EMERSON, DIANE EUGENIA. Education to Subordinate-Education to Liberate. An Historical Study of the Dual Role of Education for African Americans, 1865-1968. (Dr. Anna Victoria Wilson, Chairperson)

This research is an historical study of African Americans’ experience acquiring education in North Carolina. In particular, I examine the ideological and institutional factors that shaped public education for African Americans following the Emancipation Act in 1865. Primary data includes an oral history of the experiences of teachers and students at Williston High School in Wilmington, North Carolina. Oral history serves as the principal vehicle for understanding Williston High School as a segregated learning institution along with document analysis of personal and public records.

Williston High School was the sole secondary school for African American students in Wilmington, North Carolina, from 1919 until 1968. Founded in 1866, Williston was the first free school for African American students in the southern part of Wilmington. Local African American citizens raised their own funds to start the school. Desegregation forced the school to close in 1968.

A brief history of African Americans in Wilmington, North Carolina, during the Reconstruction era contributes to understanding the local African American community’s efforts to maintain and enhance its only high school despite blatant acts of racism.
Education to Subordinate-Education to Liberate
An Historical Study of the Dual Role of Education for
African Americans, 1865-1968

by

Diane Eugenia Emerson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS

Raleigh

2003

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Marsha Alibrandi

Dr. Paul Bitting

Dr. Bill Johnston

Dr. Anna V. Wilson
Chair of Advisory Committee
DEDICATION

*O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together.—Psalm 34:4*

On this journey of life, God has been my unfailing supply and support. I give thanks unto Him and Bless His name.

Whatever good I have accomplished in my life, whatever dreams I have been able to realize, I also owe to my grandmother, Carrie Ruth Baldwin. I stand on her shoulders. I rest in her strength. Armed with a high school diploma, a doctorate in mother wit, and an unflinching faith in God, my grandmother worked and overcame countless obstacles in her life. When others might have given up or used the circumstances of their lives as excuses to fail, my grandmother’s courage and strength enabled her to rise again and again to succeed against the odds. Clad with an iron-will, firm love, and a sharp tongue my grandmother fashioned a wonderful life for her family.

Very early in my life, my grandmother passed these unique qualities on to me. Grandma raised me on heavy doses of love and support. She nurtured my gifts and prodded me, always, to be the best that I could be, to grow, and to reach my highest potential. She refused to allow the circumstances of my life to define, confine, or restrain me. She envisioned a life of greatness and achievement for me. She believed in me when I did not believe in myself and opened the doors of self-esteem and achievable possibilities in all areas of my life. My grandmother has been my lifeline, my life-support when others would have me “bowed and broken, shoulders falling down like teardrops, weakened by soulful cries” (Angelou 1994, 8). My grandmother gave shape, form, and substance to my life. I celebrate and honor this woman who loved and celebrated me.
BIOGRAPHY

Diane Eugenia Emerson was born in Ft. Eustis, Virginia, to Joseph Eugene Emerson and Geraldine Louise Baldwin. Diane was raised by her grandmother, Carrie Ruth Baldwin, in Wilmington, North Carolina, where she attended the local public schools. She graduated from Louis D. Brandeis High School in New York City, earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Delaware State College in Dover, Delaware, and a Master’s Degree in Education from the University of North Carolina-Wilmington, North Carolina.

Diane began her teaching career at Leland Middle School, Leland, North Carolina, and worked as a high school English teacher and an assistant principal in the public schools of Wilmington, North Carolina. In Raleigh, North Carolina, she worked as an education consultant at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in the Effective Practices Section. Diane was House Education Director in the Office of the Speaker and House Democratic Education Director in the North Carolina General Assembly.

Although she is no longer in the classroom, Diane remains a teacher. Her life’s mission is to help children to realize their full potential.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to so many people for their various contributions in the completion of this research project.

I owe enormous gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Anna Victoria Wilson, who from the beginning knew that I could and determined that I would. Thank you for embracing a will to excellence. I am ever grateful.

I am also appreciative of the various roles of my advisory committee, Dr. Marsha Alibrandi, Dr. Paul Bitting, and Dr. Bill Johnston. Thank you very much for your willingness to serve.

My sincere thanks and gratitude to my family and friends who have loved, supported and encouraged me through the years. I am so very grateful.

I am especially indebted to my son, Cedron, for his love, consistent reassurance and support. Thank you for understanding.

My sincere gratitude to all.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
CELEBRATING THE GREATEST SCHOOL UNDER THE SUN ........................................1

  Purpose of the Study ......................................................................................................2
  Background ....................................................................................................................2
  Research Questions ........................................................................................................3
  Significance of the Research ..........................................................................................4
  A Personal Lens .............................................................................................................5
  Untie the Last Knot ........................................................................................................5
  My Haven .......................................................................................................................6
  My Teachers ...................................................................................................................6
  The Beginning of the Rest of My Life ...........................................................................8
  The Love of My Life ......................................................................................................9
  My Administrative Experience ....................................................................................12
  Sustaining the Connection ...........................................................................................14
  A Look Through Teachers’ Lens .................................................................................15
  Overview of the Research ............................................................................................18

CHAPTER TWO
A SEARCH FOR THE MULTIPLE REALITIES OF WILLISTON HIGH SCHOOL ..........21

  Historical Inquiry .........................................................................................................22
  History of Segregated Black Schools ..........................................................................23
  Life Histories ...............................................................................................................24
  Enhancing Validity ........................................................................................................26
  My Research ................................................................................................................29
  Unpacking the Narrative Experience ...........................................................................30
  Inviting Participation ...................................................................................................30
  Interview Format ..........................................................................................................31
  Analysis .......................................................................................................................33
  The Teachers Remember .............................................................................................33
  Mrs. Drain .....................................................................................................................34
  Ms. Richardson .............................................................................................................35
  Mrs. Todd .....................................................................................................................36
  Coach Corbin .................................................................................................................37
  Mrs. Smith .....................................................................................................................39
  The Students Remember ..............................................................................................40
  Mrs. Moore ....................................................................................................................40
  Mr. McNeil ...................................................................................................................40
  Mr. Murphy ..................................................................................................................41
  Ms. Pearce .....................................................................................................................43
  Mr. Wilson ....................................................................................................................43
  Williston High School: An Overview .........................................................................44
North Carolina’s Resistance to Brown ................................................................. 208
Wilmington, North Carolina’s Resistance to Brown ........................................ 213
The Black Community Reacts to the Closing of Williston High School ......... 215
Summary ............................................................................................................... 222

CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY ........................................................................................................... 225

The Quest for Education ..................................................................................... 225
Education to Subordinate .................................................................................... 226
Education to Liberate ......................................................................................... 229
Implications ......................................................................................................... 234
Touching the Spirit of the Black Child ............................................................... 234
The Need for Further Study ............................................................................... 236

ENDNOTES ........................................................................................................ 238

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................ 246

APPENDICES .................................................................................................... 257

Appendix A. Letter of Confirmation ................................................................. 258
Appendix B. Teacher Questionnaire ................................................................. 259
Appendix C. Interview Guide ........................................................................... 261
Appendix D. Student Interview Questions ....................................................... 262
Appendix E. Release Form ................................................................................ 263
Appendix F. Thank You Letter ......................................................................... 264
Appendix G. Chronology of Williston .............................................................. 265
Appendix H: Educational Progress of Negroes 1920-1960 ......................... 268
Appendix I: North Carolina End of Grade/Course Test Results .................. 269
CHAPTER ONE
CELEBRATING THE GREATEST SCHOOL UNDER THE SUN

Down deep in our hearts lies a love so strong and true
A love for thee, Dear Williston,
We cherish thy name and thy precepts, too
All our loyalty we give, Dear School to you.

(Chorus)
Our voices we raise in a song of thy praise,
The greatest school under the sun.
We’ll ever adore Alma Mater Dear,
Ever lift our praise to you, Dear Williston.
If we falter or if we ever fail,
From thee we new courage shall gain,
Thy standards uphold when ordeals assail,
For we love and honor Williston’s dear name

[Williston Commemorative Banquet 1991]

Voices were raised in harmony, eyes were closed, and bodies gently swayed as close to one thousand men and women sang their alma mater. On the evening of July 6, 1991, former students of Williston High School had come from all parts of the world to celebrate and to commemorate “the greatest school under the sun” (Williston Commemorative Banquet 1991). The Coastline Convention Center was abuzz; the affair was elaborate. There were plenty of hugs, kisses, and greetings of jubilation. Classmates and teachers were reunited; many had not seen each other for decades. One hundred twenty-five former
educators, administrators, teachers, librarians, band and glee club directors, coaches, and guidance counselors were recognized and honored for the significant roles they played in the lives of students. Under the leadership of Linda Pearce, a graduate of the Class of 1963, the Williston Commemorative Committee, a group of 25 former students, worked extensively for 18 months to plan the event. They all agreed it had been a “labor of love” (Williston Commemorative Banquet 1991). The event was so successful that a second reunion was held the following year (Williston Commemorative Banquet 1991).

**Purpose of the Study**

**Background**

Shortly after the Civil War, Wilmington was the largest city in North Carolina. It was considered a land of opportunity for ex-slaves. Blacks became politically active and economically successful. They established churches, schools, fire companies, labor unions, flourishing businesses, and held over 93 government positions.

In November, 1898, a series of violent acts by White racists in the community brought the ‘golden era’ for Blacks to an end. Some Whites in the city demolished the Black newspaper office by setting it on fire. A group of over 2,000 Whites invaded a Black community in the northern part of the city. Reports varied; some reported as few as 33 Blacks were wounded and killed. Others reported more than 300 casualties and murders. Whites ran Blacks out of town and took possession of their personal property and businesses. A political and economic coup unfolded. The racial violence of that period continues to associate Wilmington with White supremacy and has negatively impacted life for Blacks in Wilmington up to present time (Godwin 2000)
Blacks have struggled ever since to overcome the destructive impact of the racist violence of 1898. Godwin (2000) attested, “White supremacy on the Cape Fear left an indelible legacy in the form of a cataclysmic event which assigned a status of inferiority to blacks [sic] that was underscored by the reality of second class citizenship” (14). White peoples’ belief in their superiority over the Black race was reason enough for them to divide Wilmington along racial lines, to segregate all public facilities in the city, to underfund Black schools, and to discriminate against Blacks in jobs, housing, city services, voting rights and the administration of justice. Historically, Blacks across the nation and in North Carolina experienced similar practices of racism and discrimination. However, as a result of the 1898 violence, Blacks in Wilmington have suffered a violent past unlike Blacks in other North Carolina cities (Godwin 2000).

Research Questions

As I researched Wilmington’s history, multiple questions emerged. I was particularly interested in the historical effects of past violence on the impact of African Americans’ education and the role education might play in resurrecting African American life in the city. Here are my research questions:

1. Did the Black community of Wilmington ever overcome the city’s bloody past and the challenges of racism?
2. What role did education play in the city?
3. Did the segregated school help Black students survive the challenges of racism and develop a capacity for, and connection to, learning?
4. Did Wilmington’s Black schools contribute to the uplift of a people who had been mightily oppressed?
5. How did Wilmington’s Black community rise above the shadow of a violent past to provide quality schooling for the Black students?

**Significance of the Research**

As a result of the 1898 race riot, further research was needed to determine if there were positive aspects of the segregated schools in the city. The negative aspects of the Black segregated school are well documented. However, minimal research has been conducted on the positive aspects of segregated schooling for Black students. According to Hessling (1995), “All too often, predominantly black [sic] schools have been ignored, largely because they are seldom seen as good or worth studying by the larger society” (1). Likewise, in her study of Caswell County Training School, a formerly segregated school in rural North Carolina, Vanessa Walker (1996) argued:

> The history of the public schooling of African Americans during legalized segregation has focused almost exclusively on the inferior education that African American children received. Indeed, the meager materials, the inadequate facilities, the unequal funding of schools and teachers, the lack of bus transportation, and the failure of school boards to respond to black parents’ request are so commonly named in most descriptions of segregated education that they have created a national memory that dominates most thinking about the segregated schooling of African American children. (1)

This research project investigated the history of Williston High School. My primary goal was to gain a greater understanding of schooling and learning for Black students in a segregated school. I explored and shared the community’s perspectives with support from
historical documents on the role of Williston High School as a segregated learning institution.

It is my intention that greater understanding of the experiences schooling and learning in one segregated school will increase understanding of the dual role education played and continues to play in the lives of Black students.

A Personal Lens

Multiple factors have shaped my significant learning experiences. I draw strength from looking back at my past and the past of my people. With this strength I am able to imagine my future and the future of my children. During moments of doubt and challenge, I have but to reach back and retrieve some of the power from my foremothers and fathers to realize there is no dream I cannot realize. I can transcend any boundary placed before me when I think how my fore parents persevered in the face of daily injustices and struggles. The experiences and stories of people in my family and in my community contributed to my learning and development and enabled me to pass that spirit of connectedness to future generations.

Untie the Last Knot

My grandmother, teachers, church elders, and mentors passed on a special way of knowing. They planted within me a strong knowledge of self very early in my life that continues to support me even today. The old folks say, “Struggles make you strong!” Every adversity, every trial, every experience in my life provided me the opportunity to learn a lesson about life and about myself.

An African proverb tells the story of a grandmother who gave her granddaughter a silk scarf snarled in many knots. The granddaughter’s task was to untie the knots, a tedious
chore requiring determination and discipline. After much travail, the granddaughter understood that in order to succeed, she would have to untie the last knot first (Oral History). She would have to understand her history. So it is with life. In order to change our lives for the better, we must pay attention to our concrete experiences, our immediate challenges, our last knot(s) of difficulty so that our scarves will be able to flutter gently in the breeze of life. Sometimes, however, it is beneficial to start at our beginnings.

My Haven

Elementary school was a magical place for me, my haven. I could hardly wait to get there each morning. I lived on the front row of Jervay Housing Projects in Wilmington, North Carolina. From my house, I would pick up my best friend who lived two houses down from me. We would walk one block to our friends’ house, where their dad would just be getting home after working all night making doughnuts at the local bakery. Needless to say, warm doughnuts were a part of our breakfast every school day. About six to ten of us would continue our one-mile trek to Gregory Elementary School together. Gregory was a segregated school for Negro students who lived in the southern part of Wilmington. About half way there, we would stop at the candy store on Tenth Street to make a small purchase or to warm up near the wood stove if it was cold.

Once in my classroom, I felt so loved and accepted. I was quite comfortable there. My teachers nurtured, motivated, and pushed me to fulfill my academic potential. They believed in me and demanded that I do my very best, and my best is what I always tried to give. I did not want to let them down. I wanted them to be proud of me. I lived for their praise.

My Teachers
Very early on, my teachers taught me I was somebody. They never considered my living in the projects or being raised by a single parent an excuse for poor performance. They never raised an eyebrow at my brown lunch bag, greasy from a peanut butter and jelly sandwich wrapped in wax paper. My teachers believed I was capable of high achievement. They made me feel special, always calling on me to participate in class and school events, to run errands, to stay after school and help them in some way. I loved writing on the blackboard and cleaning it without leaving streaks. My teachers stayed after school and we would engage in personal conversations, conversations that inspired and motivated me to want to be just like them.

I still remember the moment I decided I was going to become a teacher. I was in the sixth grade helping my teacher, Miss Ida McIver, clean out a closet. She was looking for something specific, although I cannot remember exactly what. I found whatever she was looking for and asked her, “Are these they?” She praised me so highly for my sentence structure. I was on top of the world. I loved her even more for that. I decided right then and there that I wanted to be just like her when I grew up.

All of my elementary school teachers, Miss Willis in the first grade, Miss McKoy in the second grade, Mrs. Bryant, in the third, Mrs. Chestnut, in the fourth grade, Miss Gill, in the fifth grade, and Miss McIver in the sixth grade, nurtured me during my most impressionable childhood years with a little nudge here and a kiss there and set the stage for the positive self-concept and esteem I developed in my adult life. They played significant roles in who I am. They gave me the tools of confidence, determination, dedication, and discipline early in life that I have used in my later years.
The questions which one asks oneself begin, at last, to illuminate the world, and become one’s key to the experience of others. One can only face in others what one can face in oneself. On this confrontation depends the measure of our wisdom and compassion. This energy is all that one finds in the rubble of vanished civilizations, and the only hope for ours.

[Baldwin 1961, 13]

Several years after I graduated from Delaware State College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, I was having a discussion with my friend and mentor, Dorothy (Dot) B. Johnson. Dot was a petite, feisty, and intelligent woman about 65 plus years old. She was a former Williston High School biology teacher and, at the time of our conversation, a member of the local school board and owner of the funeral home where I worked part-time in the evenings. I was complaining about the second grade teacher I worked with in my full-time job as a teacher’s assistant.

I spent most of my day as an assistant trying to teach struggling second graders how to read and write, and mostly, to believe that they could. The ‘lead’ teacher, meanwhile, spent her day with students who were already reading and writing well. Daily, I watched as she interacted positively with the students in her group, those students who read articulately, came to school dressed very nicely in name brand clothes, hair neatly groomed, lunch boxes packed with neat little meat sandwiches, fruit, and juice. Her lessons were full of activities, full of fun things to do. For the students who needed her the most, the students in ‘my’ group, she seldom had a smile, seldom offered a pat on the head or back, and seldom gave a positive word. My students struggled to call the words right. Their hair was hardly ever
combed, often they did not smell clean, their teeth were seldom brushed, and their parents hardly ever came to school functions.

After listening to my complaints, Dot said, “If you feel that strongly about it, why don’t you become a teacher?” That seemingly casual conversation was the beginning of a whole new life, a whole new world for me. If I had obeyed my grandmother, I would not have been working as an assistant. I would have been a certified teacher. My grandmother sent me to college to become a teacher. In my rebel state, however, I decided I did not want to teach and as a result, changed my major from English Education to English. Thus, I was half-armed; I had a college degree but no teaching certificate. The lead teacher’s total disregard and lack of genuine concern for students who were functioning at low levels was my impetus to return to school and get a teaching certificate.

I enrolled in the local university the following semester, completed the required education courses, and began my practice teaching at John T. Hoggard High School. My supervising teacher was Mrs. Allene Drain, English Department Head and a former Williston teacher. Mrs. Drain was strict. I was not allowed to use teachers’ manuals to formulate lesson plans. Instead, she insisted I use my mind to create innovative lessons for my students. I learned so much under her leadership. I used the same strategy years later when I became a supervising teacher.

At this point, I did not realize I was on my way to the beginning of the rest of my life.

**The Love of My Life**

A few months after becoming a certified teacher, I began the greatest love affair of my lifetime in a middle school just outside the Wilmington area. I fell in love with a room full of migrant children, “my children.” Many of them were poor, often dirty, but no less
beautiful and dear. I excitedly observed those students gain confidence in their abilities and
become more and more amazed at their personal accomplishments. Those children taught
me the power education has to transform lives.

For the next fifteen years, I persisted in my efforts to educate children to excellence
in spite of the negative experiences occurring in their lives. It became my mission to inspire
them to achieve their highest potential. I wanted to return the love and care my teachers had
given me. I wanted to nurture and inspire them as my former teachers had nurtured and
inspired me.

High school diplomas, college degrees, various certificates, letters, poems, and gifts
serve as testaments to what my children and I accomplished working together. Many students
and I have sustained our connection long after they graduated high school and college. A
group of students presented the following poem to me years ago at one of our “get-togethers”
in my home. The poem was written by one of my former students, Aundrey C. Johnson, a poet
in his own right.

The Things You Are

First, you are a mother,
Second, you are a Queen.
On top of that you are a giver,
You give children a chance to dream.
When footsteps are heard in the dark of night,
You listen without fear.
For you know a child may be hopelessly lost,
And you know that child is near.
If he's close enough to reach out a hand,
  Then a hand he shall receive.
For you'll be there to show you care,
  And fulfill his every need.
This is your calling, to save the child,
  To wipe his precious tears.
You have touched many lives in many ways,
  Proof of that is standing here.
When I was lost along the way,
Like a lamb stranded in the night.
You were there weapon in hand,
  To teach me how to fight.
From all your words of wisdom,
I've gained the strength to stand today.
I have walked through life with my head up high,
  You taught me to walk this way.
Things that once meant nothing to me,
  Now mean more than I ever knew.
My pride, my culture, my soul, myself,
  Were saved because of you.
Now that I'm standing on my own,
  I want to stand with you.
To touch the lives of those in need,
This is something I want to do.

There are few like you left in the world,

That’s why we all love you so much.

We are grateful to have you in our lives,

We appreciate your touch.

You can never know how grateful we are,

We’ll stand by you until the end.

For you have become much more than a teacher,

You have become our lifelong friend.

(Johnson 1994)

I was very humbled with this presentation. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to serve my students. My life has been made richer because of them. Years later, Johnson and another student in the group earned their Master’s Degrees in Social Work. Three other students became teachers.

**My Administrative Experience**

After thirteen years of teaching, I became an assistant principal in an alternative high school. I remember standing just inside the entrance of the cafeteria door performing my daily two-hour lunch duty. I often focused on students’ faces and body language as they chatted with friends while standing in line to be served or as they ate lunch. I held brief conversations with many of them, asked about their classes or just joked around. I tried, in some positive way to touch the life of as many of the students in the school as possible, either with, “Good morning, how are you?” or a pat on the shoulder, or just a smile.
I could tell just from talking and observing them that many, too many, of those children were lost and misguided and that unless positive intervention occurred immediately, they might never find their way. Many of the students had low or no self-esteem and self-worth. They showed little enthusiasm for life and had no hope or aspirations. I developed several programs designed to improve their self esteem and boost their enthusiasm.

A few years later, I went to work for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as an education consultant in the Division of School Improvement, Effective Practices Section. That position afforded me the opportunity to visit many schools throughout the state. I interviewed administrators and teachers in the state’s Top 25 Elementary and Middle Schools and the Top Ten High Schools. I assisted administrators in low-performing schools to complete needs assessments and to find ways to improve student achievement. I then became an education researcher and writer for the North Carolina General Assembly.

Much of what I have gleaned from my thirteen years teaching and serving as a high school administrator, consultant, and researcher/writer is that most students have the capability for excellence and the desire to achieve. They harbor dreams of becoming pilots, firemen, architects, teachers, truck drivers, doctors, basketball players, musicians, and dancers. I believe it is our responsibility as educators, to find every way to ensure that they do succeed. It is up to us to give each student the knowledge and skills he or she needs to make his or her dream become true. It is our responsibility to help them soar. Each of them deserves that right.
Sustaining the Connection

During my early tenure as a graduate student at North Carolina State University, I had the opportunity to participate in an oral history project, “Capturing the Past to Guide the Future. A Continuing Legacy of Ligon High School,” under the leadership of North Carolina State University faculty. The research project investigated teaching and learning in Ligon High School, a segregated high school for African American students in the city of Raleigh, North Carolina, from 1954 until desegregation in 1971. When schools desegregated in 1971, Ligon High School became Ligon Middle School. The yearlong project engaged Ligon Middle students in interviews with thirteen former students of the segregated Ligon High School. Graduate students and professors conducted historical research at the State Archives, the archival departments of North Carolina State University and local libraries.

The stories former Ligon High Students told reminded me of stories I had heard from former students of Williston Senior High School in Wilmington, North Carolina. Ralph Campbell, a Ligon alumnus who is currently serving his second term as North Carolina State Auditor, fondly recalled that Ligon teachers were remarkable and genuinely interested in students (Deerson, Dill, Fyfe, and Mackie 1999). Dr. Chuck Davis, renowned African dancer and dance instructor, remembered the emphasis at Ligon had been on learning. He emphasized that Ligon students and teachers did well with the limited books and resources they had, but he could imagine how much better they could have done if they had had the same resources as the White school. Davis exclaimed, “Coming out of our class we got more doctors, more lawyers, more people who achieved CEOs…that whole bit! We didn’t have computers, televisions, those calculators. No! We had to develop the mind and I am so proud of it” (Davis 1999 in Deerson, Dill, Fyfe, and Mackie 1999, 15). Janet Howard, another
former Ligon student concurred. Howard recalled teachers created interesting lessons in spite of the second-hand books and meager resources and “supplemented whatever was given to them” (Howard 1999 in Deerson, Dill, Fyfe, and Mackie 1999, 18).

I was fascinated by Campbell, Davis and other Ligon alumnus’ stories and, initially, contemplated extending that research for my dissertation project. However, as I am from Wilmington and had heard similar stories from former Williston students, I decided to conduct research on Williston Senior High School, instead.

