feels as if it’s slowly slipping away” (p. 45).

Obama (2008a) explained that in the face of challenge, the easy thing is to do nothing, but that is too risky. Apparently, the nation agreed. On November 4, 2008, Obama was elected to the office of President of the United States. This marked history for our nation. Espo (2008) reported, “Barack Obama swept to victory as the nation’s first black president Tuesday night in an electoral college landslide that overcame racial barriers as old as America itself” (A1). According to Harris (2008), in a recent interview of students who comprised the Little Rock Nine, Ernest Green, the first black student to graduate from Central High School in Little Rock, stated the following regarding Obama’s victory:

I found it a very powerful moment. I had an opportunity to think that 51 years ago as a teenager, I had some ideas about wider options and wider opportunities. And last night kind of confirmed my view that we did the right thing. The nine of us are very proud of what he’s accomplished and maybe we played a small role in getting there. (¶ 7)

Although his election was a landslide, there are those who present confirmation that not all American citizens are accepting of the reality of having a black man as their president. As evidenced by an editorial in the Kingsport Tennessee Times News, Oliver (2008) wrote, “On Nov. 4th, the free America that we have known for 200 years died. You could call Obama a socialist, Marxist, or communist–most any of those words would fit along with a terrorist sympathizer …” (p. A8). However, in another recent newspaper article, Barker (2008) reported:

One hundred forty-three years after the 14th Amendment abolished slavery and 138 years after the 16th Amendment removed race as an impediment to voting, the United States
elected Barack Obama on Tuesday as its first black president. In between, black Americans embarked on a long and sometimes-bloody civil-rights struggle to reconcile the promises of the Constitution with the reality of American life. (p. A13)

Today, we are a vibrant tapestry made from a multitude of vibrant threads: white, black, brown, yellow, and red. We are not a perfect union, but because of our journey, filled with trials and tribulations, we are a “more perfect union”. Can we as a nation, acknowledge our past, embrace our future, and continue the journey together? The central theme of Obama’s Presidential campaign provided the answer to this question: “Yes, we can!” Obama (2008b) stated in his November 4, 2008, *Election Night Victory Speech*:

> America, we have come so far. We have seen so much. But there is so much more to do. So tonight, let us ask ourselves—if our children should live to see the next century; … what change will they see? What progress will we have made?
> This is our moment. This is our time–to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth—that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can’t, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes We Can. (p.152-153)
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

*Man must evolve for all human conflict a method, which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.*

(Martin Luther King, Jr., Brainy Quotes, 2008)

This was not a study based on theories or figures nor did I seek to prove or disprove a null hypothesis. As such, a quantitative research method would not have been appropriate for this study. Chapter 3 presents the methods and procedures used for conducting this qualitative biographical study of Jeannie’s journey through desegregation. This chapter addresses the fit of the study to qualitative research tradition, focus of the study, a description of the study’s participant, data collection, and procedures for data analysis.

*Fit of the Study to Qualitative Research Tradition*

Marshall and Rossman (2006) explained that qualitative researchers are captivated by the intricacies of every day life and the meaning given to it by participants. Although qualitative research methods vary, there are common characteristics associated with this type of research. These common characteristics were identified by Rossman and Rallis (2003) as:

1. oriented to the natural world,
2. seeks to understand people through multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic,
3. focuses on context,
4. researcher systematically reflects on how he or she affects the study,
5. exquisite sensitivity to personal biography,
6. emergent in nature,
7. reliance on sophisticated reasoning that is multifaceted and iterative, and
8. fundamentally interpretive. (pp. 8-11)

Consequently, a qualitative research method was appropriate to the exploring of and intent to understand Jeannie’s journey. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research and an intricate fabric made from various blends of material are appropriate comparisons. The appreciation and value of the fabric is increased by the various threads that are woven together to create the finished product. Similarly, qualitative researchers seek to weave perspectives and individual realities allowing the researcher to construct or interpret meaning that once shared increases the appreciation and value of the stories told. Before appreciation and understanding of Jeannie’s journey can occur her journey must have a voice. I sought to give her journey voice.

As explained by Flick (2006):

Rapid social change and the resulting diversification of life worlds are increasingly confronting social researchers with new social contexts and perspectives. These are so new for them that their traditional deductive methodologies–deriving research questions and hypotheses from theoretical methods and testing them against empirical evidence–are failing due to the differentiation of objects. Thus, research is increasingly forced to make use of inductive strategies. (p. 12)

Looking through the single lens of one individual, I hoped to immerse myself in Jeannie’s recollections of “Black threads” and “White threads” and weave her recollections together to reveal a beautiful vibrant tapestry. This tapestry depicted the struggles and triumphs she personally encountered as two separate races in a small community learned to live, laugh, love, and learn together while maintaining their individual cultural characteristics. The intent of this study was not to develop a theory or to provide solutions for racial equality and acceptance. The purpose of this life history study was to tell the story of Jeannie’s journey. I explored the personal experiences that she recalled from her journey beginning in a segregated childhood progressing through desegregation and continuing on to her current unyielding efforts to foster
equal opportunities in her small community in Northeast Tennessee. “Life history, as a methodology, emphasizes the value of a person’s story and provides pieces for a mosaic depicting an era or social group” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 116). I hoped to determine what I, and others, might learn from the life stories Jeannie was willing to share. There is a wealth of knowledge to be gained from the events in her life and the way she chose to respond to those events; this study sought to highlight this knowledge.

Focus of the Study

This study focused on the life experiences of Jeannie Hodges during the periods of segregation, desegregation, and the state of current societal issues. Paramount to Jeannie’s journey were the obstacles she faced and the driving force that helped her to persevere and achieve the successes she has realized. This study looked at her life story and her journey with a desire to illuminate and to give voice.

Participant

In narrative research, the focus should not be on whom the participants should be; as explained by Creswell (2007) each of us has stories to tell, and therefore, the focus should be on the story the researcher seeks to explore. The experience of interest for this study was the coming together of two races in a Northeast Tennessee community. Jeannie Hodges is an example of this experience of interest. Therefore, the sole participant in this study was Jeannie Hodges. The selection of Jeannie Hodges was both convenient; as she is an ordinary individual known to the researcher and a critical case as she was equipped to help us to look at the journey of a minority woman through desegregation in a Northeast Tennessee community.
Data Collection

Data for this biographical study were collected exclusively through in-depth interviews with the sole participant, Jeannie Hodges. After approval was granted from the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A) and a letter regarding the study was sent to Jeannie (see Appendix B) and the school district in which I work (see Appendix C), three separate interviews were scheduled. These interviews, lasting between 1 to 2 hours in length, were conducted at Jeannie’s home in the Riverview Community of Kingsport, Tennessee. With her permission, each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder. Handwritten notes were also taken during each of the interviews. In order to avoid stifling Jeannie’s storytelling, I chose not to use a predetermined set of interview questions during any of the interviews. Instead, my interview protocol (see Appendix D), as suggested by Creswell (2003), included “a heading, the key research questions, probes to follow key questions, transition messages for the interviewer, space for recording the interviewer’s comments, and space in which the researcher records reflective notes” (p. 190). The overarching research questions were:

1. What events has Jeannie encountered, endured, and overcome during her life in Appalachia that are indicative of the journey that minorities throughout our nation have struggled to overcome?

2. What specific motivators have existed throughout Jeannie’s life that have inspired her to persevere in her relentless efforts to improve not only her life but also the lives of those around her?

3. Is the “journey” over; have we arrived?

I proceeded with the intent to allow the interviews to emerge naturally. I asked Jeannie to begin by telling me the story of how her life has occurred, starting at birth and ending with the
final day of the interviews. I allowed Jeannie to lead and I asked questions for the intent to draw out additional information, to clarify, and to ensure that the overarching research questions remained the significant topic while taking in and responding to other topics that she chose to include. Marshall and Rossman (2006) validated this process:

Qualitative, in-depth interviews typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures responses. This method, in fact, is based on an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: The participant’s perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it. (p. 101)

Data Analysis Procedures

A continual initial analysis of the data, including making anecdotal notes and asking reflective analytical questions was conducted during and after each interview session. The digital voice recording of each interview was saved to compact disc and then transcribed into text format using Microsoft Word 2003. The handwritten notes and transcriptions of the interviews were then deconstructed in order to restory Jeannie’s journey. In conducting this narrative research, Jeannie’s life experiences were retold using chronology, life course stages, and experiences within the historical context explored in the literature review.

Trustworthiness

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), the trustworthiness of a qualitative research project depends on whether it was competently and ethically conducted. They further stated, “For a study to be trustworthy, it must be more than reliable and valid; it must be ethical” (p. 63). In determining the trustworthiness of this narrative study, credibility, rigor, applicability, and ethics were determining factors.

Concerning credibility and rigor, prolonged engagement and the development of rapport ensured that the stories being shared were more than a transitory portrayal of Jeannie’s journey.
Because Jeannie and I have known each other for several years and worked together for 1 year, developing rapport was not an issue. I made every effort in the restorying of Jeannie’s journey to write a complete and accurate account of her life experiences. These efforts were made with the understanding that the truth being told is a perceived truth first by Jeannie and secondarily by me. In addition, triangulation was employed through the practice of providing Jeannie with copies of the interview notes and transcription of each of the three in-depth interviews to review for misquoting, misunderstanding, and completeness of thought as well as having another doctoral student assist in member checking by comparing typed transcripts with the recorded interviews.

In regard to applicability to other situations, the reality constructed by the retelling of Jeannie’s journey, although representative of the struggles experienced by other minorities during the period from segregation to today, cannot be assumed identical or generalizable realities for others. Rossman and Rallis (2003) explained, “The standard of generalizability is not part of the qualitative research vocabulary, but what is learned in one study can still be useful for other settings” (p. 68). The purpose of this biographical narrative was to vicariously relive Jeannie’s Journey and ascertain what relevance her life story has to our historical timeline. “Storytellers” such as Jeannie provide the most relevant and accurate account of the shaping of our nation through prejudice and acceptance and weakness and strength. The degree to which this narrative study is applicable must be made on an individual basis. I have attempted to provide a systematic, substantial, vivid description and a meticulous restorying to aid the reader in making this decision.

According to Creswell (2007), “Regardless of the approach to qualitative inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field
and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports” (p. 141). In conducting this qualitative biographical study, my first priority was to the ethical and respectful treatment and portrayal of Jeannie and to any individuals or organizations that may be mentioned in the course of the interviews or ascertained by virtue of knowledge of the participant or the researcher. The first step in providing for the ethical and respectful treatment of Jeannie was to discuss the intent of the study and obtain her permission to write the study with her as the sole participant.

In conducting narrative research, the researcher’s personal life experiences, beliefs, personal biases, and values are not isolated from the study. The district in which I am employed and where Jeannie was employed for 40 years is referred to several times in the study, as such, a letter describing the purpose, significance, and intent of the study was sent to the Director of Kingsport City Schools. Considering the intent of this study, to illuminate and give voice to Jeannie’s life experiences, there was no anticipated harm to any individuals or organizations named or alluded to in the study. Although not intentional, as with any research, there is the chance of unforeseen harm to or negative attention regarding individuals or organizations named or alluded to in the study. Jeannie’s stories, which are valuable and significant, will add to our understanding of diversity and acceptance. It is my belief that this benefit outweighs any unintentional and unforeseen risk to individuals or organizations.
Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable… Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle: the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

(Martin Luther King, Jr., Brainy Quotes, 2008)

Introduction

The intent of this narrative study was to explore the journey of one individual from segregation, through desegregation, to today by listening to her life story. Specifically, the purpose of this biographical narrative was to vicariously relive Jeannie’s Journey and ascertain what relevance her life story has to our historical timeline. Data for this study were collected through three interviews with Jeannie. The interviews were conversational in nature and did not follow a set of predetermined questions. Thus, the data in this study represent a series of virtual “field trips” along Jeannie’s journey from black and white to a vibrant tapestry. It is not assumed that this study will solve the issues of racism and intolerance. Instead, I sought to weave together recollections of a reality that was segregated by the colors black and white, scarred by the journey through the evolution of desegregation and made hopeful by the enduring progression into a vibrant tapestry of increasing understanding and acceptance.

Segregation

On March 7, 1942 a remarkable individual was born. Eugenia “Jeannie” Mason was born in Detroit, Michigan to Clellie and John L. Mason. This individual was born at a time when the law of the land meant that people were judged, segregated, and discriminated against based on the color of their skin. Slavery, the Civil War, and the Reconstruction Era had all come and gone by the time Jeannie was born. However, her story gives us a glimpse at the life and journey of an
African American woman whose childhood years were spent in Northeast Tennessee when reality was still very much black and white.

Though born in Detroit, Michigan, and even after spending about a year with relatives in Washington DC, the Riverview Community (see Figure 1) in Kingsport, Tennessee has always been home to Jeannie.

![Earl Carter Photography]

_Figure 1._ An Aerial View of the Riverview Community in Kingsport, TN (date unknown) Photo reproduced with permission from Earl Carter Photography.

She does not know how much time her family spent in Michigan. Both her mother and her father had attended Douglass School in Kingsport, Tennessee. They would have graduated in 1940, with Jeannie’s older sister being born in 1939, Jeannie being born in 1942, and her younger sister being born in 1947.

