

Reimagining Civil Rights and School Desegregation in the South after 50 years of the Civil Rights Movement Through Historical Narrative of Holly Spring in Mississippi

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Transcending Boundaries of Time and Place

HOLLY SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI is a small town thirty miles southeast of Memphis. It is the county seat of Marshall County in the Northwest corner of Mississippi, about 34 miles southeast of Memphis, Tennessee. The town lies just outside the Mississippi Delta and was a major staging area for the Union invasion of the South, and Sherman's march to the sea. It is also the home of Rust College, founded in 1866, one of the oldest black private colleges in the South. There are two public high schools in the county, Holly High School being the major one. Marshall Academy, a white private school was established in 1962. It is the first private school to gain a license after the state of Mississippi closed all its schools. The school serves all grades. Finally, there is one K-8 private black school in town.

Holly Springs has had to deal with all the problems of larger urban settings, such as crime, drugs, and "failing" schools. It has experienced more violence, segregation, and economic growth in the 1990s and 2000s than it had in the 100 previous years, including a 70% increase in population (U.S. Census, 2012). In the 1980s, the city became a stopping point along US Highway Seventy-eight for drug traffickers carrying cocaine, crack, and marijuana between Memphis and Birmingham. In 1989, Eddie Lee Smith, Jr. became the city's first black mayor. Smith left Holly Springs in the 1970s. On the one hand he was a civil rights leader, while on the other, a politician worried about the economic development of a trouble small town. Smith, like Holly Springs, tried to deal with the changing economy and politics of a historically divided black and white community that changed forever in the 1960s. Many of the people who voted for Smith do not realize his or their city's civil rights in the past.

Nothing from the above description of Holly Springs would suggest this town as a prime site for curriculum theorizing about public school desegregation. Unlike Natchez, Yazoo city,

Jackson, and other Mississippi cities firmly linked in public memory to the turbulent battle over desegregation in the South, the town of Holly Springs is likely not recognized as a significant place in the history of civil rights and school desegregation. Yet it is precisely the seemingly ordinariness of Holly Springs, Mississippi that makes it an exemplary site upon which curriculum theorizing about interconnections among place, history, and race can be developed.

This article extends previous curriculum theorizing on the significance of place (e.g., Caemore, 2008; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991; Whitlock, 2007) by exploring the influence of imagined communities of race for black and white residents of Holly Springs, Mississippi on their respective roles in school desegregation. My inquiry also connects with studies of critical geography because it focuses on interconnections among race, space, place, and power. An important reason for utilizing a critical geography framework for curriculum theorizing is that it encourages new ways of thinking about relationships between space and educational experience (Helfenbein, 2006). It is hoped that this exploration of black and white racial identities and actions related to school desegregation in Holly Springs will highlight new possibilities for thinking about formal and informal curricular processes in the south.

Castenell and Pinar state (1993) that ‘all Americans are racialized beings; knowledge of who we have been, who we are, and who we will become is a story or text we will construct’ (p. 8). Given the saliency of race in individual and group identity, this work examines the formation and maintenance of black and white racial identities in Holly Springs and the influence of those identities on processes of school desegregation using the concept of imagined communities. Benedict Anderson’s (1991) concept of *imagined community* speaks to issues of identity (pp. 6-7) that develop in relation to nation, which he referred to as a “...political community that is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. In this sense, then, the term nation is interchangeable with the term community; in this article, the communities to be explored include groups of black and white individuals involved in the construction and maintenance of southern racial identities.

Anderson (1991) argues that these communities are imaginary because most of the members will never know one another, but they still maintain ideas of connectedness with other members. He wrote: “members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in their minds lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). For example, blacks in Holly Springs cannot know blacks in all other areas of the south, yet their identification as black and southern provides a basis for commonality (i.e., a sense of we-ness) with other southern blacks that they may not know. Even though these communities might be imagined, they are very real for each individual who chooses to believe in them.

Anderson (1991) stated that “awareness of being imbedded in secular, serial, time, with all its implication of continuity, yet of ‘forgetting’ the experience of continuity. . . . engenders the need for a narrative of ‘identity.’” Identity for Anderson was not innate but culturally and historically created by narratives that cooperated with each other (literature with history), while at the same time being conscious of each other. Echoing Anderson, C. Vann Woodward (1993) stated that Southern identity is consciousness of the past in the present (p. 33). Thus, the concept of imagined communities provides rich theoretical grounds upon which theorizing about race, place, and history can be made.

The richness of place and history from which we construct our identities is continuously challenged with what we experience everyday. Self-identity is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. Giddens (1991) states,

A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor ...in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to *keep a particular narrative going*. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self. (p. 54)

In this article I will discuss the notion of identity and place conceptualized by Giddens, Anderson, and many others. I will tell the historical narrative of Holly Springs, Mississippi (1960-2010) to illuminate how schools participated in the formation of community identity during the Civil Rights Movement. I explore the relationship between community activism with and separate from schools, which led to community integration and school desegregation and eventually the erosion of power led to the re-segregation of the city and schools. This historical narrative of Holly Springs serves as a metaphor for the failure of schools after the Civil Rights Movement to understand race within the educational systems as economic and political hegemony to control the oppressed.

I will tell the historical narrative of Holly Springs in four chronological sections. The first section covers from 1960 to 1964 including the birth of a local movement in Holly Springs, the local and state reaction to the Movement, conflict views on what to do, and the black community's political and economic power. The second and third sections shift the focus away from the local to the national and from integration of local institutions to desegregation of public schools. The last section primarily focuses on the influx of federal government agents and the growth of court cases to fight segregation culminating into the full desegregation of public schools in 1971.