A Look through Teachers’ Lens

In 1990, the Williston Alumni Association videotaped interviews with former Williston educators. The educators shared their experiences and perceptions of teaching and learning in the segregated schools of Wilmington. Former elementary teachers spoke of shaping students’ foundation; former high school teachers of polishing students and completing the process of excellence started by elementary teachers. Mrs. Olivia Green, one of the teachers, recalled that teaching students was more than a job; it was a responsibility. She recalled students who were eager to learn and teachers who made learning interesting. Green (1990) reminisced:

When I entered the classroom, I gave every fiber of my being toward helping the children to learn. I believed then, as I believe now, that every child can learn something. It was my responsibility to set the atmosphere of learning for all who sat before me from day to day. (Teacher’s Video 1)

For William D. Bryant, a former Williston High School teacher, teaching students included developing their social skills as well as their academic ones. Bryant (1990) remembered,
There was a sense of belonging and a sense of obligation that existed between the teacher and student. Not only did we teach subject matter, we felt a keen sense of responsibility in getting over the subject matter, we felt we had a role to play as a good friend, a big brother or a big sister, so to speak, to work with these young people. We had an occasion to work with them on a social aspect of life. We taught our young people the importance of respect; the importance of being obligated . . . And to watch these young people develop into real men and women was so gratifying. (Teacher’s Video 2)

Mrs. Constance O’Dell, director of the Williston High School Glee Club, recalled coming to Williston before desegregation. She found a group of sincerely dedicated teachers. In her interview, Mrs. O’Dell (1990) recalled,

This was before integration or some say desegregation, so that I lived in a world of teachers and students who just seemed to think that this was the greatest school under the sun. So, no matter what they were engaged in — vocal music, band music, athletics, competition for academics, they always seemed they had to be the very best because they were representing the greatest school under the sun.

(Teacher’s Video 1)

Williston High School students also paid tribute to their teachers in the souvenir booklet of the 1991 commemorative program and celebration. Williston alumni agreed Williston provided a rich and meaningful education. They thanked teachers and administrators for helping them to be successful in their later lives. One of several tributes in the booklet included Joyce Smith Jackson’s, a graduate of the Class of 1960. Jackson acknowledged the dedication of her teachers provided her a quality education that enabled her to reach her goals
and lead a very productive life. Jackson said she never believed she was academically inferior and that the teaching instructions she received were second to none. Jackson (1991) asserted,

Because of dedicated teachers during my school years, I have been able to compete academically with others of all races. The skills I learned have never made me feel academically inferior. Because of the education that we received at Williston I have never felt the need to say ‘I cannot compete because I am Black and academically deprived.’ I owe this confidence to all the teachers whose classes I attended at Williston. (Williston Commemorative Banquet)

The Williston Alumni Association endeavors to keep the memory of their school alive. Alumni have donated funds, photographs and artifacts for a permanent display of the school before desegregation in a specially designed room at the Cape Fear Museum in Wilmington, North Carolina. The museum also displays an exhibit, More than an Education: The Black Learning Experience in New Hanover County, which focuses on the legacy of Williston High School. A televised Williston Memories (1998) was part of a seminar at the museum. In it Ms. Inez Richardson, an alumna and a former teacher, guidance counselor, and administrator in Wilmington schools for over 40 years, reminisced. Ms. Richardson (1998) proclaimed, “The name Williston has that magic sound. It stirs us spiritually, culturally, psychologically, and emotionally. It causes us to want to show the best that’s in us” (Williston Memories). Ms. Richardson stated that even persons who did not attend Williston High School benefited from the school because their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents attended (Williston Memories 1998).
To many former Williston teachers and students, Williston Senior High School remains “the greatest school under the sun” years after its closing. One of the goals of this research project was to find out why so many members in the Black community of Wilmington held Williston High School in such high regard many years after it was closed.

**Overview of the Research**

Chapter Two explains the methods I employed to obtain data. This chapter discusses the limited availability of written documentation on Williston and the project’s reliance on the voices of former teachers, students, and a parent for data. Chapter Two also discusses the importance of historical inquiry, including oral history, and explores validity in qualitative research. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the oral history participants and provides background on where the interviews took place and how they were constructed.

As the history of the African American begins on the continent of their beginning, Africa, Part One of Chapter Three, “The Struggle to be Free,” opens with a brief discussion of the importance of education for the African in Africa and moves to America as the African is transported to this continent as a slave. The chapter discusses the conscientious efforts of slaves to learn how to read and write the language of the enslavers and the adamant efforts of the enslavers preventing them from doing so. The persistent efforts of Dred Scott, a slave, to obtain freedom for himself and his family is also explored in this section.

Part Two of Chapter Three concludes with a discussion of the unwillingness of White racists to relinquish their political and economic power before the Civil War. They vehemently opposed the liberation of slaves and established laws to restrict and deny freed Blacks their political and legal rights.
Chapter Four is also divided into two parts. Part One, “Freed but Not Free,” focuses on Reconstruction and the government’s attempts to reconstruct the Union and its effects on the lives of ex-slaves following the Civil War. Part One of Chapter Four focuses on the aftermath of the Civil War in Wilmington, North Carolina, where Blacks experienced significant economic, educational and political gains.

Part Two of Chapter Four explicates the collaboration of White supremacist groups to retake the South from emancipated slaves. Increasingly, White racists established illegal and criminal policies and used violence and intimidation to destroy the majority of the advances Blacks had made during Reconstruction. Part Two focuses on life for Blacks in Wilmington, once considered the Promised Land for Blacks. Immediately after the war, Wilmington became a city of rage where many Blacks were killed, evicted from their homes, and forced to leave the city.

Chapter Five establishes former Governor Aycock’s efforts to establish a public school system in North Carolina for all children in spite of objections from many Whites to the education of Black people. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) significantly impacted the education of Blacks and segregation became the law of the land. The federal government made it clear that the doctrine of separate but equal in a dual system of education was based on American principles. Never equal to White schools, Black schools were plagued with substantial underfunding, substandard facilities, poorly trained teachers and administrators, and unequal teachers’ salaries.

Chapter Six explores the experiences and perceptions of former teachers and students of Williston High School. My research investigates teaching and learning for Black students in one segregated school through the oral histories of those previously involved. Chapter Six
explores some of the challenges to the disparate policies of the segregated school. The chapter examines State and local resistance to the mandate of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision to desegregate public schools. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the legacy of *Brown* and the academic status of African American students since school desegregation.

Chapter Seven summarizes the significant findings of the research. The chapter emphasizes the unrelenting desire of former slaves for an education and the two types of education provided Blacks in North Carolina, education to subordinate and education to liberate. The chapter concludes with implications of the research and the need for further study of the Black segregated school.
CHAPTER TWO
A SEARCH FOR THE MULTIPLE REALITIES OF WILLISTON HIGH SCHOOL

Most human affairs happen without leaving vestiges or records of any kind behind them. The past, having happened, has perished with only occasional traces.


Denzin and Lincoln (2002) defined qualitative research as multi-method in focus involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. As a result, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings and attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Denzin and Lincoln (2002) contended qualitative inquiry is “a civic, participatory, collaborative project . . . that joins the researcher with the researched in an on-going moral dialogue” (x).

In many ways, this project joined me and the participants in this research in an on-going dialogue. My research ventured inside the walls of Williston High School as it was in the past, to provide an in-depth look at segregated schooling practices. I relied on a diverse collection of data including oral history interviews, personal and public documents, and audio-visual materials to record the experiences, the struggles and the accomplishments of former students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

History serves a paramount role in educational policy and practice. This chapter opens with a discussion on the importance of historical inquiry, including oral history and examines validity in qualitative research. The chapter concludes by introducing the oral history participants of the research.
Historical Inquiry

*sit down with em brothas and sistuhs,*

talk to em, listen to their tales of victories/woes/sorrows . . .

*record them talken their ago talk for our tomorrows . . .*

*let them tell us of their juju years*

*so ours will be that much stronger.*

[Adoff 1977, 26-27]

In discussing the importance of historical inquiry, Rury (2002) asked, rhetorically, “What is the value of history? What can the experiences of people who lived a hundred years ago or more possibly tell anyone about today? What has history got to do with education?” (2). Rury suggested education has always been a focal point in the development of the social fabric of United States history and has made meaningful contributions to economic growth and political change. Education helped the nation to forge a national identity from the rich history of diverse cultural and social groups.

Rury (2002) also believed changes in the economy, the political system, and other facets of the social structure impacted the process of education and produced significant changes from the past. Contemporary schools not only differ in many respects from those in the past, their purposes have changed from one historical period to another. Rury argued historical inquiry can help answer pertinent questions regarding education and the challenges faced by those who lived in the not so distant past. Historical inquiry increases understanding of how a society has developed over time and how certain events, people, and circumstances influenced social change.
Kyvig and Marty (1996) also underscored the importance of historical inquiry and extended it to include “nearby history,” the history of a person’s immediate environment. Nearby history embodies analysis, comparison, and examination of change over time. Kyvig and Marty (1996) believed knowledge of the past helps organizations and communities to function more successfully. Thus, nearby history becomes an instrument for stimulating group pride and distinctiveness, for comparing the experiences of various groups, for initiating plans and setting expectations.

**History of Segregated Black Schools**

Walker (1996) engaged in an historical research of Caswell County Training School, a formerly segregated school in rural North Carolina, to uncover the positive aspects of schooling for African American students. She argued existing studies of segregated schools were “largely quantitative case histories of excellent schools, as defined by measurable results such as test scores and graduation rates” (1996, 5). She contended the studies primarily focused on the lack of materials and resources of segregated schools and cited the need for a more complete history of segregated schools. Walker asserted the

[H]istorical recollections that recall descriptions of differences in facilities and resources of white and black schools without also providing descriptions of the black schools and communities dogged determination to educate African American children have failed to tell the complete story of segregated schools. Because of this omission, several generations of the schools African American educators and parents created with so little public support have been lost. (5)

Walker (1996) sought to construct a more complete history of the segregated school. In her research, she gathered the various experiences, beliefs, and values of former parents,
students, and teachers of Caswell County Training School. While she acknowledged the limitations of the segregated school in her study, the meager materials, inadequate facilities, the unequal funding, the lack of adequate bus transportation, she focused on the community’s perceptions of the school as a “good educational environment for African American students” (5-6).

**Life Histories**

Foster (1997) allowed us to hear the struggles and triumphs of African American teachers who taught in segregated schools in their own words. She chose to employ the life history method of research because it brings “the experiences of Blacks, including teachers, into view in ways that reveal the complexity of their experience” (xx). Foster (1997) explained, “Life history not only provides material about individual lives but also offers the opportunity to explore how individual lives are shaped by society” (xxi). This type of research provides “critical insights into larger social processes by connecting the lives of individuals to society” (xx-xxi). Foster (1997) continued:

First-person accounts have long been employed by individuals to encode and record the experiences of blacks, and such accounts have served as a valuable source of information for both scholars seeking to understand the black community and for the black community itself. (1997, xxi)

Similarly, Wilson and Segall (2001) argued teachers’ narratives were, indeed, significant to their research on school desegregation. The teachers’ narratives gave them access to segregated high school classrooms in the 1970s. Wilson and Segall (2001) affirmed:
The teachers’ willingness to share their experiences through their stories allows us to unravel a major historical event that affected all of society. The teachers’ stories encapsulate the personal (social/professional) histories of people who reflected great changes of that time, and paints a picture about how individuals, with their very own specific lives to live, were caught up in a web of social change. (4)

In *Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry*, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) told researchers, “learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and other’s stories” (2). They emphasized the significance of studying the narrative, “the study of the ways humans experience the world” (2).

In my research, participants told stories of their individual and collective experiences as teachers and students at segregated Williston High School. Yet, as Noblitt and Dempsey (1996) argued, they did far more than merely tell and describe stories. Their historical accounts presented credible arguments as to why these accounts really matter or should matter in the first place. In describing the oral histories of Rougemont, an historically Black school that was closed during school desegregation in the 1970s, Noblitt and Dempsey (1996) contended:

The oral histories of the schools were not academic enterprises for these people, done simply to create a record where none existed; rather oral history was a moral enterprise through which people constructed the meaning of their schools for their own lives and the lives of their communities . . . they not only reported history but also constructed meaning out of those lives past and present. (15)
The stories participants in my research shared construct the meaning of living in and with segregated schools. Their stories are the well-spring of understanding.

**Enhancing Validity**

Although Foster (1997) and Walker (1996) are African American females who either attended and/or taught in a segregated school, they affirmed they were committed to being factual and to truthfully representing the participants whom they interviewed in their research on segregated schools. Foster, a former teacher from the urban North was often invited into the homes and churches of the teachers whom she interviewed. She participated in their daily activities, church and community meetings, dinner with their friends and families, and sometimes, even stayed in their homes rather than in hotels (1997, xxi-xxii). Walker (1996) declared she left no room for the reader to question her relationship to Caswell County Training School (CCTS), the subject of her research. She explained:

> In my choice to write about how this school operated during the era of legal segregation, my relationship to the place and to the people cannot be discounted. I am a product of the community. My mother was a teacher at CCTS from 1955 to 1967. My father once served as PTA president. When I travel back to the community and to other places around the state to interview former participants, I am given almost immediate access to their presence, their knowledge, and their materials. I am, after all, Mrs. Diddle or Reverend Siddle’s daughter to many of them. More than that, I am one of their own—one of the students they produced (ix).

Walker’s relationship to the school and the community was an advantage that allowed her access to people and documents. Walker (1996) admitted, however, her “closeness to the
community could cause her to miss the significance of subtle meaning, to be skewed in her interpretation of events” or to be influenced by “nostalgia, or euphoric recall” (224). Therefore, to limit biases and to ensure validity of the research, Walker engaged the assistance of two assistants, one from the community, and one from outside the community, plus a videographer who was not from the vicinity to review the research. She allowed several other key informants to verify the facts of the interviews. The video served as an additional check (Walker 1996).

Delgado-Gaitan (1993) believed positivists might question the objectivity of researchers like Foster and Walker who were so involved with the groups they studied. According to Delgado-Gaitan (1993), positivists assert the researcher compromises the research by getting involved with the group and “ceases to identify with the professional subgroup as his or her dominant reference group” and “The conventional premise here is that the ethnographer has to maintain an interpretive stance congruent with the professional group he or she represents” (391).

Walker (1996) and Foster (1997) used the close involvement with participants to enhance their research credibility. Walker (1996) rigorously guarded against bias by engaging in three levels of data collection. She made every attempt to minimize the ‘romanticization’ which could occur in her analysis by employing triangulation. The first involved ethnographic, open-ended interviews with people in four categories, parents, students, teachers, and administrators to determine what it was about the school that had been most valued by them. Secondly, she involved participants in a more focused approach to interviews using interview guide sheets. Walker (1996) reported most of the sources were chronologically categorized for thematic analysis. Thirdly, she focused on specific questions
and documents that might fill any gaps remaining in the story. For example, *Southern Association* notes confirmed how the school perceived itself in 1953. Walker insisted that throughout the research, documents were used in a similar manner to confirm the presence of the themes in real time (Walker 1996). Conducting many of the interviews during this stage by telephone, people who had been interviewed before were consulted a second time to clarify information. Walker (1996) also put an advertisement in the town’s local newspaper inviting anyone who wanted to contribute additional information to the story to contact her.


I realized that to be valid, oral accounts had to be placed in a meaningful cultural and social context. My research required cross-checking with other persons who had lived in the same period, especially when there was an absence of written accounts. In addition, documents and photographs had to be gathered for cross-reference. For validity, I cross-checked whatever documented evidence I could find concerning that area and period. Triangulation in the search was used in both data collection sources and multiple data collection (i.e. interviews and document analysis). In this way the investigation “could build the strength of each type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach.” (59)
My Research

Like Walker and Garrett, I am a ‘product’ of the segregated school system. Although, I attended a segregated elementary and middle school in Wilmington and not Williston High School. However, my mother, aunts, uncles, and cousins graduated from that school. Adopting the strategies of Walker and Garrett, I reported factually and honestly the research I found in written documents and in interviews with participants. I sought the assistance of an “outsider,” Beverly Tetterton, a librarian, to check for any bias in reporting. Upon my initial contact with Tetterton, she informed me that throughout her more than 20 years working at the New Hanover County Public Library in Wilmington, North Carolina, she cannot remember anyone ever saying anything bad about Williston. People had only praised the formerly segregated school. In one of her messages to me, however, Tetterton conveyed two examples of negativity Dr. Bellamy, a former superintendent of New Hanover County Schools, shared with her. Because I was unable to follow-up on the stories with Dr. Bellamy, I did not include them as part of this research.

The integrity of this research is important to me. To prevent reliance on a single data collection, I used the process of triangulation to validate and verify data analyses. Historical documents and videotapes confirmed and verified the content of oral histories. In addition, multiple voices were used to verify and validate my analysis: teachers representing various disciplines, English teachers, guidance counselors, librarian, and an athletic coach. Students, too, represented different time periods from the 1940s to the late 1960s. I used the exact words of the participants to communicate their oral histories.

Each participant was invited to tell his or her story. Each one offered a unique perspective as well as insight into some experiences they had in common. Their stories are
the heart of my understanding. My primary goal in engaging in in-depth interviews with the former teachers and students in this research was to paint a picture, to reconstruct the world of Williston High School. I developed an interview guide that focused on the research topic and served as the basic instrument of each interview. A copy of the guide is found in Appendix C. I was mindful, however, as suggested by Foster (1997), “A good oral history will always leave room for interviewees to speak their own minds and will not try to shoehorn their responses into a prepaid questionnaire or mind-set” (12).

**Unpacking Narrative Experience**

**Inviting Participation**

Each interview with former Williston teachers, students, and the parent was tape-recorded, transcribed, and edited. I also attempted to record notes manually during interviews, although, tape-recording proved to be more productive. I tended to be intrigued by the discussion and listened more than took notes. The depth and detail of feelings exposed by the respondents will, undoubtedly, open up the world of the segregated school and take the reader directly inside the walls of the classrooms.

I followed the same agenda with each participant. Each prospective participant was initially telephoned and informed of the purpose of the research. I then requested an interview. Upon consent, the time and place of the interview was set. I followed up with a letter of confirmation and expressed my thanks for their participation. Appendix A is a sample confirmation letter. Upon meeting with the participant, I, again, expressed gratitude and restated the purpose of the meeting. The interviewees signed a consent form (see Appendix E) giving me permission to use the data from the taped interview and I followed this with an overview of the interview procedure.
I opened the interview by asking introductory questions about the interviewee’s childhood and proceeded with formal and informal questions. All interviews were recorded on audiocassette tape. Interview sessions were quite informal and warm. All but two of the interviews took place in the participants’ homes. Joe McNeil lives in New York and was in Wilmington visiting family and friends for the Fourth of July holiday. I had arranged for our interview to take place at the Williston Alumni facility. The interview with Ms Richardson was held in the Education Department of St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Wilmington.

**Interview Format**

Although I did have a fixed set of questions to ask the participants, each interview varied and was influenced by the specific topic(s) of interests of the interviewees. Interviews were loosely guided by the following questions developed out of the literature review and as a result of discussions with former and current educators:

- How did teachers in the segregated school empower African American students to achieve academic excellence?
- How did parents participate within the school community?
- How did the Black community participate within the school community?
- What type of messages did segregated schools send to students regarding their academic abilities?
- What type of messages did parents send to students regarding their academic abilities?
- What type of messages did the community send to students regarding their academic abilities?
- What opportunities inspired African American students to believe they were capable of high achievement?
- What impact did the experiences of African American teachers and students in segregated schools have on their world-views?

Each interview lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. I then transcribed each interview. Transcribing the taped sessions brought back memories of the time spent with the participants. Riessman (1993) considered transcribing discourse an interpretive experience.

Decisions about how to transcribe, like decisions about telling and listening, are theory driven and rhetorical; by displaying text in particular ways, we provide grounds for our arguments, just like a photographer guides the viewer’s eye with lenses and by cropping images (13).

While I transcribed the recorded voices, I was taken back to the very moments of the interview, and along with my few notes, was able to recapture the specific moments of the narrative experience.

I sent a copy of the transcribed interview to the participant for his or her review. It was important that I had transcribed correctly and that the interviewees’ intended meaning was represented in the manner he or she desired. After I felt the participant had had time to review the transcription, I followed up with a telephone call to make sure the text and the intended meanings were correct. Three interviewees mailed back minor corrections. I made the necessary corrections and proceeded to the next steps in the process, coding, describing, interpreting, and analyzing the data.
Analysis

Coding the transcripts was another rather arduous process because transcripts were read and reread multiple times. In coding the narratives, the following general themes were repeated in all of the interviews:

- Students felt a sense of community, a sense of family, a sense of belonging at Williston.
- Teachers held high expectations for student performance and behavior.
- Teachers instilled within students a sense of pride. They fostered and developed positive self-concepts.
- Teachers embraced a will to excellence.
- Teachers taught more than basic academic subjects like reading, writing, and arithmetic. They taught students how to be successful in life beyond school.

The narratives provided insight into teachers and students’ backgrounds and experiences at Williston High School. These recurrent themes undergird my understanding of the experience of teaching and learning in segregated schools.

The Teachers Remember

My research focused on the oral histories of ten former teachers and students of Williston Senior High School. The participants took us inside the walls of the formerly segregated school providing a glimpse of what it had been like as a student or part of the faculty or staff. Interviewees included five former teachers and five former students, one, a parent who attended Williston and whose children also attended the high school. The former teachers of Williston interviewed in this research include Mrs. Allene Drain, Ms. Inez Richardson, Mrs. Bertha Todd, Coach E. A. “Spike” Corbin, and Mrs. Lillian Quick Smith.
Mrs. Drain

I interviewed Mrs. Drain in her beach home in Topsail Beach, North Carolina, on July 26, 1998, for a previous assignment. Mrs. Drain had taught English at Williston and also worked as an English teacher and Department Head at John T. Hoggard High School upon the forced closing of Williston and the desegregation of the city’s White high schools. At age 72, Mrs. Drain looked much younger than her years and was a stylish and immaculate dresser. Her carriage reflected a lady of substance, a lady of elegance. A petite unpretentious woman, she was easy to talk with and charming.

Mrs. Drain grew up a ‘P.K.’, a preacher’s kid and lived in various towns and cities in North Carolina. She attended Williston High School and earned her B. A. in English History at North Carolina College for Negroes, now North Carolina Central University, in Durham, North Carolina. Later, she earned her Master’s Degree in English there. Her first teaching job was at Kittrell Junior College in Salisbury, North Carolina. She later returned to teach at Williston.

Mrs. Drain said the high expectations teachers had for students when she was a student at Williston were evident when she became a teacher there as well. Although the teachers did not have an abundance of materials and resources, she said they took advantage of what they did have. According to Mrs. Drain (1998),

We didn’t have the greatest, nicest things that the other schools had, but we took advantage of what we had. And I think that’s why we were able to succeed so well, [because] the teachers were determined – you may not have this, but you’re going to get it . . . The classrooms weren’t that great but they [teachers] worked. They worked. (Drain Interview)
Ms. Richardson

I interviewed Ms. Inez Richardson in the Education Department of St. Luke A. M. E. Zion Church in Wilmington, North Carolina, on June 14, 2002. Ms. Richardson looks much, much younger than her 81 years and remains very active in her church and community. She, too, is petite, dresses daintily and fashionably, and carries herself with grace and dignity. In 1941, Ms. Richardson earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in elementary education at Winston Salem Teachers College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Later, she earned two Master’s Degrees from Columbia University in New York City. In 1945, she earned a Master’s Degree in elementary education, and in 1953, a Master’s Degree in Supervisor Instruction. She is a former language arts teacher and guidance counselor at Williston Junior High School, a feeder school to Williston High School, and served as assistant principal and principal of two elementary schools in Wilmington. Ms. Richardson retired as an elementary school principal in Wilmington after 55 years of service as an educator. Ms. Richardson travels frequently and coordinates bus trips around the United States and in Canada.

Ms. Richardson had a very easy manner during the interview. One of the amazing findings of the interview with Ms. Richardson was that as a teacher at Williston during the middle 1940s, she taught 35 to 40 students in her classes without any disruptions. Ms. Richardson (2002) reflected,

But no problems. That was the thing that made it so easy to work with that large number of students because students were interested in learning and you did not have to discipline and teach. You just did the job of teaching and the students really wanted to grasp whatever you had to offer. (Richardson Interview)
Having 35-40 students in each class seems challenging. However, according to Ms. Richardson, students were more eager to learn and cooperate than in the experiences of some teachers in desegregated schools.

**Mrs. Todd**

I interviewed Mrs. Todd in her home in Wilmington, North Carolina, on June 14, 2002. Mrs. Todd is from Sampson County, North Carolina. In 1951, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree from North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham, North Carolina. She earned her Master’s Degree in Library Science there in 1952. In 1978, she earned a Master’s degree in Education Administration and Supervision from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Mrs. Todd was a librarian at Williston for fifteen years and later served as assistant principal at John T. Hoggard High School in Wilmington, North Carolina. She ended her educational career as the staff development coordinator at the central office of New Hanover County Schools.