Older people … people did not talk to you back then, like now. Parents never told you, so we didn’t think to ask questions. And now that I’m older, there are a lot of questions I wish I had asked, and it’s too late. But I mean when you’re a kid growing up, I mean I didn’t really care how I got here or why, but now I’d like to know that.
When talking about her childhood it is interesting to note that Jeannie does not say much about her father, John L. Mason. In fact, aside from the interesting detail that Jeannie’s paternal grandmother, Bessie M. Hipps, was known for giving Riverview its name, the only other things she did mention about her father was his name and that he, like her mother, attended Douglass School. Her parents divorced when she was very young. Her mother, on the other hand, was obviously a role model and an inspiration to Jeannie. In the 3 years that I have known Jeannie she has been the epitome of a selfless, determined, hard working, independent, and caring individual. Interestingly enough, these are the same words that Jeannie used to describe her mother. Clellie, Jeannie’s mother, was born in Knoxville, but like Jeannie, spent most of her life in Kingsport. Clellie received a high school education but did not have the opportunity to go on to college (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Douglass School Glee Club-Clellie Mason [First Female Bottom Left] (1938) Photo from Douglass’ 1938 School yearbook (no copyright information available).](image)

Although Clellie remarried a couple of times, for the most part she raised her children on her own. Growing up, Jeannie explained that they had never heard of welfare or free lunch,
Clellie worked two jobs to provide for her family. Jeannie has two sisters, an older sister named Elizabeth Ann (see Figure 3) and a younger sister named Ellen Frances “Francine”.

![Image of Clellie, Jeannie, and Elizabeth Ann](image.jpg)

*Figure 3. Jeannie, Age 3, Her Older Sister Elizabeth Ann, and Her Mother, Clellie (1945)*

The lasting impact Jeannie’s mother had on her is evident in how she talks about difficult times. Even when recalling a time in her life that she and her sisters had to be separated (see Figure 4), she never stopped smiling and recalled only positive memories.

I can remember, my mother evidently went through a time when she was physically ill, and all three of us were split up and stayed with different family members. But I think we were all fortunate because I stayed with, um, would have been my mother’s uncle and his wife and they had no children. So they were very good to me. I was very blessed. They had an automobile, so I got to travel. I went to Washington DC, probably when I was four or five years old and stayed with another relative (see Figure 4). And I attended kindergarten, they say. And I can remember going, I didn’t know what it was, but going to, like, Kindergarten … I can remember the streetcars now. In Washington DC, you know they had streetcars. And that’s an experience I don’t think I’ll ever forget. And I can tell you something else I remember about that. They had the, what do you call it, the Goodyear Blimp. Something like that would fly over often. You’d just look up and there’d be that big blimp up in the sky. I don’t know if it was Goodyear, or what it was, but …
Although DC was very much segregated at this time, around 1947, Jeannie has only fond memories of her time in the Nation’s Capital. She explained that her older sister went to live with her father’s mother. Jeannie’s younger sister stayed with her mother’s sister in Riverview, Ella Stafford, and her husband, James Stafford, during Clellie’s illness. According to Jeannie, James Street, in Riverview, is believed to have been named for Jeannie’s uncle, James Stafford. After about a year, around 1949, Jeannie, her mother, and her younger sister were reunited. Her older sister chose to stay with her grandmother.

At this time in our nation the federal government and the military were becoming racially integrated (Jamar 2007). Also during this period, before the landmark U.S. Supreme Court Case of Brown v. Board of Education, law suits against segregated school systems were sprouting across the country (National Park Service 2007). In 1949, when Jeannie and her family returned to Kingsport, which like most Southern cities at the time was segregated, they became residents
of the Riverview Community. Riverview, including the subsidized housing Riverview Apartments, was the primary housing area for black residents.

But some [blacks] lived on Oak Street. A lot of them had homes in the alleys. You know they were not—you know they were not in good condition. I can remember there were people that lived on, there were some people that lived on Walnut Street, Oak Street, and I think Maple Street were the 3 main. Then, of course, years later, I guess the whites that lived on Dale Street moved down or something. And as they moved out, I guess that blacks began to move down to Dale Street.

Having attended kindergarten the year before, Clellie enrolled Jeannie in the all-black Douglass School (see Figure 5). Jeannie recalled that she never attended 1st grade. This may be because Jeannie had attended a year of school and Douglass did not have kindergarten. Douglass served black students in 1st through 12th grades.

But when I came back to Kingsport and I started school, I was promoted to … I skipped 1st grade. Back in those days—you may have heard people talking about skippin’. They did a lot of that, I guess. I don’t know what the criteria was, but I went to 2nd grade at the Old Douglass School that was on …back then it wasn’t East Sevier. It was called Walnut Street. On the corner of Walnut Street and what is now Center Street. That wasn’t called Center Street back then either. We called it the Bristol Highway, because you could get on that street and go all the way to Bristol.

History tells us that under the doctrine of separate-but-equal most schools for blacks were far from equal, they were substandard. These schools were typically housed in inferior buildings, poorly furnished, lacked adequate materials, and often had a faculty that was not as well prepared as faculties at white schools. In similar fashion, the Oklahoma Grove School that served as the school for blacks in Kingsport from 1913 to 1934 was a substandard run-down building (Kingsport Retired Teachers’ Association 1997). However, aside from old textbooks, minimal materials, and hand-me-down sports uniforms, this was not the case at the black school in Kingsport where Jeannie enrolled in 1949. Douglass School (see Figure 5), named after abolitionist Frederick Douglass, opened in 1934 replacing the deplorable Oklahoma building.
Douglass was located very close to the all-white Dobyns-Bennett High School, which was then located in the current John Sevier Middle School building on Wateree Street.

When Jeannie began to talk about attending Douglass, she lit up! She smiled from ear to ear. Her memories sound nothing like the horror stories that some blacks lived through. I could almost see the vibrant picture that she painted for me as she spoke.

Douglass was a great school! The teachers were great! The thing about the teachers … most of the teachers lived in the community. You know, they attended our churches and everything. I mean it was, yeah now when you look back, like I said, we didn’t realize DB (Dobyns-Bennett High School) was very close. I guess DB was where the old Sevier School … and I could hear the DB band when they practiced, you know like during football. But you know, I never did wonder why we couldn’t go, you know Douglass—it was a great school. Yeah, we had the old wooden floors, and it was the kind of floors that the custodians, they would put oil on it. It was some kind of oil (laughing). Yes, coal, ‘cause it was a coal furnace. We didn’t have a cafeteria. It was two floors, and upstairs in the hall at lunchtime they would, there were desks and chairs lined up on each side of the hall and that’s where, if you brought lunch, that’s where you had to sit and eat lunch. See we had an hour and you could do whatever you wanted to. Many times I took my lunch—I took my lunch money ‘cause there was a café across—couple of cafés across the street, I went over ‘cause you could get a hotdog for 15 cents. You know and a drink for 10 cents. I’d go get a hotdog and a drink. My mother would still be beatin’ me if she
knew that … (laughing) … if she knew that. But you got an hour for lunch and you didn’t have to sign out, sign in, have no permission. You were free to roam.

According to the Kingsport Retired Teachers’ Association (1997), Mr. Dobbins, the second and final principal at Douglass School, started the first “free lunch” program at the school. The first principal was Albert H. Howell.

I hear and I am sure it’s true, Mr. Dobbins, the principal, would have a garden in the summer and raise a lot of the vegetables that was used for lunch. They would can. I guess he, a lot of other staff, and people in the community would can the vegetables, and that was used, you know, for lunch. So, I’m sure that was unique.

Jeannie recalled another fond memory about her time at Douglass.

We really had … I did something at Douglass–every year, especially every elementary grade … every grade had to be on stage. They had to do some kind of a play or something. I guess where the kids could be on … and this … now that I think back on how creative those teachers were… I know you don’t know what crepe paper is. But they would … I wish I had pictures of the costumes they would make out of crepe paper. They would stitch it and make dresses. I mean, now that I look back on it, they had to really be creative to do that. Oh, gosh. I could remember we all … girls … we were always little fairies or flowers. And I can remember being … we had a Jack and the Beanstalk one year. I just wish I had pictures. And then in high school, I was in the drama club. That was fun.

Jeannie laughed as she thought about some of the things kids complain about today.

Things like walking to school, school dress codes, being bored, not having the toys they wanted, teachers, and school rules.

You had to walk from Riverview over there. ‘Cause we didn’t have cars. There was very few cars. I remember Reverend Stokley had a car, and he would haul kids to school. But most of us, we had to walk to and from school. I mean … really … you had to walk, rain, snow, cold, and see, back in those days, we were not allowed … we didn’t wear pants to school. I can remember, they would let you wear, we used to have leggings they called ‘em. You’d have a coat and you’d have leggings … like pants. You could wear those to school but when you got to school, you’d have to take the leggings off. You’d put ‘em in your locker. I guess pants wearing didn’t start … ‘cause I remember when I first went to Lincoln, uh, you know, staff couldn’t wear pants. I think that started either my first or second year at Lincoln, where pants became … But, it had to have been … well you probably weren’t even born when pants suits came out (laughing). Wow! That was … that was like the invention of the electric lights. That was good!
Jeannie also laughed when she thought about kids saying that they are bored or wanting to spend large sums of money on toys.

Oh, you know what? These kids, I mean, we had to make our fun … make our toys. We laugh now about jack rocks—jack rocks was big back in our day. And sometimes you could afford to buy jacks with the ball. Well, you know the jacks would tear up. They was cheap. So when we didn’t have—Riverview hadn’t always been paved. It was, uh rock … it was brick. It was like bricks had been crumbled. It was red brick streets, is what it was. Well, we’d go out in the street and get some rocks. We had the ball … and that was our jack rocks. I mean actually rocks out of the street. But, you know the jump rope, and that’s what now days … last year field day … I went to Roosevelt (Elementary with my grandson) and they were going to jump rope, and I said, ‘Well, my grandson don’t know how to jump rope.’ But you know what? None of the kids knew how to jump rope. They don’t do it anymore. And you got a bicycle once in your lifetime. We got to go to the carnival if there was a free carnival day in the summer. We didn’t have a pool. We had a wading pool. This big, round concrete—but, I mean, grown people, everybody would be—you know it had that thing in the middle like the sprinkler with the water. But, I mean that was a gathering place for the community. Like I say, we didn’t know what a swimming pool was. How old was I when we had TV? I can remember when TVs came out. My aunt, I said, used to live behind us, and they had one. And we’d go over there and look at it. But there’d be so much snow on it. But you don’t know (laughing) … maybe you heard your mama talk about … we listened to the radio. Now you want to talk about something with your imagination. There used to be, like scary shows would come on … on the radio. Of course, you’re sittin’ there and you just had to visualize. Somebody … (laughing) these kids … they would go crazy. But I’m … that’s all we had. And soap operas. We’d listen to them on the radio. The first soap opera back when I was … we’d go to school the next day talkin’ about them just like they do now. Did you hear Stella Della … ? Backstage Family, and (laughing). Gosh, I’d say I was probably in the 6th or 7th grade when we got TV. Yeah, we was laughin’ about that the other week, you remember when eleven o’clock … the TV stations went off at eleven o’clock. You saw the waving of the flag and the playing of the anthem. That was it. No sittin’ up watching it all night.

Talking about television brought up memories about how differently telephone calls were made when Jeannie was growing up.

And telephones … I was laughing at my granddaughter last Sunday, I guess. We still got our first telephone, which was a rotary. I keep saying I’m going to throw it away. That’s what my granddaughter was playing with. And I said, ‘You don’t remember that.’ And she said, ‘Yeah, I remember.’ And I was telling her how, back when phones first came, I remember my aunt’s number was like 69J. ‘Cause you picked up the phone, and the operator would say, ‘Number please!’ And you’d say, ‘69J.’ And then we went from that, I think our numbers were circle. Like now, were 246, we would be circle 6. Something (laughing), then it finally went to something like 245, 246. And the party
line. I tell you, you just pick up the phone … get in on anybody’s … listen in on anybody’s conversation. Cause most everybody was on a party line. You had to ask … tell people … I need to use the phone, please and hope that they didn’t just sit there and listen to your conversation.

The black population, though never exceeding 10% of the total population of Kingsport, was continuing to grow (Wolfe, 1983). As a result, a new Douglass School was built to accommodate black students (see Figure 6).

![Douglass School](image)

**Figure 6.** Douglass School–Opened in 1951 – Now the V.O. Dobbins Community Center (date unknown) Photo reproduced with permission from The Douglass Alumni Association-Kingsport.

Black students from Sullivan County, Tennessee and Gate City, Virginia also attended Douglass School in Kingsport. This new building was located in the Riverview Community and began serving black students in 1951. Consistent with the previous Douglass School, this school was not the typical inferior and substandard black school.

I think the new Douglass School was built when I was in fourth grade. And, you know, for us that lived in Riverview, then it was reversed. Our school was close to us, and the people that lived on the other side of town had to walk over here if they didn’t have a car. I lived … I think by then, I used to live in the apartments, when I used to attend the old Douglass, I lived in the Riverview Apartments. But, I’m thinking that by the time I was in fourth grade, I had moved … we had moved out of the housing project into a duplex house. So, still, I was one street over from the school. We started the year at the old Douglass, on what we called the highway. Then, after Christmas, when we went back to school in January, we started at the new Douglass School. It was located where the V. O.
Dobbins Center is now. Oh, man it was as different as night and day. Number one, you know, of course, a newer building, um. We had a gym. At the old Douglass, I guess we had what you’d call a gymnatorium. It was a gym and an auditorium together. Like I said, we had no cafeteria. We had (at the new Douglass) a nice, big, new, modern cafeteria, gym, and an auditorium separate. Oh, just I mean, of course the grounds, we had much more fields, yeah, a big, big field where the football team could practice. The band could practice. Playground equipment—I don’t remember having a music teacher at the old Douglass but when we moved to the new … you know. I guess that came on, let’s see, yeah, we didn’t have a, I don’t remember PE teacher there at the elementary school. We never did have kindergarten. The elementary was on the ground level and then 7-12 was on the second floor.

As described by the Kingsport Retired Teachers’ Association (1997):

Many showcase elements were incorporated into this up-to-date and newest school in Kingsport when it opened in January 1951. They were as follows: a gym that seated 450, a state of the art cafeteria that seated 72, auditorium stage equipped with lighting above and on the floor, a control panel, spiral staircase, separate industrial arts building, a library, wading pool, girls’ and boys’ showers and locker rooms in gym area, playground, practice field, flush wall hall lockers for high school students, full basketball court with the first glass backboards in the area, a projection booth, auditorium-theater that seated 300, fireproof stage backdrop curtains, stage dressing rooms, backstage loading ramp, a separate band room, principal’s office, secretary office, guidance office, clinic, home economics department, gymnasium, ladies’ teachers’ lounge, men’s teachers’ lounge, 16 classrooms, science lab, and bathrooms on both floors (pp. 200-201).