Holly Springs has always been attractive to me. The complexity of this North Mississippi town inspires me to tell its stories. I hope to avoid what Lee D. Baker (1998) calls the attempt to settle past wrongs by writing a revisionist recount. Civil Rights historiography has tended to emphasize the extraordinary and the exciting over the mundane, which is not reflective of the change and resistance in the Civil Rights Movement in Holly Springs, specifically the battle for the desegregation of the public schools. There are terms used throughout this work that need further explanation for the reader. The desegregation which is the act of mixing students within schools should not be confused with integration, the act of accepting and interacting with others (Swift, 1991). The Civil Rights Movement language uses the word integration prior to the U.S. Courts using the word desegregation as the official term for school integration after 1968 (Whitman, 1998; Wolters, 1984). For the purposes of this article, I define civil rights as a movement that respond to the treatment of blacks in the South under segregation. It is a southern movement that evolved from black protest, especially after 1948 (Eagles, 1986). Its national genesis came in 1954 with the Brown case (Sitkoff 1981), a U.S. Supreme Court case that reversed *separate but equal*, and the popularity of sit-ins in 1960. Legally, its birth is in 1965 with the Voting Rights Act, passed after the Civil Rights Act (1964) (Namorato, 1979). After the passage of these two laws, the movement reverted to the urban blacks in the North, and the formation of the Black Power Movement of the 1970s (Sitkoff, 1981; Swift, 1991; Weisbord, 1973).

I hope to contribute and shed light on places like Holly Springs, which avoided civil rights violence but remained largely unchanged. This inquiry is based on six months of research conducted in Holly Springs, Mississippi. It draws on interviews of persons involved in the Civil Rights Movement in Holly Springs between 1960 and 1970. Their experiences have been

complemented by the use of newspapers, local, state, federal documents on education, politics, law, and archives at Holly Springs, Marshall County, Rust College, and the University of Mississippi. I draw on the information gathered by the State Sovereignty Commission of Mississippi which was established in 1956, shortly after *Brown v. Topeka, Kansas*. It was a state-funded institution that gathered information on all citizens of the state of Mississippi, thwarting integration in the state. The Commission was a hierarchal web of local and state authorities who used any means necessary, from the law to smearing and violence, in order to stop change in the state. The records for the most part offer general information on persons and their whereabouts between 1956 and 1977. However, some reveal the cooperation of local members of the community to stop desegregation. The key point is that even though the majority of these were white, many blacks cooperated with the state in the effort, mostly as informants. The Civil Rights Movement needs to be reexamined. The conventional historiography focuses on the violent revolutionary aspects of the Civil Rights Movement, such as those that occurred in the Mississippi Delta or Birmingham (Carson, 1981/1995; Cobb, 1992; Eskew, 1997; Goldfield, 1990; McAdam, 1982). Most places tended to be like Holly Springs, changing slowly but becoming more segregated due to the complex and shifting race relations in rural towns. The historical narrative of Holly Spring counters the meca narrative portraying whites as resisters and blacks as activists. This is not a necessary truth as both groups in Holly Spring lined up across class lines, social positions, education, and even against the federal government. Drawing upon his experience growing up in Ghana, Kwame Appiah (2006) argues that moral and religious disagreement between cultures is overstated and the complexities of social change are deemphasized when they do not fit within ideological beliefs. As you read this article, I hope that you will remember that Holly Springs represents only a small part of the Civil Rights Movement in the South, and that many of the decisions made by the local leadership were without the benefit of hindsight. The Civil Rights Movement in Holly Springs allowed individual blacks to trust the changing social system the opportunity to discover their identities and reinterpret their places. On the other hand, unlike the local whites who remained in control of the economic and political arenas of the town, the local black community was caught-off-guard by the rapid change and was unable to deal with the long term consequences.

Counternarratives in Contested Spaces

Today, the text and discourse of the Civil Rights Era South can be a metaphor for the changing nature of education, and its role in the formation of identity. The regional reconstruction of Southern society resulting from the Civil Rights Movement has become reflective of customs, values, and meaning which in turn has produced their interpretation of the reality of the modern Southern imagined community (Anderson, 1991). The power of the imagined community to which each individual succumbs, regardless of race, hinges on the importance and need for racial identification as the basis for individual freedom in today's media-influenced society, which affords a limited number of social spaces that define what Southern identity should be for each race—and leaves individuals with only select memories of the past as a means for personal and social identification that includes the social structure built on the value of racial identification.

Schooling, and more specifically curriculum, has traditionally marginalized the importance of individual and group identities while ironically providing place for individuals and groups to

exist. Schooling is merely an institutional representation of the society. The repressions and suppressions of blacks continue to exist. As curriculum has become more hegemonized, the public policy of integration perpetuates further marginalization and suppression.

The struggle of understanding places such as Holly Springs is a quest to transcend the burden of the past (slavery and lost cause) and place (economic depression and racial segregation) to search for self identity. The problem then remains that much of the post-Civil Rights United States is transfixed by a spatial regionalism that describes persons—especially when dealing with race—and makes education about the impact of civil (and human) rights and the Movement uniquely Southern and belonging in the past. In the following, I hope to tell the historical narrative of Holly Springs, Mississippi to re-imagine the impact of civil rights on our lives today. In a sense, the South and its segregation is as distant today as it was in 1960.

Birth of a Movement (1960-1964)

On September 15, 1960, Tom Scarbrough, Head Investigator for the Sovereignty Commission in North Mississippi reported, “concerning someone writing quite a number of threatening letters to business houses in Holly Springs threatening to boycott their places of business on the 24th of September unless Negroes were permitted to vote and unless all Negro school teachers, whom the Board of Education saw fit not to re-contract with for the year 1960–61, were- re-hired” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-36-2-1-1). Most of the letters were written to local businesses asking them to pressure Superintendent of Education H. B. Appleton to rehire the schoolteachers whose contracts were not renewed by the County School Board. They advised white businesses to complain about the treatment of blacks, as they were the ones who voted for Appleton, “as they (the Negroes) were denied the right to vote” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-36-2-1-1).