Mrs. Todd is 73 years old. Her face is youthful and her skin is smooth and flawless. A petite woman with a rather serious demeanor, Mrs. Todd speaks deliberately, finding just the right words to convey her meaning. Mrs. Todd considered Williston the core of the Black community in Wilmington, the place where social interaction took place. According to her, Williston was the place where students learned civic responsibility and assumed their academic responsibilities. There was a definite sense of community during that time, she recalled. Referring to the attitude of the Black community during the days of segregation, Mrs. Todd (2002) stated, “Blacks felt as if they had to support Blacks regardless of what had happened” (Todd Interview).
Mrs. Todd (2002) also recalled she was troubled by the “1898 mentality” some people exhibited in the 1950s when she first arrived in Wilmington from Durham, North Carolina. She said it was as though she “had gone back into time” (Todd Interview). Referring to the legacy of catastrophic events, Mrs. Todd defined the ‘1898 mentality’ as “keeping a wound or skeletons in the closet” (Todd Interview). Mrs. Todd said many African Americans with the 1898 mentality did not cooperate in the community, did not assume leadership roles, and did not participate in integrated or interracial dialogues. As co-chair of the 1898 Centennial Foundation, Mrs. Todd worked diligently to restore and maintain positive race relationships in the Wilmington community.

Coach Corbin

When I arrived at the home of Coach Corbin on Saturday morning, July 18, 2002, he opened the door and welcomed me as though I were a visiting relative. A tall man resembling a big teddy bear, he spoke with a Boston accent and, frequently, prefaced sentences with the phrase, “Now, get this” (Corbin Interview 2002). His voice boomed like the voice of James Earl Jones with laughter and happiness. He had a very calm, happy demeanor. Coach Corbin led me into the large family room of his sprawling ranch home in Bolton, North Carolina, where he has lived alone since the death of his wife several years ago.

When I was settled, he showed me a scrapbook filled with his cartoons that had been published in various professional magazines and newspapers. I was simply amazed at his talent and also his age. I could not believe he was 89 years old. Although he walked a little slowly, he possessed remarkable recall, had a sense of humor, and spoke Italian and Spanish
fluently. He recalled people, places, and events that occurred when he was in elementary school, more than 80 years ago.

Coach Corbin’s family had emigrated to Boston, Massachusetts, from Cuba when he was about seven years old. Raised in a diverse neighborhood of the city, his best friends were Italians, Irish, Germans, and Polish. Upon graduating from high school, Coach Corbin traveled briefly with a Negro baseball team before enrolling in West Virginia College in Lawrenceville, Virginia. He taught at St. Pauls College in Lawrenceville, Virginia. He then enlisted in the army and served as a military policeman in northern Africa and Italy. He once had the opportunity to work as Joe Louis’s bodyguard during one of his fights in Sicily.

After serving three years in the army, Coach Corbin studied at Boston University and earned his Master’s degree in education. He followed his young bride to her home right outside of Wilmington and began his coaching career at Williston High School around 1948, remaining there until the school was closed 20 years later. He continued his coaching career at John T. Hoggard High School and later, served as one of the school’s assistant principals. From 1974 to 1980, Coach Corbin was Athletic Director of New Hanover County Schools.

A humble man, Coach Corbin only casually mentioned the state championships Williston won during his tenure, four state titles in baseball and two each in football and basketball. He was quite proud, however, that he had coached former Harlem Globetrotters legend, Meadowlark Lemon. They maintained contact and he considered him his son. He also coached tennis great, Althea Gibson, and ex-major league baseball player, Sam Bowens. In celebration of his greatness, New Hanover County Schools named the baseball field at John T. Hoggard High School in Wilmington, North Carolina, for him. On April 8, 2003, Coach Corbin was inducted into the North Carolina High School Athletic Directors
Association Hall of Fame. I was deeply saddened to hear that Coach Corbin passed on June 9, 2003, after a brief stay in a local nursing home. I am honored to have had the opportunity to interview him.

Mrs. Smith

Before I left Mrs. Lillian Quick Smith’s home on Saturday afternoon, July 18, 2002, it was as though I had known her all my life. Mrs. Smith is a petite, unpretentious, busy 70 year-old who walks and talks fast. A highly opinionated woman, with a “tell-it-like-it-is” manner of speaking, Mrs. Smith was adamant about Williston being the greatest school under the sun. I was struck with the fervor with which she continually spoke about the teachers at Williston and the quality of the education she received at Williston during the 1940s. Mrs. Smith (2002) recalled,

I can truly say that we’re standing on the shoulders of those great teachers, dedicated teachers, teachers who cared about their teaching, who taught their students well . . . I know that I’m standing on the shoulders of not only my parents, but those teachers that inspired and instilled things in me. (Smith Interview)

Inspired by the teachers who had nurtured and taught her, Mrs. Smith followed in their footsteps and became a teacher. Following her graduation from Kittrell College, Kittrell, North Carolina, in 1953, Mrs. Smith began her educational career as a language arts teacher in a community college in South Carolina. She attained a Master’s Degree in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Indiana and returned to Wilmington to serve as a guidance counselor at Williston for four years. Seeking higher pay, Mrs. Smith left Wilmington to
work in the public school system of Washington, D. C. She has since retired and returned to Wilmington.

**The Students Remember**

**Mrs. Moore**

This research also included the oral histories of former Williston students. Mrs. Dolores Moore attended Williston and would have graduated from the school in 1942 had she not been sent to complete high school in New York City. She attended Williston from grades seven through eleven. Two of her eight children graduated from Williston, one in 1966, the other in 1968, the year the school was closed. I interviewed Mrs. Moore in her home in Wilmington, North Carolina, on August 30, 2002. Mrs. Moore is 72 years old. Only her wisdom indicates her age; she looks much younger than her years.

Mrs. Moore speaks her mind. She speaks from her soul. In discussing her experiences as a student at Williston, she recalled that a German Prisoner of War camp was built right across the street from the school. They could see the prisoners outside their classroom window. She recalled, too, the fear students sometimes felt when they went outside for their physical education classes. Mrs. Moore worked as a teacher’s aide in two elementary schools in Wilmington and also taught in a pre-school before taking a job with North Carolina government. Politically active in Wilmington for many years, she currently serves as Vice President of the Wilmington chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

**Mr. McNeil**

Joseph (Joe) McNeil is 61 years old and a graduate of Williston’s Class of 1959.
McNeil was a college preparatory student and participated on the track team and in the social club, the Vikings. His boyish face and slim body disguise his inner strength and courage. As a freshman, on scholarship at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State College (North Carolina A & T College), McNeil was one of four students who initiated a sit-in at the Woolworths in Greensboro, North Carolina, on February 1, 1960. McNeil did not know that singular event would spark similar protests in cities across the United States. Within five days of the Greensboro sit-in, thousands of Blacks in major cities in the country initiated similar protests to demand their equal rights and full citizenship. McNeil (2002) credited his teachers at Williston, especially Mr. Lowe, for the actions he took that historic day:

> It goes back to Graddy Lowe and others about standing up for our rights and not to take crap from anybody here. We’re American citizens with such rights. You know, the Bill of Rights. We don’t have to play second fiddle to anybody. Sit up and stand-up. (McNeil Interview)

Upon graduating from North Carolina A & T with a degree in physics, McNeil joined the Air Force and became a captain and pilot. He enjoyed flying so much, he later joined the Air Force reserves and rose to the rank of Brigadier General. McNeil worked at the Federal Aviation Authority where he used his flying background to become an inspector and division manager of all the other inspectors. McNeil also worked in commercial and investment banking. I interviewed McNeil in Wilmington, North Carolina, on July 4, 2002.

**Mr. Murphy**

William E. Murphy is a tall man with an athlete’s physique. Murphy is 64 years old and has an easy-going manner. A former captain of the football team, he graduated from Williston in 1954. Murphy, as he is known and referred to in Wilmington, worked as athletic
coordinator for the recreational centers for the City of Wilmington for 35 years. He retired in 1991, but continues to work with inner-city youths coaching Pop Warner football teams. Murphy is revered in the Wilmington community and has received several honors. A 2002 tribute to him by the Juneteenth Celebration Committee of Wilmington, North Carolina, proclaimed Murphy had touched almost every African American living in Wilmington within the past 40 years. The Committee (2002) praised him for the contributions he had made to the community:

Because of his honesty, willingness to share his wisdom and knowledge, commitment to his charges, love for his family, (and we are all his family), and dedication to excellence, he is the most respected man in Wilmington. Murphy stands tall . . . a mountain of everything that is the essence of a human being. (Juneteenth Celebration Committee)

I interviewed Murphy in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, referred to as “the center,” in Wilmington, North Carolina, on July 4, 2002.

Murphy had a different story to share about his school experiences. From the third grade until the tenth grade, he said his school experiences were often negative. “You don’t know what segregation is until it happens to you from your own people. That’s where it started for me. That’s when I realized that things weren’t always the same” (Murphy Interview 2002). Murphy (2002) shared his story without malice and in a matter-of-fact manner. He stated that even though he was not treated in the same positive manner many other students were treated, he still had high regard for many of his teachers. “When people speak highly of some of these teachers, I have that same respect for those teachers . . . and
some of them I love to death. Some of those teachers, I wouldn’t trade for anybody” (Murphy Interview).

Ms. Pearce

Linda A. Pearce, a vivacious 56 year old and a graduate of the Class of 1963, played the clarinet in Williston’s marching band, an activity she loved dearly. The Williston band was like no other, she proudly recalled. People came from miles away to hear and see the band perform in the annual Azalea Festival Parade and to “show their stuff” in front of the post office. Pearce (2002) remembered Mr. Floyd, the band director, was a strict disciplinarian who “would not allow the band to play junk or anything or do any dancing. But, at the post office, he would lighten up on us and we were good. We were good” (Pearce Interview).

Pearce graduated from North Carolina College in Durham, North Carolina, and went to work in the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. She also worked as a teacher in a public school in Washington, D. C., but soon discovered she preferred working with older people. She went back to school and earned her Master’s degree in Adult Education with a concentration in gerontology from the University of the District of Columbia. She returned to Wilmington and founded Elderhaus, Inc., a non-profit day care facility for the elderly where she has served as executive director for the past 21 years. I interviewed Pearce in her home in Wilmington on June 30, 2002.

Mr. Wilson

Fifty-five year old Madafo Lloyd Wilson graduated from Williston in 1963. His fondest memories are of being a member of the glee club under the direction of Mrs. Constance O’Dell, his favorite teacher. He admired Mrs. O’Dell’s professionalism and her
attention to detail. He was also quite fond of several of his other teachers. Mr. Wilson (2002) remembered,

There was Mr. Todd, our physical education teacher. I know all the bones and muscles of the body because of him. There was Mr. Newsome who taught me drafting and electricity and gave me a sense of manhood because he was a strong and gentle man . . . we played with our teachers. They played with us.

(Wilson Interview)

Wilson attended North Carolina A & T College in Greensboro, North Carolina, and worked as laboratory technician in Freedmen’s Hospital in Washington, D. C. After a stint in the army, he returned to Wilmington and worked several years as a recreation center director for the City of Wilmington. Wilson later followed his heart and became a professional storyteller and musician. He tells stories all over the United States and in Africa. A community activist, he has organized several youth groups and established mentoring programs in elementary, middle and high schools in Wilmington. I interviewed Wilson in his home in Wilmington on July 13, 2002.

**Williston High School: An Overview**

In 1865, the Freedmen’s Bureau opened four schools in Wilmington, North Carolina, and began teaching freed slaves how to read and write. In 1866, the intense desire for an education motivated Negroes in Wilmington to initiate a series of events to raise funds for a free school for Negro students in the southern part of the city. The school opened the same year and was named Williston Free School in honor of one of the school’s heaviest contributors, Samuel Williston from Massachusetts. Between 1866 and 1873, the name of the school was changed to Williston Graded School. In 1873, the school was the first Negro
school to become a part of the newly formed Wilmington Board of Education. The all White principal and faculty were replaced with an all Negro principal and faculty.

In 1919, the school added eighth through the twelfth grades and became Williston Industrial High School. A full college preparatory and liberal arts curriculum was offered. In 1923, Williston was accredited and received the highest rating of all the other Negro schools in North Carolina. Williston High School served as the only Negro high school in Wilmington until the school board closed it in June 1968.

**Gaining Access**

At the onset of this research, I was optimistic about collecting data from different sources. However, I soon discovered that oral history interviews would most likely serve as my primary data collection method. I endeavored to select a cross-section of interviewees representative of various time periods as well as to various disciplines. I wanted to engage teachers and students who were still actively involved in the community. I wanted to record the experiences of the former teachers and students while the memories were still vivid enough to provide valuable insight and before the demise of more seasoned citizens.

Ritchie (1995) warned us about memory,

> Dealing with memory is a risky business, and it is inescapably the interviewer’s business. Every interviewer has a story about someone interviewed too late, when memory had lost its sharpness, begun to dim, or faded almost entirely. Such disappointments are balanced by experiences with interviewees who possess remarkable recall, who remember individuals and incidents clearly, and whose accounts can be corroborated in other evidence. (11)
There are only a few remaining Williston teachers and with the demise of Coach Corbin, the community is absent one more. I knew that many of the surviving Williston teachers were growing older and that in some instances, memory of the school may have faded.

Sharing the same concern in their interviews of “cross-over teachers” in an Austin, Texas high school, Wilson and Segall (2001) noted, “Even though the teachers’ ages and the distance in time from the actual events potentially contribute to disjointed recollections, their remembered experiences were complementary of one another and with the few documents still available” (5).

Although the former faculty and staff who participated in this research are “seasoned citizens” and have long retired from the school system, all remained active in their churches and communities. They still possessed vivid memories of their experiences at Williston and were able to recall useful and interesting information about the past. For example, Coach Corbin (2002), at age 88, recalled the names of his friends with whom he had played football more than 80 years ago:

I’ll never forget it. Now get this. In the middle of the line, we had three Polish kids. Joe Woneshki played center. Bill Belerowski played one guard and Ziggie Malason played the other guard. The other tackle was a kid named Gilligan, big Irish boy. At the left end was a Swedish boy named Iddie Anderson. On my side, I played the tackle. On right end was a Jewish boy, Ed Harris. In the backfield was a Black quarterback, Tootie Weisch. The right half-back was Tony Sorowski; left halfback was Walter. (Corbin Interview)
Each of the interviewees was able to recount pertinent information necessary to reconstruct the not so distant past. Accessing their preserved memories proved a very important part of the process in painting as accurate a picture of the past as possible.

**Historical Collections**

When conducting historical research, it is important to locate sources that lend relevance and detail to the study. Before beginning the research, I was optimistic about gaining entry to archival documents at the New Hanover County Board of Education. Consistent with other studies of segregated schools, however, most of the school’s documents were destroyed, discarded, or misplaced. In this case, the documents were burned. According to Beverly Tetterton, historian at New Hanover County Library in Wilmington, after Williston was closed in 1968, the school board housed the school’s records in Hemenway, an old school not far from central office. In 1970, Hemenway burned down with most of Williston’s documents in it. According to Tetterton (2003),

> From what I have heard for many years the New Hanover system kept incredible records in the basement of the school, that went way back, Black and White. Leland Newsome, an African-American school board member at the time of the fire, said he was only a few blocks away from the school when it burned. He said the singed papers were blowing all over the neighborhood and low and behold one of his relatives record floated into his hand. According to Dr. Bellamy, they tried to save as many of the records as possible and they were transferred to the new central office. (Personal correspondence)
When I requested access to Williston’s records at the New Hanover County Board of Education, I was given records of the school beginning in the summer of 1968, the time the school was closed. I was told there were no records available of the school prior to that time.

Experiencing difficulty in obtaining public documents for their research of L. C. Anderson, a formerly segregated high school in Austin, Texas, Wilson and Segall (2001) claimed, “few primary sources, other than the oral histories, could be located” (6) about the Black schools. The researchers had no difficulty, however, locating materials about White schools in the district. Wilson and Segall (2001) commented:

Although we easily located boxes of materials about each school in the school district archives, we soon noted an exception—minimal historical materials were located specific to the Black schools, from the elementary schools through to L. C. Anderson High School. (6)

I was able to obtain some personal and professional documents. They included copies of reunion program booklets, a copy of the New Hanover Schools Handbook for School Personnel, 1948-1949, school yearbooks, two videotapes containing numerous interviews with former teachers, a videotape of a seminar at the local museum, and a videotape of a school reunion held in 2002. I was also able to retrieve and use data from primary sources from the North Carolina State Archives including graduation reports of Williston completed by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges, principals’ reports, correspondence from State and local superintendents, correspondence from Department of Public Instruction program directors to the State Superintendent and local school principals and program directors, and notes from conferences.
**Summary**

Historical inquiry is valuable. Historical inquiry helps us to understand why and how certain events occurred. In this chapter, I considered the importance of historical and qualitative research in examining the education of African Americans in a segregated school. I discussed the difficulty I experienced in obtaining historical documents and my reliance upon oral history to understand the feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and experiences of former teachers and students. I introduced the participants of the oral history interviews, the former teachers and students who provided a glimpse into teaching and learning in a segregated African American school in Wilmington, North Carolina’s past.

The history of African Americans living in Wilmington did not begin in Wilmington, however. Their story began on the continent of Africa. Thus, Chapter Three, “The Struggle to be Free,” will open with a brief discussion of the pursuit of education on the continent of Africa. The chapter provides a glimpse into the African past in order to better understand African Americans’ struggle for education in the colonies and the United States.
THROUGH all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope – a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence. Sometimes it is faith in life, sometimes a faith in death, sometimes assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond. But whichever it is, the meaning is always clear: that sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not their skins. Is such a hope justified? Do the Sorrow Songs sing true?

[S DuBois 1903/1993, 206]

Sankofa is an African term that means go back and fetch it. Sankofa encourages us of the importance of knowing and understanding our past before we are able to move successfully into the future. Sankofa in no way suggests, however, that we live blindly in the past or that we return to the past. It means we should take advantage of the valuable wisdom left for us by our ancestors. Sankofa encourages us to view history through a critical lens so that we may gain a deeper understanding and respect for historical and cultural foundations, foundations that could serve well as guides for future growth and development (Asante 1990; Hilliard 1997/1998). There is much to be gained from looking back. It is very fitting, then, that my research about the education of African Americans opens with a brief discussion of the beginnings of our educational processes on the continent of our beginning, Africa.

Chapter Three is a discussion of the Africans as they were transported to this country as slaves. The chapter provides insight into methods used to break the spirits of the Africans to make them fit to be American slaves. Nevertheless, their quest for education was strong
even during their early history in America. They understood the relationship of literacy to freedom. Forbidden by law to learn, slaves risked severe penalties and even death to learn to read and write. The chapter looks at the *Dred Scott* case, one slave’s efforts to obtain freedom, and the conscious efforts of society to maintain his enslavement. Chapter Three discusses the Civil War and its aftermath, especially in Wilmington, North Carolina, and life for freed men and women.

**The Search for Truth**

Education for early Africans was a holistic process built on a spiritual foundation that included the sciences, politics, health, nature, or culture. Learning was comprehensive and interactive and centered not only on technical knowledge, but also on the development of character, social responsibility, and spiritual power as well (Bennett 1996; Hilliard 1995). Bennett (1996) elaborated on the parallelism found between African philosophy and modern subatomic physics.

African thought is conditioned by their ontology, that is, their theory of the nature of being; for them being is a process and not a mere state, and the nature of things is thought of in terms of force or energy rather than matter; the forces of the spirit, human, animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds are all constantly influencing each other, and by a proper knowledge and use of them a man may influence his own life and that of others. (26)

Thus, education was a spiritual process, focused on transcendent learning which taught students how to live in harmony with nature. African learning respected the relationship of nature to life, with spirituality as an expression of life.
The Egyptian Mystery System

The ancient Egyptian Mystery System, according to Hilliard (1995), instructed students to cultivate ten virtues in the search for the higher self. They were: a) Control of thought, b) Control of action, c) Steadfastness of purpose, d) Identity with the spiritual life, e) Evidence of having a mission in life, f) Evidence of a call to spiritual orders, g) Freedom from resentment under persecution and wrong, h) Confidence in the power of the master as teacher, i) Confidence in one’s own ability to learn, and j) Readiness or preparedness for initiation (92-93). The student’s ultimate goal was to become one with God or to become like God.

Egyptian priests studied a liberal arts curriculum that included religion, geometry, applied and social sciences, music, and business for a period of forty years or more (Hilliard 1995). Bennett (1969), Bernal (1991), and Diop (1974) argued that Egypt was indeed the classic land that gave the world its legacy of philosophy, religion, and the arts and sciences. Africans were kings and queens, pharaohs and leaders, farmers and herders, traders and hunters, teachers and priests, musicians and dancers, sculptors and poets. They were a people with a significant and varied culture living on a continent with an abundant supply of natural resources including precious minerals and gems like uranium, copper, aluminum, gold, and diamonds. They developed hieroglyphics, the world’s first oldest form of writing. They founded the world’s first university, the Grand Lodge of Wa’at in Egypt. They discovered the laws of mathematics and science and built pyramids thousands of years ago that still stand and are being imitated by architects today (Bernal 1991).

The lunar and solar calendars and the study of astronomy were begun in Egypt. Imhotep, the father of medicine, created the first hospital in Egypt and developed the process
of mummification, which required surgery of the vital organs. According to Kunjufu (1987), doctors today still take the Hippocratic oath which refers to Aesculapius, the Greek name for Imhotep:

I swear by Apollo the physician, and Aesculapius, and Health, and all-heal, and all the gods and goddesses, that according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this oath and this stipulation to reckon him who taught me this art equally dear to me as my parents, to share my substance with him, and relieve his necessities if required. (4)

This ancient oath bespeaks the connection of the spiritual and the earthly that undergirded African educational principles.

Many Africans were highly educated and profoundly spiritual, their educational experiences were rich and meaningful. Students were helped to discover their true identity. They were taught technical skills and learned to apply them in their everyday lives. They were introduced to profound ideas by reading proverbs, analogies, and parables. Young people were given responsibilities and were expected to be able to function on their own initiative. Students were taught to be courteous and respectful of themselves, their elders and their peers. They were encouraged to examine their ultimate moral and spiritual responsibilities. The goal of African education was to transform the individual to his or her highest form of self-knowledge (Hilliard 1995). According to Hilliard (1997/1998), education assisted African students in “the human ‘perfecting’ process” (xv).

**Slaves in Africa**

Systems of slavery have always existed in various forms on the continent of Africa. They were most often rooted in the complexities of social caste (Johnson, Smith and the
WGBH Research Team 1998). In some African societies, people voluntarily sold themselves and their families to repay debt or for financial gain. In other societies, slavery served as punishment for breaking laws or as the price of war. When African societies engaged in battles for land, power, food, money, or animals, the conquered people became slaves. Prisoners of war entered the lowest class in the victor’s society as slave laborers, soldiers, and laborers of the state (Johnson, Smith et al 1998; Ploski and Williams 1989).

Far from being considered faceless eternal property, domestic slaves in Africa knew their enslavement was only temporary and upon their capture, they would set their sights on the probabilities of eventual freedom. In some African societies, established rules governed the treatment of slaves. Slave owners were to be responsive and accessible to slaves. They were required to make slaves part of their families either through adoption or marriage. Slave owners were required to provide their slaves food, clothing, and shelter. They were to discipline and train their slaves in the same manner that they would train and discipline their own children. In contrast to slaves in the United States, African slaves were considered human beings (Bernal 1991; Diop 1974; Johnson, Smith et al 1998; Stampp 1984).

African slaves had control of their destiny and could still pursue their dreams. Slave parents could rest in the knowledge their children were not destined for slavery. Slaves often enjoyed the same privileges as their owner’s children. Slave families and owners’ families often commingled and intermarried. African slaves could own and manage property (Johnson, Smith et al 1998). Some kings chose the sons of slaves to succeed the throne (Ploski and Williams 1989). The system of more humane African slavery differed distinctly from the brutally inhumane system of chattel slavery in the United States.
The African slave was not subjected to “slave ships crammed with writhing cargo, backs crisscrossed with welts and gleaming scars, and the ripped fabric of families” (Johnson, Smith et al 1998, 3). They were not subjected to “the auction block, midnight runs with guns popping staccato in the distance, [and] men as machines” (Johnson, Smith et al 1998, 3). African slavery was not based on race. Being an African slave was not a stigma of inferiority. The African slave owner did not have the power of life and death over the slave (Johnson, Smith et al 1998).