Just like when she talked about the first Douglass School. Jeannie beamed when recalling her time spent at the new Douglass School (see Figure 7). She talked about the basketball and football teams. The Douglass Tigers competed against other black school teams in the area as well as black schools in Knoxville and Chattanooga, Tennessee and Big Stone Gap, Virginia. Douglass was rivals with Langston, the black school in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Although now integrated, some things never change. Dobyns-Bennett in Kingsport and Science Hill in Johnson City continue to be rival schools to this day. Jeannie recalled a number of different activities and organizations at Douglass (see Figure 8), in some of which she was actively involved. Jeannie was a majorette, a member of the Glee Club, the New Homemakers of America, the drama club, and Y Teen Club.
We had things that we called NHA. I think, what is it they have in the county schools, is it FHA, Future Homemakers of America? Yeah, we had like-NHA was New Homemakers of America. And of course, we had so many organizations. We had Glee Club, and you could be on the annual staff. We had, um, drama club. Of course, we had a band. That’s probably … of course, we had sports … basketball and football. And something, I guess we did at Douglass, they always had the Miss Douglass drive. It would be in the fall of the year. Each high school class would pick a girl they would want to represent their class as a contestant to be Miss Douglass. Then we’d have a junior Miss Douglass. That would be the 7th and 8th grade. Back then, 7th and 8th grade was junior high. Ninth through twelfth was high school. But, then the younger kids, those classes would pick whichever class … I don’t know who chose … whichever high school class they would work with … would be fundraisers. And then the class that raised the most money, that girl would be Miss Douglass. Beauty had nothing to do with it. It was a fundraiser. But we all loved that time of year, because you talk about some good eating. Cause people would make, you know, cup cakes, them sweet potato, those little individual sweet potato pies. They may have a spaghetti dinner for lunch. Yes … sold the food for the fundraiser. And the money went to the school. And I’m sure a lot went to help the athletics. But I’m sure the money raised for Miss Douglass helped a whole lot with basketball and football equipment. Like I said, that was back in the days you could sell candy. You could buy candy. When I got to high school, I got to do that … pop popcorn at lunch time and oh, man … we used to have movies for ten cent–at school–during lunch we’d see a movie. Like I said, we had an hour for lunch and we were free to roam. I guess they just trusted us to come back. But … ’cause I lived in Riverview, I used to go home if it wasn’t a day I was sellin’ popcorn or something. But … you know when that stopped was the year I started working at Lincoln … they
stopped. I understand it was a student at DB got killed in an accident, a car accident. (paused) You got an hour for lunch; you could do whatever you wanted. They provided lunch but you didn’t have to stay there and eat. I mean, cause you know … well, you, don’t know … There was a restaurant down on Lincoln Street … Reverend Edge’s … I don’t know if you’ve ever heard about Reverend Edge. He was a pastor at Bethel AME Zion Church. He had a restaurant down on … so a lot of us, especially the high school kids would go on down there ’cause he sold hamburgers … hot dogs … pork chop sandwiches … French fries. And he had a little grocery on top … a little grocery store. And he had a juke box. So a lot of the kids would go there for lunch. I’m sure taking their lunch money. But I went home, you know, what I would do a lot of times, I’d go home and do … cause I knew I had to wash dishes when I got home–so a lot of the time I’d take my lunch time and I’d go home and wash dishes at lunch time so when I got home after school I could have that time for play. I’d already done it. But that was some fun … we had some fun times. Oh, God. I just remember having … I just loved our school!

Figure 8. Collage of Various Activities at Douglass (1937) Photo reproduced with permission from The Douglass Alumni Association-Kingsport.

I recalled hearing that Jeannie had been a majorette in high school (see Figures 9 and 10). When I asked, she gave an expected humble reply.
Oh, you … Lord yes. You did have to mention that. Yes. Um, there used to be, among the black schools around the Tri-Cities, they called it—a festival—they used to do in the
spring. It would alternate between Bristol, Kingsport, Johnson City, wherever. Your band, of course, and the drama club would all perform. And that was all good to get … you know … mingle with the other black schools in the area and see what each school was doing. It was called the Arts … the Arts Festival. That was good, because Johnson City and Kingsport have always been rivals. We don’t like Johnson City today. It carries over. It used to be Langston and Douglass. Langston was our number one rival. Now it’s Science Hill and DB. I just don’t like them (laughing).

I mentioned to Jeannie that the big rival basketball game was going on tonight. As we spoke, DB and Science Hill were playing basketball at DB. Jeannie laughed, “Oh, Lord! Go home so I can go!”

Jeannie reminisced about how school was when she was younger compared to what she sees today.

’Cause when I was in school, you used to um, you did recitations, you … we didn’t have a lot of papers. You had to write … we had to … we had to do essay questions. When you … I mean you answered questions. Wasn’t multiple choice. And now, if you notice, most of our kids can’t write a complete sentence. But, no, we … you started with a capital letter. You used correct punctuation. But most of them … we had a lot of essay type questions. But no ’yes’ and ’no’. You went to the chalkboard and you did math. Spelling, you stood up at your desks. Everybody lined up across the room, and that’s the way we did our spelling. ’Cause now our kids are missing out on a lot of that. And probably … I think probably helped you a lot. Well, I still don’t like getting up in front of public, but to get up in the classroom and have to … well, I remember … you know … you probably had to learn the Preamble to the Constitution, the Gettysburg Address, and all that. And you’d stand and everybody stood up in front of the class and recited it. But Lincoln … when I went to Lincoln I … it was a new experience. Like I said, I had never heard of field trips. Field trips? What’s that? (laughing) But, um yeah. I went in as a teacher’s assistant. I worked a lot in the classrooms with the kids. Of course, back then, teachers would use you a lot to go take a break. You know, leave you to show a film strip to the class.

Jeannie quickly went to the topic of discipline. She described how differently discipline was handled when she went to Douglass and when she first went to work at the integrated elementary school.

Kids were very … I mean back then … you know … teachers back then, what they called was a no … no foolishness type. They’d tell you … you sit here and you … and they’d … really, they did. It’s not like today. (laughing) No, that would be funny, ’cause … really… you know schools had PA systems—you probably don’t know. Um, and then
when I did start working in the office, cause teachers, sometimes they did come to the office so they’d have you turn on the thing in their room. And she would tell them that we’d be listening. And they’d be really good. If anybody was misbehaving or … anything—so that was a good way to monitor the classroom. Spanking back then was permitted. No parent permission. It was with a paddle; I’m sure with the … bent over a desk or just bent over. Well, even at Douglass, we was talking about that the other day, that we had one teacher, I mean, pinched. I never did have that teacher, but she was bad to pinch. Pinched kids. She’d just pinch ‘em. I know we had one teacher, and I never saw him do this … they said he would throw a book or whatever. So discipline was pretty much … now it’s probably … most of them would probably file suit. I guess most of them are probably dead. And kids didn’t want you to tell their parents, ‘cause when you got home, you was gonna get it. And you wasn’t going to go home and say nothin’, ‘cause you’d know you … (laughing) Mr. Dobbins … the boys were smokin’ in the bathroom, like that Charlie Brown. Their punishment was, we called it, they had to be on the chain gang. They would have to … like I said, we had a coal furnace. They’d have to go carry the cinders out. He would put them different places—I don’t know what that was for … on the school grounds. Of course we all knew, if we saw the guys doin’ it, why they were doin’ it. So… it was a big joke. Somethin’ else we could not do—we did not cut the corners on the school grounds. Like, I’m gonna go through the grass. Lord, you might as well have smacked your mama or something! That was punishment. You had to go on the chain gang for that. No, you didn’t cut across the (laughing) you’d go all the way to the end of the sidewalk and you did not cut across. We called it, ‘Cuttin’ Corners.’ I don’t know what he’d do to girls, but the boys, they’d be on the chain gang. I don’t know what girls’ punishment would be. No … you know, boys are always more … gonna try you.

Jeannie recalled a poem that students at Douglass were required to memorize and recite. The poem, written in 1920, is entitled “Myself” and is by Edgar Guest:

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I have to live with myself and so
I want to be fit for myself to know.
I want to be able as days go by
always to look myself straight in the eye;
I don’t want to stand with the setting sun
and hate myself for the things I’ve done.
I don’t want to keep on a closet shelf
a lot of secrets about myself
and fool myself as I come and go
into thinking no one else will ever know
The kind of man I really am,
I don’t want to dress myself up in a sham.
I want to go out with my head erect
I want to deserve all men’s respect;
but here in this struggle for fame and wealth
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I want to be able to like myself.
I don’t want to look at myself and know that
I am bluster and bluff and empty show.
I never can hide myself from me;
I see what others may never see;
I know what others may never know,
I never can fool myself and so,
whatever happens, I want to be
self-respecting and conscience free.

(Guest, 2009)

She still recalls part of it today. She said that it was a good poem about being of good character.

Jeannie still has a certificate (see Figure 11) that she received for good citizenship when she was a Douglass student. Jeannie also explained that the expectation for appropriate behavior was not just a school expectation, but also a community expectation.

As with most parents those days…and I can just see older people…I mean, anybody’d get after you. You didn’t have to worry about your mom getting mad. Anybody’d see you doing anything, they’d reprimand you… and probably tell your momma that they did. Parents used to tell each other… ‘If you see my…so-and-so doing anything, you correct ‘em.’ And I still do. My children tell me, ‘Somebody’s gonna beat you!’ I see, you know, I see kids coming up here and they’re throwing rocks, and I’d say, ‘Guys, you’re gonna break out somebody’s window. You may break out a car window, and you know your mom or dad will have to pay for that, and they’re not gonna be happy.’ Well, that may prevent them from …I mean, I’m not ugly to them, but I’m really just correcting them. I just can’t sit there and watch a kid… and they could hurt somebody, to get hit… you know, in the eye, with a rock, or … but, anyway… it’s just me, I guess.

Figure 11: Citizenship Award Given to Jeannie by V.O. Dobbins in 1959
I asked Jeannie about what she remembered about the time around the Brown case or about desegregation.

I didn’t hear about it. And we … a lot of things now … we look back about a lot of things that blacks didn’t know about. Why did we not? … Did our teachers not know this when we were in school? Like the red light was supposed to be invented by (a black man) … and we never were told that. I’d been grown and learned more, and I thought, did our teachers not know about this? Or … since we’d never heard of it … they may have been afraid to … Maybe they were. I don’t know. I don’t know if it was forbidden or they just didn’t know. I wonder about that.

I asked Jeannie about interactions with the rest of Kingsport when she was growing up in Riverview.

The only thing I can remember is when I was in high school, they used to have … well, they still have it … what they called City Day. I don’t hear as much about it now. A representative from each high school got to go down to City Hall and I guess somebody got to be the mayor and alderman … I remember getting to go one time. But other than that, I don’t remember any. Our churches … I used to go to the Methodist Church and I could remember us going down to Broad Street, doing some kind of youth activity in the summertime. But as far as any school … I don’t … Yeah, now I can remember there used to be a dentist at what’s now … I don’t know what school that was … where the senior citizens’ center is … I can’t remember which one it was. But anyway, there used to be a dentist, and he was housed in that school. So, if we needed to go to the dentist, our principal would usually transport us over to that school. That was the only time I remember going into that building … was that school, cause of the dentist. He gave free dental care.

When talking about her recollections of race relations during her childhood, Jeannie explained that as a child she never really wondered why blacks and whites were separate or why schools, business entrances, seating in theaters, transportation, lunch counters, and water fountains were designated for whites or blacks. She stated, in a very matter of fact voice, “We knew our place.”

Everything was separate. I mean in stores, like you know, you’ve probably never heard of, for instance, like the five and ten cent stores–McCroy’s, Crescents, and Woolworth’s. But the drinking fountains, each drinking fountain, they would be one that said “White Only” and there would be one that said “Colored.” Of course, the restrooms … I don’t even know if you could go in the restrooms. I remember the drinkin’ fountains. But the bus terminal…there was the colored section and on the bus we’d sit in the back. And as far as high school, I mean, it never bothered me. I didn’t even worry. Douglass School
was all I knew and all I needed to know. Um, like I said, we didn’t play sports with each other. We were just in our world and we just didn’t worry about what they were doing over there. It was just separate, and I don’t think we even knew. I don’t think we realized. You know … you just … it’s just the way it was.

Jeannie went on to talk about the lack of career opportunities for blacks.

Well, one thing I’ve thought about that we as black people didn’t really have anything to look forward to, as far as a career. The only, proper professional, position we could get would be school teacher. And really, I just cannot think of … ’cause there were no, you know, secretarial positions were not … and most of the guys, you know, were janitors. Even if they went to Eastman in the plants, that was all they were hired in as, was custodians, or janitors, they called them back then. I mean, as far as a professional, the only thing I can think of was teachers. I mean, there were, they called them hair dressers back then. That maybe did hair. I don’t know if that was a natural talent they had, ’cause I don’t remember any beauty schools or nothing around here where you could get a license. But, I just got to thinking about that. So, even if we went to college, you could get a degree in something, but you could not use it. Our teachers, and even the principal, for summer work, cause they didn’t get paid year-round, so they had to work … and they went in these plants and worked as custodians. The military—that was another option for girls or boys. My mother encouraged me to go to school. I mean, they wanted you to go, but now that I look back on it and think … you could go get a degree, or an education, but … (trailed off).

Jeannie graduated from Douglass in 1959. I asked her to tell me what she remembered about graduation.