Holly Springs had both civil and social rationales for conducting a campaign to end segregation. First, there were the active members of civil rights organizations, and second, a black college (Rust) that supported the Movement. The Superintendent of Education, H. B. Appleton, stated that “he felt his school teachers were doing a good job and were pleased with their present set up which the State had provided for them and that it was his policy to dispose of any teacher suspected of engaging in any type of agitation for the mixing of the races” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-14-1-1-1). After initial inspiration from the sit-ins in Greensboro in 1960 and desegregation in New Kent County, Virginia, local blacks backed away from civil disobedience as the county witnessed a few meetings whose attendance was public knowledge and no one made a secret of their affiliation with the NAACP.

Marshall County had five black public schools; Rosenwald School (W.T. Sims High School and Frazier Grammar school) in the city; Henry High School, Sand Flat, Mary Reed Grammar School, and Delina in the county, two of which taught children from the first grade through the twelfth grade, and the three others from the first grade through the eighth grade. Even though four of the schools were relatively new, costing the State of Mississippi and Marshall County \$924,000, texts and other instructional materials were nonexistent, and the classrooms were extremely overcrowded. The student to teacher ratio in the white schools was nineteen to one; black schools’ ratio was thirty-eight to one. White schools received twice the amount of money for classroom materials as did the black schools, including teacher salaries, extracurricular activities, and materials.

Local teachers, both white and black, were required to sign the loyalty oath, “as required by law and to make a sworn statement listing the organizations to which they now belong and those which they have belonged to in the past five years” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-61-1-1-1). The Sovereignty Commission was aware that it was teachers who were heading the Civil Rights Movement. In Marshall County, the black leadership came from the ranks of local teachers, including Eddie Smith and Henry Boyd, Jr. Apart from schools, two other issues concerned the white leadership, blacks registering to vote and freedom schools. Voter registration took precedent over freedom schools. On March 29, 1962, “Negroes were accelerating their efforts more than usual in paying their poll tax and registering to vote” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-61-1-1-1). The issue of voter registration had always been part of the local movement. Scarbrough also visited Sheriff Cox to verify that “no noticeable number of Negroes paid their poll tax or tried to for 1961” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-61-1-1-1). The poll tax was an effective tool in Marshall County, as it was in the South, to keep blacks from voting (Key, 1941; Woodward, 1974).

By 1964, Black voter registration rose. In early 1964, Tom Scarbrough witnessed a carload of blacks in the county clerk’s office to register to vote (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-67-1-1-1). L.A. McLemore had brought the group to the courthouse. McLemore, a student at Rust College, claimed “he was only furnishing the transportation for the Negroes who were aspiring to register because they did not have an automobile in which to come to the Circuit Clerk’s Office” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-1-67-1-1-1). McLemore illustrates the new activity brewing among blacks in Marshall County. He drove four carloads of blacks to register at the clerk’s office. The sheriff’s department and the local police were well aware of the situation but did not act. McLemore was not the only person who brought blacks to register to vote at the clerk’s office. The sheriff’s office reported that a Mrs. S.T. Nero, an instructor at Rust College, also brought several blacks to the Clerk’s Office, as did a Reverend Broomfield.

The Massive Resistance of Mississippi was more organized than the Civil Rights organizations, but the State had very little control over local officials. The main reason integration in Holly Springs took so long and went relatively unnoticed was that the white leadership understood the law and used it to its advantage. The leaders rejected violence and force. In Hattiesburg and in Jackson, elementary students were chased and attacked by rowdy white teenagers as white women stood by and cheered (Cobb, 1992; Wolters, 1984). The white community of Holly Springs abided by the unwritten rules of Massive Resistance, using social, economic, and political power over the black community, rarely resorting to violence.

Mississippi Freedom Summer, in 1964, marked a significant turning point in the civil rights campaign in Holly Springs. The “fifteen to twenty” white students from Ohio staying at Rust College were the catalyst in the Movement. The white staff arrived to work at the Freedom Schools that Frank Smith was setting up in the county (Dittmer, 1995). Perhaps more critically, the presence of the “outsiders” galvanized the white community to action, generally against Rust College, more specifically against its president. This campaign took two directions. First was to discredit the outsiders, Rust College, and President Smith, by associating them with racial, sexual, and social deviancy.

The Freedom School in Marshall County met at Holly Springs, in Asbury Chapel, where their slogan was “One Man—one vote!” (Sovereignty Commission: 2-20-2-5-1-1-1). Their pamphlets advertised that in order to be a first class citizen, the person must first register to vote. Classes were held at 8:00 a.m. on how to register and circumvent the newly placed resistance obstacles, such as reading tests. After class, selected citizens would march to the courthouse on

the square, about one mile away, and attempt to register. The activists wanted blacks to register with the newly formed Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Prior to the boycott, Skip Robinson sent out letters on behalf of the United League of Marshall County (UL) stating that “We have check [sic] the registration books but we was unable to fin[d] your name. If you have registered, or if you have not, please go by the courthouse and check the book for your name. Please cooperate with us; we are trying to get all of our people registered to vote” (Rust College Archives). The signed letter was followed by a second notice for a petition signed by Robinson and Henry Boyd stating the power of controlling 70% of the vote in Marshall County.