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

The transatlantic slave trade began in 1443 when Portuguese traders took the first African slaves to supply their Brazilian sugar plantations. Upon legalization of the system of slavery by Pope Nicholas V in 1444, Portugal established slave stations all along the west coast of Africa. Initially, some African kings engaged in the slave trade and sold their prisoners of war to the traders. Trading became a profitable business and a major cause of war among coastal tribes competing to supply slaves (Johnson, Smith et al 1998). Ploski and Williams (1989) asserted the trading of slaves became a vicious trap once guns were introduced into the equation. An African king who refused to participate in slave trade would be cut off from the gun supply “making his own people defenseless before the raids of others” (Ploski and Williams 1989, 1434). By refusing to participate, the king also subjected himself to captivity.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, 200,000 Africans had been taken from their homes and sent to Atlantic islands, Europe, and Sao Tome. The Portuguese controlled the slave trade until the late seventeenth century when the British created the Royal African Company to transport slaves to North America to work tobacco and sugar plantations.
During the course of the slave trade, approximately 10 million slaves were taken from Africa. According to estimates, the middle passage, which could last as long as ten weeks, claimed millions of their lives (Johnson, Smith et al 1998; Olson 1994; Ploski and Williams 1989).

Africans, kidnapped and brought to the United States against their will, were not ignorant, savage or pagan as some biased historical accounts lead society to believe (Lewis 1995). Their adaptation to life on the American continent “involved a process of education, not one of biological evolution” (Stampp 1989, 12). Some could read and write in their native West African languages. Some knew the Koran from memory and could write in Arabic. Many were skilled in fishing, farming, and mining iron, gold, and diamonds. They were explorers, artisans, weavers, herbalists, and potters of bronze, copper and gold. Africans were herders, priests, teachers, diplomats, historians, elders, astronomers, and musicians. They were mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers involved in a complex system of social and economic life that had existed for thousands of years.

The African Way of Life

The political and social institutions of some African societies were complex (Asante 1995; Diop 1974; Franklin and Moss 1988; Hilliard 1998; Stampp 1989). Setting up trading posts on the coast of West Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, traders found Africans engaged in a complex way of life. According to Franklin and Moss (1988), West African societies were stable and well organized. West African culture included “well defined concepts of law and order” and “cohesive family” units (25). The extended family was the central force of life in West Africa.
Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Europeans and Africans were business partners in the commerce and profit of slavery. A growing greed for human cargo, however, severed the trade and mutual respect (Johnson, Smith et al 1998).

**How to Make an American Slave**

Kidnapped Africans had to be taught how to be slaves in America. Methods were devised to break the spirits of a people who had known no other land, language, customs, or rule except that of their own African peoples (Harding 1983). The slaveholders developed a formula for breaking the Africans’ spirit. According to Harding (1983), the formula relied on six related elements:

1. The development of “unconditional submission.”

2. The development of a sense of personal inferiority, especially in relation to their African ancestry.

3. The development of raw fear, “to awe them with a sense of their master’s enormous power.” [Author’s emphasis] Local and national governments stood behind the master’s power.

4. The establishment of a sense that the master’s welfare was really synonymous with the slave’s own.

5. The creation of a willingness to accept the slaveholders’ standard of conduct as the slave’s own.

6. The development of “a habit of perfect dependence” upon those who claimed to be the slaves’ masters (105-106).
The formula for making good slaves was used to institute a ruthless and dehumanizing system of enslavement for over 200 years. The slave was psychologically transformed to submit to his or her master’s will.

Stripped away from the identities, traditions, values, religions, and languages of their homeland, Africans were forced to learn the culture and language of the slaveholders. Africans learned how to use new tools and machinery. They learned how to cultivate land, plant, grow, and harvest new crops. Africans learned how to tend and raise new animals, how to cook elaborate meals for the slave owner’s family. Africans learned to speak the language of the slave owner. In most instances, however, they were not taught how to read and write the language of their enslavers, although many slaves were quite eager to learn the curious marks on the pages of books and their relationships to the words coming from the mouths of their enslavers. According to Gates and McKay (1997), James Albert Ukawsaw Gronnisaw, an African prince, captured and enslaved in America, explained the metaphor of the talking book in the first full-length African American autobiography. In his autobiography, Gronnisaw (1770) described his reactions.

[My Master] used to read prayers in public to the ship’s crew every Sabbath day; and then I saw him read. I was never so surprised in my life as when I saw the book talk to my master, for I thought it did as I observed him to look upon it, and move his lips. I wished it would do so with me. As soon as my master had done reading, I followed him to the place where he put the book, being mightily delighted with it, and when nobody saw me, I opened it, and put my ear down close upon it, in great hopes that it would say something to me; but I was sorry, and greatly disappointed, when I found that it would not speak. This
thought immediately presented itself to me, that every body and every thing despised me because I was black. (Gronnshaw 1770, N. P. cited in Gates and McKay 1997, xxviii)

Some religious groups, desiring slaves learn the principles of Christianity, taught slaves how to read and write. According to Ploski and Williams (1989), the Church of England was instrumental in teaching Africans and Indians of the colonies reading, prayers, and the catechism. The Quakers and other religious groups also led efforts to educate Africans. Sunday schools often served to teach Africans how to read and write. In 1829, the African Education Society was founded to provide Africans with academic, mechanical, and agricultural skills (Ploski and Williams 1989). A few slave owners, believing their slaves could be more productive if they knew the language and customs of the colonies rather than their native tongues, taught their slaves how to read.

Most slave owners, however, would not teach their slaves how to read and write. In 1830, well aware of the liberating effects of literacy, state legislatures passed strict laws prohibiting slaves from learning to read and write and anyone from teaching them how (Ploski and Williams 1989). They insisted that the slave “know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it” (McFeely 1991, 30). Frederick Douglass, a former slave whose mistress taught him how to read, recalled hearing his master, Hugh Auld, explode once he found out his wife was teaching him to read. According to Douglass (1845/1993), Auld forbade his wife to continue instructions and told her it was unlawful as well as unsafe:

Learning will spoil the best nigger in the world. If he learns to read the Bible it will forever unfit him to be a slave. He should know nothing but the will of his master and learn to obey it. As to himself, learning will do him no good, but a
great deal of harm, making him disconsolate and unhappy. If you teach him how to read, he’ll want to know how to write, and this accomplished, he’ll be running away with himself (57).

It was imperative that the slave remained illiterate and ignorant for Southern planters depended on the cheap and available supply of slave labor. Stampp (1989) argued the Southern plantation owner could very well have utilized other forms of labor to cultivate crops. Stampp insisted using slaves “was a deliberate choice made by men who sought greater returns than they could obtain from their own labor alone, and who found other types of labor more expensive” (5). Thus, the economic and political survival of the South depended on the illiteracy of the slave.

There were severe penalties for breaking the law against literacy. Immediately after the Stono Rebellion of 1739, the largest slave uprising in the colonies prior to the American Revolution, the South Carolina colony enacted the following law against literacy:

And whereas the having of slaves taught to write, or suffering them to be employed in writing, may be attending with great inconveniences; Be it enacted, that all and every person and persons whatsoever, who shall hereafter teach, or cause any slave or slaves to be taught to write, or shall use or employ any slave as a scribe in any manner of writing whatsoever, hereafter taught to write; every such person or persons shall, for every offense, forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds current money (cited in Gates and McKay 1997, xxix).

As early as 1787, President Thomas Jefferson echoed the importance of an illiterate slave force in his proposal to the Virginia Legislature for three-year public schooling for all White children in the state. As for enslaved children, who represented about forty percent of
Virginia’s total population, Anderson (1988) believed, “Virginia’s peace, prosperity, and ‘civilization’ depended as much, if not more, on the containment and repression of literate culture among its enslaved population as it did on the diffusion of literate culture among its free population (1).

Nonetheless, the slaves’ passion for education was not deterred. Armed with an intense desire and a strong will, some slaves risked the penalties of a severe whipping, dismemberment, and even death to learn to read and write. Many who acquired even the most rudimentary skills, taught other slaves, who, in turn, taught others. Nightjohn serves as a prime example. According to Paulsen (1993), Nightjohn was an ex-slave who had escaped to freedom, yet, risked his life time and time again to return to plantations during the night to teach slaves how to read and write. After having made numerous trips, Nightjohn’s selfless act was discovered and he suffered the overseer’s wrath:

[Waller, the overseer] made one of the field hands to fetch the stump used for chopping the heads off chickens . . . Waller had two field hands to hold one of John’s feet on the block. He put the chisel to the middle toe and swung the hammer. Thunk. The toe came off clean, jumped away from the chisel and fell in the dirt. Blood squirting out, all over the block . . . Other foot. Waller spit and wiped the chisel off on the stump . . . So Robe he puts John’s foot up there and Waller puts the chisel on it. Thunk. “There. That’ll teach you to mess with things you shouldn’t. Get a rag and some grease on that.” (Paulsen 1993, 74-76)

This was certainly a lesson for the other slaves. Learn to read and write and potentially suffer the loss of an extremity or two.
From the 1730s to 1861, some slaves and free Negroes were able to learn to read and write through both formal and informal means without penalty. Apprenticeship laws established in 1762 compelled every slave owner to teach his slaves to read and write. The apprenticeship system in North Carolina not only taught free Negroes how to make a living it also enabled them to come in contact with the literary activities of White children. Although it is highly unlikely that every slave owner observed the letter of the apprenticeship law, the system was responsible for the literacy of a number of free Negroes in North Carolina. Even after the law was revoked in 1838, many slave owners continued to teach their slaves the fundamentals of reading and writing. As early as 1771, Quaker organizations like the *Society For the Free Instruction of the Orderly Blacks and People of Color* and the *African Colonization Society* taught slaves to read and write (Franklin 1969). Negroes in northern urban areas owned churches in 1792 and schools in 1800 (Franklin, Pettigrew, and Mack 1971).

Some slave owners considered their slaves mentally deficient, the happiest people in the world, working little and spending the rest of their time “singing, dancing, laughing, chattering, and bringing up pigs and chickens” (Takaki 1993, 112). They argued that slavery was not only the natural lot of Negroes, but was also “in accordance with God’s will that they should be kept in slavery” (Franklin, Pettigrew, and Mack 1971, 15). The expounding of one slave owner exemplifies these beliefs.

Slaves had brought with them only heathenism, immorality, profligacy, and irresponsibility. They possessed neither the mental capacity nor the moral impulse to improve themselves. Only if their sponsors—those to whom were entrusted not only their souls but their bodies—were fully committed to their
improvement could they take even the slightest, halting steps toward civilization (cited in Franklin, Pettigrew, and Mack 1971, 15).

According to these beliefs, trying to teach slaves was immoral. It went against the natural order. Reading and writing, along with the other promises of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness set forth in the original Constitution of the United States were clearly gifts for some, not rights to be enjoyed by all (Emerson 1994). The Constitution not only excluded Blacks but also defined them as only three-fifths human.

**The Constitutionality of Slavery**

In 1857, the United States Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of slavery. In *Dred Scott v. Sanford* the court found Negroes were not and could never become citizens of the United States. According to the decision, Negroes were not equally endowed by God with certain unalienable rights (Goldwin 1964). The decision ruled that neither free nor enslaved Negroes had any Constitutional rights (Appiah and Gates 1999). The Court also maintained the United States Congress had no power to prohibit slavery in the territories. This decision provided the basis for a future legislation declaring no state had the power to forbid slavery (Goldwin 1964).

*Dred Scott v. John F. A. Sanford* involved Sam Blow, a slave born in Virginia around 1795 who brought a lawsuit to obtain his freedom. It is believed that at some point in being moved, first to Alabama in 1818, and then, to Missouri in 1830, Sam changed his name to Dred Scott as a joke to contrast his tiny stature with that of Winfield Great Scott, a rather obese general. Upon the death of his first owner, Peter Blow, Dred was sold to John Emerson, a surgeon in the United States Army, who took Sam with him when he was transferred to Illinois and Minnesota, two states that prohibited slavery. When Emerson died,
Dred sued Emerson’s wife for his family’s freedom, lost the case, and finally won freedom for him and his family in a new trial in 1850 (Appiah and Gates 1999).

However, in 1852, Dred and his family were returned to slavery after Mrs. Emerson won an appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court (Appiah and Gates 1999). When John Sandford, Scott’s new owner, took the case to the Missouri Supreme Court, the court upheld the constitutionality of slavery and ruled that Congress could not regulate slavery in the territories until they became states. The court also argued that slave states could not be expected to uphold the law of free states and furthered argued that since slaves were property, they could not be taken from their owners. A slave, whether on free soil or not, was still a slave. Even slaves born in the United States were denied the right of citizenship.

Writing for the majority in the case, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney (1857) argued,

They had more than a century before [the signing of the Declaration of Independence] been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to be associated with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and the Negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom [principle] in morals as well as in politics. (cited in Asante 1995, 228)

The legacy of the Dred Scott decision enshrined the second-class status of the Negro until the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. Only after numerous attempts to secure their freedom were the Scotts ordered free by virtue of their stay on free soil. In 1857 the Supreme Court
ruled they could not be returned to slavery even after returning to a slave state (Appiah and Gates 1999).

The Civil War

[T]here is within and without the sound of conflict,

the burning of body and rending of soul; inspiration strives with doubt,

and faith with vain questionings.

[DuBois 1903/1993, 14]

As the westward expansion of the United States increased, so did the question of whether the United States would be a proslavery or an antislavery nation. The rise of the cotton industry had greatly inflated the economic importance of slavery. There were more than two million slaves in the United States. Tensions between the North and the South grew. The North opposed slavery. The South argued the necessity of slave labor in the production of cotton and opposed the North’s demand for high tariffs on imports. But the North had very few additional sources of revenue and depended on tariffs to fund canals, turnpikes, and railroads necessary for industrialization and Western expansion. Southern plantation owners manufactured very little and resisted the industrialization that had captured the North and reduced the need for Southern imports. They were willing to do without improvements, but were unwilling to yield to the North’s demand for gradual reduction in extending slavery into the western territories. Southern states including South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas seceded from the union (Appiah and Gates 1999).

In an attempt to hold the union together, President Abraham Lincoln recommended gradual elimination of slavery in the four states bordering the Deep South, Delaware,
Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. He promised slaveholders who were loyal to the union they would keep their slaves. There were 447,432 slaves in the Border States; Lincoln offered to buy them at a price of $400 to $500 per slave (Bennett 2000). The slaveholders absolutely refused. In 1862, Congress passed two laws against slavery in an effort to keep the four Border States from seceding. “The first was a confiscation act that freed slaves from owners who had rebelled against the United States. The second was a militia act that enabled the president to use freed slaves in the army” (Appiah and Gates 1999, 1842).

Lincoln fully realized that freeing the slaves would destabilize the South of its most vital economic component, slaves (Appiah and Gates 1999). According to Thomas (2000) and Bennett (2000), freeing slaves, then, was based on saving the union rather than the principles of abolition. Thomas (2000) argued, “The possible dissolution of the Union had been upper-most in men's minds” (N. P.) Lincoln emphasized this fact in his first Inaugural Address on March 4, 1861. He told Southerners there was no need for them to be apprehensive about their ‘property,’ slaves, and referred them to his previous speeches in which he had also expressed no interest in interfering with slavery. Lincoln (1861) proclaimed, “I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so” (Available online at http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres31.html). Lincoln promised slave owners he would protect the institution of slavery but would not allow it to move into the West (Johnson, Smith and the WGBH Team 1998).

President Lincoln called on the remaining Southern states, Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee to join Union regiments (Appiah and Gates 1996). They refused. When he appealed to North Carolina to send 75,000 men to help subdue the secession, Governor John
Ellis refused. Instead, he called a special session of the General Assembly and requested 20,000 volunteers to defend North Carolina from Northern aggression. On May 20, 1861, North Carolina seceded from the Union, issued its second Declaration of Independence, and joined Virginia, Arkansas, and Tennessee in war (Fonvielle, Jr. 1987; Howell 1930). Four volunteer companies of militia in Wilmington, North Carolina, the Wilmington Light Infantry, Wilmington Rifle Guards, German Volunteers, and Cape Fear Light Infantry had already begun drilling and preparing for war. The Wilmington troops greeted the announcement with great enthusiasm (Howell 1930).

**Wilmington at War**

Wilmington, North Carolina, was one of the most important ports in the Confederacy. Located at the confluence of the northwest and northeast branches of the Cape Fear River, the port was significant for receiving and distributing Confederate supplies. The Old Inlet, the northwest channel, was navigable as far east as Fayetteville, approximately one hundred miles into the state’s interior. Fort Fisher, located a few miles southeast of Wilmington, paralleled the Atlantic Ocean for about 1,300 yards and was the strongest Confederate seacoast fortification. The fort protected the New Inlet in the northeastern section (Fonvielle, Jr. 1987).

The Confederate government realized the importance of Wilmington as a major seaport and took steps early in the war to build fortifications around the port to protect it from destruction by the Union. As a result, Union attempts to disrupt Wilmington’s commerce with blockades were unsuccessful. Less than 600 miles from Nassau, Bahamas, Wilmington was ideally located for blockade running. Blockade runners, built in England, willfully entered and exited the Southern ports and brought in needed army supplies, food,
and clothing to the Confederate army and to the people of the state. Blockade runners also allowed the region to continue export of its cash crops, cotton and salt (Fonvielle, Jr. 1987).

Wilmington became a booming commercial spot during the war as agents and traders flocked to the newly erected warehouses along the waterfront. Two large shipyards built and repaired ships. Several plants processed seawater into salt. Compresses prepared thousands of bales of cotton for export on blockade runners. In July 1863, commercial steamers from Nassau brought in yellow fever. An epidemic took over the city. Several months later, approximately 1,500 people in Wilmington had suffered from the disease. Fatalities averaged approximately 37 percent during the entire course of the disease. Many prominent Wilmington citizens lost their lives (Fonvielle, Jr. 1987).

**Emancipation**

On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the *Emancipation Proclamation* declaring slaves free in territories held by the Confederates. Lincoln (1863) proclaimed,

That on the 1st day of January, A.D. 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom (Available online at http://www.usconstitution).

However, as Appiah and Gates (1999) claimed, the Act “technically freed no one because Lincoln’s authority was not recognized by the Confederacy” (1842). One million Africans
remained enslaved in Union territory after the proclamation. The order did not apply to slaves in Border States fighting on the Union side and many more slaves did not hear about the proclamation until several months or years later. Slaves in Texas remained in bondage until June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers marched from Houston to other parts of the state and informed them they had been free since Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation more than two years before. Former Texan slaves celebrated their freedom on June 19, 1866. Thus began the celebration of ‘Juneteenth,’ Emancipation Day for Texas slaves (Bennett, Jr. 1969/1975; Wilson and Segall 2001).

It was not until the ratification of the *Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution* in 1865 that the institution of slavery was finally abolished throughout the nation. *Sections 1 and 2 of the amendment stated:*

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation (Available online at http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.amendmentxiii).

**The End of the War**

After four years of fighting, federal soldiers captured Fort Fisher on January 15, 1865 (Fonvielle, Jr. 1987). By the end of the Civil War, approximately 180,000 Negro troops had served in the Union Army; 30,000 in the Navy. A quarter of a million had assisted the military as laborers. Almost 3,000 had died from battle wounds while 33,000 died from disease

Wilmington was a site of jubilation for the slaves when Union Troops captured the city and reported they were free. Many of the city’s White citizens either left town or hid behind closed doors. Reaves (1998) stated not all of White Wilmington was ready “to grasp the black revelation” (233). According to Fonvielle, Jr. (1987), a widow of a popular Confederate officer and daughter of a prominent Wilmington physician openly expressed her anxiety over being captured, “God grant us the power to cope with our giant enemy, she prayed. The sense of captivity of subjugation . . . is so galling that I cannot see how a manly spirit could submit to it” (cited in Fonvielle, Jr. 1987, 240). Indeed, many of the White men in Wilmington did not abide by the slaves’ new status as freed men and women.

The former slaves may have been freed, but they, certainly, were not free. Takaki (1993) recounted a Black folk song that expressed the sentiments of the ex-slaves:

*Slavery an’ freedom*

*Dey’s mos’ de same*

*No difference hahdly*

*Cep’ in de name* (135).

Frederick Douglass (1845/1993) contended that although slavery had been abolished, the wrongs of the Negro were not ended. He agreed that although they were no longer slaves, they were not free. He lamented, “No man can be truly free whose liberty is dependent upon the thought, feeling, and action of others; and who has himself no means in his own hands for guarding, protecting, defending, and maintaining that liberty” (368). The former slaves
remained under the control of the former masters. DuBois (1903/1993) believed emancipation for the former slave would be a long, slow, painful process.

**Freed but Not Free**

A series of proclamations executed by President Andrew Johnson after Lincoln’s assassination in early April 1865 returned the Southern states to their old ways of White domination. President Johnson pardoned all Whites in the South except wealthy confederate leaders and persons whose financial worth exceeded $20,000. Johnson required that they make personal application for his pardon. He allowed former plantation owners to reclaim their abandoned plantations and sent in federal troops to enforce the returns. In addition, President Johnson allowed formerly seceded states to rejoin the union after they abolished slavery and forgave both their Confederate War and secession debts (Appiah and Gates 1999).

Encouraged by the president’s leniency, Southern legislatures, including North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Maryland, Virginia and Tennessee, began to devise their own solutions to the problems caused by an economy deprived of slave labor. In 1865, several legislatures quickly passed a series of discriminatory laws known as the *Black Codes* to limit the freedom of ex-slaves. Similar to *Slave Codes*, the *Black Codes* attempted to re-enslave freed men and women and to legally subordinate them to Whites (Appiah and Gates 1999; Bennett 1969).

Black Codes’ laws were merely substitutes for the former controls of slavery. They allowed states to implement and enforce discriminatory acts against the former slaves. The laws were primarily “police laws to get the freedmen back to the fields under control” (Wilson 1978/1980, 53). Code laws forced ex-slaves into second-class citizenship and
ensured the South its plentiful and cheap labor supply. Freed men and women were not allowed to own or rent farmland. Forced to become sharecroppers, former slaves were trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, rarely making enough to pay off their debts. The codes restricted the movement of the freed men and women, denied them political and legal rights, and provided for the segregation of public facilities in most southern states. Unemployed ex-slaves who unlawfully assembled could be arrested and fined for vagrancy. If unable to pay, they were imprisoned or bound out to plantations under labor contracts. Skilled laborers and artisans were required to pay excessive licensing fees forcing many freed men to remain wage laborers. The unequal system of code laws permitted groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) to intimidate and attack ex-slaves without censure (Wilson 1978/1980).

The KKK

The Ku Klux Klan began in Tennessee in mid-1866. A well-organized White terrorist group, the KKK consisted, primarily, of Confederate veterans who sought to maintain the social, economic, and political supremacy of the White male in the South. The White supremacist organization was also known by other names that included the Knights of the White Camelia and the Jayhawkers. The Ku Klux Klan engaged in malicious acts to prevent Negroes from social and political achievement. Wilson and Ferris (1989) contended any idea of racial equality or apparent Negro domination particularly horrified the Klan. Klansmen whipped, tarred and feathered, shot, and lynched Negroes and their White allies for a range of ‘crimes’ including insolence, voting Republican, making a good crop, or becoming prosperous (Wilson and Ferris 1989).

The provisions of Black Codes varied from state to state although all attempted to press the former slaves back into slavery. Former slaves in South Carolina were forbidden to
do any work other than farming and menial service and were required to have a special license to do any other type of work. South Carolina law gave masters the right to whip servants under eighteen years old. Apprenticeship laws provided an easy way for Negro children to be taken away from parents or guardians who were considered unable to properly support or guide them and often placed such children into the hands of White families as unpaid laborers (Harding 1981). Negroes in other states could be punished for making “insulting gestures,” “seditious speeches” and walking off a job (Harding 1981, 313). Black Codes in Texas mandated that all Negroes remove their hats, stand aside or step off the sidewalk completely, nod and speak in deference when meeting a White person walking on the sidewalk (Wilson and Segall 2001). One state required Negroes to have police permission before they could preach. A Mississippi law enacted in late November, required Negroes to have jobs before the second Monday in January (Harding 1981).

General Carl Schurz, investigating postwar conditions in the South for President Johnson, succinctly expressed the sentiments of many Southern Whites regarding the newly freed slave. According to Bennett (1962/1966), the general concluded in his report, “the emancipation of the slave was submitted to only in so far as chattel slavery in the old form could not be kept up” (194). Although the freedman was not considered the individual master’s property, he was still considered the slave of society. Bennett (1962/1966) recounted comments made by General Schurz:

Wherever I go — the street, the shop, the house, the hotel, or the steamboat I hear the people talk in such a way as to indicate that they are yet unable to conceive of the Negro as possessing any rights at all. Men who are honorable
in their dealings with their white neighbors will cheat a Negro man without feeling a single twinge of their honor (cited in Bennett 1962/1966, 194).