What did they call it … on Friday night? The baccalaureate … no, it wasn’t Friday it was Sunday. We had what they called the baccalaureate. But, anyway, it was something like a church service. You know, we would march … the seniors would march in. You’d sit down front, and then, you know, there was a program. I don’t have any programs from then. It always would be a minister, that would do the … I call it a sermon. It was like going to church. It was just like … that would be on Sunday afternoon. Then on Tuesday, would actually be the graduation in the auditorium and that’s when you got your diploma. And you’d see … there was a speaker and a short program. You got your diploma. Now, I remember when I was a junior I was, uh, shoot, what are the top two … I was the salutatorian. So, the junior … our junior year, I guess … I don’t know how the next year they decided how next year you was going to be valedictorian or salutatorian. We got to march. We were like the, what do you call them … we marched before the senior class.

After graduating from Douglass, she enrolled in Bennett College, in Greensboro, North Carolina.

She explained that she was glad that she went to Bennett even though she had never been away
from family. “It was a good year down there. I had good teachers. Made a lot of good friends (see Figure 12).”

Gosh, yes, I guess that’s the first time I’d ever been gone since … I remember crying the whole first semester, up till probably Christmas. But after that, I got used to … oh Lord! I had a ball! (laughing) You know, ‘cause I went down there … I didn’t know a soul. Of course, my mother went with me. You know, we had to go on the bus. And I think she stayed two or three days, ‘cause they had the orientation for parents. I don’t think my roommate had made it … probably hadn’t got there when she left. But I had a good roommate, met a lot of girls. It was an all girls’ school. Probably still is. But, um, A&T College was co-ed. The guys from A & T would always come over to Bennett looking for girls. One or two white kids went to Bennett. Yeah, both of them were basically all-black schools.

Figure 12: Jeannie (on the Right) at Bennett College (1959)

Jeannie, who has always been a very laid-back person, recalled her dislike of the Bennett traditions.

Well, like I said, it was an all girls’ school. And it was a prim and proper school. You had to wear hats and gloves, like if you went to town for shopping. And then on Sunday, we had what you’d call vespers. What I would say, like going to church. And everybody had assigned seats. And of course, they had somebody checkin’ to make sure that you were there. I think you were allowed to miss two, two or three times that whole year. You had to work in the cafeteria–I guess it was part of your tuition. One time you would be the one to go in and set the tables for supper. They used real linen tablecloths. Real … And everybody … you’d sit down and were served. So you either … your duty was either setting the tables up or else you were a server. And it rotated. But I liked that. And they had some other Bennett traditions. I think I chose to forget ‘em. But, I got so tired of hearing about the Bennett traditions.
At the time she enrolled at Bennett, she had no way of knowing how close she would come to being part of the historical lunch counter sit-ins. She considered participating in the sit-ins but opted to attend class instead.

In fact, I was down there when the sit down strike ... when they’d sit in Woolworth’s. It started in Greensboro. I was at Bennett when that took place in the spring, must have been the spring of 1960. I cannot remember the guy’s name that started that. I wish I could. But they came over to Bennett and explained to us what they were going to do. And the president of Bennett said we could participate in the sit down strike as long as it didn’t interfere with our class schedule. Well, as luck would have it, I couldn’t do it 'cause it interfered with my class schedule. When I look back on that I said wasn’t that, uh ... 'cause I’m sure I would have ended up in jail. You know, in some ways I wished I could have. But then, you know, I didn’t realize what an impact that was going to make. And now, just to think that I was actually in Greensboro, got to see the guys that actually started that. And something I hope I never forget, 'cause some of the kids at Bennett were locked up.

One of the only times I heard Jeannie talk about being afraid was when she talked about her bus trip home from Bennett for Christmas break. Unlike her trip to Bennett, her mother was not with her.

I can remember when I came home for Christmas, I had to ... I think it was Wytheville, Virginia ... I think I had a two–at least a two-hour layover. And I was really afraid because I was by myself and that’s when they had the colored and white sections. Nobody else was there. And it was late in the night. But, God was good. Course, things ... you didn’t hear things happenin’ like they do now. I would of ... I probably couldn’t have done it now. But that was back in the day when you had your colored section and your white sections. But nobody was in either section but me (laughing).

Jeannie explained that she was only able to attend Bennett for 1 year. She had received some scholarship money from the Methodist church. However, they simply could not afford more than 1 year. After her year at Bennett College, Jeannie returned to Kingsport and enrolled at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). However, due to transportation issues she had to withdraw after 1 year.

I didn’t have a car and, you know, I was bumming a ride. I had a cousin that was going there then. I would bum a ride. One time I stayed over at somebody’s house for a while.
But after that, I just didn’t have transportation. I don’t think they called it ETSU back then. I don’t think so.

I asked Jeannie what she did after she left ETSU. Jeannie simply replied, “I got married.” I was surprised to her reply when I asked her when she had gotten married.

Oh, gosh! I’ve been married all my life! You know, that’s true. I thought about that one day. And I told Willie, I said ‘You know what? You are with your spouse longer than you are with your mother.’ I’ve been with him twice as long as I was … three times as long as I was with my mama. I tell you, I’ve been married 90 years. I don’t even remember (laughing).

Jeannie married Willie Hodges, also a Riverview resident, on July 6, 1961. Jeannie and Willie both attended Douglass but never dated when they were in high school. Willie graduated in 1957 and Jeannie graduated in 1959.

I’d known him … but we’d never … I’d never looked at him cause he had a girlfriend in high school. Everybody always thought they’d get married. All through high school they went together till they graduated and she went one way and he went another. He went to A&I in Nashville. You’ve probably heard it called Tennessee State. They called it A&I … Agricultural and Industrial, I guess. That used to be the school where most blacks went when they graduated … well either Knoxville College or A&I.

Jeannie explained that circumstances often interfered with the desire to get an education.

Several of the kids went to school. They went down to A&I. A lot of ‘em didn’t graduate. ‘Cause, say my circumstance where they just didn’t have the money. Alternatively, like Willie, he went to A&I, and of course, his dad … he didn’t see the importance of an education. So he gave him no money. He did work at the school, and tried to work … but then, when he couldn’t do it anymore. He just had to drop out. Course, now he worked … he went to East Tennessee State, and he just lacked very little. He could go, ‘cause when he was a custodian, he worked 5:00 till 1:00, so he could go to school some during the day. But when he got placed on shift work, that kind of ended that. And he came very close to getting his degree.

Willie worked at the Eastman Chemical Plant for 33 years. He began in 1961 on “cleanup”, the only position he could be hired in at that time. He was the first black man to work in the dope filter department. Ultimately, Willie retired as a foreman. I asked Jeannie if she or Willie ever considered going back to college. She immediately replied, “Nope!”
Well, you know, I just … you start a family and then it gets hard … the babysitting thing. And then we only had … we had one car, for many years. I would actually take Willie to work. He went at 5:00, then go back at 1:00 in the morning to pick him up.

They had two daughters, Lisa Látice, born January 30, 1962, and Susan Carol, born July 17, 1967. Jeannie explained that her mother came up with the name Susan Carol. Clellie once had a boyfriend named Dan Carol. Her oldest daughter’s name came from a request made by a neighbor.

Uh, there used to be a lady that lived across the street from us, an older lady. And she asked me, she said, ‘If you have a girl, would you name her Látice?’ Why sure. But I didn’t have anything to go with it. And Willie came up with Lisa.

Jeannie also has four grandchildren: Sunny, Seraja “Armande” (see Figure 13), Christopher, and Shane. In addition, Jeannie has one great-granddaughter, Alexa.

Talking about Willie’s job at Eastman brought her back to thoughts about housing for blacks when segregation was still rampant.

And that was another thing. Housing in the … housing for us, for black people—I’d say most places … I just know about Kingsport … that it was … that was the reason how we ended up in this house (see Figures 14 and 15). This was his mother and daddy’s house.
Because, you could, I mean the only apartments we could live in was these down (the Riverview Apartments) and if you worked at Eastman, I don’t care if you was a custodian or, just the word Eastman, you didn’t get no … you couldn’t have, uh … couldn’t live in Kingsport housing. And there were no other apartments that I know of. I guess they considered your income too high, low as it was. I mean, I guess their guideline … I never saw what it was. They just said no. You couldn’t get public housing. Like when I went to the old Douglass School, we lived in the old Riverview Apartments. I don’t know how long we were there … probably two or three years. Then see, my mother got a job down at Holston Defense … like I said … when you got a job at a plant or something, you were out. So, we moved up here to Carver Street (see Figure 16). I think I was in junior high school when my mother married, um, Joe Baylor, and they built that house on Dunbar Street (see Figure 17). They (Willie’s parents) really weren’t here … his dad had a building down on Lincoln Street. He had a little business. And so he stayed down there most of the time. Sometimes he’d come and stay, but—they separated, his mother and daddy, after all those years, they kept separating. She kind of stayed with his sister, and they kind of moved … I told him, it was strange after we got married, they all moved to Ohio.

Figure 14: Willie Hodges in Front of His Childhood Home–Now His and Jeannie’s Home (1967)
Figure 15: Jeannie in Front of Willie’s Childhood Home-Now Willie and Jeannie’s Home (1967)

Figure 16: The House on Carver Street Where Jeannie, Clellie, and Francine Once Lived, It Was a Two-Family House When They Lived in It (2009)
Jeannie went on to talk about all the work she and Willie had done on the house: putting up siding, tearing up and replacing all the floors, and installing paneling. She explained that once blacks were able to live anywhere in the city, they decided to stay, in part, because of the work they had done on the house (see Figure 18).

But, now, 'cause when it did get so you could go out, I thought, ‘I’m not going anywhere now!’ Most of the people that we knew … and you know it’s so strange … I was thinking again today that when we first moved—everybody who lived over here is gone … husband and wife. Except for two houses, we’re the original people. I mean, but those others … they were here when we … when I came, well Willie was over here. But, they’re all gone. Now we’re the older people. Well, see they tore down … they tore down the two houses on the corner … by the corner. And I hear they’re going to tear down the one on the other side of this one, and it will be part of the V.O. Dobbins … I think it will be a parking area for V.O. Dobbins. I don’t know the people who didn’t sell … didn’t sell this one. They’ve got the sign up there, but nobody’s buying it. I don’t know what they’re asking for it. It’s fallin’ down.
Kingsport residents, white and black, experienced a metamorphosis in 1965, a decade after the U.S. Supreme Court declared that separate but equal had no place in education, integration came to Kingsport. The Kingsport Retired Teachers’ Association (1997) explained that in the 35 years that Douglass educated black students, the school had earned accreditation, grew from a student body of about 214 to approximately 384, increased the number of teachers from 7 to 16, and graduated approximately 300 students, 19 in the final graduation in 1966. I asked Jeannie what she remembered about the closing of Douglass. For the first time, when talking about Douglass, Jeannie didn’t light up. In fact, she stammered a bit before offering a somber reply.

I … of course, you know… well, we all wondered what was going to happen, you know …what would they do with the school. ‘Cause most of the black schools, when they closed, they just let them sit there and deteriorate, you know. So, I guess that was just the one big concern was what would they do with the building. Of course, it was different. You’re used to havin’ the school down there. You know … not having it in the community–the activities that took place–we missed it.
Jeannie recalled the integration of the city school system being a fairly smooth transition with only minor fistfights and insignificant short-lived problems. Her recollections share no commonalities with any of the historically horrific accounts of violent attempts to integrate schools.

The first year when the integration rule came out, they gave kids a choice. They could go to DB or stay at Douglass. That might have been 1965. And that’s when I started as a teacher’s assistant that spring at Douglass … March of 1966. But, the way they did Riverview, only the block that I lived in went to Lincoln School. I don’t know how … to this day I’ve tried to figure how …there weren’t that many kids. But then, all the rest of Riverview elementary kids went to Washington School. Of course, all the middle school and high school went to either Sevier and … it was junior high back at that time-so, junior high, 7th and 8th grade went to Sevier and the rest of the kids went to DB–schools were open for integration, but they if they chose, they could stay at Douglass. But I am trying to think, did something happen at DB? Seems like something happened at DB. I can’t remember what it was, but it was short-lived, whatever it was.

The stark disparity experienced during desegregating different school systems across our country is amazing. I think back to the experiences of the Little Rock Nine at Central High School, which required the assistance of approximately 1,000 soldiers in order for the students to attend a full day at the previously all-white school. Jeannie explained that nothing of that caliber occurred in Kingsport.

Jeannie also explained that it was not just the students that were being integrated. Several of the 17 black faculty members of Douglass were placed at other city schools.

‘Cause like I said, when Douglass closed, I guess the teachers they thought were good enough … they put ‘em in the white schools. ‘Cause all of them didn’t get placed. My stepfather went to Sevier … Joe Baylor (Jeannie’s mother had married Joe Baylor when Jeannie was in junior high). Just certain ones. ‘Cause, like I said, teachers used to be, I called it monitored. ‘Cause I told you, they had an elementary supervisor, and principals used to go in to the rooms more than they do now. But I’m sure that elementary supervisor could give some insight on who … now that’s my opinion!

I had asked Jeannie if her teaching assistant position at Douglass was her first job. She answered with predictable Jeannie style.
Oh, heavens no! I was working when I was a teenager. Well, we worked in people’s homes. I even … there used to be a lady that did hair. She was a black lady. I would iron for her in exchange she would do my hair. I’ve done so many things. You know. I did baby sitting. You may get paid … you may not. But, yeah, I’ve done housework. I’ve worked in a nursery school. That’s what I was doing when the principal, Mr. Dobbins, at Douglass called me—when the teaching assistant thing came…and asked me why I hadn’t applied. And I’m like … ‘What are you talkin’ about? I’d never heard of that.’ And he said, ‘Well, they are going to be interviewing this afternoon. So you come down here and ….’ Okay, so I went. I’m trying to think which assistant superintendent it was that did the interview. I don’t remember, but anyway—so, I got the job. Of course, that was just from March until the end of the school year. I don’t know if you remember, they used to have elementary school supervisors that would come around … go around to each elementary school every so often and sit in the classrooms … really just checkin’ the teachers out. A name I will never forget … Ms. Bowman—that summer—they used to have summer school in Kingsport for the elementary. So she asked me if I’d want to work the summer school. I said, ‘Yeah, I’ll do it.’ So, I worked summer school at Washington School … no, it was at Lincoln School that year. Usually, it was always at Washington, but they was doing something at Washington so it was at Lincoln. So, I guess I met the secretary from Lincoln, and umm … they called. So the teaching assistants didn’t use to start until about November. So, but I never had heard anything, so I went to my other job that I had back at the nursery. And Willie called me and said that they had called me from Lincoln School. ‘You need to call them back.’ And then I called them and they wanted to know why I didn’t come. ‘What do you mean, why didn’t I?’ So, evidently central office thought the principal was going to call, and the principal thought that central office was going to call. Yeah, so you know, I’m over here at my other job and they call and say, ‘Well, come on up here.’ And I … and I … I hate to leave, but I’ve got to go. I’ve got this job. And I didn’t even know the principal. I hadn’t met the principal at Lincoln. So I knew the secretary. The principal hired me on what the secretary … because I had never … Ms. Sandusky was the principal and I had never met her.