In 1964, civil rights were no longer a local issue, or a state issue or even a southern issue. It was now a national concern. The sudden federal push left blacks with little control as the federal government became an active participant in change, thereby leaving a void between the old conservative leadership and the new emerging post-Brown leadership. The new leadership was not cognizant of the pre-Brown days. Nor was it as cautious about stepping on the toes of the white establishment (Dittmer, 1995; Marable, 1984). The ensuing years after Freedom Summer of 1964 left the black leadership in constant turmoil as the aging leadership of the 1950s gradual-change approach was questioned by the young leadership, who, spurred on by the lawyers and the federal government, demanded immediate change. Whites were also faced with the decision to continue Massive Resistance in the face of the new, younger black leadership, outsiders familiar with federal legislation, and the involvement of the U.S. Courts in integration.

Desegregation and the Public Schools (1966-1970)

Alongside the tumultuous campaign for legal recognition, school integration/desegregation was a powerful and difficult campaign fought in the courts of law and public opinion. Freedom of Choice governed schools between 1966 and 1970. Before 1966, Marshall County and Holly Springs schools remained strictly segregated. Under pressure from the federal government, however, some form of integration became unavoidable. While some school districts chose Massive Resistance, as had Prince Edward County, Virginia, closing schools before racially integrating them; Marshall County and Holly Springs resorted to the Freedom of Choice Plan. Freedom of Choice allowed all students to attend the school they wanted. In Marshall County, grades one, two, seven and twelve were opened to Freedom of Choice. Each school district across Mississippi had the right to choose how to integrate the schools. Freedom of Choice was safe in Marshall because it followed court decisions. Integration of schools occurred in two phases. Freedom of Choice was the first phase lasting less than five years. It powerfully effected the local population. The refusal of local districts to integrate forced the U.S. Courts to take action, thereby, beginning the second phase integration: desegregation. This phase was fought in the U.S. District Courts. By 1968, the South was faced with multiple class action suits against the schools for violation of the civil rights of black children. One such case was Clarence Anthony vs. Marshall County and Holly Springs Schools (409 F.2d 1287). The plaintiffs won as the U.S. Court ruled that Freedom of Choice had not desegregated the schools. The Court gave the schools the option to use testing to assign children to each grade based on their score. U.S. Senators from Mississippi advocated that the court ruling violated the Civil Rights Act because they favored blacks over whites. The state used money to support their students who wanted to attend private schools. Finally, the local school districts attempted delay tactics to keep schools segregated. In the end, they failed as the federal courts and Justice Hugo Black ushered in the

end of Freedom of Choice and token integration with a plan for total desegregation of the schools in 1970. After lengthy delays in integration, the U.S. Courts forced schools to desegregate by February 1, 1970.

On January 15, 1970, Senator John Stennis addressed a group at an Oxford, Mississippi, meeting where he stated, “the South is being imposed on while other areas of the country are neglected” (*South Reporter*, 1970, January 16). The belief in local schools was strong in the small communities who took pride in the “Separate Schools Systems” (Wolters, 1984). The social hegemony of Massive Resistance could not stop the individual’s ability to choose, even if the choice was made by the legal system. The desegregation period reconceptualized a new social hegemony defined the new “man,” based on the tenets of the Civil Rights laws rather than on the practices that evolved from the Movement. In this case, emphasis was on the individual over the collective rights of the “Black” citizenry. Robert Bellah (1985) blames capitalist communitarianism prevalent in the post-World War II United States for the devaluation and responsibility of the individual to the organic whole that defines them. Bellah (1985) believed that the Protestant ethic of duty helped keep society together. Capitalism, an industrial impetus, diminished the social and collective fabric that was the foundation for the Movement by emancipating the individual from the social commitments of kin, community and place. A result of the industrial thrust of individual over community was the forced decision that alienated the individual and their liberation from their traditional way of life (Fromm, 1941; Hoffer, 1964) that had provided a discourse for dealing with Southern uniqueness, frustration and hopes (Woodward, 1993).

Power and Identity: Freedom of Choice (1967-1969)

Marshall County determined to now integrate in four grades. For various reasons few chose integration. The local paper, *The South Reporter*, discouraged blacks from sending their children to the white schools during the Freedom of Choice period. At Holly Springs High School, Ruth Greer, Al Beck, and Modina Reynolds entered the twelfth grade. In an angry letter to the paper, the Civil Rights leaders admonished Freedom of Choice and the paper for urging blacks to keep their children in their own schools. “Remember that the editor of this paper is a white Southerner. We doubt that he has ever set foot in Frazier or Sims,” appeared in the opening paragraph (Rust College Archives).

The most popular course at Sims was clerical skills, yet the school had few typewriters, little lab equipment for Chemistry or Biology, no new library books in over ten years, no football field or basketball gym, or industrial arts shop. Angry, Sims students followed several leaders for a one week sit-in at Holly High, the only major incident by the black student body of Sims. The schools in Holly Springs were only integrating grades one, two, seven, and twelve. In total, twenty students took advantage of the situation. Freedom of Choice in the early grades was unencumbered by the authorities because many in Holly Springs did not want to be compared to Selma, Grenada, or Prince Edward County. In these mobs attacked young school children for integrating the schools (Wolters, 1984). Third, the “lower class element” that made up the foot soldiers of such attacks on *Freedom of Choicers* across the South lived in the outer edges of the county, outside of the city limits. Fourth, Holly Springs was heavily dependent on outside industry, such as Coca Cola, for their economy. The city could not and would not risk a race riot, especially if smaller children were attacked. At the seventh grade level, only two boys entered

school, and their family name and position was such that they were not harassed. The four that entered high schools were virtually invisible to anyone but their friends at Sims or their new classmates at Holly High. The Holly High Tiger Yearbook placed all four of their pictures on a separate page at the end of the senior section so that it could be removed if any of the students did not want blacks in their yearbook (Holly Springs High School Yearbook 1966-1967). The year went along smoothly at the high school, except for the personal battles of each student who chose to attend the formerly all-white high school. As 1968 approached, court dockets overflowed across the state and the South, as a new generation of challenges to the Brown decisions on school integration arose. For blacks in Holly Springs, the year held great promise, but, as the school year came to a close, a more conservative president came to Rust, thus ending the unwavering support for civil rights by the college. On May 30, 1968, during commencement, President W.A. McMillan was inaugurated at Rust. Eddie Smith, the vocal leader in the 1965 economic boycott, had all but left the college, and Skip Robinson had left the Civil Rights Movement for the Nation of Islam. The third leader of the Movement, Henry Boyd, Jr., who ran the Freedom School in 1964, began to concentrate on his job as a teacher.