Whites did not consider killing a Negro murder, stealing from a Negro robbery, and debauching a Negro woman rape. Bennett (1962/1966) said Whites boasted, ‘the niggers will catch hell’ when they got the freedmen’s affairs in their own hands (194).

White Southerners let Negroes know by their actions and their inactions they still considered them less than human. “[They] were useful, to be sure, for economic purposes, but only in the sense that mules and tractors were useful” (Powledge 1991, 11). According to Bennett (2003), Congressman Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania stated entrusting the slaves to their former masters and to the protection of State law, without giving them any voice in making the laws, was merely turning them over to the torture of their enemies. According to Bennett (2003) Stevens added, “To turn them lose unaided and unprotected is wholesale murder” (586). Douglass (1845/1993) argued the freedmen were given the machinery of freedom, but were “denied the steam to put it in motion” (500). Congressman Stevens recommended Congress give the Negro forty acres of land and treat them like human beings (in Bennett 1962/1966).

**Civil Rights Act of 1866**

Freedmen and women had no recourse for their abuse until both Houses of a Republican-controlled Congress passed the *Civil Rights Act* in 1866 to protect the citizenship rights of the former slaves. The law specified that discriminatory acts against freedmen were punishable by fine and/or imprisonment. Theoretically, the *Civil Rights Act* (1866) gave Negro citizens the same rights of Whites. The Act allowed citizens of every race and color equal rights to make contracts, to sue, to testify in court, to purchase, hold and dispose of
property, and to enjoy the full and equal benefit of all laws. All citizens were to be subject to
the same punishment, pains and penalties. Violations of the act would be punishable by fine
and/or imprisonment. Only after ratification of the *Fourteenth Amendment* in 1868,
however, was “full” citizenship conferred to former slaves. Before adoption of the *14th
Amendment*, citizenship was a local issue determined by the laws of each state. A person
could very well be considered a citizen in one state and not in another (Reaves 1998).

**The 14th Amendment**

The *Fourteenth Amendment* clarified the status of Negroes as American citizens and
declared, “all persons born or naturalized in the United States acquired citizenship in any
particular state in which residence was made” (in Thomas 2000, 120). The Amendment also
set out to protect all persons, whether citizens or not, from being victimized or discriminated
by their state governments, and stated, in part, that no state shall “deprive any person of life,
liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction
the equal protection of the laws” (in Goldwin 1964, 162). Many Southern Whites persisted
in believing Negroes were not citizens and tried every means possible to avoid compliance
with the spirit and letter of the major amendments.

**Post-War Wilmington**

A shattered economy, wartime devastations, home-front shortages, and having to deal
with Union troops, paroled prisoners, and refugees produced grave feelings of despair and
resentment among many White citizens of Wilmington (Fonvielle, Jr. 1987). Fonvielle, Jr.
(1987) explained, “Submission did not demand Southerners alter their political view, only
that they adhere to the policies of the military authorities” (240). In a letter to Pennsylvania
Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, G. F. Granger captured the conviction of many of
Wilmington’s White citizens right after the war. According to Reaves (1998), Granger told the Congressman the Civil War had changed Wilmington forever. He declared Southern Whites were extremely bitter against Negroes and terrified of them since they had been freed. Whites boasted about what they would do with Negroes once the Yankee soldiers left. Granger described what was happening.

There is not a corporal guard of white citizens in North Carolina who will be willing if all power is placed untrammeled in the hands of the people, to extend any rights and privileges to the Negro; tho’ they have passed laws ostensibly for his protection, those laws would be practically inoperative if the liberty to do as they please, unawed by the United States Military Power in their midst, God only knows what a scene of anarchy and confusion would ensue. (cited in Reaves 1998, 233)

Granger further declared Negroes were as incompetent to govern themselves as “the inmates of Sing Sing or an Insane Asylum would be if they were colonized somewhere and left to manage themselves according to their own insane ideas” (cited in Reaves 1998, 234). According to Reaves (1998), Granger threatened all classes of Whites would “unite in abusing the Negro by word of mouth, and so far as they dare do so, by deeds of personal violence” (234). Granger ended the letter proclaiming the Negro was “the most helpless and worthless creature Extant. . . that he is after all notwithstanding his freedom, now and forever more, nothing but a damned nigger [sic] (cited in Reaves 1998, 234). The same sentiment was echoed throughout the South and before the year was over, there were numerous stories of shootings, burnings, drownings, hangings, and decapitations of Negroes.
“Word of black bodies putrefying on the ground began to come up out of the South” (Harding 1981, 315).

Hope

Newly freed slaves surmised their freedom would not be free. With a desperate hope and few legal assurances, they held on to their visions of a new life in America. They wanted to be recognized as human beings, no obstructions be placed in their way, the same laws which governed White men and women to govern Negro men and women, and to be treated as Whites were, “in equity and justice” (Harding 1981, 325).

Summary

Chapter Three opened with a brief discussion of education and slavery of Africans in Africa and followed captured Africans to North America where they became chattel slaves. In Africa, freed or enslaved, Africans were part of a highly complex and organized social institution with a well-defined sense of order and a cohesive family unit. Africans believed in the sanctity of people and of nature. Their ultimate goal was to become as much like the Creator as possible. The principles and values taught to Africans in Africa contrasted greatly with the principles slave owners taught Africans in America.

Kidnapped or sold, Africans were chained to other Africans, hauled into crowded ships and transported across the ocean to America where they were challenged to learn new goals and principles on a new continent. Africans were to become nameless, stateless and unconditionally submissive to the slaveholders’ will. They were prohibited from learning how to read or write and the denial of their right to citizenship was sanctioned by the Dred Scott decision. Slaves believed the Civil War freed them. However, state-enacted Black Codes restricted their freedom and prevented them from having equal status with Whites. In
addition, well-organized White supremacist groups engaged in violent acts against the ex-slaves to further prevent them from political and social achievement. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments legislated ex-slaves’ rights.

Chapter Four is divided into two parts. The primary purpose of Part One, Reconstruction, is to explore life for the ex-slaves immediately after the Civil War. The chapter looks at the efforts of the Freedmen’s Bureau in assisting the freed men and women transition from a world of bondage to one of freedom. Particular attention is focused on Negroes living in Wilmington, North Carolina, during Reconstruction. The second part of Chapter Four will examine the reactions and responses of Whites to the gains Negroes made as freed men and women in states and cities across the South, with special focus on Wilmington.
CHAPTER FOUR

FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

In song and exhortation swelled one refrain . . .

Shout, O children!

Shout, you’re free!

For God has bought your liberty!


Chapter Four examines life for ex-slaves after the Civil War in their quest to become independent, self-sufficient citizens. Part One focuses on the years 1865 to 1877, referred to as the period of Reconstruction. Ex-slaves left plantations with little more than the clothes on their backs and entered their new lives as freed men and women with no land, money, or jobs. This section briefly discusses the role of the Freedmen’s Bureau in reconstructing both the lives of the ex-slaves and the political economy of the South. Tozer, Violas, and Senese (1993/1998) defined political economy as a “concept that includes the social, cultural, economic, political, and demographic dimensions of a society” (5). This research includes a discussion of those aspects of the political economy which are of particular importance to the schooling of Negroes. Part One also discusses the differences enfranchisement of political privileges made in the lives of freed Negroes.

Part Two discusses the response of Southern Whites to the political and economic gains Negroes made during Reconstruction. Specifically, this section focuses on the actions of Southern Whites following the removal of federal troops from the South. Referred to as the period of Redemption, White resistance to emancipation unraveled most of the achievements Negroes made during Reconstruction.
Reconstruction

The Condition of Freedmen

DuBois (1903/1993) contended the freed slave was thrust destitute into a racist society and was most often blamed for the catastrophe of war. Freed slaves had no political power, no property, no home, no farm animals or tools, few clothes fit to wear as a freed man or woman and could neither read nor write. Douglass, himself a former slave, bitterly declared that the freed slave had none of the conditions necessary for self-preservation or for self-protection. The former slave may have been freed from his former master, but he remained a slave of society. Douglass (1845/1993) asserted:

He was free from the old plantation, but he had nothing but the dusty road under his feet. He was free from the old quarter that once gave him shelter, but a slave to the rains of summer and the frosts of winter. He was in a word literally turned loose naked, hungry, and destitute to the open sky. (369)

With no money, land, homes, tools, or savings, freedmen were ill equipped to compete with wealthy White homeowners. DuBois (1903/1993) argued being a poor person was hard, but being a poor people in a rich nation was the worst hardship a people could experience. According to DuBois (1903/1993), “A people thus handicapped ought not to be asked to race with the world, but rather allowed to give all its time and thought to its own social problems” (13). Abolitionist Wendell Phillips also lamented the fate of the former slave. Phillips proclaimed despite his contributions to the nation before and during the war, the Negro was now so destitute he did not own even a handful of dust.

That man made the South a paradise, and when it was done, he shouldered his musket with us, and saved it to the nation. Look at him! The gratitude of
republics! Disfranchised, naked, homeless, poor, we give him back to the white man who hates him, to dictate the terms of his existence! (cited in Bennett, Jr. 2000, 586).

Thus, freed slaves were not acknowledged for their contributions to the well being of White people in the South. In fact, freed slaves were despised, feared and abused.

First Aid

With few resources of their own, freed slaves accepted clothes and money from various secular aid societies and church organizations until the organizations became too overburdened by their private efforts to provide sufficient resources to destitute freed men and women. The aid societies (1863) claimed the government “had not discharged its whole duty to the Negro simply by emancipating him” (cited in Bentley 1970, 30) and petitioned President Lincoln to create a federal bureau of emancipation to provide financial assistance and needful protection. Philanthropists argued the ex-slaves needed federal assistance to reconstruct their lives and to help them transition from a world of bondage to one of freedom (Bentley 1970; DuBois 1903/1993; Franklin 1988).

Freedmen’s Bureau

In 1864, the United States Congress made multiple attempts to pass a bill to create a Bureau of Emancipation within the War Department. It was only after the appointment of a conference committee in March 1865, however, that Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands legislation was finally passed. Butchart (1976) believed the delay was fashioned to allow “contradictory policies to be pursued under the aegis of military commanders” (18). The Bureau was created one month after President Lincoln’s assassination. General Oliver O. Howard was appointed as the Bureau’s commissioner by
President Johnson. Under Howard’s leadership, the Bureau authorized ten assistant commissioners to issue clothing, fuel, and immediate and temporary shelter to the destitute refugees. The Bureau was to assign not more than 40 acres of abandoned or confiscated land for a period of three years to every Negro male citizen, whether refugee or freedman (Butchart 1976).

For taxation purposes, annual rent was not to exceed six per cent of its value. If no appraisal was found, then “the rent should be based upon the estimated value of the land in said year, to be ascertained in such manner as the commissioner may by regulation prescribe” (Available at www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen(fbact). The Bureau specified the occupants could purchase the land “upon paying therefore the value of the land, as ascertained and fixed for the purpose of determining the annual rent aforesaid” (Available at www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen(fbact).

Freedmen never received the forty acres and a mule promised by the government. Instead, they were permitted to rent and pay taxes on tracts of land for three years. Bennet, Jr (1962/1966) believed not giving the ex-slaves land was the greatest tragedy of Reconstruction, “Freedom was not free without a firm economic foundation” (188).

The Act of 1866 (available at http://www.toptags.com/aama/docs/crts1866.htm) established the final form of the Freedmen’s Bureau and gave the organization total responsibility to ameliorate the lives of the four million freedmen. DuBois (1903/1993) argued it would be a Herculean task even in calm, perfect times, “amid willing neighbors and streaming wealth” (27), however, “the spite and hate of conflict, the hell of war; when suspicion and cruelty were rife, and gaunt Hunger wept beside Bereavement . . . the work of any instrument of social regeneration was in large part foredoomed to failure” (27). DuBois
(1903/1993) argued that to the South, the very name of the Freedmen’s Bureau represented the distinct belief, “that life amid free Negroes was simply unthinkable, the maddest of experiments” (27).

The Bureau consisted primarily of military men (Cimbala and Miller 1999; Nieman 1979) whom DuBois believed personified the racial policies developed by the army during the Civil War. DuBois (1903/1993) claimed the agents varied all the way from “unselfish philanthropists to narrow-minded busybodies and thieves,” (27) who were in no way concerned with the freedmen achieving equality and dignity. Instead, he argued, the bureau’s chief interests lay with various aspects of providing aid to White and Black war refugees, taking control of confiscated and abandoned property, and reestablishing order.

Frederick Douglass, also dubious of the freedmen’s societies, declared the Bureau’s efforts would add insult to injury. In fact, Douglass (1865) believed that the charity of the Bureau would insight the prejudice “which it is so desirable to banish from the country” (cited in Butchart 1976, 414). Nevertheless, the Bureau is credited with helping the former slaves secure jobs, homes, food, and clothing. The Bureau assisted freed slaves in one of the most dramatic changes, the opportunity to acquire formal education.

**Freedmen Schools**

**Longing to Learn**

Beginning a new life with nothing except the few clothes and possessions carried out of slavery, former slaves desperately sought an education. They understood education was one of the requisites for real freedom. Traveling throughout Louisiana soon after the Civil War, Thomas Calahan, a missionary and pastor of a church in Louisiana, stated that in any direction he went, he met Negroes who wanted to be educated. Calahan recalled,
Negroes on horses, Negroes on mules, Negroes with oxen, Negroes by the wagon cart and buddy load, Negroes on foot, men, women, and children; Negroes in uniform, Negroes in rags, Negroes in frame houses, Negroes living in tents, Negroes living in rail pens covered with brush, and Negroes living under brush piles without any rails, Negroes living on the bare ground with the sky for their covering; all hopeful, almost all cheerful, everyone pleading to be taught, willing to do anything for learning. They are never out of our rooms, and their cry is for ‘Books! Books! and ‘when will school begin?’ (cited in Bennett, Jr. 1969/1975, 199).

The Bureau, too, contended freedmen had an eager, almost pitiful yearning to learn (Bentley 1970). According to Bentley (1970), the Bureau found, “there was almost a religious nature to the freedmen’s regard for schooling. In learning to read he was eating of the fruit so long forbidden to him.” (170)

Freed men and women were willing to pay for learning even in their substantial poverty. DuBois (1903/1993) believed freed men and women considered book learning “the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, step and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life” (12). Freed men and women assumed their sacrifices would ensure their freedom. Negro parents paid anywhere from five to fifty cents tuition for their children to attend the early freedmen schools. In many instances, former slaves donated their nickels and dimes, their carpentry skills, and funds from organized dinners, excursions, and entertainment to build their own schools. Negro children often sought schooling in spite of the great distance, scanty clothing and meals, and opposition from employers or former masters (Bennett, Jr. 1969/1975).
Sabbath Schools

In 1868, Sabbath schools were well established and available in “all the cities of the state [North Carolina], in most of the smaller towns, and in many of the rural districts” (Anderson 1988, 13). According to Anderson (1988), the Freedmen’s Bureau reported finding numerous Sabbath schools already established across the South right after the Civil War. Developed by ex-slaves, these church-sponsored schools operated primarily in the evenings and on weekends providing elementary instruction to thousands of freed men and women who were unable to attend school during the weekdays. Freedmen’s Bureau superintendent, John Alvord (1866), commented on the educational movement initiated by the ex-slaves, “They are growing to a habit . . . crystallizing into a system, and each succeeding school-term shows their organization more and more complete and permanent” (10 cited in Anderson 1988, 15). Anderson (1988) believed the establishment and support of their own schools by freed people provided the impetus for the educational efforts of northern missionary societies and the Freedmen’s Bureau. According to Anderson (1988) ex-slaves successfully established the foundation for universal education. “[F]or the freedmen, universal schooling was a matter of personal liberation and a necessary function of a free society” (18).

Ex-slaves’ efforts to establish schools benefited from the financial assistance of the Freedmen’s Bureau. However, many school facilities remained deplorable even after the intervention of the Freedmen’s Bureau. Drafty cold barns and sheds often served as schools. One teacher (1869) described conditions.

I am teaching in what was, until the fall, the poultry-house [Author’s emphasis]. Had the comfort of the feathered tribe been more thought of in its erection, mine would
have been better secured at present. The crevices are numerous, and the keen winds easily find them. On the most exposed side, I have nailed up an army blanket, and if I could only get more to tapestry [Author’s emphasis] the rest of the building, it might make the hens sigh for their old quarters (cited in Butchart 1976, 261).

In addition to the awkward, uncomfortable facilities, the schools often had crowded classrooms with different age groups and grade levels being taught together. Nearly always, teachers lacked basic teaching aids like textbooks, chalk, blackboards, slates, maps, and writing tools (Butchart 1976). Nevertheless, the ex-slaves persisted in their efforts to educate their children.

The Freedmen’s Bureau complained about the preference of the ex-slaves in sending their children to free schools dominated by Negroes. Although ex-slaves were grateful for northern support, they, sometimes, “resisted infringements that threatened to undermine their own initiative and self-reliance” (Anderson 1988). Many freed men and women raised funds to start their own schools.

**Williston School – The Beginning**

On April 30, 1865, one month after the arrival of Union liberators, the Freedmen’s Bureau’s first teacher arrived in Wilmington, North Carolina, and facilitated the establishment of schools for ex-slaves. The schools were established in four churches across the city, with two teachers per school. The Negro population’s overwhelming and immediate response created the need for an additional two schools and six teachers in the city. This occurred before the end of the first school term in July. Between the summer of 1865 and early 1866, Wilmington’s Negro community initiated fund-raisers to assist in the building of a free school for Negro students in the southern part of the city on a parcel of land secured by
the American Missionary Association. Located on Seventh Street midway between Ann and Nun Streets, the new school was completed in the latter part of 1866. It was named Williston Free School in honor of Samuel Williston, a White philanthropist from Massachusetts and one of the school’s heaviest contributors (Reaves 1998).

During the winter of 1865-1866, poor White children, unable to afford tuition to the city’s private schools, attended one of the city’s first free schools for White children located on South Sixth Street between Nun and Church Streets. That school later became Tileston Normal School (Howell 1930). Previously, the support of common schools in Wilmington had been substantially limited. S. D. Wallace, chairman of the Board of County Superintendents of New Hanover County, had complained to the North Carolina State General Superintendent in 1856 that the city’s common schools were being patronized only by those White students whose parents could not afford to send them to private schools in the city (cited in Noble 1930).

Negro participation in education intensified. By December 1868, four additional schools were established in Wilmington to serve Negro students. There were, then, a total of eight schools, two in private residences, serving 588 Negro students. In that same year, Governor Worth approved the incorporation of the Wilmington Colored Educational Institute. The Institute served the purpose of establishing free Negro schools in the city. In 1873, Williston Graded School was the first Negro school to become a part of the newly formed Wilmington Board of Education. The Board replaced the all-White faculty with an all-Negro one (Reaves 1998). However, the school only served elementary Negro pupils. By 1880, a growing Negro school population warranted the need for additional space. In 1884, Williston Graded School became Gregory Normal Institute in honor of J. J. Howard.
Gregory who had donated more than $25,000 to religious and educational facilities in the city. The school served first through sixth grades for approximately 35 years (Reaves 1998).

**Opposition Persists**

Nonetheless, opposition to educating Negroes persisted. In many areas of the South, Negro schools were burned and White and Negro teachers were beaten and run out of communities. In some cases, Northern White teachers, unable to secure housing with reputable Southern White families, were often taunted and ridiculed. “Nigger teacher” (Butchart 1976, 263) was the most abusive epithet Southern Whites used. One newspaper (1866) reported the only reason which could explain the opposition was “an intense hatred for the very idea of educating Negroes” (cited in Bond 1934, 31).

Southern Whites complained freedmen teachers used their classrooms to criticize the South, to incite racial hatred, and to promote the Republican Party. A southern writer argued northern teachers were not ordinary school teachers but were instead, political missionaries teaching social equality to their Negro students (cited in Butchart 1976). The Bureau had ordered freedmen teachers not to engage in political teaching. However, Butchart (1976) believed much of what Southern Whites considered political teaching was instead training in patriotism (see also Litwack 1998).

The American Freedmen’s Union reported Southern Whites offered no cooperation or sympathy to the educational efforts of Negroes. Instead, the freedmen’s attempts for education “were regarded as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their [Whites’] peculiar rights, and derided as an absurd attempt to elevate the Negro” (Butchart 1976, 263). Litwack (1998) argued Southern Whites believed education would make the Negro discontented, divert him or her from his or her true place, and prepare the way for social equity. In
response, Bureau agents and superintendents seeking to educate the freed men and women within the Southern White power structure stressed the value of an educated labor force and urged the freedmen to adopt a simple, humble and unoffending demeanor (Butchart 1976). As a result of the Bureau’s efforts, the plantation school was born.

The Plantation School

The efforts of the ex-slaves, themselves, also influenced the development of the plantation schools. As the demand for post-war labor increased, productivity on the plantations significantly decreased due to loss of slave labor. In negotiating labor contracts with Southern planters, some ex-slaves insisted on an education clause that would provide schools. According to Anderson (1988), most often ex-slaves funded their schools with little financial support form the planters. Realizing the inevitability of Negro education, Southern planters allowed schools on their plantations, primarily, for the following three reasons, 1) Freedmen would go where there were schools; 2) Plantation schools brought the teachers, schools, and curriculum under close scrutiny and control of Southern Whites, and 3) The schools tied Negroes to the land as agricultural workers (Butchart 1976).

Nonetheless, the Southern plantation owners’ opposition to the education of ex-slaves persisted. “They had little incentive to use education and technology to increase efficiency and productivity or to use schooling as a means to train and discipline a more efficient work force” (Anderson 1988, 25). However, the planters realized that an education controlled by them was a potent tool of control. The Freedmen’s Bureau actively supported plantation schools as part of its conciliatory policy and made every attempt to design policies that were generally acceptable to Southern Whites.
The Freedmen’s School Curriculum

The American Tract Society

The American Tract Society⁶, a nondenominational conservative evangelical organization, considered the ex-slave inferior intellectually, morally, and culturally. An arm of the American Missionary Association, the American Tract Society believed it was their duty to civilize and train the Negro race (Anderson 1988; Butchart 1980; Cimbala and Miller 1999; Morris 1976/1981; Watkins 2001). The Association (1867) explained their beliefs:

The emotional character of these people renders their religion impulsive, tending to mere excitement, while the terrible curse of slavery has well nigh divorced, in their minds, a practical morality from emotional piety. This great evil can only be remedied by connecting most closely in all, and particularly the earlier stages of their progress, their intellectual and their religious training. In their homes, in the schools as well as in the church, must this blended teaching be maintained. This obvious necessity has largely dictated the policy of the Association in its efforts for their advancement. (21st Annual Report, 18 cited in Bullard 1980, 157)

Butchart (1976) and Watkins (2001) believed the main objectives of schools created by the Freedmen’s Bureau were to teach the Negro child his place in the world and to maintain social control by creating a “neutralized, pliant black race bound to the dominant society and culture” (Butchart 1976, 129-130). Textbooks designed specifically for Negroes would help the Bureau and Southern Whites fulfill their desired goals (Butchart 1976).

Textbooks

According to Butchart (1976), the American Tract Society took a blatant racist position and published the more popular texts used in freedmen schools including The
Anecdotes from the lives of Abraham Lincoln, Paul Cuffee, and Toussaint L’Ouverture emphasized the importance of hard work, loyalty, philanthropy, thrift, and “the need to ‘Americanize’ the African race” (Morris 1976/1981, 170). The curriculum stressed the importance of accepting the role given them in life, urged them to be content with their lowly station, and to behave themselves. Freedom was de-emphasized as a positive value, whilepliant, loyal labor was emphasized (Butchart 1976; Litwack 1998).

Textbooks almost always showed pictures of impeccably dressed middle-class Whites living in idyllic settings, while Negroes were always portrayed negatively. They were overweight, grinning, poorly dressed, living in ramshackle houses surrounded by trashy yards. Textbooks referred to Negroes as aunty or uncle or as Sue or Sam’s wife, while Whites were granted the honor of a title, Mr., Mrs. or Miss. White children were referred to as babies or children; Negro children as pickaninnies. Textbooks indicated that Negroes were destined to be the laborers and the plantation hands, and they would continue living in the old slave quarters in many cases. The message conveyed to Negro school children was ubiquitous. Negroes were subservient. They had no inspiration, will or creative intelligence of their own and were incapable of doing anything for themselves (Butchart 1976; Watkins 2001).