Jeannie was the first black employee at the elementary school. Because she was hired the same time that integration was taking place in the school system, there were some black students at the school. Jeannie was there, a part of history as the walls of segregation started coming down.

According to Jeannie’s recollections, for the most part, the integration of the school system went rather smoothly. I asked Jeannie whether she experienced any problems during desegregation.

She explained that she did not experience any prejudice at work.

I was the only black employee at the school. There were a few black kids. Now, I don’t know what they said behind my back. But, as far as to me personally, I have never, never as long as I was there, had nobody to … and I didn’t feel … you know … I just guess I
was one of them. I just … (laughing) you know … I didn’t, I just didn’t feel uneasy. The other two people they hired as teacher assistants, like were … one of them’s husband was principal at DB and then the other lady, I just met her when I got there. But we always got along. Really, I was blessed.

We reached another somber moment when Jeannie began talking about the Riverview Apartments being torn down in January 2008 (see Figure 19).

They tore down both of them [the older and the newer apartments]. All of them, I think it was, what 91 or 92 apartments. They’re building like … what do you call those … ? More like townhouses kind of— you know, modern like apartments instead of the institutional kind. Just last year—a year ago in January … Some of them (the tenants) went into some of the other KHRA (Kingsport Housing and Redevelopment Authority), you know, housing. Some of them got Section 8 vouchers to, you know live in a house. And I’d say, you know that’s pretty much it.

I asked Jeannie if she knew why the Riverview Apartments were torn down instead of being renovated.

Well, it was just like this house. There’s just so much you can do to an old house like … as far as … it had no … none of ‘em had like, hookup for washer and dryers. You know, they didn’t have air … they tried to go in and put in air conditioning but you can’t … they tried to put in some washer and dryer hookups. But I know one girl … it sounded like your washer may have been here in the bathroom, or somewhere, and then your dryer could have been downstairs or somewhere else way far away, because they put it … put it wherever. And that got kind of … of course all of ‘em … most of ‘em had an upstairs. There were a few that were one story. But that was just like a three-room … and you know; there were some older people who lived in them. And you know, that wasn’t good. And then like I say, you know, there was so much … they didn’t have driveways. These they build now, each person would have their own driveway.

Jeannie told me that she went back to visit her old apartment before it was torn down. She had her husband, Willie, take a picture of her in front of the apartment (see Figure 20). Castle (2007a) reported:

‘A lot of history is going to be gone once the buildings start disappearing, but just like everything in life, the surroundings have to change so the next generation can have the better things,’ said Van Dobbins Jr., whose father V.O. Dobbins Sr. is the namesake of the community center that anchors the housing community. (¶ 3)
After the demolition was complete, the community gathered in the V.O. Dobbins Center and former residents of the Riverview Apartments took a brick or two as a piece of their history (see Figure 21).
Although Jeannie will never admit that she deserved to be honored in a celebration recognizing her for her 40 years of service to the children of Kingsport, thankfully, Tammie Davis, principal at Lincoln, and many others felt that the honor was well deserved. Jeannie mentioned that she and her colleagues always got along. Several former colleagues wrote letters and sent photos to be shared at Jeannie’s retirement celebration (see Figures 22-26). Jeannie worked in the school system for 40 years. She worked as a teaching assistant from 1966 until 1990, when she became the office assistant. Jeannie was often referred to as the face and voice of Lincoln School. She retired at the close of school in May of 2006. Over those 40 years, Jeannie made a countless number of copies, answered an incalculable number of phone calls, stood watch during more cafeteria lunches than anyone would care to recall, assisted in a vast number of classrooms, helped a myriad of students with their work, and touched more lives, of both children and adults, than can be measured.
Figure 22: Letter from Anna Dickson, Former Lincoln Teacher (2006)

Figure 23: Letter from Joyce George, Friend and Former Colleague (2006)
Figure 24: Teaching Assistants at Lincoln: Joyce George, Jeannie Hodges, and Dee Bockman (date unknown)

March 1, 2006

Dear Jeannie,

Congratulations on your many years of work for Kingsport City Schools and Lincoln School! You are truly a wonderful person and have contributed in such a positive way to so many lives. I remember fondly my days at Lincoln School and our times on "guard duty" in the cafeteria. We used to share funny happenings to add to the laughter for the day and make the "duty" time go faster. I still tell one of your stories occasionally about you getting in the wrong yellow vehicle one time when you had finished shopping at the mall!

I miss all my friends at Lincoln School and hope to see you soon. Have a fantastic celebration!

Love,
Fran Roosevelt

Figure 25: Letter from Fran Roosevelt, Friend and Former Colleague (2006)
Even when Jeannie was working in the office, she never let an opportunity to help students be wasted. She was always ready with a kind word of encouragement or a few moments spent helping students with reading or other assignments in the hallway. Jeannie often talks about how she has been blessed throughout her life. I do not believe that she has any idea what a blessing she is to others. She is a true example of a servant leader: always giving of her self, trying to find ways to help others, giving encouragement and support, and never seeking recognition.

On March 14, 2006, several individuals, whose lives had been enriched by Jeannie, had the perfect opportunity to express their gratitude. The day started with the arrival of a chauffer (see Figure 27), breakfast at the MeadowView Convention Center (see Figure 28), while a banner was hung at the front entrance to the school (see Figure 29). Jeannie returned from breakfast to a “red carpet” welcome from students, colleagues, friends, and family gathered along the sidewalk. The festivities then moved indoors to the school auditorium (see Figure 30), with a performance by Tony Foreman and the “Men of Lincoln”, all the male teachers at Lincoln
(see Figures 31 and 32), and Mayor Dennis Phillip’s proclamation of Jeannie Hodges Day (see Figures 33 and 34). Reflective remarks were made by Richard Kitzmiller (Kingsport City Schools’ Superintendent), Ed Abbott (former principal of Lincoln), Tammie Davis (current principal of Lincoln), Willie Hodges (Jeannie’s husband), Jan Russaw (colleague and friend), and Pat Cox (colleague and friend). Pat Cox also presented Jeannie with a scrapbook compiled of photos and notes written by friends and family members. At the close of the ceremony, Ida Machen and Jan Russaw sang, “Wind beneath My Wings” (see Figure 35) while a pictorial history was shown on the projection screen. Following the ceremony, a reception was held in the school’s main alcove. Jeannie was visibly still in shock (see Figure 36) as friends and family members continued to celebrate and express their appreciation. Jeannie Hodges Day was featured in the Kingsport Times-News (see Figure 37). Staten (2006) reported, “She [Jeannie] recalled a few of the changes she had witnessed in her four decades….But one thing didn’t change in 40 years-Jeannie Hodges and her megawatt smile.”

*Figure 27: Jeannie Being Escorted to the Waiting Limo While Friends Applaud (2006)*
Figure 28: Breakfast at MeadowView—Pictured from Left to Right: Jeannie Hodges, Ed Abbott (Former Principal of Lincoln), Richard Kitzmiller (Superintendent of Kingsport City Schools), Sara Thompson (Former Secretary of Lincoln), and Tammie Davis (Current Principal of Lincoln) (2006)

Figure 29: Doug and Steve Quickly Hang the Banner before Jeannie Returns (2006)
Figure 30: Willie, Jeannie, Lisa (Jeannie’s Daughter), Robyn (Willie’s Niece), and Sunny (Jeannie’s Granddaughter) in Lincoln’s Auditorium (2006)

Figure 31: Tony Foreman, a Family Friend, Singing “Hello Jeannie” (2006)

Figure 33: Mayor Dennis Phillips Declared March 14, 2006 Jeannie Hodges Day (2006)
City of Kingsport
Proclamation

Whereas, Mrs. Jeannie Hodges is a graduate of Kingsport’s Douglas High School where she served her fellow students as a Drum Majorette; and

Whereas, Jeannie Hodges has dedicated over forty years to our Kingsport City School System helping smooth the way for countless students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators, often times being the “Saint Behind The Scenes;” and

Whereas, Jeannie Hodges dedicates an extraordinary amount of her time and energy to her church, and to her community through her service on the South Central Community Development and Weed and Seed Boards of Directors and as a premier “Fun Fester;” and

Whereas, Jeannie Hodges, through her many humanitarian and benevolent efforts, is truly the heart and soul of Abraham Lincoln Elementary School; and

Whereas, the citizens of Kingsport deeply appreciate Jeannie’s efforts to foster, support and sustain the well-being of all citizens of our community.

Now, Therefore, I, Dennis R. Phillips, Mayor of the City of Kingsport, Tennessee, and on behalf of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Kingsport, do hereby proclaim March 14, 2006, as

Jeannie Hodges Day

in Kingsport and ask everyone to join me in honoring this exceptional individual for her commitment to bettering the life of our youth and for her extraordinary efforts in helping us make the City of Kingsport the best place to be.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Proclamation Seal of the City of Kingsport, Tennessee, to be affixed this the 14th day of March, 2006.

Dennis R. Phillips, Mayor

Figure 34: Mayor’s Proclamation of Jeannie Hodges Day (2006)
Figure 35: Ida Machen and Jan Russaw (Friends and Colleagues) Sing a Tribute to Jeannie (2006)

Figure 36: Jeannie Still Visibly in Shock at the Reception Following the Tribute—Pictured—Jeannie, Jim Davis (Father of Principal Tammie Davis and Friend of Jeannie), and Terry Moore (Family Friend) (2006)
March 14 declared Jeannie Hodges Day

They were whispering in the hallway at Lincoln School Tuesday morning, keeping a lookout for Jeannie Hodges, dashing into the auditorium when a whisperer reported she was headed this way.

Finally at 7:00 a.m., the whisperers turned into cheers as a young man in a suit led Jeannie out the front door and into a waiting limousine for her first-ever limo ride.

To commemorate Jeannie’s 60th anniversary working at Lincoln, Principal Tummie Davis had arranged a surprise, a limo to take Jeannie and a few friends and colleagues out for a celebration breakfast at Meadowview. “I had to juggle a little bit and tell her my dad was bringing ham biscuits so she wouldn’t eat breakfast before she came to school.”

Jeannie started at Lincoln in 1940 in a teaching assistant, moving into the office in 1950. And she’s been retiring at the end of the school year. But the surprises weren’t over for Jeannie. An hour and a half later, when the limo turned the corner at Sumner Street, bringing her back to campus, she was greeted by a cheering crowd, all the school’s 488 students, as well as teachers, parents, former teachers, parents of former students, friends, church members and the mayor.

Jeannie was more than surprised. She was “totalement totally surprised. I am not believing this,” this last remark was quickly followed by a warning: “There’s no turning going on.”

But there was turning going on, learning about Jeannie and her four decades in the city school system. Jeannie was led into a packed auditorium, where she was celebrated some more.


Her longtime principal, Ed Abbott — Lincoln’s chief administrator for 50 of her 40 years — declared her its indispensable employee. Jeannie was also acclaimed by her principal, Tummie Davis, her colleague and friend, Jan Mills, even her husband, Willie Hodges, who would later declare that keeping the

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event secret from his wife was one of the hardest things in their 45-year marriage.

Tummie told Jeannie during the assembly, “This is the first thing that has happened at Lincoln School in 40 years that you didn’t know about.”

The love for Jeannie especially flowed during the program’s dance number: All seven male teachers at Lincoln worked up a top-hat-and-cane kick-line number performed to parent Tony Foreman’s rendition of “Hello, Jeannie”:

“Well now hello, Jeannie, well hello, Jeannie, It’s so nice to have you right where you belong... Jeannie’s the Queen of Lincoln School, A-men.”

The planning for Jeannie Hodges Day began last August and has been the undercover project of her colleagues Pat Cox and Jan Mills. One of the biggest surprises of the day was that they pulled it off under Jeannie’s nose without her knowing.

“To be able to keep something secret from Jeannie is amazing,” said retired Lincoln art teacher Kathy Hawk. “She knew it all.”

Jeannie is a Kingsport native, a 1959 graduate of the old Douglass High, where she was a drum majorette. She went to Bennett College in Greensboro, N.C., for a year before moving back to finish up at East Tennessee State. She was working at the old Kingsport Nursery School when she was hired in the office at Douglass on March 14, 1966. In the fall she transferred to Lincoln, where she has worked ever since.

She recalled a few of the changes she had witnessed in her four decades.

“The physical part of the school has changed. We didn’t have kindergarten at first, and it was grades 1 through 8. We didn’t have a gym. We had a playroom where the library is now.”

But one thing didn’t change in 40 years —

Jeannie Hodges and her megawatt smile. “Jeannie is the heartbeat of this school,” said Tummie. “You are Lincoln.”

PROGRAM AND PHOTOS

I’ve posted the program for Jeannie Hodges Day along with a few photos on my blog: vincestaten.blogspot.com.

Figure 37: Kingsport Times-News Article by Vince Staten (2006)
Duration

Jeannie now works with the South Central Kingsport–Weed and Seed organization. I asked Jeannie if she could describe the purpose or mission of Weed and Seed.