The congruency of interaction, of what is espoused and acted between the defined role of the individual and society were the driving force of the Movement in Holly Springs. Without this interaction, the Movement seemed to just stop as the leaders moved after years of community work for individual endeavors. Henry Allan Bullock (1970) stated that the verbal protest developed in the early twentieth century was shaped as American Blacks sought “to find a new conception of themselves and a deeper spiritual orientation. The new group aspired to reestablish the Negro’s racial heritage The Negro must remake his past in order to make his future. And so they wrote of African Kings, black warriors, black leaders of slave rebellions, Negro jockeys, and the problems of being Negro” (p. 199). The first shift occurred through re-interpretation, based on the historical rejection of a past. Rejection of the old was the pragmatic answer to functioning in a new order (Dewey, 1963) caused by the abrupt changes of the federal government that not only impacted desegregation but left those seeking equality without the collective social order that provided a context and thereby losing access to the empowerment offered by the new freedom (Fanon 1967; Wolcott 1990).

Manning Marable (1984) echoes C. Vann Woodward’s (1993) critique of “Black” reinterpretation of the Second Reconstruction being similar to that of White Southerners’ interpretation of themselves over 100 years earlier during Reconstruction as they began to believe in themselves as English gentry and Arthurian heroes. Robert Penn Warren captured the ideology in *Legacy of the Civil War* (1961), with the term “Great Alibi.” “By the Great Alibi the Southerner explains, condones, and transmutes everything. By a single reference to the “War’ . . . laziness becomes the aesthetic sense . . . and resentful misery becomes divine revelation . . . he turns defeat into victory, defects into virtue” (Warren, 1961).

Culture and Narratives of Change: The Courts and Desegregation

The South was an honor culture, with chivalric undertones derived from the romantic literature, especially King Arthur (Brown, 1986). Rollin Osterweis stated “there existed a natural affinity in all this [Southern romanticism] for the theme of medieval chivalry, emphasized by Scott’s brand of romanticism” (Osterweis, 1971, p. 17). Along with economic determinism caused by dependence (economic and political), illustrated by the large number of sharecroppers

of both races who struggled for a voice against the landowners in the *New South*, Depression and the *New Deal*, and through the Federal inroads into the Post-World War II (Bartley, 1995). It was from this fabricated and real society that the idea of the South redefined itself in order to counterbalance the imagined world. As a result, changes in the Southern states' Constitutions, Jim Crow Laws, lynching and other methods of separation, including economic control that did not allow Blacks the ability to sustain themselves, or leave for the North in order to look for employment arose and ultimately segregated the South internally and externally. The South was out of step with the rest of nation, as Southerners' existence depended on their fixation with their past and place, and loss of self-determination. Ironically, this change impacted both Whites and Blacks as changed occurred in the courts and government but not in society.

If few students and families chose integration in phase one, phase two saw a marked increase in integration and black interest in white schools. As a result of school desegregation, and federal legislation passed in 1968, 356 blacks applied for Freedom of Choice for the September 1969 school year in both the city and county. The forms were filed on May 15, 1969 and announced in the front page of the *South Reporter*. In June, two more events took place in Holly Springs that signaled a shift in both schooling and the power structure of the black leadership. Eddie L. Smith took out an ad in the newspaper for candidacy for the school board, a position he would win, becoming the first black elected to office in the county. This would lead to his separation from the Movement in the city and his push for desegregation in the county. The focus of the effort for the county, and the relative lack of power of county whites, led to more desegregation in county schools and facilities as opposed to the city. In the same month, St. Mary's senior class graduated. This was an uneventful situation, except that the school was all black. The closing of the white St. Joseph and black St. Mary's, and the new desegregated school, provided a preview of what would occur in the public schools. The whites left either for the still segregated public schools or for the newly established Marshall Academy.

As the court cases loomed over the schools, Marshall County and Holly Springs decided to use alternate plans for integration. In phase two, testing replaced Freedom of Choice as the tool for integration. On June 12, 1969, county and city school districts released their plans to integrate the schools through the use of achievement scores. The U.S. courts had ordered several school districts in Mississippi to find an alternative to Freedom of Choice. Marshall County and Holly Springs schools chose to use achievement scores because whites scored higher than blacks. The school board would test the first three grades, and the students with the highest scores would be assigned to each school pending space, first to the white school, Sally Cochran and then to the black school, Frazier. Then, for the next three years, three more grades would be tested per year, fourth through sixth in 1970, seventh through ninth in 1971, and tenth through twelfth in 1972, until all grades were tested and the four year plan completed. The Fifth District Court offered a counter proposal; all children would be tested in the spring of 1970 and reassigned to their new schools. The district court gave attorneys until January 16, 1970, to file objections to the desegregation plan, and a hearing was scheduled for January 30, 1970.