According to Litwack (1998) and (Morris 1976/1981), the American Tract Society and other Southern White religious organizations had no intention of instilling or even suggesting racial pride or racial equality within ex-slaves. Instead, they sought to produce a safe working corps for the South and a pious and moral membership for their churches. The
lessons in freedmen’s schools replicated the same lessons taught in the White schools and as Litwack (1998) contended, were “essentially a sanitized history of Anglo-Saxons and northern Europeans: Pilgrims, Puritans, and Founding Fathers” (71). The lessons contained no relevance to the lives of Negroes, to their ancestors or of their contributions in science, history, literature, law, and the fine arts (Litwack 1998; Woodson 1933/1969). In fact, Woodson (1933/1969) reasoned the early curriculum sought to “engender in whites a race hate of the Negro, and in the Negroes contempt for themselves” (17).

Publications

In addition to the previously mentioned textbooks, the American Tract Society also published a collection of cheaply made books, the *Freedmen’s Library*, primarily designed for adult classes and homes but which were adaptable to the regular classroom as well. *The Freedman* was a four-page monthly paper published by the American Tract Society to counter the *Anglo-African*, a Negro publication the American Tract Society considered inappropriate. *The Freedman* format remained the same each month and contained short memory verses, prose, poetry, and exercises in penmanship, reading and arithmetic. Like the textbooks, *The Freedman* emphasized the pervasive themes of loyalty, temperance, and domesticity and dealt with temptation, prayer, the Bible, sharing, temperance, and personal demeanor (Butchart 1976; Cimbala and Miller 1999).

Many of the Freedman’s Bureau’s emphases were contained in the closing paragraph of a serialized story entitled, “Our Home.” According to the story, Negroes had grown from brutes to understanding the importance of hard work, of learning to read and write, of following the necessary rules of society, and of living virtuous lives. By the end of the story, the Negroes were content and happy, living peaceful and orderly lives under the guidance of
a big-hearted master and a northern teacher. *The Freedman* was freely distributed and widely used in freedmen schools throughout the latter half of the 1860s (Butchart 1976). Anderson (1988) pointed out the Freedmen’s curriculum was patterned after the curriculum in the northern public schools and the number of schools sustained by the American Missionary Association had decreased substantially by 1874. Anderson (1988) expressed doubts of the long-range impact of the special books published by the American Missionary Society.

By the mid-1870s, the Association focused its efforts and funds on normal and higher education, both of which offered the traditional classical liberal curriculum (Anderson 1988). Education in the freedmen schools did not uplift the four million ex-slaves to an assured and self-sustaining place in the political, social, and economic realms of society (Butchart 1976; Cimbala and Miller 1999; Watkins 2001). Rather than liberating the ex-slaves and providing them access to political and economic power, education was the means by which Southern Whites used the former slaves for their own ends. The educational goal of the aid movement was to create useful, virtuous, Christian and obedient Blacks.

**Schools**

By March 1869, the Freedmen’s Bureau had spent almost two million dollars for rent and repairs on existing schools and had helped Negroes build 630 schoolhouses. Another two million dollars was appropriated for school buildings within the following three years. From 1863 to 1875, charities donated the Bureau over seven and one-half million dollars (Butchart 1980). The Bureau offered assistance and paid for the remainder of the job, which they referred to as “repair” once Negroes had secured land, agreed to pay a substantial share of the costs and proved they had done all they could to secure resources. The Bureau superintendent would then assist in school building (Bentley 1970).
In contrast to the strict regulations pertaining to freedmen, fraud was evident within the organization as Bureau agents divided profits with contractors who sometimes charged exorbitant prices to Negroes. In addition, the Bureau did not enforce its own rules and regulations which required examinations of prospective teachers, frequent inspections of city schools by their directors, and monthly reports from rural school teachers. According to Bentley (1970), some illiterate teachers presented fraudulent accounts and started schools simply to obtain the pay offered.

Discussing the contributions of the Bureau, DuBois (1903/1993) maintained it would be easy “to heap on the Freedmen’s Bureau all the evils of that evil day, and damn it utterly for every mistake and blunder that was made” (32). He believed the Bureau failed to complete major work the freedmen so direly needed and argued,

[I]t failed to begin the establishment of goodwill between ex-masters and freedmen, to guard its work wholly from paternalistic methods which discouraged self-reliance, and to carry out to any considerable extent its implied promised to furnish the freedmen with land. (33)

Bennett (1969/1975) and DuBois (1903/1933) believed the Bureau had been underfunded and its mission cut short long before it was fulfilled. Butchart (1980) acknowledged the Bureau’s potential as an instrument for social change, but believed the Bureau compromised freed slaves offering conciliation and co-optation in place of empowerment. According to Butchart (1980) the Bureau’s main function was to soothe the fears of Southern Whites. In fact, Bureau schools did not serve to liberate freed Blacks. Rather, the schools became another form of training for subservience correlated to “abandonment” (107) of Negroes.
The Freedmen’s Bureau was the basis of the Negro public school system and is credited with helping Negroes to establish 4,000 schools and hire 9,300 teachers for approximately 250,000 students (Bond 1934; DuBois 1903/1993; Nieman 1994). The Bureau’s belief that freedmen should learn self-sufficiency in order to support and control their own organizations helped propel Negroes to a tradition of racial solidarity and mutual aid in education. By 1871, there were eleven colleges and universities in the country specifically for Negroes. Among them were Howard University, Washington, D. C.; Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute, Hampton, Virginia; Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia; Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee; and Biddle Institute (now Johnson C. Smith), Charlotte, North Carolina (Bentley 1970).

**Welcome to The Promise Land**

*Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever . . .*  
[DuBois 1903/1993, 10]

**Prospering**

The sacrifices Negro parents in Wilmington and surrounding areas made to send their children to secondary school and college resulted in numerous opportunities for their advancement (Wooley 1977). Negroes occupied a central place in the economic life of Wilmington from 1865 until 1898. In fact, according to Wooley (1977), many of the port city’s Negro citizenry were so successful, *The Wilmington Record* (1897), declared, “Truly there is a noble place for this despised race somewhere in the future of this nation” (cited in Wooley 1977, 161).

Reverend Vass, a Negro field representative for the Southern missionary program of the American Baptist Publication Society, proclaimed Wilmington the freest town in the country for a Negro (Wooley 1977). Skilled Negro workers found jobs on the railroad and
truck farms, in the naval yard and turpentine stills. Unskilled laborers unable to find work in the port city migrated to other states in search of better lives and jobs. Like Negroes in other parts of the South, many in Wilmington were also laborers in the late 1800s. Some owned their farms but the majority were tenant farmers (Reaves 1998).

As early as 1866, Wilmington’s Negro entrepreneurs experienced a unique situation. Negro businesses dotted the downtown streets and, in many instances, most if not all of their patrons were White. Negroes owned ten of the eleven restaurants in the city and twenty of twenty-two barbershops. Three of the nine butchers and two of the city’s four tailors were Negroes. Negroes also dominated the boot and shoemaking occupations (Prather 1984; Reaves 1998).

Negroes established corporations including the Wilmington Livery Stable Company and the North Carolina Colored Mutual Enterprise Company. They owned several funeral homes and a newspaper. Negroes in service occupations such as cooks, janitors, porters, messengers, and waiters were given preferential treatment at a time when unemployment remained high among the city’s poor Whites. Hotels, private clubs, and banks, desiring a cultured personnel primarily employed Negroes who had developed a sophistication far exceeding their formal education while working in the private clubs or in the affluent homes of White aristocrats during slavery. They performed their duties as messengers, bellhops, and waiters with a noble appearance and articulate speech patterns that many of the city’s poor White population lacked (Prather 1984; Reaves 1998).

Severe unemployment among the poor White population increased the competition for jobs in Wilmington. Not surprisingly, the fact that Negro artisans were getting almost all
of the city’s business and laborers the majority of the service occupations created growing racial tension (Prather 1984; Reaves 1998).

**Political Power and Disenfranchisement**

*For this much all men know: despite compromise, war, and struggle,

the Negro is not free

[DuBois 1903/1993, 36]*

After ratification of the *Fifteenth Amendment* on May 2, 1870, most Negroes in Wilmington joined the Republican Party. In the years just after the war, Negro men experienced tremendous success in local politics. They held several executive positions in the local party and were nominated for various positions from state legislator to local assessor. Republicans represented the majority rule in local politics and captured 68 percent of the vote in April 1869. However, Democrats regained control of the state legislature in the 1877 election.

By the late 1880s, the publication of a letter written by Representative Daniel L. Russell to the Executive Committee of the state’s Republican Party created racial tension in the city. Russell protested that the majority of Southern Negroes were savages and “no more fit to govern than are their brethren in African swamps or so many Mongolians dumped down from pagan Asia” (cited in Reaves 1998, 241). Thus, Russell blamed the demise of the Republican’s power on Negro representation in the party.

While Russell was a judge in a nearby town, he had prosecuted a Negro man for larceny. Russell declared, “[A]ll Negroes are natural born thieves; they will steal six days in the week and go off to church Sundays, pray and shout their sins off and return to the bosom of their race, honored and respected members” (cited in Reaves 1998, 241). Marvin Brown
(2000) reported similar convictions were echoed in “virtually every mid-1880s issue of Wilmington’s White newspapers” (20). Brown (2000) cited the October 2, 1886, issue of the Democratic Morning Star as an example:

No man is fit to represent the white taxpayers of the East, or of what are known as the “Negro counties”—those counties in which the Negroes control, with the assistance or otherwise of white Radicals, who is in favor of this resolution . . .

If the present system of County Government is abolished, and it will be if the Radicals get control, then New Hanover county and Bladen and Craven and Pender and Lenoir and the other counties under Negro domination will be in a fearful condition. Are the white men of the East ready to accept again the [Reconstructionist military commander] General Canby system that was fastened upon us by bayonets and a stuffed ballot and laws of disfranchisement?

(20)

The Republican Party was split. There were White Republicans against Negro Republicans.

Independent Republicans

Some Negroes in the city formed an independent Republican Party directly refuting Russell’s accusations and the tendency of Republicans to elect White men rather than Negroes to paid party positions. Most Negroes were Republicans. New Hanover County and Wilmington were centers of Republican strength in southeastern North Carolina. Even after the Democrats gained control of the state, New Hanover and Wilmington remained Republican strongholds until violence and Negro disfranchisement made the county and city safely Democratic. From 1867 to 1898, Negroes in New Hanover not only voted
Republican, Negro Republicans also held county, legislative, and municipal offices. Nevertheless, control of the party remained in the hands of Whites. Yet, Negro politicians maintained the Negro voter held the balance of power and that his interests should receive proper attention (McDuffie 1979; Wooley 1977).

**Fusion Politics**

McDuffie (1979) and Wooley (1977) contended the active participation of Negroes in the political process was contrary to the expectations of many Whites. Negroes rejected Whites’ theory of servility and strove to transition from slavery to political prominence. However, Southern Whites resented the aspirations of Negroes. Southern Whites were disgusted by the intrusion of so many Negro politicians in what they considered their rightful domain. They abhorred the Negroes’ disregard for the advice of White leaders (McDuffie 1979; Wooley 1977).

By 1894, White Republican leaders were aware that the Negro vote was becoming too powerful and difficult to control. Hence, the “lily-white faction” convinced leadership that achieving White solidarity, via the fusion of Populist and Republican forces, was the best opportunity for electoral success. They maintained there were enough White Republican and Populist votes to defeat the Democrats even if Negro Republicans refused to cooperate with the Populists and defect (Reaves 1998).

North Carolina Democrats were shocked by the stunning defeat they had suffered in 1894. “Fusion government had almost swept the field! The old political order had been overthrown” (Wooley 1977, 68). No one had predicted Republican victory. The Fusionist coalition rewarded loyal Negroes throughout the state with political positions and
government jobs (Reaves 1998). Negro voters held at least one thousand government positions in North Carolina after the 1894 Fusion victory (Prather 1984).

Negroes held professional positions in Wilmington, as well. They included doctors, druggists, teachers, and lawyers, who practiced in city, state, and federal courts in the city. Many Whites in the city also considered Negroes holding office as “an inherent affront to White supremacy” (Wooley 1977, 169). To them, all Negro officials were demeaning. Some were deemed even more detestable than others because their official duties vividly dramatized the threat of Negro office holding to the established caste system. For example, a Negro register of deeds officiated over White real estate transfers. Negro school committeemen supervised White schools and hired White female teachers. A Negro county treasurer paid county personnel a majority of whom were White, and all teachers, including White females. Negro health inspectors inspected White homes and a Negro in the county clerk’s office signed White marriage licenses (Wooley 1977).

Wilmington’s White population was appalled at the rise in the Negro population’s self-assuredness. Historically the dominant influence in the city, the romantic Cape Fear aristocrats “had always thought of themselves in terms of poetic license rather than prose reality” (Wooley 1977, 172). In 1896, Daniel Russell became the first Republican governor in North Carolina since Reconstruction (Prather 1984). Under Russell’s influence, politics in Wilmington took a dramatic change. Two Republican factions were established: the Republican Afro League vowed to fight State legislation aimed at reducing their civil rights and the White Man’s Republican Party aimed “to run the Negro out of office and out of local employment” (Reaves 1998, 244). The success of the White Man’s Republican Party would significantly change life for Negroes in the city.
Prather (1984) believed Whites in Wilmington were also outraged that many of the city’s influential Negroes chose to live in integrated neighborhoods rather than in Brooklyn, the city’s predominant Negro community which spanned the entire northern section of the city. Most of the houses in the Brooklyn area were unattractive two-room shanties. Here and there, the houses of the Negro bourgeoisie dotted the neighborhood. Wooley (1977) claimed many Negro officials who lived in attractive homes as well as maintained magisterial offices in Wilmington, served as constant reminders to Whites of offensive “humiliating black politicization” (169-170). He contended that to many Whites, Negro officeholding “marred the beauty of their political fabric” (131).

Wooley (1977) claimed it was the Negro postmaster who represented the most potent threat to Whites. A White resident of Milton County expressed his disgust in a letter to his State Representative, “You know in a small town like ours a colored man is objectionable on account of so many ladies having to go to the Post Office” (anonymous cited in Wooley 1977, 132-133). Wooley (1977) emphasized that the very presence of Negroes in positions of authority undermined the prevailing norms of White supremacy. The reversal of roles was more than many Whites could stand.

**Majority Status**

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the population of North Carolina was approximately one-third Negroes and two-thirds White. While Negroes were a significant and important minority in the state, they were in the majority in New Hanover County and in the city of Wilmington. They remained in the majority until the beginning of the twentieth century. Prather (1984) claimed the General Assembly’s efforts to rectify the racial imbalance by carving Pender County out of New Hanover County in 1875 failed.
Negroes not only continued to exceed Whites in New Hanover County, they were also the majority population in the newly created Pender County. In 1880, Negroes represented almost 62 percent of New Hanover County’s population, approximately 60 percent of the Wilmington population, and nearly 56 percent of Pender County’s population. The percentage of Negroes in the three counties dropped considerably after the 1890s.

Negroes in Wilmington were not the only ones to experience significant political and economic gains during Reconstruction, Negroes in several other states experienced similar success. Between 1866 and the late 1890s, Negroes served as lieutenant governors in Mississippi and South Carolina. Louisiana had a Negro governor. A Negro was secretary of state in Florida. A Negro served on the state supreme court in South Carolina. Negroes functioned as superintendents of education, state treasurers, adjutant generals, solicitors, judges, and major generals of militia. They sat in the House of Representatives. Fourteen Negroes from the South were elected to Congress. Two Negroes in Mississippi went to the Senate. In fact, Bennett (1969) asserted, Negro independence and assertiveness threatened the supremacy of the White South.

Henry Grady (1887), editor of the Atlanta Constitution, affirmed the position of Southern Whites to take back and maintain the supremacy of Whites. He voiced the beliefs of White supremacists declaring the supremacy of the White race. This declaration “has abided forever in the marrow of our bones, and shall run forever with the blood that feeds Anglo-Saxon hearts” (Grady 1887, 264 cited in Litwack 1998, 218). Whites used violence and intimidation to maintain their superior social status. In many Southern cities, Negro rule was overturned only after bloodshed (Shapiro 1988).
Policemen and government officials joined by secret White supremacist organizations including the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, Red Shirts, the White League, Mother’s Little Helpers, and the Baseball Club of the First Baptist Church united forces in a struggle to maintain the political and social dominance they had enjoyed before the war (Hollandsworth 2001; Reaves 1998). Business pressure, vote buying, the lash, the hangman’s noose, the torch, and the gun crushed Negroes and their White allies and contributed to the eventual downfall of the Reconstruction governments (Reaves 1998). From 1865 through 1898, terror prevailed in many parts of the South as Whites insisted on caste demarcation and crucified, burned, raped, hung, and shot Negroes and their supporters so they might remain in a servile position under them. The highly organized campaigns for White supremacy would not leave Negroes in Wilmington unscathed.

The Cost of Being Free

Stepping Over the Line

Lo! We are . . . dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain;

What need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man’s ballot, by force or fraud, -

and behold the suicide of a race!

[DuBois 1903/1993, 14]

Prather (1984) reported that in early 1898, a group of nine influential White citizens of Wilmington formulated plans to take control of Wilmington and reestablish White supremacy (Prather 1984). Negroes had stepped across the line White society had drawn for them. They were to never forget where that line lay. Clearly, they had forgotten their
‘place.’ Negroes were to keep their mouths shut, except when addressing Whites as “sire” and “ma’am”. They were to keep their eyes averted, “hooded with feigned ignorance,” (Powledge 1991, 22) and if they met a White on the sidewalk, they were to “step off it and down into the gutter,” (23) if necessary, until the Whites had passed. To many White residents, the Negro was the equivalent of a child and Whites were doing him a favor by taking care of him. In return, Negroes were expected to perform for them on command. According to Powledge (1991) the message from Whites to Negroes was unequivocal:

If you deliberately refuse to do these things—if you step out of line, if you forget ‘your place’ or even act as if you have forgotten—you can get in a lot of trouble. You can have your face slapped, or you can be lynched. Or we can starve you economically” (22-23).

**White Supremacy**

White supremacy had been on the rise throughout North Carolina since the Democratic Executive Committee issued a statewide call for White unity in 1897. In an effort to disrupt the coalition of Black Republicans and White Populists who had been in office since 1894, the Democratic Party, the self-proclaimed White supremacy party, conducted a campaign of racist appeals and political violence throughout North Carolina. The Fusion coalition that included White and Black members threatened the power of both the remaining old planter class and the emerging industrial leaders of the New South (Prather 1984).

According to Cecelski and Tyson (1998), Democratic leaders declared North Carolina would not be “negroized,” claiming it was of all the States of the Union, the home of the Anglo-Saxon, and should, therefore, be governed by the Anglo-Saxon (4). The Democrats
proposed that the political campaign of 1898 would be one of redemption. Grassroots White supremacy clubs were formed with both women and boys under twenty years old allowed membership without voting privileges (Prather 1984).

A reporter at the *Washington Post* emphasized the prominent and important role Wilmington’s business leaders played in the White supremacy campaign. Many merchants, bank presidents, clergymen, lawyers, and reputable citizens joined the supremacist fray. The result was that the White man’s ticket succeeded, not because Whites were in the majority but because only Whites were allowed to vote (Shapiro 1988). Whites asserted they owned the state “and would have it peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must” (Shapiro 1988, 66). Charles Aycock, who at the time was not yet governor of North Carolina, joined Josephus Daniels, the newly-elected chairman of the Democratic Party, and Furnifold Simmons in a meeting in New Bern, North Carolina in March 1898, to devise a way to regain the power from the Fusionists (Cecelski and Tyson 1998).

**Mounting Tensions**

Governor Aycock (1898) described Wilmington as “the storm center of the White Supremacy movement” and believed the city, with its Negro majority, epitomized the problem of Negro rule, providing “fertile ground for stories of Negro outrages” (cited in Cecelski and Tyson 1998, 75). To justify the revolutionary methods by which governments were overthrown, Southern Whites created a ploy of homeland security considered by many as a brilliant strategy (Cecelski and Tyson 1998). Daniels and other conservative Democrats across the state were more than willing to publish fictitious stories about Negroes on a daily basis (Reaves 1998). Local correspondents forwarded newspaper stories of street altercations, sassy Negro women hitting innocent White girls with umbrellas, various assaults, attempts to
rape, and of rapes. The safety of the White home became the Democrat’s campaign slogan (Cecelski and Tyson 1998). The White-owned *Wilmington Messenger* placed the following chant on the front page the day before the November 1898 elections:

*Rise, ye sons of Carolina!*

*Proud Caucasians, one and all;*

*Be not deaf to Love’s appealing—*

*Hear your wives and daughters call,*

*See their blanched and anxious faces,*

*Note their frail, but lovely forms;*

*Rise, defend their spotless virtue*

*With your strong and manly arms*

(cited in Cecelski and Tyson 1998, 74-75).

The *Raleigh News and Observer* and other Democratic newspapers began a “smear campaign against black men, claiming that rapes and other attacks on white women had increased under the Fusion administration” (Prather 1984, 71). The *Wilmington Messenger* resuscitated a year-old keynote speech given by Rebecca Felton, wife of ex-Georgia Congressman W. H. Felton, at an agricultural society meeting in Tybee, Georgia (Prather 1984; Reaves 1998).

Felton emphasized the needed protection of White women in isolated districts of the South and spoke of strong White men who had told her they had moved to town and stopped farming because their womenfolk were too scared to be left alone (Prather 1984; Reaves 1998). Felton remarked that some Southern White men had neglected White women and allowed things to deteriorate to the point that the only solution was to lynch the Black rapists, a
pronouncement that aligned perfectly with the White supremacists’ campaign (Cecelski and Tyson 1998). Felton (1898) was goading White men into lynching Black men:

> When there is not enough religion in the pulpit to organize a crusade against sin, nor justice in the court house to promptly punish crime . . . [and] if it needs lynching to protect woman’s dearest possession form ravening beasts—then I say lynch, a thousand times a week if necessary (cited in Prather 1984, 71).

Alex Manly, editor of the *Daily Record*, a Black newspaper in Wilmington, questioned the basis for the hysteria over rape and tried to redress the rape scare. He infuriated Whites across North Carolina and the nation. Manly pointed out that papers were frequently filled with accusations of rapes of White women and of the subsequent lynchings of the alleged Negro rapists but were devoid of reports of the rapes of Negro women committed by White men (Prather 1984). Manly questioned the legitimacy of the alleged rape crimes against White women and the hypocrisy of Christian principles that were directed only to Whites and not to Negroes.

According to Reaves (1998), the Democrat press reprinted Manly’s editorial “often misconstruing its contents, and published it across the state” (246-247). Democratic newspapers intentionally omitted that portion of Manly’s article and focused, primarily, on Manly’s discussion of clandestine meetings between White women and Negro men and between White men and Negro women (Prather 1984). Manly infuriated Whites by denouncing White men as hypocrites for raping Black women. Manly (1898) asserted,

> You set yourselves down as a lot of carping hypocrites; in fact, you cry aloud for the virtue of your women while you seek to destroy the morality of ours.
Don’t think ever that your women will remain pure while you are debauching ours. You sow the seed—the harvest will come in due time (cited in Prather 1984, 73).

Newspapers across the nation carried the article. Headlines read: *Negro Editor Slanders White Women; Negro Defamer of White Women; A Horrid Slander of White Women*; and *Infamous Attack on White Women* (Prather 1984; Reaves 1998). Manly received threatening letters: “Leave [town] on the pain of death; stop the publishing of that paper; apologize for that slander” (Prather 1984, 74-75). Newspapers even called for Negroes to run Manly out of town. For the next three months, Democratic campaigners used Manly’s article to incite hatred of Negroes among Whites and fear of the ballot among Negroes (Reaves 1998; Prather 1984). Whites (1898) predicted their victory “by hook or crook, peacefully if possible, by revolution if necessary” (cited in Prather 1984, 74-75). Whites held parades, marches, and rallies. Newspapers gave daily notices of White supremacy meetings with free food and moonshine. White supremacy groups in Wilmington pooled their money and bought a rapid-firing Gatling gun for $1,200 (Cecelski and Tyson 1998).

**The Violence of 1898**

The Democrats were on an unrelenting quest to recapture their dominance in the city. White Government Unions complete with a White Constitution and bylaws had been organized in every voting precinct during the summer of 1898. On November 3, 1898, five days before the election, a group of White supremacists rode on horseback through the Negro neighborhoods of the city. On the eve of the election in Wilmington, Waddell, one of the prime instigators of the 1898 violence, told Whites if they found Negroes out voting, they
were to instruct them to leave the polls, and to kill them if they refused (Prather 1984). Democrats were quoted in the *Washington Post* (1898) saying:

> It has become necessary after twenty years of uninterrupted peace and Christian civilization, to teach the Southern Negroes that they cannot rule over the property and the destinies of the superior race and that lesson will be taught on Tuesday next, we solemnly believe (cited in Prather 1984, 68).