I really work with South Central, who’s the parent group for Weed and Seed. A lot of people ask me, and I’ll say something about Weed and Seed. And they’ll say, ‘What’s Weed and Seed?’ And I’ll say, ‘Okay, just think of a garden. You go in … you weed out the bad, the weeds, the bad element, or whatever. And then you seed it with, in the case of Weed and Seed, you seed it with something good.’ You know, if it’s drug, or violence … that’s the weeding. Then you try to replace it with, hopefully, jobs, job training and education … whatever you need to, to make the community a better place. A safer place … improve the quality of life. Like I say, I do have a book that is official, but that’s basically what Weed and Seed is … and Lord, anybody can testify that if you lived in Riverview, it’s … I mean, it’s … I couldn’t believe. You wouldn’t have been able to come in here like you did today—a couple of years ago—because the drug dealers would be all up and down Lincoln [Street]. I mean, like me, I’d like … I come in and see ‘em and they’d start out like … ah, no you aren’t coming out in my … you know, then they recognize you, you know. ‘Cause a lot of … most of them were not from out here. But then, they may start out, then they may recognize a car, and then you could see ‘em back up. But … well, I mean, you know, like I say, you got to know some of them. Especially those from here, you’d know who’s who, and … they wouldn’t come out and ask me do I want … But I mean uh, I remember when Shane (one of her grandsons) was a baby, ‘cause he was a preemie … they lived on Dunbar Street. So he had, like occupational therapists, and all that, and so … one of them was like … she was a young white girl. She came in that way. And one day, she came up and she said, ‘You know, these people, they came out and stopped my car. And what did they …’ (laughing) so let me just tell you … do not stop your car. Then I told her how to come in the back way and come around Dunbar so she didn’t have to come in that way. I mean, it was just bad.

Jeannie also explained how the Weed and Seed organization contributes money to other “safe havens” including the Riverview Boys and Girls Club, previously housed in one of the Riverview Apartments but, currently housed at Central Baptist Church, a branch of the Kingsport Parks and Recreation, housed at V.O. Dobbins, and Lee Learning Center, housed in the Lee Apartments. Weed and Seed also organizes job fairs, back to school parties, and several other cultural and community enrichment activities. I asked Jeannie what has happened over the past 2 years to make such a difference in the Riverview Community.
When we got … with Weed and Seed, and when we got the money and the city was in … cooperating with it. We got the video … the cameras. And I did not think… you know, I thought they’ll get up there and shoot those cameras out. They’d do no good. I had no confidence in that. I really didn’t. Well, what they had planned to do was to, uh, give the money to the police department so they could hire more people. More officers … but they had been to a conference in California … Los Angeles or somewhere, and had seen these video cameras. So they asked could the money go for that, instead of …well now, most of them are gone, because a lot of them were down in the apartments. There are some still here. I don’t know what they’ve got them aimed at … I don’t think there’s very many over here now. But, they made a huge difference. I think that made all the difference. And then, people began to … nobody at first would, wouldn’t say anything–people would never talk to the police. They were afraid to provide information. The community finally got tired of the shootings, children getting killed, the violence, and the drug crime and they started to speak out. That and the evidence from the video cameras (see Figure 38) made all the difference.

![Figure 38: One of the Surveillance Video Cameras Installed in Riverview in 2006](image)

I asked Jeannie, Why now? What prompted the development of Weed and Seed?

Well, there was a group called Catch the Vision. There had … a little girl had been killed over here, being in … just a drug dealer shooting another drug dealer and the little girl got caught in the crossfire. Oh, that’s been maybe even ten years ago. So, then of course, something like that bad happens in a community, you know, then people, they’ll come out and want to do something. So they started this group called Catch the Vision. They had meetings to find out what the community … kind of what some of their wants and wishes were. Unemployment was a high priority … education … activities for the youth. And it was active two, three, four years. And then South Central Kingsport Community Development Corporation grew out of that. And then, I don’t know, for something like Weed and Seed … I don’t know why we need a parent [organization] … cause Johnson City’s got a … started Weed and Seed–just this last year. It must have
started in 2008, ’cause I remember a couple of people came over to my office … they was just getting started, and they kind of wanted to know something about it.

The little girl that Jeannie spoke about being killed in crossfire was Jalisa Ferguson. Jalisa was 4 years old when she was killed in 1994. As Jeannie, explained, this galvanized the community to take action. There is now a park named in memory of Jalisa. Castle (2007a) reported that the Riverview community gathered in the spring of 2007 at the Jalisa Ferguson Memorial Park to celebrate expected improvements that the Federal Hope VI Project promises, including refurbishment to houses and apartments. Jeannie went on to explain that by organizing the South Central Kingsport Community Development Corporation as a nonprofit organization they were able to seek funding that is only available to incorporated nonprofit organizations. She also explained that South Central works to improve other parts of the city beyond the Riverview Community.

For as long as I have known Jeannie, she has been active in her community. I asked Jeannie when she first got involved in working to improve her community. I should have been able to guess her response, “Probably when I was born (laughing)!”

What happens is that I get involved in everything. I was on the Kingsport Nursery School Board one time. I guess that was probably about the first board I was on. Then when they were organizing South Central, somebody called me and asked me to be the treasurer. And naturally, I don’t know how to say no. Yeah, I mean that’s always how you end up on something. Somebody calls you and asks you, ‘Would you do it?’ And like I said, I’ve never learned to say no. I have a problem with that. I want to see if there’s medication for it (laughing). I used to volunteer at FunFest and now I am on the FunFest Council … I used to work in the FunFest store as a volunteer. And we’d have to go in and fold all those t-shirts. We’d do that six weeks before FunFest started. Then we’d work the store all during FunFest. It was fun. I’ve been on so much; I can’t even remember it all. ‘Cause I don’t know how to say no. But South Central, I know that’s been since … ’cause you can only serve two 3-year terms, so I was on it from 2000 … now I’m employed by them. So what happened to Weed and Seed when it first started, they just took the officers from South Central and we did Weed and Seed when it was getting off the ground. I’m still on the steering committee for Weed and Seed, as well. I’m not a board member for South Central, but I’m still employed by them. And you know, when you get on something, you’re just on it for years and years and years. Then
you finally just have to say … I think I’ve done this long enough now. But then as you’re saying that, somebody else is asking you … well, you’re not doing that now, how about you … I enjoy it. Most of it, I really do. Like I say, most people … somebody’s got to do it. And there’s not a lot of people … it’s time. It just takes your time. It’s a worthy cause … much needed. Especially, when you try and do something for the kids. When they’re out of school, you can’t do something every day they’re out, but … you know, kids … idle time is not good.

Jeannie’s office until recently was housed in the V. O. Dobbins Center, formerly Douglass School. She is now working out of a building owned by Central Baptist Church.

You know, they’re getting ready to tear the auditorium down. Well, they’re tearing down the auditorium and the back of the auditorium (see Figure 39) where it used to be the band room and the industrial arts room for us. And that’s where my office is now. Well, they said it costs too much to renovate it and they’re getting ready to do some … that’s the reason I had to move out … getting ready to do some renovations to the V.O. Dobbins Center. It was the auditorium that used to be our band room. Umm-hmm–but I hate to see it go. We wished they’d just remodel it. Something to do with the asbestos and just the cost of it.

Figure 39: V.O. Dobbins Community Center’s Auditorium Being Torn Down (2009)

I asked Jeannie about who had influenced her throughout her life. She immediately said, “My mother.”

Oh, yeah! My mother definitely! I’m so much like her. Independent. And I think coming from … as a single parent that was–yeah–that was good for me–a learning experience that I can see … learn that independence –that you can do. You don’t have to have … you know–and she worked. A lot of the time, she’d have to work two jobs. You
know, but … I know we were not on free lunch. We didn’t have … I don’t even know if they had food stamps back then. But I had never heard of welfare or … I never heard of free lunch. I don’t know if they had free lunch or not. But like I said, mama, she would work two jobs if she needed to. Whatever … to provide for us. So … that was a learning experience. You don’t realize until you’re older though … really, now I look back on how hard it must have been. Just live without a husband … It’s hard. Let alone—I can’t imagine.

She also explained that most adults were influential to her when she was growing up. “I had some good examples … my neighbors, teachers, and some family members.” Although she was “already grown” (as Jeannie explained) when she learned about individuals like Rosa Parks and Ruby Bridges, she considers them to be good examples, “Their strength and willingness to stand up for what was right … to sacrifice.” I asked Jeannie what she felt was the greatest lesson she learned from her mother. She replied, “Respect, independence, do for others, (pause) not just being concerned for myself.” Jeannie talked about how her mother worked hard, never gave up, and never used being a single parent as an excuse. She talked about her mother’s community involvement.

But now we had Parks and Rec. My mother would be over that in the summer … direct the Parks and Rec. You’d used to meet at the V. O. Dobbins Center. Now that was a fun time. ‘Cause we had all kinds of games and activities. You’d look forward to that in the summer. She was good at that. She’d get right out there with the kids. She loved … They would do dolls. She’d have contests with the girls to bring their dolls and dress ‘em … you know. They’d do a contest. She would do badminton contests…Ping pong contests.

Jeannie attended Saint Mark Methodist Church, now United Methodist, until several years after she got married.

Saint Mark Methodist on Maple Street—it was Methodist then. It’s United Methodist now. Yeah, you know, now, about all the Methodist churches have added that ‘United’ to them. Of course, I’m Baptist now, so (laughing) now I go to Central Baptist (see Figure 40). Yeah, for 20 years, I think, I went to Saint Mark and Willie went to Central.
I asked Jeannie what she thought she would be doing in the next 5 years. Jeannie simply replied, “Winding down (laughing) winding down.” I asked if there were any places that she had ever wanted to visit. Perhaps there was somewhere that she would like to visit once she winds down and learns how to say “no.”

No, I’m kind of doing some of that. You know, I’d always wanted to go to Hawaii, but I’m not flying, and they haven’t built that bridge on the highway! If you can’t drive or walk, I won’t be going. So … we’ve been on a couple of cruises. That’s something I’d always wanted to do. So we’ve done that—the Caribbean, the Gulf Shores. Oh, we’ve done so many things I always wanted to do. Our first cruise was on the Commodore Cruise line in 1986 for our 25th wedding anniversary (see Figure 41). We got to go to New York twice. And thank goodness, we went when the Twin Towers were still there. We’ve been to Mackinac Island on a bus tour. Our two trips to New York were bus tours. I think to go to a place like that, that’s the only way I’d go. Take me to the door and let me out (laughing). So … and I love Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I love going to the Amish country (see Figure 42). I just love it, especially in the fall. I guess we went … it would be a year ago in the fall. We went, and I love to go, and they have plays. They have Sight … what they call Sight and Sound Theater. I just like to go to the Amish country. I don’t know why. And we got lost, last time. You remember that school where that guy went in, and … we ended up in that … I didn’t see the school—of course they had torn it down, but we saw that little town. So, I’ve been … done a lot of stuff that I … of course … I love to go. I love to go. We’ve been on one end of the Blue Ridge Parkway (see Figure 43), but somehow we cannot get on the other end. That’s something I’ve wanted to do. A couple of months ago, you know, for some reason, I just got this thing I wanted to ride to Bluefield, West Virginia. I don’t know … I’d always heard how
the houses just kind of sit on the side of the mountain. And they do! I said, ‘This is what you call cliff dwellers.’ But we just rode over there one Sunday. It’s not very far. I thought it was way up the road, but … Now, you know, going to the Gulf Coast, we went through Montgomery, Alabama, and Birmingham. Now, I want to go back. I’d love to go back and do that … see that church that was bombed. And, what is it … do that walk where they walked from … I don’t think I could probably walk that far. From Selma to … But I would love to go to Montgomery and see where the bus strikes … where the sit … you know, Rosa Parks.

Figure 41: Jeannie and Willie on a Cruise for Their 25th Wedding Anniversary (1986)

Figure 42: Picture from Jeannie’s Trip to the Amish Country (2008)
Kingsport, tucked in the rolling hills of Northeast Tennessee, experienced racism and segregation, but Jeannie’s journey was not as harsh and ugly as history tells us the journey was for many blacks in other parts of the country. In Riverview, Jeannie recalls a big sense of community. People in the community supported each other. The community was very involved in school sporting events, children’s programs, and other school activities, especially because there were not many other social activities for blacks.

I guess for us it was, you know, the school activities even for the community…was probably the biggest thing we had to do. You know … go to the football games, the basketball games, and the plays, and the other events that was held at the school.

Though segregated, Jeannie does not recall much violence. Races did not mingle much; when they did, there was occasional name-calling, rock and bottle throwing, and physical violence. Jeannie explained, “It was so funny, because I guess, I never thought of myself … I guess … of course, I wouldn’t have known what segregated meant, anyway. I just never wondered why. You knew your place.” She did recall some negativity, fear, and hinted that there were things
she recalled that she would rather not talk about. “There are some things I’d probably choose not
to … (trailed off)”. However, she does not recall living her childhood in fear of lynch mobs,
cross burnings, or church bombings which were common in some parts of the country as *de jure*
segregation came to an end and races struggled to find ways to do more than just coexist; to
thrive together—from black and white to a vibrant tapestry.

I asked Jeannie what she thought had kept her involved in the community for all these
years, trying to help others. I asked her what keeps her from becoming dejected and giving up.