In 1968, Clarence Anthony filed a class action lawsuit against the Marshall County and Holly Springs school districts in order to desegregate both school districts. U.S. District Chief Justice William Keady found against the plaintiffs, and in favor of Freedom of Choice. Anthony appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court. Based on the evidence that forty-three out of 5,574 black children in both districts had attended white schools, and that not one single white child had attended black schools, Judge Ainsworth ruled that a new plan had to be formulated by the school districts (Mississippi 1969, No. 56432, US 409 F.2d 1282). Ainsworth cited other cases

such as *Bowman v. County School Board of Charles City County* (US 1967, 382 F.2d 326, 333), where the judiciary mandated a plan for creating a “unitary, nonracial system.” He also referred to *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (US 1968, 430, 88 S. Ct. 1689, 20 L.Ed.2d 716), as an example of segregation continuing under freedom of choice because of outside influence on the schools. On June 19, 1969, the plaintiffs proposed a competing plan. Unlike the Marshall County plan, the new plan proposed testing all twelve grades. The scores on the test would determine the school students would attend the following year.

After hearing both sides, on July 17, 1969, federal judge Keady approved this scheme in order to insure integration with the test scores for grades one through four, and that 20 percent of the students in grades 11 and 12 of the formerly white schools would be black. He also mandated one black teacher for every six white teachers in white schools, and one white teacher for every six black teachers in black schools. He demanded that school facilities be integrated by 1970. Testing was a means of keeping the black students out, while complying with the law. Judge Keady warned that “if testing did not produce substantial desegregation, the plan would be ruled unconstitutional” (Mississippi 1969, No. 26432, US 409F.2d 1287). Following the judge’s order, the *South Reporter* printed an advertisement for the parents of Marshall County students for the dates of the school placement tests for children in grades 1st through 4th (August 7, 1969). All children in grades 1st through 4th would attend an orientation program that required a parent to transport them. The session was held one week before the test.

Marshall County whites had integration in the U.S. courts; they continued to resist even when the judiciary opposed them. This mandate to test the children, the school districts decided, they “could not” afford to transport them to the exams. Thus, on August 14, 1969, the U.S. Fifth District Court ordered that the eighty-one highest scoring students in grades 1 through 4 attend Sallie Cochran Elementary, and the rest Frazier. Second, all other grades would accept students by Freedom of Choice, except grades 11 and 12, which in accordance to Judge Keady’s ruling had to have a 20% black student body for the 1969-1970 school year. However, the U.S. Court added that in the 1970-1971 school year, grades nine through twelve had to have a 20% black student body. The U.S. Court also ordered that in 1969-1970 school year, one in six persons at the school had to be of a different race, and with the facility fully desegregated by 1970-1971.

While Marshall County resisted, the school district asked for extra time. In order to avoid any more delays from parents not testing their children, the Court imposed a penalty of a one-year suspension from any form of schooling, public or private, for any child who did not take the test. And still, whites resisted. Once again, in the face of impending desegregation, and in view of an increase in enrollment, the Mississippi Private School Council (MPSC) asked the state legislature to pass three bills to aid parents of children who attended private schools. The week before, Governor John Bell Williams passed a threefold package that involved tuition grants, loans, and tax credits for patrons of both secular and religious schools.

In order to combat the impending court decisions, Mississippi Senator Jaime Whitten attempted to pass the Whitten Amendment through the U.S. Congress. As a law, it specified that “no part of the funds contained in this act [Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)] may be used to force busing of students, the abolishment of schools, or to force any students attending any elementary or secondary school to attend a particular school against the choice of his or her parents” (ESEA, 1967). The ESEA had been passed in 1968 to help reform education in the U.S., especially in lower-income areas. Senators Whitten and John Stennis held that favoring blacks over whites violated the law under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, so the ESEA was breaking federal law. Both Whitten and Stennis also concluded that although schools in the

South were being attacked for Freedom of Choice, the state of New York practiced the same policy without judicial prejudice. Finally, both Senators argued that States' Rights were being violated by the use of "federal money to force racial integration in schools," while at the same time making references to Reconstruction (Dittmer, 1995; Marable, 1984).

With both the local government and the U.S. senators in the fray, the Sovereignty Commission contacted Superintendent of Education Edward Malliken about using local teachers instead of bringing workers from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) of the Office of Education to administer the tests. The U.S. judge blocked this suggestion. In October of 1969, the state of Mississippi and its school districts were running out of options to delay the integration of schools. On October 16, 1969, under threat from the federal government to take action against the state, Governor John Bell Williams vetoed a bill that would allow a half credit, up to \$50,000 of state income tax donations, to give public, parochial, and all other accredited school children scholarships. Williams had proposed the tuition bill, which was passed overwhelmingly by the House but killed in the Senate. The news reaffirmed the reality of desegregation.

Testing of students was a ploy of the school attorneys practiced across the state. The method was to have the children abstain from the tests, appeal the one year ban, suggest Freedom of Choice, and after the children began the school year, it would be impossible to reassign them to their proper school. The belief was that blacks and whites would likely remain in their same schools. In Holly Springs, 175 blacks were to be transferred to white schools, and 59 whites were to attend black schools. In the city schools, blacks comprised almost 70% of the population at the elementary level, and about 60% at the secondary level. In fact, more black students dropped out of school than there were whites in school. The testing plan was to be continued at the end of April 1970, as grades five through eight were to be tested in May 1970 and assigned in September 1970 along with grades One through Four. Then, in May 1971 all grades would be tested and assigned in September 1971. Facing the possibilities of desegregating through testing, and with the pending desegregation cases still in the courts, the Board of Trustees of Holly Springs and Marshall County Schools decided to conduct surveys of opinions of school patrons, voters, and taxpayers in order to determine the feelings of the district toward desegregation.