Whites held pistols in the faces of Negro voters. Ambush rifle shots rang out. That night, as the votes were being counted, ceiling kerosene lamps were put out and table lamps extinguished and blown out by gunfire. Despite numerous irregularities, Democrats in Wilmington were victorious at the end of Election Day, November 8, 1898.

The White newspaper announced a mass meeting of all White men in the city the following morning (Prather 1984). Approximately 1,000 White men filled the county courtroom. Colonel Alfred Waddell read the crowd part of the new *Wilmington Declaration of Independence* (1898) penned by a Supremacist group referred to as the Secret Nine. The Declaration reaffirmed the necessity of terminating the White/Negro coalition (Prather 1984). It read in part:

> [T]he Constitution of the United States contemplated a government to be carried on by an enlightened people . . . and its framers did not anticipate the enfranchisement of an ignorant population of African origin, and . . .the men of the state of North Carolina who joined in forming the Union did not contemplate for their descendants as subjection to an inferior race (1898 cited in Prather 1984, 108).
The new *Wilmington Declaration of Independence* intoned that Negroes were mentally inferior to Whites and would never again be allowed to rule in Wilmington and New Hanover County (Howell 1930; Prather 1984). Four hundred forty-two men signed the Declaration (Cecelski and Tyson 1998).

On the morning of Thursday, November 10, 1898, about 500 heavily armed White men and boys, members of groups such as the Secret Nine, the Redshirts, and the Rough Riders lined up in front of the armory in Wilmington (Cecelski and Tyson 1998; Howell 1930). With Waddell leading the procession, the men marched four abreast through the city to Alex Manly’s newspaper office. Approximately 25 men battered the door down, demolished Alex Manly’s press, and threw his equipment into the street. Before the men left, the building was ablaze and had burned down by the time the firemen arrived (Howell 1930). Forewarned, Alex Manly had already escaped to Asbury Park, New Jersey (Reaves 1998).

Armed with repeating rifles and rapid-fire guns, the organized White militia, including members of the United States Naval Reserves and the Wilmington Light Infantry, invaded Brooklyn, the heart of the Negro community. Reverend J. Allen Kirk recalled the militia murdered and threw the bodies of hundreds of Negroes into the Cape Fear River. Whites outgunned the Negro men who attempted to defend their homes with antique revolvers and shotguns (Reaves 1998). They drove hundreds of Negroes into the woods, into cemeteries, and out of town. *The Caucasian* (1898), A Raleigh newspaper, wrote, “the roads were lined with [blacks], some carrying their bedding on their heads and whatever effects could be carried” (cited in Cecelski and Tyson 1998, 36).

Whites took over Negroes’ property including their homes and businesses and gave Whites all the government jobs previously held by Negroes (Cecelski and Tyson 1998).
Before night fell, a political coup had unfolded and Wilmington was under new Democratic leadership. Citizens forced a former postmaster, the ex-chief of Police, a magistrate, the mayor and others who allegedly helped to incite the Negroes in their unwise course of action, to resign and then marched them through the main streets forcing them to leave the city by train. Leaders of the massacre and the coup d’état took control (Howell 1930; Prather 1984).

Estimates of the number of Negroes killed in the Wilmington violence vary. However, official inquests were held with regard to the deaths of only seven men. The Washington Post reported that a prominent White leader of the mob stated as many as 25 Negroes had actually been killed. Hugh McRae, the textile mill owner and industrialist who helped initiate the massacre, boasted of 90 dead. Many Wilmington Negroes believed the death toll actually exceeded 300. The Post (1898) reported several Negroes, particularly children, had died of exposure among the hundreds who fled to the woods in the aftermath of the Wilmington bloodshed (in Prather 1984).

Nearly 1,500 Negroes left Wilmington, contrary to the Wilmington Messenger which reported only 400 leaving by train within the month. The 1900 census noted a drop of almost eight percent in Wilmington’s Negro population (Litwack 1998). Negroes represented 58 percent of the total population in Wilmington in 1896. By 1900, the percentage of Negroes in the city had dropped to 49.6 percent (Godwin 2000).

Cecelski and Tyson (1998) argued historians misrepresented the 1898 violence that occurred in Wilmington by referring to it as a riot, “even though it was certainly not the spontaneous outbreak of violence that “riot” implies” (6). They insisted the events in Wilmington were part of a well-orchestrated plan to end interracial cooperation, restore White supremacy, and in the process, ensure the rule of the plantation owners and industrial leaders.
According to Cecelski and Tyson (1998), historians have only recently begun to steer away from using the term, ‘race riot,’ and are, instead, using more appropriate terms like “coup d’etat, massacre, revolt and revolution” (6). Nevertheless, they asserted:

Each conveys a part of the truth, yet none captures the full scope of these events. . . . In its overall effect, however, the event was nothing less than a revolution against interracial democracy: its aftermath brought the birth of the Jim Crow social order, the end of black voting rights, and the rise of a one-party political system in the South that strangled the aspirations of generations of blacks and whites (1998, 6).

Godwin (2000) concurred. He believed the White supremacy campaigns of 1896-1900, which led to what he called the Wilmington Racial Massacre, became the defining event which established North Carolina’s “progressive ethos as a kind of class ideology for a plutocracy of wealth hostile to democracy and anxious to promote its own hegemony through the deliberate exploitation of racial prejudice and fear” (5).

**Jim Crow**

Godwin (2000) believed that racially segregated industries, extremely low wages, hostility to labor unions, and a Jim Crow system of justice which consistently discriminated against Blacks, helped to define some of the ways in which North Carolina fell short of its own progressive vision in the twentieth century. This tendency was even more pronounced for Wilmington and the Cape Fear region. He contended, however, that although the intimidation of both Blacks and Whites may have been harshest in Wilmington, every corner of the state was adversely affected during the elections of 1898. Few communities escaped
racial terrorism. Whites had violently taken back control of their government and no one had stopped them (Cecelski and Tyson 1998).

Summary

Life changed significantly for Blacks during the years of Reconstruction. With the initial assistance of the Freedmen’s Bureau, the former slaves were able to secure jobs, homes, clothing, and food. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments granted them enfranchisement and citizenship. They achieved political, economic, and social success. The liberties were short-lived, however, as vindictive Whites and former slaveholders engaged in violent acts and took back the political and social dominance they had enjoyed before the war. As Douglass (1845/1993) argued, the Negro was “in a condition but little above that in which they were found before the rebellion” (502). In many instances, the reconstructive measures had failed. Upon the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, “the road to freedom had twisted and turned and doubled back on itself” (Bennett 1975, 202).

A major part of Chapter Four focused on the effects of Reconstruction and Redemption on Black life in Wilmington, North Carolina, where White resistance to Black progress was particularly evident. The historical origins of Negro schools were explored.

The Negroes’ struggle for education in the aftermath of the Civil War was the effort of an oppressed people to put as great a distance between themselves and bondage as possible. From a social perspective, education should not only cultivate the intellect but a person’s feelings, imagination, and aspiration as well. Education should instill within a person a critical appreciation of the values that make civilized society possible. From a political viewpoint, education should develop a person’s ability to exercise his rights of citizenship in an intelligent manner and from an economic standpoint, education should
improve a person’s standard of living and value in contributing to society (Butchart 1980). However, the education masses of Negroes received prepared them for a life of subordination.

Redemption, as the post-Reconstruction era was referred to by many Southern Whites, obliterated many of the gains Blacks had made during Reconstruction. Would it also stamp out the most significant gain of all - the right and the privilege to educate their children?

Chapter Five will discuss the implications of the political system on the educational structures of the Black community. The chapter examines how the social, economic, and political conditions of the post-Redemptive period influenced educational practices in Wilmington and in greater North Carolina and by the extension of the United States Negro population.
CHAPTER FIVE
CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN PATH TO CANAAN

Up the new path the advance guard toiled, slowly, heavily, doggedly; only those who have watched and guided the faltering feet, the misty minds, the dull understandings of the dark pupils of these schools know how faithfully, how piteously, this people strove to learn.

[DuBois 1903/ 1993, 12]

The quest for education has been of paramount importance to African Americans before they were first brought to the United States as slaves. It has been this quest that has evoked so much controversy throughout their history. Denied the privilege of education as slaves, freed Negroes overcame relentless adversity to be educated. They realized education was the key to restructuring their lives and advancing their new freedom. The Freedmen’s Bureau helped establish numerous schools in the state for ex-slaves. Chapter Five discusses the development of the state-supported public school system in North Carolina and the efforts of Governor Aycock to establish universal education for all children in the state.

Establishing Public Schools in North Carolina

In 1866, the North Carolina General Assembly abolished the Office of Superintendent of Common Schools and appropriated $100,000 to the State Board of Education to organize a system of public schools. In 1868, the State Board of Education appointed S. S. Ashley, a minister from Massachusetts, the first superintendent of North Carolina schools. Ashley considered the education of Negroes important and appointed Bishop J. W. Hood, a Negro minister from Pennsylvania, as the Assistant State Superintendent of Public Instruction to supervise the public school interests of Negro children. Upon his appointment, Hood visited
and inspected the approximately 152 Colored
schools in the state which had been
established or assisted by the Freedmen’s Bureau and other ‘benevolent’ organizations.
Theses schools enrolled almost 12,000 students and employed 224 teachers (Rodgers 1975).

**Separate but Equal**

From the beginning, Assistant State Superintendent Hood believed the education of
Colored children should be entrusted to Colored people. Responding to State legislation
regarding the status of White and Colored children in their respective schools, Hood asserted
that both Coloreds and Whites would want to maintain their own separate schools. Coloreds,
he said, would prefer Colored teachers just as they preferred Colored preachers. Hood
extended gratitude to Northern White teachers who came to the South to teach Colored pupils
but argued, “it is impossible for white teachers, educated as they necessarily are in this
country, to enter into the feelings of colored pupils as the colored teacher does” (cited in
Rodgers 1975, 25). Hood was concerned that White teachers could not successfully teach
Colored students without imparting the idea of White superiority.

Hood maintained White teachers would not provide sufficient positive psychological
support to instill self-pride in Colored children and make them feel as though they were
competent and worthy human beings. He denounced the practice of White teachers teaching
Colored children:

I do not believe that it is good for our children to eat and drink daily the
sentiment that they are naturally inferior to the whites, which they do in three-
fourths of all the schools where they have white teachers. There are numbers
of colored people who really think that they are naturally inferior to white
people. Nothing tries me more than to hear a black man make this admission;
and yet they cannot be expected to do otherwise, when they learn it as they learn their letters, and it grows with their growth and strengthens with their strength. Taking this view of the case, I shall always do what I can to have colored teachers for colored schools (cited in Rodgers 1975, 26).

Hood urged the establishment of one or more normal schools to train Colored teachers and continually pressed for quality education for Colored students. At the same time, he objected to making the distinction of Colored and White schools part of the State Constitution. Hood made it clear that Colored students had no desire to attend schools with White children; thus, there was no need to include the distinction of race in the Constitution (Rodgers 1975). Hood’s preference for separate but equal schools for Colored students was that the separation occur by mutual consent and interest than by law. He contended that if Colored children were provided with good schools they would stay out of White schools. Thus, both parties’ interests would be naturally obtained (Rodgers 1975). From a political standpoint, Negroes believed they had greater rights to public education without specifying the status of both groups in the State Constitution.

In March 1868, a compromise to establishing separate education for Negro and White pupils was offered by Representative W. J. Hayes, a Negro legislator from Halifax County. The resolution read, in part:

Resolved, That it is the sense of this Convention that intermarriages and illegal intercourse between the races should be discountenanced, and the interests and happiness of the two races would be best promoted by the establishment of separate schools (cited in Rodgers 1975, 26).

However, it was a resolution proposed by Jacob W. Bowman, the White chairman of the
Committee on Education that finally made separate education for Negro and White students in North Carolina compulsory. The two Negro members of the legislature cast the only dissenting votes (Rodgers 1975).

Public schools for North Carolina’s Negro students were established on a segregated basis during the 1873-1874 school year. Bringing free public education to Negro children in North Carolina proved problematic from the beginning. Foremost was the objection of most Whites to the education of Negroes. Secondly, there were never enough Negro teachers. Third, the White teachers who agreed to teach Negro children were constantly harassed and ostracized by other members of the White community. The difference in the length of school terms also posed a problem. The average length of terms in rural schools was only about thirteen weeks while the average length of terms in cities and towns was much longer, eight to ten months. Hence, urban education was more costly as well as more comprehensive. Longer terms could only be approved by vote of cities and towns. In addition, local and state governments relinquished support of Negro education soon after the dissolution of the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1877 (Rodgers 1975).

In 1873, the State Educational Association was established to strengthen popular education and to lengthen school terms throughout the state, but the association failed to win total public support. In 1881, the North Carolina General Assembly authorized the appointment of a county superintendent. In 1885 the Assembly established the county board of education to administer the county school systems (Brown 1964). Nonetheless, Negro education, and anyone who supported it, continued to come under strong attack, especially after 1900 as Southern Whites sought to enforce White supremacy and segregation in all areas of life. The framework of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) played a significant role in the
separate and unequal schooling of Negroes. According to Brown (1964), some Whites asserted, “the growth of black education must be tied to the expansion of white education” (40). In many Whites’ minds that meant the educational needs of Whites must be met before considering the educational needs of Negroes (Anderson and Moss 1999).

**Separate and Unequal**

The *Plessy* (1896) case involved Homer Plessy, a 30 year old mixed race cobbler, who agreed to test the constitutionality of the *Separate Car Act* for a Louisiana group called the Citizens’ Committee (Appiah and Gates 1999). New Orleans’ trains, which had been segregated just prior to the Civil War, were desegregated in 1867 and re-segregated in 1890. The *Separate Car Act* mandated separate railway cars for Negroes and Whites. Plessy was arrested after admitting to being a Negro on a WHITES-ONLY train and was found guilty by Judge John Ferguson. Plessy, believing his mixed heritage made him more White than Negro, argued his personal rights under the *Thirteenth* and *Fourteenth Amendments*. He lost, appealed the case as *Plessy v. Ferguson* to the Supreme Court and was again found guilty and ordered to pay a $25 fine. By an overwhelming 7 to 1 vote (one justice did not participate) the court ruled the “separate but equal accommodations for blacks constituted a reasonable use of police power” (Appiah and Gates 1999, 1532) as long as the separate accommodations were equal. The ‘separate but equal’ phrase had originated in *Roberts v. City of Boston* in which Massachusetts Chief Justice Shaw wrote that if prejudice did, in fact, exist, it was not created by law, and therefore, could not be changed by law (Appiah and Gates 1999).

The majority opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson* was, “legislation was powerless to eradicate racial instincts” (163 U.S., 544). In addition it was not the intent of the *Fourteenth*
Amendment to enforce social equality as distinguished from political equality or to enforce the “commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to each other” (163 U.S., 544). Separate but equal became the law nationwide. The court ruled that as long as equal facilities were provided, classification by race was not a violation of a person's rights.

The Plessy ruling violated both the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Constitutional Amendments which guaranteed equal protection of the law to all citizens. Justice Harlan, the lone dissenter in the case, set out to prove the unconstitutionality of the decision. He argued the Separate Car Act not only separated the races but it did so to oblige White racial prejudice. Harlan (1896) believed the decision would further induce seeds of race hatred and perpetuate feelings of distrust between the two races under the sanctions of law. He (1896) argued:

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 the law which, practically, puts the brand of servitude and degradation upon a large class of our fellow-citizens, our equals before the law (163 U.S., 562).

Harlan realized that Africans imported to this country and sold as slaves, were not and would never be recognized as citizens under the Constitution. He believed Negroes would remain under dominant rule and would never realize the rights or privileges held by those in power. Justice Harlan (1896) believed separation based on race could not be justified on any legal basis and included the following prophecy in his dissent:

The thin disguise of equal accommodations for passengers in railroad coaches will not mislead anyone nor atone for the wrong this day done . . . The
judgment this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the
decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott case (163 U.S., 559, 562).

Henry Brown (1896), justice for the majority, rejected the idea that “the enforced
separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority” (163 U.S.,
551). He argued:

If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, solely because the
colored race chooses to put that construction upon it. 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 (163 U.S., 551).

The Court explicitly recognized separate schools for White and Negro children was a general
American practice, not unique to the South. Referred to as the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine,
the Plessy decision paved the way for the segregation of Negroes in all walks of life (Ploski
and Williams 1989; Wilson and Segall 2001). Historically, however, accommodations have
seldom, if ever been equal, only separate.

Segregation statutes, already an integral part of Southern life, multiplied rapidly
after the Supreme Court wrote the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine into the law. “Whites Only,”
“For Colored Only,” “White,” “Colored,” “Colored this Way, “No Negroes Allowed” signs
became a way of life in the South and instructed Negroes on where they could legally, eat,
drink, sit, stand, rest, walk, and entertain themselves. From one’s birth to one’s death, this
nation maintained a system of separation operating in favor of Whites only. Negro babies and
White babies could not be born in the same hospitals or on the same wards. Negro bodies and
White bodies could not be buried in the same cemeteries. Negro and White witnesses in the
courts administered oaths on separate Bibles. Negroes could not eat in White establishments even though many Whites ate the food prepared by Negroes in their homes and were even fed the milk from a Negro woman’s breast. Negroes holding identical tickets to Whites could not ride in the same part of public conveyance as Whites, unless they were domestic workers accompanying their employer or the employer’s child (Litwack 1998). The position of superior and inferior had to be absolutely clear. The law constantly reminded Negroes that no matter their station in life, whether they were respectable or discreditable, they were not entitled to equal treatment with even the poorest Whites. Negroes could go anywhere and do almost anything in the South provided it was done in a manner denoting their inferiority (Litwack 1998; Wilson and Segall 2001).

The established color line and the maintenance of racial supremacy allowed for little dissent. The concern for many Negroes was not so much with ending racial separation as it was with eradicating inequality. “[T]hey resented paying first-class fares for second-class accommodations” (Litwack 1998, 243). They wanted most to improve their facilities, to make them equal to the Whites’. It would be more than half a century later, however, before an organized mass movement would directly confront the foundations of White supremacy.

**Segregated Schools**

According to Ferguson (1962), former director of the Division of Negro Education, Negro children in more than 950 public school districts did not have schoolhouses, while Negro children in 1,132 districts attended facilities that were very poorly built and furnished (1). Less than one third of the Negro children attended school in the state. The average school term was for seventy days and only thirty systems levied a local tax in support of schools. Many Negro schools were old, funded at a meager two cents per child per day, and
staffed by poorly trained Negro teachers paid very low wages. North Carolina was apathetic toward public education when Governor Charles B. Aycock took office on January 15, 1901. Ferguson (1962) reported the governor immediately began a campaign to improve the State’s public schools.

Convinced of “the equal right of every child born on earth to have the opportunity to burgeon out all that is within him,” Governor Aycock (1901) took his message for universal education for both races to the people of North Carolina. According to Ferguson (1962), even the most progressive towns were against raising taxes to support schools and that one town after “voting the tax, and after trying the public schools for a year or two, voted the tax out, closed the school, and celebrated the event with bonfires and brass bands” (2). Governor Aycock stated that thousands of conscientious, intelligent, and patriotic citizens could not understand why they should pay taxes to educate other people’s children. Some were willing to support schools for White children but were doggedly against educating the Negro child (Ferguson 1962). Governor Aycock (1901) acknowledged:

These people appear to have been willing to deny education to white children in order that they might keep the Negro in ignorance. Thus to complicate a situation already sufficiently difficult, the race issue injected its poison into the very vitals of the problem (cited in Ferguson 1962, 2).

Governor Aycock (1901) was in full support of educating Negroes and “pledged that his administration would be devoted to improving the public schools for all the children of the state, no matter how poor or humble” (cited in Westin 1967, 140). Governor Aycock continued his campaign for universal education despite limited State support while concurrently seeking the financial assistance of Northern philanthropists. In 1901, on the
first of a series of Pullman-train excursions with Southern White education leaders and Northern White philanthropists, he launched the Southern Education Movement

In 1898, Northern philanthropists and Southern White educational reformers had initiated the first Conference for Education in the South at Capon Springs, West Virginia. Participants from North Carolina included Governor Charles B. Aycock; Charles Dabney, a University of North Carolina chemistry professor who later became president of the University of Cincinnati; Charles McIver, president of the North Carolina Women’s College and president of the Southern Educational Association; and Edwin Alderman, president of the University of North Carolina. The annual conferences allowed the Northern philanthropists and Southern White educational reformers to set the agenda for universal education of both Negroes and Whites in the South (Anderson 1988).

Laying the foundation during that initial meeting, Principal Hollis Frissell of Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia, maintained, slavery had been a civilizing influence on the “barbarous Negroes” and recommended Hampton’s model of industrial education as a system that would complete their education begun under slavery (Anderson 1988). William H. Baldwin (1898), a Northern philanthropist agreed that the ideology of the Hampton-Tuskegee model for a “racially qualified form of class subordination” was the preferred system for educating the Negro (cited in Anderson 1988, 82). Baldwin spoke at the second Conference for Education in the South and discussed the immense value of a Negro properly educated to perform the South’s heavy labor. Baldwin pointed out the Negro and the mule were the only combination able to grow cotton and that the Negro would “willingly fill the more menial positions, and do the heavy work, at less wages, than the American white man or any foreign race which has yet come to our shores” (cited in Anderson 1988, 82).
Southern White laborer, then, would perform the more expert labor, and “leave the fields, the mines, and the simpler trades for the Negro” (cited in Anderson 1988, 82). Baldwin (1898), in his advice to Southern Negroes, told them to:

Avoid social questions; leave politics alone; continue to be patient; live moral lives; live simply; learn to work . . . know that it is a crime for any teacher, white or black, to educate the Negro for positions which are not open to him (cited in Anderson 1988, 84)

The fourth conference was held in Winston Salem, North Carolina. Charles Dabney, the president of the University of Tennessee, spoke to the delegation and declared, “We must use common sense in the education of the Negro . . . . We must recognize in all its relations that momentous fact that the Negro is a child race, at least two thousand years behind the Anglo-Saxon in its development” (cited in Anderson 1988, 85). Dabney believed Negroes had to “work out their salvation by practicing the industrial arts and considered it ridiculous to offer a liberal arts program to Negro students” (cited in Anderson 1988, 85). He contended, “General Armstrong, of Hampton, and Principal Washington of Tuskegee have worked out a sensible plan for the education of the Negro . . . Our state school for this race should be modeled after their plan” (cited in Anderson 1988, 85).

**The Hampton Model**

The speakers shared the philosophy of Negro industrial training as the most desired type of education for ex-slaves. The Hampton model was considered the most successful educational experiment in the country, the solution to the Southern race problem. George T. Winston, president of North Carolina’s College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at the time, argued against liberal education, or even academic education for Negroes. He asserted
that trade skills and tools should take the place of academic subjects (Anderson 1988). Negroes “must be taught to work, to submit to authority, to respect their superiors . . . the saw and plane and the anvil must take the place of geography” (1988, 87). Winston recommended the school system be restructured to suit Negroes. He believed it should be entirely industrial. According to Anderson (1988), educational leaders advised Southern Negroes to “accept racial subordination, to avoid questioning social problems, stay out of politics, be patient, work simply, and live moral lives” (87).

Although Aycock was a representative of the conservative wing of the White Supremacy movement and supported Negro disfranchisement, he was an advocate of Negro education and vowed to protect Negro schools from hostile state legislation “through the power and prestige of his office” (Anderson 1988, 84). While Governor Aycock claimed universal education meant education for all, both Negro and White children, others in the state worked to ensure that ‘all’ meant all White children. Harlan (1958) insisted, “Aycock presided over the first great unbalancing of school funds in favor of whites” (102). The governor successfully persuaded the Southern Education Board to subsidize an imbalanced universal education.

**Philanthropy and Coercion**

Northerners agreed to support disfranchisement with Jim Crow laws, and to promote the type of industrial education for Negroes endorsed by the Southerners. Northern philanthropists acquiesced to White supremacy and united with upper-class conservatives who subtly administered school discrimination. Anderson (1988) insisted the original purpose of the philanthropists was to diminish the shock of racism against the Negro and to keep public education open as an avenue of Negro advancement. He argued the
philanthropists offered the Negro charity rather than full-fledged philanthropy and were willing to dismiss some of the claims for equal status and opportunity in exchange for industrial and moral education. Harlan (1958) believed the philanthropists were willing to fund the type of education that would create order and discipline in the Negro community and instill in them a proper attitude toward work. Watkins (2001) concurred. He believed philanthropy was a means of social engineering, a way “to guarantee an orderly South and a compliant Black population” (19).