I’m just not a give-up person. And I guess that job I have now, the reason I took it … I
hated to see not anybody do it. People, they laugh at me because this employment
outreach…I stress, it’s not an employment office. It’s an outreach program, which
means if somebody calls me and says, ‘I need some workers,’ I’ll go knock on the
door…somebody’s door. If I can’t get them on the phone, or… I mean, I’ll go that extra
step to let them know, hey, they’re hiring at such and such a place…because I just want
to help them that much. And then, I still act like I’m their mother…their grandmother,
because I do the training program. And I know some of them don’t want to stick to
nothing… ‘Now, listen, are you gonna stick with this?’ ‘Yes, ma’am. Yes ma’am I am.’
Yeah, (laughing) you know, they want the money on payday, but they really don’t want
the… they don’t really want to work. And some that I know, like before … you know
now… are you going to stick with it. ‘Cause you know, if you’re not, I’ll get somebody
else that…. You know, if I were younger, knowing what I know now, I would get on
these bandwagons. There’s a couple things that I would really…I think our…what is the
system…Department of Human Services? I think they have it all wrong. I think you
should just quit handing that money out after a while. One, everybody makes a mistake.
But when you have three or four [children], no attempt to go to work, to better yourself,
you need to cut that money off. That’s not being mean. And if you have to penalize
them, if you had not found a job in thirty days … some kind of penalty. But you know,
your assistance ends. Plus, there’s no follow up. I just say there’s no follow up to say,
‘Why are you just sitting at home and your kids are all school age and in school?’ And
we’re still giving you checks? Why? And you’re just sitting at home. I mean, we’re not
giving them an incentive to go out. Well, it’s just like the children in the school. I think
they need to check with the school. How do the children look? How are they dressed?
You know… their attendance… does the parent come for parent-teacher conferences? I
mean, some kind of accountability.

In this conversation, Jeannie’s passion bubbled to the surface like lava in a previously
dormant volcano. She explained that she wants desperately to help others but not just by giving
people handouts. She believes that it is far more important and more valuable to help people to
learn how to help themselves while learning self-respect and personal responsibility and accountability. She feels that it is time that things change.

This is generational. We’ve got to break the cycle some kind of way. Now, another example… all these people that lived in the [Riverview] apartments, how many of them do you think will be back over here when they rebuild? Very, very few. You know why? ‘Cause they won’t meet the criteria. This is going to be different. You can’t just be on assistance and live there. You’ve got to have a job. You’ve got to attend some classes. There’s going to be government assistance, but then… with requirements…with a criteria to meet. But anyway, there will be very few of them ‘cause very few of them are gonna be working. And they won’t want to attend the classes and meet the criteria. It’s going to be sad. The people are going to say it’s just because they are black.

Jeannie paused for a brief second before going on to another topic that obviously means a great deal to her.

As you know, in the black community, there’s a high number of crimes. So many of our young men are in prison, have been in prison. When they re-enter society, they are not prepared. Many of them don’t have their GED. They have that stigma because you’ve been in prison, you’re a felon, so many companies like Eastman won’t hire felons. And I run into that through what I do. And I just feel that there should be some kind of program for felons that when they come out…well, they need…there needs to be somewhere they can go and receive some training…some job training. They tell me, in the prison, they can get the GED, but it’s optional. That should be mandatory! What else do they got to do, besides raise Cain? That should be mandatory. When they get out, they’re gonna need that. But I’d say that’s a bigger problem in the black community than it is…Well, we don’t…I don’t know. And I can’t say that it is… But I know in our community, it’s a big problem. And I’m sure it is ‘cause we have more men in prison than…Well, I know that since drugs have been on the scene, most of it has been because they’ve gotten mixed up either in selling or buying drugs. Trying to make a quick dollar…the one’s that are selling it…they don’t look down the road. I may make this quick money…and usually they’re working for a bigger person and they have to turn most of it over to them, and they give them enough just to keep them…working for ‘em. But it’s a problem. And when they do get out of prison, if they might want to do [right], but then after so long, they don’t get no job, they’re going to go back to what they know. And they say there are companies that the government gives…somebody gives them tax breaks for hiring. But, I haven’t been able to find…get a list of those places. But, even something like that, if the government would say, ‘Here, we’ll offer you…give you a tax break if you’ll hire X number of…’ You know, but in that area, we’ve really got a long way to go.

I asked Jeannie how she felt we were doing in the educational arena in regard to equity and preparing all students for the future. Jeannie replied, “From what you hear about the
statistics, not good.” Jeannie and I got into a slight debate regarding high schools offering dual tracks and whether or not all students should be expected to excel on the “college track”. We discussed how in the past, minority and low-socioeconomic students rarely ended up on the college track and that the schools and the government were trying to change that. We talked about how there are numerous children who never hear the word “college” mentioned at home and whose responsibility is it to encourage and prepare these children for life after high school.

Well, the federal [government] better wake up and smell the coffee. Everybody is not going to college. But, you know, the ones that don’t hear it at home…like I said basically…like a lot of them…like I said, it’s that generational thing…I don’t care what you offer…they’re not going. So, but don’t let them just come out…like I said, they’re kids that got a high school diploma, but so what. What are they doing with it? They’re not going to college. They’re not working. ‘Cause they’re not trained, you know…But if they’re not going to college, I mean, still give them something that they could go out and get a job… and their own business maybe. I mean, don’t give them pat classes…but you know, and I know… ’cause like I said…I know some people…I said they need…they need more, like adult education. They’re not going to go out to Northeast State because they say you have to take this math…so much math. And they’re not going to do that. A lot of them can’t do it. They couldn’t handle it. But, if it was like a hands on…you’re teaching me to fix a car, or something that I could just learn hands on without having to pass Math 101…but there’s no place to do that. Like a barber school…I think the closest one is in Knoxville. I mean, barbers make good money, and that’s a legitimate…that’s like what I’m talking about. But where can you do it around here?

From education, Jeannie moved on to the issue of disability.

There are more young people in this town, and these are blacks that I know, drawing disability than I have ever heard of in my life! And there are older people that’s worked all their lives and really need, and they can’t get it. They’re denied. How does that happen? People are drawing disability for…now, this is a good one…somebody told me that this mother was getting…this person was getting disability ‘cause they were too short to drive. I said, ‘Lord, let me tell Lisa (her daughter), Shane (her grandson) can probably qualify.’ I said, ‘You are kidding me!’ They said, ‘No!’ Yeah, that’s another thing that’s gotten out of control…disability.

I asked Jeannie if she had ever thought she would see the day that a black man was elected president.
Oh, well, Oh no…I mean, that never even…I mean, just the same shock as one being assassinated. [She had mentioned, previously, about her shock when President Kennedy had been assassinated.] It happened, so…I mean, there wasn’t any marches…protesting…like…you know. It still just don’t seem like it’s real.

I went on to ask Jeannie if she felt that King’s dream for equality and acceptance had been realized.

Close, probably not totally there, but you know, we’ve come a long way. I mean, many things have changed, but there are more that need to change especially in the workplace. Well, I know blacks have much greater opportunities now. They have positions that…like again…that I never would have dreamed they’d have. But, I’m not sure…I don’t know, what people say…I hear people complain that even women…that women are not…their pay is not equal to what a man in that same position…and I’m not sure…I don’t know…you know. And I’m not…it may be. Blacks and whites may be equal in the positions. The salaries may be. But I know some people don’t feel like that they are. In this country, maybe not as much here, but I know on TV sometimes, I’ll watch these specials, and the…the living conditions…blacks…there’s some areas, um…I’m trying to think of what city it was and I was so shocked at their living…blacks are still living like they did back…I mean, they showed children that…were hungry…living in, just…I mean, I’m surprised in this country, in this day and time, that we have people living in just slum conditions. And you know, we’re feeding the hungry and sending all this food overseas, and I thought…you see that. Well, I guess now you still go back…a lot of our people…a lot of them more in the big cities, they…they’re not…the reason they can’t get a decent job, they’re not trained. They don’t have the training, and so therefore they’re gonna go take the drug route. But then there are some that are actually struggling…struggling and trying to better themselves but they just can’t seem to get their heads above water. I don’t know…I don’t know what the answer is. I said we just don’t know how well we have it. When you see things like that on TV and see that there are still people in horrible conditions. It’s just sad. We may not see it down here, but there’s still a lot of places where they haven’t made much progress. It takes somebody to buck the system, speak up, and say, ‘This is wrong and we’re going to fight ‘till it changes!’ Otherwise, people think you’re satisfied. Like I said, I wish I was just younger…I’d run for congress. Change! Well, I couldn’t say I could do it, but I’d sure be workin’ hard to.

Jeannie has never considered herself a leader. Jeannie’s mother, Clellie Mason Baylor, who passed away in March of 2007, had always taught Jeannie the importance of helping others. Jeannie continues to live by the lesson her mother taught her. For more than 4 decades, Jeannie has worked to improve the lives of others: working with students in the school setting, working with her church, working with Weed and Seed and South Central (see Figure 44). I asked
Jeannie what the one thing was that she would hope that her children and the people who she has come in contact with would remember about her.

Well, there’s one thing. I guess, that really … I try to help other people. Try to help somebody along the way. And I especially have a heart for what I call the underdog…those that are less fortunate, that people cast aside…that aren’t good enough to, you know, be in our little group. And that’s why when I was at Lincoln, I was always concerned about those children that didn’t come from Fair Acres, or the better part of town. That I feel like, you know, they’re not going to get the type of recognition. They need that little extra somebody to speak to them every day, and you know, just let them know that we care. That song says, ‘As long as I have helped somebody along the way, then my livin’ will not have been in vain.’ Yeah, I don’t remember who sang it, but I think about the words to that song a lot.

The song that Jeannie referred to is, “If I Can Help Somebody” by Mahalia Jackson:

If I can help somebody
    As I travel along
If I can help somebody
    From doing wrong
My living shall not be in vain.

My living shall not be in vain
My living shall not be in vain
If I can help somebody
While I’m singing this song
My living shall not be in vain. (Jackson, 2009 ¶ 1)
Figure 44: Jeannie and Willie at the South Central Kingsport Community Development Corporation Silent Auction Fundraiser at MeadowView Convention Center (2005)
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.

(Martin Luther King, Jr., Brainy Quotes, 2008)

Summary of the Study

There are those who believe that we should let the issues of the past remain issues of the past. I have heard mention that we should stop talking about slavery, racism, and even diversity. A debate exists as to whether race issues are improved by discussion, or if they improve by ceasing these types of discussions and not even mentioning race: we are all Americans, not white Americans and black Americans, just Americans. Some believe that slavery, racism, and segregation have been fully addressed and that further discussion does more harm than good. I however agree with Pollak (2005) who stated, “Perhaps some bygones can be left, like cuttings from the garden, to be raked into small heaps, gathered, and wheel-barrowed to the compost pile. But not the bygones of race. Not in America. Not yet” (p. 30). He further sated that “From our nation’s beginnings the ways in which we treat persons of color have been the knottiest—the hardest to unravel—of the long threads that make up the law’s fabric” (p. 30). I agree that we should consider ourselves Americans and the distinction of black or white is not the issue. However, who we are is a direct manifestation of where we have been and the journeys we have taken. The point of the discussion, and this study, is not to point out the wrongs of one race, or the retributions sought by the other race. The point is to gain a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of our individual histories, like threads in a tapestry. I am who I am today because of the combined histories of individuals who came before me. If we were to stop
discussing race, stop discussing our positive and negative history, how do we move forward? Shall we assume that if we do not discuss cultural differences that they will disappear? Do prejudice, misconception, mistrust, and misunderstanding simply become clear? Would de jure segregation have come to an end, minorities and women have the right to vote, and a black man be elected president if we had stopped talking about race? Of course not! To imply that we stop discussing our racial past would be analogous to suggesting that we not discuss any American history. It is only by open discussions with open minds that we progress toward acceptance and understanding. It is in this mindset that I undertook this study.

I too hope for the day that there is no longer a need to discuss diversity. I dream of the day that “One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” is not just our pledge but is our actual way of life. I dream of the day when we all work together indivisibly in the best interest of our nation and our children, not due to mandates, but because we can fathom no other way to function. I dream of the day that King’s dream is fully realized!

Through this biographical study, I sought to vicariously relive the journey of one Northeast Tennessee African-American woman’s journey from segregation to the state of race relations today: from black and white to a vibrant tapestry. A review of related literature provided a historically relevant backdrop for the retelling of Jeannie’s journey. Data for this study were collected through three in-depth interviews with the sole participant of the study, Jeannie Hodges.

Findings

Research Question #1

What events has Jeannie encountered, endured, and overcome during her life in Appalachia that are indicative of the journey that minorities throughout our nation have struggled
to overcome? Jeannie grew up in a segregated neighborhood and attended an all-black school. Jeannie was subjected to exclusion from “whites only” businesses, facilities, and community activities. Early employment opportunities were limited to childcare and housekeeping. According to Patrick (1997), “Most blacks could not expect to rise above the positions of maid, janitor, or chauffeur” (p. 63). She experienced fear when traveling alone outside of her familiar community. She described a sense of knowing one’s place. Although Jeannie did not experience harsh violent racism or hatred, until the mid-1960s she was denied the opportunity to benefit from the sharing of culture, traditions, and experiences that occur with true integration. In an article about a reunion celebration of the legacy of Douglass School, Castle (2007b) reported the words of Calvin Sneed, television broadcaster and former Douglass student, as he reflected upon the last time he walked out of the doors of Douglass:

> It was truly like leaving home. It was scary, a scary time, but we were fortunate that there were those students and teachers who went out of their way to make us feel welcome. ….They [the faculty and administration at Douglass] wanted us to be strong, to be sure of ourselves, and they wanted us to be ready to experience other cultures and deal with other people, because I think they knew the day was coming when the divide would end and we would be out there to fend for ourselves. We were brought up during some of the most tumultuous times a person can think of. The Civil Rights Movement had begun in the 1950s, and by the 1960s it was going forward. Things like the events in Selma, Alabama, and the Mississippi church bombings had taken place. …I lived through the ‘N word’ on several occasions, but there were people at Dobyns-Bennett (High School) who took that extra step, and they made a difference, and I still call those people my friends. (p.1A & 5A)

**Research Question #2**

What specific motivators have existed throughout Jeannie’s life that have inspired her to persevere, in her relentless efforts to improve not only her life but also the lives of those around her? Two main motivators served to inspire Jeannie to live her life as she has: God and her mother. Jeannie has a strong faith in God and her belief that our duty is to help others is evident. Jeannie’s mother, Clellie, instilled a great sense of independence, responsibility, self-respect,
humility, and care for others. As such, Jeannie has developed a character based on faith in God, hard work, and respect and love for others. Jeannie worked in the Kingsport City School system for 4 decades. She had, and still has, a yearning to help children by providing encouragement, guidance, support, and care. Following her retirement from the school system, she continues to spend her time working diligently to help others. She has been involved with the Kingsport Nursery Board, community efforts through her church, Central Baptist, the Weed and Seed program, and the South Central Kingsport Community Development Corporation. She works to help others find ways to help themselves, which is so much greater and more enduring than a simple handout. Jeannie was honored with a tribute culminating in the mayor’s proclamation of March 14, 2006, as Jeannie Hodges Day in recognition of her community service, humanitarianism, compassion, and for being a servant leader.