In the wake of judicial rulings, the U.S. Courts had also allowed alternative schemes for integration besides the testing of Judge Keady, and Marshall County used these to delay integration too. The U.S. Courts developed four plans for integrating schools; pairing, zoning, testing, and consolidation. The school board believed that by using the opinions of the surveys it could convince the U.S. Courts to delay desegregation. Pairing was not very popular with white parents, but blacks saw it as the closest thing to full desegregation. The second plan was less popular. Zoning was the use of designated areas known as zones, which were racially balanced with both races in each zone. Blacks saw it as a great plan for one reason, that in changing zones, it would serve to even out voting zones in the districts of Holly Springs. The third plan, which was the one assigned to the county and city, testing, was based on achievement tests, whereby the highest scores attended one school and the lower scores another. This plan was not liked by the white community, and abhorred by Blacks. Blacks concurred reluctantly since it provided the only option at the time to desegregate the schools. The final plan, consolidation of grades, whereby one school became central, and all other schools were closed, was the closest system to total desegregation, and favored by a small minority of whites. The plan would close the black schools, and move all children to the Holly High-Sallie Cochran Complex. According to the Anthony ruling in 1968, a school system must establish one system by order of the court in order

to have a public school system during the 1970-1971 school year. The court had accepted these four plans as viable to replace Freedom of Choice. The white leadership in Holly Springs feared their constituency was giving up, although whites preferred Freedom of Choice, for desegregation. For blacks, zoning and pairing led the lists as the most popular choices, three times more popular than testing and consolidation.

As the year was winding down, Judge Hugo Black forced total desegregation without any room for appeals. The decision came from the U.S. Supreme Court and represented the final word on desegregation. On December 4, 1969, the court ordered the second phase for school desegregation to begin (US 1970, 419F.2d 1211). Marshall County and Holly Springs were ordered to establish a unitary school system by September 1970. Faculties, staff, transportation, services athletics, and other extracurricular activities had to be merged by February 1, 1970. According to the U.S. Supreme Court, schools had to have the same racial percentage in schools as children who lived in the district. This meant that for the city and the county, 70 percent black and 30 percent white. Judge Black also handed down a second harsher penalty for the desegregation of the schools by revoking the use of testing, giving each school district until January 6, 1970, to file a plan with the U.S. Circuit Court that complied with the *Singleton v. Jackson Municipal Separate School District* decision (348 F2d 729).

Following his decision, Judge Black, a Southerner, wanted to avoid stalling tactics that followed other rulings and announced that by February 1, 16 school desegregation cases would be decided. These districts had to submit plans and request help from the U.S. Office of Education. Following orders from Hugo Black, on December 4, 1969, Judge Keady set January 15, 1970, as the hearing date where the plan had to be presented to HEW with the understanding that in schools “No race or color shall be excluded.” On February 1, 1970, all teachers, principals, and staff were reassigned “so as to not constitute any racial induction of school for white or black” (US 1970, 419F.2d 1211). The ratio of black to white teachers was 64 to 36 percent. Two weeks later, following the Fifth Circuit Court’s lead, the U.S. Supreme Court set February 1, 1970, as the deadline for total desegregation. The U.S. Courts instructed Marshall County and Holly Springs to take steps for complete school desegregation by the deadline. The U.S. Supreme Court would make the final decision on desegregation, thereby bypassing the district, in case schools petitioned about the impossibility of compliance in the allotted time. Schools had to file a plan with the Fifth Circuit Court on January 6, 1970, and respond to Judge Black about the decision by January 2, 1970. On January 5, 1970, Holly Springs and Marshall County school districts filed desegregation plans with the court and HEW. The plans divided the children among the schools. The district chose Joseph Ford, who had been ostracized earlier after being accused of writing letters against the firing of teachers in 1960 to desegregate Holly High, as the symbol of white Holly Springs.

The white resistance finally ran out of steam as the U.S. Courts ruled in favor of total desegregation in the County. The school districts had to abide or lose control of their schools. Teachers in grades one through six would be assigned children through a lottery. In grades seven through twelve, students would choose the teachers for each subject as had been done before. The principal of Holly Springs High School, grades ten through twelve, was Joseph Ford, because he had the highest credentials. The Intermediate School, grades four through nine, was to be headed by Donald Randolph, the former Holly High principal; and Alice Bell, who was the principal at Sallie Cochran, headed the Primary School, grades One through Four. All students stayed with the same teachers they had. Schools were to close on January 23, 1970 to move furniture and reopen on February 2 in Marshall County and Holly Springs, as desegregated

schools for the first time ever.

Raising Questions and Invigorating Possibilities for Positive Social Change

The white community of Holly Springs transferred all loyalty, students, and community events from the high school to the Marshall Academy, an all white school. By 1974, Marshall County and Holly Springs consisted of two groups of people living next to one another who did not live together. The pictures on the hallways of Holly High represented the past. Only the children who attended Marshall Academy knew the people in the photos. The children in the resegregated high school had no connection to a past in the pictures they never knew since most of them were born fifteen years after the schools were desegregated in 1970. The Civil Rights Movement in Holly Springs and Marshall County took almost twenty years to fully be realized. The Movement began in 1954 and fizzled out by 1970 after desegregation. Holly Spring had some unique qualities separated from other small towns in the South. It was a central point of focus for the national movements every major organization and dignitary visited Holly Springs. However, unlike the towns of Greenwood and Selma that gained notoriety for violence, Holly Springs never experienced violence. If there is one word that describes the movement in Holly Springs, it is “politeness.” The Civil Rights Movement was a fight for the right to control public space, as blacks tried to fight for rights and justice for themselves and other suppressed individuals and groups. The main object of their efforts was the public schools. Blacks believed that schools would secure economic and political freedom for their community.

