Hope or Hindrance

A Collage of School-Life Experiences and Opinions about the Impact of the Brown vs. Board of Education Decision

ASU Delta Blues Symposium X
Creative Presentation
Presented by Deidre Douglas
Dedication

To the late

Bishop Justice Edward Bowe
My grandfather, Justus Edward Bowe was like many parents of his time. He saw integration as a chance for a better education and inevitably a better life for his children. This presentation seeks to explore the impact of the Brown vs Board Decision through the memories and opinions expressed in the following interviews.
Disclaimer

*All interviews are the opinions of the participants.
Mrs. Emma Jean Bowe

Attended:

Sara McKinney High School
1931-1935 (6th-10th Grade School)
Mrs. Emma Jean Bowe
School-Life Memory I*

“Mrs. Ritas would take us on a trip every Friday (by describing places that she had studied in detail). She would say, I’m going to take you to Africa today. . .”
Mrs. Emma Jean Bowe  
School-Life Memory II*  

Justus Edward Bowe took Carolyn Bowe, the couples youngest daughter, to the white school. Carolyn first attended Partee Elementary in 1966 as a 4th grade student.
Carolyn says that she remembers that one white student nicknamed her ‘toast.’ However, another white student would offer to buy her milk if she couldn’t pay for it.
Impact of Brown vs. Board Decision*

“...Our school was good enough, and we had everything that we needed. Their teachers didn’t know any more than our teachers... We had smart teachers.”

-Emma Jean Bowe
Mrs. Geraldine Purcell Davidson

Attended:

Zent Public Schools 1933-1943
(ill 3 terms)

Fargo Agricultural School 1943-1947

Jones Commercial Community College 1964-66
Fargo Agricultural School was founded in 1919 on Thanksgiving Day by Dr. Floyd Brown.
Geraldine Davidson holding her high school graduation picture.
“The teachers taught us to sit erect, hold your head up, and look them in the eye . . . Students at the Fargo Agricultural School were different.”
Impact of Brown v. Board Decision*

“Youth today are losing so much of their heritage by not knowing about it.”

-Geraldine Purcell Davidson
Ms. Cora L. Bowe

Attended:

Easter Seals Convalescent Center  
1960 - 1968

Marian Anderson High School  
1968 - 1970

Brinkley High School 1970-1972

Arkansas State University 1972-1976
Ms. Cora L. Bowe
School-Life Memory I*

“I want to be a teacher.”
Ms. Cora L. Bowe
School-Life Memory II*

Cora Bowe is one of the chartering members of the Eta Upsilon Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha at ASU.
Ms. Cora L. Bowe
School-Life Memory III*

“ We use to tease that . . . B was for Black.
Ms. Cora L. Bowe
School-Life Memory IV*

“... we were segregated in a way because all of the African-American students sat on one side and all of the Caucasian students sat on the other side of the room.”
Ms. Cora L. Bowe
Impact of Brown v. Board Decision*

“...happy at Marian Anderson High School... became antagonistic at Brinkley High School.”
Mr. A. Leon Randolph and Mrs. Laura B. Randolph

Mr. Randolph taught at:

Garret Grove
(1st experience one summer)

Marian Anderson School 1955-1968

Brinkley High School 1968-1993
Mr. A. Leon Randolph and Mrs. Laura B. Randolph

Mrs. Randolph taught at:

Marian Anderson Elementary
1966-1968

Partee Elementary 1969-Present
(expected retirement Spring 2004)
“One year during Martin Luther King’s birthday, African American students rallied around the flag and sang songs in tribute. The following day some Caucasian students brought confederate flags to rally around. . .

Part I
“... I stopped some African-American students from grabbing the confederate flags. The next day, African-American students boycotted classes. At that time the basketball team was championship material. . .”

Part II
“. . . The African-American members of the team stayed away from school. So, the white coach put them off the team. As a result, the team that was expected to win the state championship lost its first game.”
“One thing that stands out is how selective the schools had to be about which Caucasian students to place in African-American teacher’s classes immediately following integration. . .”

Part I
There were parents who very adamantly requested that their children not be placed in these rooms. I can recall the astonished looks on parents’ faces as they left my room to request that their children be moved to another teacher. . .”

Part II
“... I also remember a conversation with a Caucasian friend and fellow teacher who confided in me that various parents had asked her to watch and regulate their children at recess to ensure that they did not play with African-American students.”

Part III
Impact of Brown v. Board Decision*

“It was hope because it gave all students an equal chance. Notice I didn’t say it made them equal; I said it gave them a chance.”

-Leon Randolph
Impact of Brown v. Board Decision*

“I guess it (integration) was hope for most people…Things were never equal . . . the overall picture is hopeful and integration is the best for humanity. . .”

-Laura B. Randolph
Mr. Herbert Williams and Mrs. Virginia Williams

Coach Herbert Williams taught at:

Marian Anderson School  1964-1970

Brinkley High School  1970-2003
Mr. Herbert Williams and Mrs. Virginia Williams

Mrs. Virginia Williams taught at:

Fargo Girls Training School 1968

Marian Anderson High School 1968-1970

Brinkley High School 1970-2003
Coach Herbert Williams
School-Life Memory*

“From 1964-1970, we were truly trying to educate kids. We took it very personally. The kids had more role models. I know that when I was in school. I had a lot of teachers that were role models. This was before integration. . .”

Part I
Coach Herbert Williams
School-Life Memory*

“... So, we wanted to be the best role models ... This is why I wanted to be a teacher. I had a lot of teachers that were my role models, and I think that this was the most impact on students during that era (before integration)....”

Part II
Mrs. Virginia Williams
School-Life Memory*

“When we went to Brinkley High, all of the teachers (black) were demoted especially the principals, counselors, and coaches . . . Principals were demoted to counselors. Coaches were demoted to assistant coaches . . .”

Part I
Mrs. Virginia Williams
School-Life Memory*

“... The smart students were put in the white teachers rooms ... Also, the pay was different during this time. There was a white pay scale and a black pay scale. There were a set of rules for white students and a set of rules for black students which still exists today.”

Part II
Impact of Brown v. Board Decision*

“... less black head and assistant football coaches because of integration ... less blacks going into teacher education than ever before ...”

-Coach Williams
Impact of Brown v. Board Decision*

“Our kids have lost all values and morals. They don’t go to school to get an education any more. Before integration, education was number one.”

-Virginia Williams
Ms. Trudy Vance

Taught at:
Dermont School District 1968-69
Augusta School District 1969
Brinkley School District 1978-2003
Ms. Trudy Vance
School-Life Memory*

Ms. Vance outside her home in Brinkley, Arkansas.
Ms. Trudy Vance
Impact of Brown v. Board Decision*

“...we were able to do some things that we had never done before ... inspired us to do more. ...”

-Trudy Vance
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