Research Question #3

Is the “journey” over; have we arrived? Jeannie attests that we have made awesome progress: “better education and employment opportunities, better housing opportunities, and the overall benefits of integration”. As stated previously, we have made great strides: from slavery to an African-American being elected as the President of the United States. However, racism, discrimination, ignorance, and intolerance still exist. In 2008, our nation experienced significant “firsts” that should have been realized a long time ago: from the election of the first minority president to the first integrated prom in Charleston, Mississippi. Germain (2009) explained that actor Morgan Freeman paid $17,000 in 2008 to provide the first integrated prom in his hometown of Charleston, Mississippi. He further explained that Freeman first made this offer in 1997; however, his offer was ignored until 2008. Director Paul Saltzman approached Freeman regarding his desire to create a documentary to tell “…a story about young people and racial
attitudes that hopefully would make other young people walk out of a darkened theater and think about their own attitudes and their own beliefs” (¶ 9). Another example that the journey is not yet complete is the issue of our schools resegregating. According to Educational Research Service (2009):

While the population of minority students continues to climb—44% of all public school students were non-white students during the 2006-2007 school year—African American and Latino students continue to experience increased racial segregation. The increased segregation has received little attention, partially due to the fact that, even as African American and Latino students are becoming increasingly isolated, white students are attending schools more diverse than they were a generation before. This disparity is due to the declining proportion of white students within the school population. The increased segregation in schools can primarily be attributed to segregated living. Many minority families live in concentrated areas that often overlap with high-poverty areas. Stable, integrated neighborhoods are key to reducing the segregation of African American and Latino students. (¶ 1 & 3)

In his thesis entitled The Desegregation of the Kingsport City School System, Patrick (1997) charged that the school system had desegregated but not truly integrated. He explained that desegregation involved the removal of policies that created dual schools within the school system, while integration referred to real social and cultural interactions. Patrick declared that the system’s failure to plan for true integration resulted in “…years of interracial conflict, misinterpretations, and mistrust among parents, students, and teachers” (p. 68). Conversely, today I see a steadily increasing degree of acceptance of diversity in the community and among parents, students, and teachers in the schools. In a recent article about an annual celebration parade in honor of Martin Luther King, Castle (2009) reported that this year’s parade was a dual celebration as participants also came out to support the upcoming inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama. Castle reported the words of one of the participants, Gabrielle Ziegar, who said, “…race played no part in her walk downtown Monday. ‘I’ve been coming every year, and it is always such a blessing to me—seeing people come together like this’” (p. 2A). Patrick further
stated, “…there are no black administrators” (p. 69). However, today, there are four black administrators in the school system: an assistant superintendent, an assistant principal at the high school, a principal at one of the two middle schools, and me, a principal at one of seven elementary schools. I am honored to be the first black elementary principal in my school system. I take great pleasure in knowing that I did not get this job because I am black. I am aware, unfortunately, that there are those who believe that affirmative action is the reason for my position; just as I am sure that there were those who believed that affirmative action was the reason for Jeannie’s position when she was the first black employee at Lincoln. As much as I appreciate the fact that being black is not why I am a principal in this school system, I appreciate even more the fact that I am black and can be a principal. It is because of the struggles that Jeannie and countless others faced that I am where I am and who I am today.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

I believe that it is important that we continue to examine our intertwined history. Just as we get a little more from a great book each time we reread it, we learn more about our history each time we revisit our past. Every individual has a story to tell. Although it is important to keep in mind that life stories are based on the individual’s perception of reality, these life stories are valuable pieces of our history. Exploring life stories provides multiple points of views regarding one topic or one era thereby providing a better picture of reality. Jeannie’s journey may not be a generalizable comparison to the journey experienced by others. However, her journey provides a significant addition to the body of history related to this topic. Jeannie’s journey has and continues to be one of enduring compassion, strength, resiliency, humility, and service to others.
Jeannie’s journey shows us that we can look at the past and discuss history without hate, pointing fingers, or laying blame. We benefit from gaining a deeper understanding of where we as a people have been as opposed to as individual races of blacks and whites. Understanding our combined histories provides an appreciation for where we are today, as well as guidance for the future. It is crucial to our continued progress that we not cease discussions about race or about this part of our historical timeline. Unless we can unequivocally state that King’s Dream has been fully realized, that in regard to race issues there is nothing left to be gained, and we as a nation are happy with the current state of race relations, the journey is not over. During an interview, Rosa Parks was once asked if she was happy, she replied:

I do the very best I can to look upon life with optimism and hope and looking forward to a better day, but I don’t think there is any such thing as complete happiness. It pains me that there is still a lot of Klan activity and racism. I think when you say you’re happy, you have everything that you need and everything that you want, and nothing more to wish for. I haven’t reached that stage yet” (Academy of Achievement, 2005, ¶ 9).

I do not believe we have reached that stage yet. Consequently, I propose the following recommendations for further research and practice:

1. Continue to gather individual life stories regarding personal journeys during this part of our historical timeline in order to derive a better picture of reality.

2. Continue to have open discussions regarding race issues with the intent to gain a deep understanding of our past in order to provide greater appreciation for our present and guidance for our future.

3. Remember that silence signifies acceptance and satisfaction. Ensure that we communicate the intended message.

4. The Hispanic population is rapidly growing, we need to continue to look to the lessons of our past to guide us toward positive race relations as a minority becomes the majority.
5. Continue to look for ways to achieve full integration of our schools and to foster integration in our neighborhoods.

6. Continue to examine our own personal beliefs and attitudes.

7. Teach our children acceptance, humility, self-respect, tolerance, the value of our intertwined existence, and their history: from black and white to a vibrant tapestry of white, black, brown, yellow, and red.

8. Continue the journey. Never stop dreaming of a world where all men are created, considered, and regarded as equals.
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Kirk, J. A. (2007). Crisis at central high: John A. Kirk recalls the dramatic events at Little Rock, Arkansas, fifty years ago this month, when a stand-off over the granting of black students access to integrated education brought the civil rights agenda to international attention. *History Today, 57*, 23-30.


December 15, 2008

Carolyn Kennedy
410 Ferndale Rd
Johnson City, TN 37604

Re: Jeannie’s Journey: From Black and White to Vibrant Tapestry
IRB#: C08-168e
ORSPA #: None

The following items were reviewed:
- Form 103 with Assurance Statement
- Narrative (12/11/2008)
- CV
- Conflict of Interest Form (no potential conflict of interest identified)
- Questionnaire/Interview Questions
- Letter to Participants (12/12/2008)
- Letter to Dr. Kitzmiller

On December 12, 2008, a final approval was granted in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Policies. No continuing review is required. The exempt approval will be reported to the convened board on January 8, 2009.

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&O if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research can not be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 (www.etsu.edu/irb). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject’s continued welfare.
Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chris Ayres, Chairperson
ETSU Campus Institutional Review Board

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APPENDIX B

Letter to Jeannie Hodges to Explain the Research Study

December 12, 2008

Dear Jeannie,

I am working toward the completion of a doctoral degree in education at East Tennessee State University. As you know, I would like to conduct a qualitative narrative research study of your life story entitled, Jeannie’s Journey: From Black and White to a Vibrant Tapestry. The intent of this study is to explore the journey of one individual through desegregation by listening to and retelling your life stories. Through learning about your life stories we can ascertain what relevance your life stories have to our historical timeline.

Looking from your perspective as one individual, I hope to immerse myself in your recollections of “Black threads” and “White threads” and weave your life stories together to reveal a beautiful vibrant tapestry. This tapestry will depict the struggles and triumphs you personally encountered as two separate races in a small community learned to live, laugh, love, and learn together. The purpose of this study is not to develop a theory or to provide solutions for racial equality and acceptance. The purpose is to tell the story of Jeannie’s Journey. Personal life stories provide the most accurate account of the shaping of our nation through prejudice and acceptance, and weakness and strength. Your journey is important and significant, many lives are richer, happier, and more successful because you helped pave the way.

In order to conduct this study, I would need to interview you on at least three separate days. Each interview will last between one to two hours and will be recorded for later transcription. My intent is not to pressure you into participating or into answering any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. I do not know of any possible risks associated with your participation. Your participation in this study is voluntary. As such, you may withdraw from the study at any time or choose not to answer any questions. I will not ask you any biased or leading questions. You will have the opportunity to review all interview notes and transcripts to check for misquoting, misunderstanding, or completeness of thought. At any time during the study you will be permitted to revise any answer you provide.

As the subject of the study, your name would appear in the study and confidentiality cannot be maintained. However, you will be afforded editorial privilege regarding the content of the information that is included in the study. My intent is to explore how far “we” have come in the journey of acceptance and understanding and to discuss where the journey may lead us in the future.

Please feel free to contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Louise MacKay, or me, if you have any questions or would like to discuss the matter further. Dr. MacKay may be reached through the office of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University at (423) 439 – 4430. I can be reached at (423) 483 - 8392. I will contact you in the next few days to ask if you have questions regarding the research project and, with your consent, to schedule our first interview.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Kennedy
Doctoral Student
East Tennessee State University
APPENDIX C

Letter of Intent to Director of Schools

Dr. Richard Kitzmiller
Director of Schools
Kingsport City Schools
1701 East Center Street
Kingsport, TN 37664

December 12, 2008

Dear Dr. Kitzmiller:

I am conducting a qualitative narrative study of Jeannie Hodges’ life story entitled, Jeannie’s Journey: From Black and White to a Vibrant Tapestry. The intent of this study is to explore the journey of one individual through desegregation by listening to and retelling her life stories. Through learning about her life stories we can ascertain what relevance her life stories have to our historical timeline.

Looking from the perspective of one individual, I hope to immerse myself in Jeannie’s recollections of “Black threads” and “White threads” and weave her life stories together to reveal a beautiful vibrant tapestry. This tapestry will depict the struggles and triumphs she personally encountered as two separate races in a small community learned to live, laugh, love, and learn together. The purpose of this study is not to develop a theory or to provide solutions for racial equality and acceptance. The purpose is to tell the story of Jeannie’s Journey. Personal life stories provide the most accurate account of the shaping of our nation through prejudice and acceptance, and weakness and strength. Jeannie’s journey is important and significant; many lives are richer, happier, and more successful because she helped pave the way.

Although Kingsport City Schools is not the focus of my study, the school system is mentioned in the review of relevant literature. The review of the literature explored the historical context of desegregation nationally and locally. Also, as Jeannie was both a student and an employee in the school system, Kingsport City Schools will inevitably be mentioned during the interview sessions. Additionally, by nature of biographical narratives, the researcher has the opportunity to interject her own life stories into the study as a point of comparison. As such, I wanted to inform you that my intent in conducting this study is not to bring negative attention to the school system or to Kingsport City. My intent is to explore how far “we” have come in the journey of acceptance and understanding and to discuss where the journey may lead us in the future.

Please feel free to contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Louise MacKay, or me, if you have any questions or would like to discuss the matter further. Dr. MacKay may be reached through the office of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University at (423) 439 – 4430.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Kennedy
Doctoral Student
East Tennessee State University
APPENDIX D
Interview Protocol

Jeannie’s Journey: From Black and White to a Vibrant Tapestry
Interview Protocol

Key Research Questions:
1. What events has Jeannie encountered, endured, and overcome during her life in Appalachia that are indicative of the journey that minorities throughout our nation have struggled to overcome?
2. What specific motivators have existed throughout Jeannie’s life that have inspired her to persevere in her relentless efforts to improve not only her life but also the lives of those around her?
3. Is the “journey” over; have we arrived?

Probes:
- Focus on life stages before Brown, during Brown, and after Brown.
- Tell me about when and where you were born.
- Tell me what you remember about your childhood.
- Tell me about living in segregation.
- Tell me about your experiences during desegregation.
- Tell me about your experiences working for the school district.
- Tell me about your work in the community.
- Tell me about race issues today.
- Anything else?
- Can you tell me more?

Transition messages:
- Yes
- Okay
- I see
- That’s interesting

Date:

Time:

Interviewer Instructions:
Remind Jeannie that she is the subject of a research study, and as previously discussed the interview will be recorded, her participation is voluntary, her participation constitutes consent, and she may withdraw from the study or choose not to answer any question at any time.

Interview Notes:
VITA

CAROLYN DENISE KENNEDY

Personal Data: Date of Birth: June 30, 1970
Place of Birth: Fort Knox, Kentucky

Education: Park University, Parkville, Missouri (Ft. Bliss, TX Branch);
Management, B.S.; 1994

Tusculum College, Greeneville, Tennessee;
Education, M.Ed.; 2001

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;

Professional Experience: Special Education Teacher,
Captain Walter E. Clarke Middle School, Socorro I.S.D.;
El Paso, Texas; 1994-1998

Special Education Teacher,
Holston Point Academy, Kingsport City Schools;
Kingsport, Tennessee; 1998-2002

Special Education Teacher,
Ross N. Robinson Middle School, Kingsport City Schools;
Kingsport, Tennessee; 2002-2005

Administrative Assistant to the Principal,
Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, Kingsport City Schools;
Kingsport, Tennessee; 2005-2006

Principal,
Andrew Jackson Elementary School, Kingsport City Schools;
Kingsport, Tennessee; 2006-