The political struggle that began in 1960 had become old and tired by 1974. Many of the leaders left Marshall County, and the new leaders could not sustain the Movement. They also became victims of widespread poverty in the late 1960s, the closing of Mississippi Industrial College, and the demise of Rust College, which had only about 800 students and no longer possessed the influence after white state schools were opened to blacks. By the end of the 1970s more blacks were in integrated state schools than in black institutions (Fleming, Gill, & Swinton, 1978). Schools, the Civil Rights Movement, and the battle for desegregation were pyrrhic victories that in the end cost the resegregation of the community.

Blacks as well as whites had to deal with race every day and the social roles of individuals based on their racial identification. As Civil Rights legislation was forced on the South in order to bring justice to the oppressed individuals, the discourse of past and place that Southerners had held onto fell apart. As blacks received access for social advancement, that realized social freedom came with a price: the collective identity as oppressed people under the structure of segregation went from real to memory. Thus, the battle of recreating identities as African Americans or Blacks in the U.S. South continued. However, the media and the new schools of re-segregation did not create space for African Americans or Blacks to voice their struggles and claim their identities.

In this article, I hope to explore the role of schools in the formation of community identity during the Civil Rights Movement by examining the relationship between community activism with and separate from schools. I think that the historical narrative of Holly Springs can help understand that the failure of schools results from a narrow perspective that considers race solely as economic and political hegemony which leads to further school desegregation. I keep asking questions for the purposes of telling historical narrative of Holly Spring, Mississippi to re-

imagine the impact of civil rights on our lives in the South after 60 years of the Civil Rights Movement.

What has desegregation done to our educational system? Schooling has not dealt with the changing nature of Southern society or with the re-construction of social roles for Blacks and Whites in the post-Civil Rights South. Today, as school districts are moving toward neighborhood schools, vouchers, and the ending of busing, many of the integrative efforts of the Civil Rights Movement are lost in the education of our younger generations. Although society is concerned with place and past, especially regional and racial identities, it is still too consumed with economic and social acculturation and assimilation. Schooling is merely an institutional representation of the social milieu (Schwab, 1969). We have always faced problems of race and racism. The repression and suppression of African-Americans in our society have never been fully addressed. Louis Castenell and William Pinar (1993) state that “all Americans are radicalized beings; knowledge of who we have been, who we are, and who we will become is a story or text we will construct” (p. 8). The approaches to race in schools (Uhrmacher, 1997) are twofold: one is how race is situated within teaching, how it is disseminated, and how it is contextualized; the other, more importantly, is the hidden interpretations within teachers and students--how they imagine race to be learned or taught and how their views of race and racism influence their own personal beliefs and actions.

Schools have been places where class is perpetuated, where conformity is taught, and where deviance is discouraged. They inculcate children into learn the norms and values of the dominant culture; first, through emulation (most powerful, where the child believes what she is learning is good); second, through diplomacy (where the school tries to prove to the child that school is good); third, through manipulation (by bribing the child with a diploma); fourth, by threatening force (making the child learn what is taught, ill-equipping the child for thinking) and; lastly, by force (where the child is mis-educated, through a deficit model of education (Brantlinger, 2004)). This cultural hegemony can be overcome by exposing the history of the past and reality of one’s present. Questions must extend beyond how others feel. They must deal with how an individual feels as she/he is involved within the educational system. Even though our answers are similar because they deal with our survival and our ability to be heard. If a group of individuals ask similar questions about a system, even if they come from different backgrounds, they will be able to understand where they fit within the larger narrative.

Another question I would like to ask is: What important and enduring lessons can be taught and learned from the Civil Rights Movement? This question is rarely asked in our schools today. When it does, the answers are usually simplistic, such as busing, rather than question the larger context of social change for all citizens and for minority groups such as African-Americans, Latinos, and women of color who cherished the opportunities provided by and beyond the Movement. As Neil Postman (1996) states writes, the “answer to this question has nothing to do with computers, testing, with teacher accountability, with class size, and with the other details of managing schools.” (Postman, p. 18). The right answer, for Postman, rests on “the existence of shared narratives and the capacity of such narratives to provide an inspired reason for schooling.” (p. 18).

John Dewey (1916/1997) writes, renewal of the self and community best occurs within a democratic society where justice and caring can prevail. These ideas only thrive in schools where a multitude of experiences from students, parents, teachers, and administrators are valued and respected, where the dedication, caring, talent, and intelligence of teachers are allowed to flourish, and where democratic ideals are enacted while choosing to vote, raise children, live in

particular neighborhoods, attend or not attend religious services, and, mostly, judge themselves as democratic citizens regardless of one's background, place, or economic reality.

The Civil Rights Movement provided a space for learners to develop and claim identities to reach their highest human potential within schools. Educational policies active in schools have appropriated the progressive language of the Movement while de-legitimizing teachers, students, and communities (Brantlinger, 2004; Carini, 2001). The historical narrative of Holly Spring emphasizes the community aspect of education and illuminates its power to create space to address the needs and interests of all members of the groups, societies, and tribes. Schools must embrace communities and their histories to holistically immerse young learners into the school environment and beyond. Teachers need to make choices beyond testing scores and they need to perceive personal experiences and places as the driving force for teaching. We also need to understand our students, and “draw from their own personal biographies, struggles, and attempts to understand their own contradiction in the context of the contradictions of schooling and capitalism” (Torres, 1998, p. 142). We need to challenge the “two educational myths of liberalism...the notion that education is a neutral activity, and that education is an apolitical activity” (p. 142). Schools should become actively engaged in promoting social change. Race and class pervade our educational systems as solely economic and political hegemony control the oppressed classes through the magnification of their perceived and constructed shortcomings and failures. Teachers should also understand that politics and economics drive schooling today as what they did during the Civil Rights Movement. Education has to be among the highest priority in our society to empower people to change their life situations and cultivate better human conditions for all (Nussbaum, 1997; Schubert, 2009).

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