Between 1921 and 1930, corporate philanthropies superseded missionary societies as the leading influence in the education of Negroes and had, jointly, committed 43 percent of all their financial contributions to education. Capitalist labor economics required the type of cheap semiskilled and skilled labor Negroes could provide. Watkins (2001) believed the foundations’ aim was to offer an accommodationist education designed to teach Negroes their place in the new industrial order. He claimed, “American industrialism would be built on the backs of Black labor” (22) and believed corporate ideology would socialize Negroes politically, give them a false sense of hope, and at least minimal access to survival. Negroes wanted to uplift themselves, be a part of the social mainstream, and live better lives than their past bondage had allowed. Lacking their own resources and their larger freedom, however, the politics and ideology of an accommodationist education would ensure their subservient place in American society.

**Apply Within: Education Not Necessary**

Governor Aycock persisted in his proposal for universal education and Whites in North Carolina persisted in their objections to educating the Negro. White planters, who insisted on the old attitude of master and slave, believed that to educate a Negro was to ruin a
good farm hand. Animosity existed among poor Whites who competed to a great degree with the Negro in the labor market. Some Whites were afraid Negro children, undeterred by poor clothing and meager circumstances, would attend school in greater numbers than White children. Others contended it was ridiculous to spend money on Negro children when the opportunities of White children were so limited (Anderson 1988). An article in the *Windsor Ledger* (1902) assertively stated the objections of many Whites:

> Education has but one tendency: to give higher hopes and aspirations. There can be but one result in educating the Negro... We want the Negro to remain here, just as he is—with mighty little change. We want them to become better cooks, better servants, better wash women, better workmen in farm and field and shop. We will cheerfully pay taxes to give him that sort of schooling. But that is not what the Negro wants... We pay for a thing we want to get the sort of thing we are willing to pay for... Of course if the Negro don’t like this he can leave. If he is let alone he will be content (1902 cited in Harlan 1958, 104).

Harlan (1958) believed an increased desire among Whites for an education in North Carolina led to decreased funding of Negro schools. Whites were unwilling to finance education that may lead to upward mobility and positions of authority for Negroes.

In 1902, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that Negro children were entitled to the same per capita share of school funds as White children. By 1905, however, the Court ruled that only equal facilities must be provided, and defined equal facilities as an equal length of school terms, a sufficient number of competent teachers to teach the children in each building or section, and salaries deemed proper by the board. The local boards of
education paid Negro teachers an average salary about 30 percent less than White teachers, a 20 percent drop in comparison to salaries of the 1890s. The actual school facilities provided for Negro children also deteriorated at this time (Rodgers 1975).

**Taxation without Representation**

In 1903, the North Carolina Legislature proposed a law limiting Negro school expenditures to the amount paid by Negroes in taxes. Governor Aycock condemned the proposal and threatened to resign if the law passed. The governor did, however, send a letter to local school superintendents explaining how they could “save the appearance of equality while discriminating” against Negro schools (cited in Nieman 1994, 193). Governor Aycock argued Negro schools ought to be run more inexpensively than White schools. In fact, Aycock argued they could be run for one fourth the cost of White schools. He also advised that if lower salaries, smaller faculties and larger classes were not announced, Negroes would not make any trouble (Nieman 1994, 193). When one superintendent asked if he could discriminate against the Negro, Governor Aycock replied that it would not be discrimination given what Negroes paid in taxes (Nieman 1994, 193).

Thus, legal means diverted a greater share of school funds to White schools. Harlan (1958) contended Negro schools “occupied the zone between being kept deliberately poor but not destroyed” (8). In fact, there was an ever-widening discrepancy in the financial support of schools for Negroes and schools for Whites. One White North Carolina school official (1913) claimed, “The negroes are semi-outcasts. They get only the dregs” (cited in Litwack 1998, 107). In 1913, this school official found the average Negro rural schoolhouse a total “disgrace” to any civilized people. Litwack (1998) explicated,
To one who does not know our history, these schoolhouses, though mute, would tell in unmistakable terms a story of injustice, inhumanity, and neglect on the part of our white people. Even the most tolerant minded whites, he noted, looked upon black schools as a liability rather than an asset, based on the commonly accepted theory that the poorer the school supplied to the Negroes, the better it would be for society and the state. (107)

**Disparities**

Data from the United States Education Bureau (1917) supported Harlan’s claims that Negro schools were kept on the edge of destruction. The United States Education Bureau reported the population of North Carolina in 1910 was 1,500,511 Whites and 697,843 Negroes. Negroes represented over 31 percent of the state’s population. In 1910-1911, public school teachers in North Carolina received $2,056,850 in salaries. Of that sum, $1,715,994 was for teachers of 325,555 White children and $340,856 was for the teachers of 169,034 Negro children. White teachers were paid $5.27 per child. Negro teachers were paid $2.02 per child. Data also indicated 12 percent of the White population was illiterate compared with almost 32 percent of the Negro population (Department of the Interior 1917). Herein is evidence of the Negroes’ determination to do more with less and the value they placed on literacy.

Services rendered by the public school system differed considerably in relation to economic, social, and racial groups. The greater the percentage of Negroes in the county, the greater the disparity in funding per capita between White and Negro students. For example, in counties where Negroes represented 0 to 10 percent of the population, the gap in funding for White and Negro students was only 50 cents; per capita funding for White
students was $3.24 and for Negro students, $2.74. In counties with a Negro population between 11 to 25 percent, the disparity in funding was higher at $1.88; per capita funding for White students was $4.36 and for Negro students, $2.48. In counties where Negroes represented 26 to 50 percent of the population, the gap in services was as much as $4.42; $6.51 per capita for White students, and $2.09 per capita for Negro students. The widest disparity in appropriations was in counties with 51 to 75 percent Negro population. The per capita rate for White students was $6.78 and for Negro students, $1.52 (Department of the Interior 1917). Apparently, there were no counties with a Negro population over 75 percent. This indicates the relative fear Whites had of educating Negroes. In places where Negroes posed a small threat, education was not nearly so dangerous.

The disparities in services provided to children of urban and rural areas were so evident that in 1913, State Superintendent J. Y. Joyner requested financial assistance from the General Education Board of New York to hire two agents for rural schools. Upon approval of the request, the Superintendent appointed N. C. Newbold as Associate Superintendent of Rural Schools to supervise the schools for Negro children. L. C. Brogden was hired to supervise the schools for White children (Ferguson 1962). After visiting all the Negro institutions in the state to secure their cooperation, Newbold (1914) reported the majority of the teachers could not satisfactorily pass a sixth grade examination. Newbold (1914) stated the majority of the schools did not have classes above the fifth grade and pupil attendance was irregular and non-punctual. He also reported that most of the schools had either unsanitary outhouses or no outhouses at all.

Newbold (1914) included the following probable reasons for the poor condition of Negro rural schools in the state: the general impoverished condition of the state for many
years after the Civil War, lack of proper supervision and direction, racial prejudice, and the mis-education among some Negro educational leaders. Newbold (1914) also noted that no one in authority had ever carefully studied the conditions and needs of the race, therefore, a well defined plan or scheme of education and training had never been devised.

However, poor conditions were not only found in rural Negro schools. They were found in urban Negro schools as well. According to Litwack (1998), Pauli Murray, a student in a Negro school in Durham, North Carolina, in the early 1900s, remembered her school as a dilapidated two-story wooden warehouse structure that creaked and swayed in the wind as though it might collapse. The exterior showed the effects of harsh winters; the interior was just as poor and featured bare and splintered floors, leaky plumbing, broken drinking fountains and smelly toilets that were usually out of order. However, according to Litwack, Murray claimed it was not the inadequacy of the building itself that hurt so much, but the contrast between what Negro students had and what the White children had that hurt the most. Litwack (1998) interpreted Murray’s painful memories,

The new books white children used (“we got the greasy, torn, dog-eared books”), the field days in the city park white children enjoyed (“we had it on a furrowed stubby hillside”), the prominent mention white children received in the newspapers (“we got a paragraph at the bottom”), the attention bestowed on public displays in white schools by city officials, including the mayor (“we got a solitary official”)—all served to set the white schools apart from the black schools (108).

Neither the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment nor the separate but equal rule of *Plessy* proved to be meaningful to Negro education. In 1915, State
expenditures for the White pupil were 300 percent more than for the Negro pupil. In 1890, 35 years prior, the difference had been 50 percent more (Rodgers 1975). If anything, Plessy seemed to increase disparities between the races.

**Establishing High Schools in North Carolina**

In 1907 the North Carolina General Assembly recognized the need for high school instruction in rural areas and in small towns. They passed the *High School Law* to establish funds to initiate high school instruction in towns and rural areas with a population of less than 1,200. In 1915, eight years later, Washington Catlett, the Superintendent of Public Instruction in New Hanover County, wrote a letter to State Superintendent Newbold requesting funds to build an industrial high school for Negroes in Wilmington. Catlett (1915), acknowledged the funding disparities of Negro schools in Wilmington, “I want to do some things for my Negro schools next year. While we have not exactly overlooked them, still the white schools seem to have slightly overshadowed them for a while. We must except, however, the Negro schools in the city” (1). Catlett proposed the school be built on 34 acres of land the United States Congress had donated in 1912, specifically for that purpose. He wrote that he had come across a letter the State Superintendent had written to him seven months prior regarding funds to build Negro rural schools and was inquiring if the funds were still available.

A couple of months after Catlett’s request of State funds, J. O. Carr, Chairman of the New Hanover County Board of Education, wrote to the Department of Public Instruction in response to Dr. Newbold’s recommendation to hire a supervisor for the Negro rural schools of New Hanover County (Carr 1915). Carr also requested funds to establish Williston School as an industrial school for the Negro pupils in the city. At that time, he explained the local board of education was reorganizing Negro schools in the city with the goal of
maintaining two elementary grammar schools including the first to fourth grades. According to Carr (1915), Williston would house students in grades five and above and would teach industrial subjects in a “very modest way” (1). Carr indicated Mr. D. C. Virgo from Greensboro, North Carolina, would serve as principal of the school.

**Williston High School**

The new Williston, a relatively modern two-story brick building, located between Tenth and Thirteenth and Ann Streets, opened its doors on February 1, 1915. The majority of the students from the old Seventh Street school along with the fifth, sixth, and seventh grade students from Peabody School were transferred to the new building. A Negro principal replaced the White principal and Negro teachers replaced the White ones. The old Williston School, affectionately called “Mother Williston” was demolished (Williston Commemorative Banquet Souvenir Booklet 1991). Agriculture, domestic science and art courses were added to the curriculum. By the spring of 1916, students harvested cabbage, lettuce, sweet potatoes, and corn planted on approximately five acres of land near the school. In 1919, Williston Industrial High School admitted students for grades eight through twelve. A full college preparatory program including the liberal arts, mathematics, sciences, and foreign languages was offered in addition to the vocational program. In 1923, the school celebrated its first seven graduates (Williston Commemorative Banquet Souvenir Booklet 1991).

Williston High School served as an academic model for Negro secondary schools across the state. In 1923, following a formal inspection by M. C. S. Noble and the Southern Association of Secondary Schools, Williston Industrial School earned the highest ratings of any other Negro high school in the state and became the first public high school for Negroes to be accredited in North Carolina (Williston Commemorative Banquet Souvenir Booklet 1991).
A school had to satisfy minimum standards set by the Commission on Secondary Schools of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in order to be accredited. Standards were also set for school location, lighting, heating, ventilation, water supply, and the condition of bathrooms (Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools 1935-1936).

The Commission established standards in several areas including course requirements, curriculum, teacher qualifications, class size, school term limits, student enrollment, books, equipment, buildings and facilities. Sixteen units of high school work were required for graduation; no more than four units could be applied from junior high school. A unit represented one year’s study in any high school subject and only students in the upper 25 percent of the student body were permitted to take more than four academic units per school year. The maximum teaching load for an academic teacher was 750 student-periods per week, with no more than six daily recitations. The minimum length of a recitation period was 45 minutes. Schools had to be in session 175 days per year excluding holidays (Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools 1935-1936).

For a school to be accredited, at least 75 percent of the faculty had to hold a bachelor’s degree from an approved college. Teachers were not allowed to teach outside their fields of college specialization and were required to have taken courses in psychology, methods and principles of teaching, history of education, observation and directed teaching, and tests and measurements. Principals had to have at least a Master’s Degree and two years experience as a teacher or an administrator. The maximum class size was 40 students and the student - teacher ratio not more than 30 pupils. Appropriation for library books was based on student enrollment, $1.00 per student per year was allocated for schools with 500 or less
students, $.75 was allocated for enrollment of 500 students or more. The employment of either a full or a part time librarian was based on the number of students enrolled (Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools 1935-1936).

According to the Commission, accredited schools offered better educational opportunities for the school community. Graduates of accredited schools were allowed admission into out of state colleges without special conditions or qualifications. In addition, administrators and teachers in accredited schools had direct contact with regional and national educational leaders (Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools 1935-1936).

Williston High School was the highest ranking Negro school in the state. However, circumstances were not so favorable for many of the other Negro schools in the state. Most Negro students pursuing high school subjects in North Carolina during the 1920s were enrolled in a secondary department of a Negro college or in private boarding schools. By 1924, only fifteen of the state’s 100 counties had an accredited high school for any rural Negro or White child and there were no accredited high schools for any child, rural or urban, in 35 counties in the state (Ferguson 1962). In an effort to address some of the problems related to Negro education, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction initiated a study of Negro education in the state.

The Division of Negro Education

In 1921, the North Carolina General Assembly had authorized the organization of the Department of Public Instruction into divisions according to the services rendered to the public schools of the state. As a result, the Division of Negro Education had been established to focus on the concerns of Negro schools. Specifically, the division was designed to
monitor all the Negro normal, training, elementary, and high schools and teacher-training departments, to promote the building of better schoolhouses, to better educate and supervise teachers, and to develop normal schools and a statewide system of Negro high schools. The necessary supervisors and assistants were hired to complete the designated assignments (General Correspondence 1907-1950; Rodgers 1975).

From 1921 through 1923, the Division of Negro Education conducted surveys of schools. This three-year survey revealed less than one-half of the Negro children who should have been attending school were enrolled, and average daily attendance was less than fifty percent of the enrollment. The survey noted attendance was particularly poor during the opening and closing months and was considerably overcrowded and congested during the three or four months in the middle of the year. Additionally, the survey revealed there was practically no supervision of instruction and more than half of the children, particularly in the rural schools, were enrolled in the first grade. These first grade students ranged in age from 5 years to 15 years and older. Only seven high schools were accredited by the State and four of those were attached to the four state colleges cooperating at that time. There were about 4,500 supervisors, principals, and teachers in the urban and rural schools with an average of about three and a half years of high school education (Ferguson 1962).

The survey showed a great number of the rural schoolteachers had not even finished elementary school and most of the principals were ministers with regularly assigned churches. These ministers had received no formal education in schoolwork and were frequently absent from the school to conduct funerals and attend to other church functions. Survey results also indicated that more than fifty percent of the schools had only one teacher and a large number of the rural schools were “buildings in deplorable condition” with “
negligible furnishings” (Ferguson 1962, 5). Ferguson (1962) cited as an example, in one of the schools “you could study animal life through the cracks in the floor, plant life through openings in the walls, and astronomy through the holes in the roofs” (5).

The inadequate funding of Negro elementary schools was also evident in the School Board’s funding of Williston High School. By 1924, student enrollment in Williston had increased by 60 percent since its opening in 1915. There were 115 sixth grade students in two small classrooms, 57 students per teacher. There were 108 eighth grade students, 54 students per teacher. Only fifteen classrooms were available for the 948 students in the primary grades, 64 students per teacher. The senior high school enrolled 157 students, 40 students per teacher. Williston had a total of 1,564 students in twenty-six classrooms. Not surprisingly, the school was condemned as unsafe and unsanitary and required extensive expansion as well as repairs. In 1925, unable to secure funds from the school board, Williston High School built a second annex with nine classrooms using funds the people raised. Twenty-seven students graduated from the school in 1926, forty-eight in 1927 (Williston Commemorative Banquet Souvenir Book 1991).

Williston High School continued to grow. By 1929, Williston was short ten classrooms required by state law for the number of students enrolled. The Board of Education built the third Williston in 1931. The new three-story brick building included a gymnasium, an auditorium, cafeteria, lockers, and laboratories, amenities the older school lacked. Student enrollment was approximately 600 high school students and 26 teachers. Fifty-five students graduated in 1931 (Williston Commemorative Banquet Souvenir Book 1991). Williston High School continued to serve as a model school despite funding inequities perpetuated by the School Board.
In 1933, another study of Negro education in North Carolina was authorized. Governor J. C. B. Ehringhaus appointed a commission that included members of the North Carolina Teachers Association to study Negro education in the state. In 1880, Negro teachers and professionals had organized the North Carolina Teachers Association as a result of decisions regarding Negro education being made by the State Board of Education without consult of Negro leaders (Murray, N. D.). According to Rodgers (1975), the commission found that even with 106 public high schools in operation in 71 counties with Negro school populations of 1,000 or more, seventeen counties and five city administrative units in the state did not have Negro high schools. Thirteen counties and four city administrative units refused to support their accredited Negro high schools. A total of 48 accredited Negro high schools in 33 counties had facilities that were inadequate for both the population and size of the county. The commission also found that Negro teachers were being paid substantially less than White Teachers. The commission made the following recommendations to the governor:

1. Consolidate small schools into modern school plants.
2. Provide adequate transportation for Black students.
3. Add needed classrooms to existing schools.
4. Provide adequate training for Black teachers at the post-high school level.
5. Require Black schools to operate for a minimum of eight months.
6. Require the Black high school curriculum to include vocational training
7. Require Black teachers to receive training in the area of guidance.
8. Provide Black teachers equal pay for equal training and equal service as White teachers. Reduce the differential between Black teachers’ salaries
and that of White teachers by 50 percent in 1935 and eliminate it totally within three to five years after that (Rodgers 1975, 31).

Many and various explanations had been given for paying Negro teachers smaller salaries than were paid to White teachers. There was the commonly held belief that “it did not cost as much to operate a Negro school as it did a white school” (Bond 1934, 270). It was believed that Negro teachers were inferior to White teachers, and should, therefore, be paid lower salaries. The cost of living was also said to have been lower for Negro teachers than for White teachers, thus warranting smaller salaries for Negro teachers. Therefore, in 1933-1934, a minimum salary for a White teacher was established at $622 while the minimum salary for a Negro teacher was set at $407 (Bond 1934).

By 1938, five years after the commission’s report, circumstances had barely improved for Negro schools. Historian John Hope Franklin (1947) argued the need for the North Carolina Teachers Association to study teacher salaries, school term lengths, school buildings and equipment. A report of county and city budgets echoed Franklin’s concerns. The report showed that Negro schools received far less in expenditures for all items than White schools with the greatest disparity appearing in the classification of new services, such as transportation. Ordinarily, more of the school budgets went to those auxiliaries for White children than to all purposes for Negro children, even where Negroes were a large majority of the population (Bond 1934).

In 1937, the Commission to Study Public Schools and Colleges for Colored People in North Carolina was appointed to study Negro public schools and colleges in North Carolina. The Commission reported to the General Assembly of the extremely distressing conditions that existed in rural Negro schools. Out of approximately one thousand one-teacher schools
and nine hundred two and three-teacher schools, the Commission judged 845 schools very poor. The Commission recommended that Governor Clyde R. Hoey and members of the General Assembly increase financial support to the state’s Negro public schools and colleges and appoint commissions to study Negro education each biennium (Commission to Study Public Schools and Colleges for Colored People in North Carolina 1937).

In the 1920s and 1930s, local authorities were allowed a lot of latitude in deciding teacher salaries and certification requirements. State certification laws and minimum salaries were frequently disregarded when Negroes were concerned. In 1930, for example, at a time when the State claimed every teacher in North Carolina was required to have a state certificate, no more than ten of thirty-three Negro teachers in Union County, North Carolina possessed a certificate at all. In several cases, those teachers were being paid less than $30 per month, when the State schedule stipulated a minimum of $55 for each monthly check. Bond (1934) believed the money was being saved for White schools by employing poorly trained and incompetent Negro teachers in Negro schools in contradiction to the mandates of the equalization law.

In the majority of Southern states that adopted equalization laws, the term equalized was not applicable to Negro schools except in an absurd sense. The laws were the result of the majority White counties’ objection to State funds going into Negro counties under the old per capita apportionment system. The equalization laws were ingeniously framed by experts who wanted to focus the benefit of the new funds upon the counties with a majority population of White children and a minority population of Negro students as a way to offset the advantage previously enjoyed by the Negro counties in the disposition of state funds. Bond (1934) asserted, “in approved equalization schemes, the expert begins by estimating the
ability of the local community to support schools, a standard according to a ‘defensible’ instructional program” (253). In most cases in the South, the more heavily populated rural Negro counties fell within the category of the counties to receive aid. The scientific method of constructing equalization schemes authorized school districts to establish minimum requirements for local support to be supplemented to a greater or smaller degree by the necessary state funds to meet the minimum program (Bond 1934).

The outdated methods of apportioning school funds by county systems of administration made Negro children one of the most important factors in school finance in the South and kept disbursements for Negro schools down to merely pittance. The South was the region of the country least able to support even a single system. Compared to the nation at large, it may be said that Southern states were not able to support systems for the two races comparing favorably with national norms of achievement. The result was that Negro children were universally discriminated against in states with a heavy Negro population. All available funds were devoted to the needs of White school children. Equalization funds were intended to offset the provision of new state aid for White counties, not to equalize education in the broader sense. Accordingly, the funds did not mean much to Negro children (Bond 1934).

W. P. Keith (1932), a White superintendent in Jefferson County, Arkansas, believed that as a White man, it was his duty to take care of the White schools first. “After I had done all I could for them, I would then take hold of the Negro schools. That may be a selfish policy. No doubt it is. However, this is the only policy with which a county superintendent may work in the South, especially in Arkansas” (1932 cited in Bond 1934, 258-259).
Disparities in school funding for Negro schools continued in North Carolina. In 1948, the State Education Commission issued a report on Negro schools. The Commission (1948) indicated Negro schools were in much worse condition than White schools and deserved special consideration. Over 60 percent of Negro children in the state were enrolled in high schools below the standard required for accreditation. The report further noted 96 of the 201 Negro high schools in the state employed only one to three teachers and students attending those schools could not receive credits required for college (Education in North Carolina Today and Tomorrow: Report of the State Education Commission 1948, 251 cited in Rodgers 1975, 32).

**Negro Teacher Education**

Improvement in Negro teacher education became evident, especially after the State Department of Public Instruction instituted a new comprehensive teacher certification plan. Certification included two basic categories of teachers, non-standard certificate holders and standard certificate holders. Certificates were also required for principals, supervisors, and superintendents. Teachers were required to attend summer classes in order to meet certification guidelines. In addition, by 1921, teacher salaries had become tied to their level of certification. “Hence, if a teacher raised his certificate, his salary would rise as well” (Westin 1967, 322).

In 1947-1948, the quality of teacher training and preparation for Negroes and Whites in North Carolina reversed from what it had been in 1924-1925. The educational level of Negro teachers, which in 1924-1925, was about four years of high school, averaged about two years of college between 1934-1945. The figures for Whites were between one and a half years and three and three-quarter years of college. By 1948 there were sixty times more
of White teachers than there had been in 1937. From 1941 to 1948, the number of White teachers teaching on nonstandard certificates increased from 1,022 to 2,909, while the number of Negro teachers holding an A standard certificate rose from 5,806 to 6,240. After World War II, White teachers found more profitable jobs in areas other than teaching and left the teaching professions in great numbers (Rodgers 1975).

In 1949-1950, White teachers had an average of 3.8 years in college, while Negro teachers had 4.0 years. In 1950-1951 the figures were 4.1 years of college for Negro teachers and 3.9 for White teachers. Salaries also reflected this difference in education since the General Assembly voluntarily passed a law in 1944 equalizing the salary schedules. Negro teachers’ salaries were 103 percent of those of White teachers in 1950-1951 as opposed to 73 percent of Whites teachers’ salaries in 1940 (Rodgers 1975).

Only after court decisions began to undermine the separate but equal policies at the graduate and professional school levels in the late 1930s and 1940s did the entire South begin to appropriate more money to Negro public schools, most likely, Rodgers (1975) believed, as an effort to thwart further challenge to the doctrine of separate but equal. By the early 1950s, North Carolina was spending considerably more per Negro children than it had spent in 1940. In 1940, the amount spent on each Negro child was 65 percent of that spent on each White child. By the 1950-1951 school year, 85 percent of the amount spent on each White child was spent for each Negro child. In that ten-year period, North Carolina increased the comparative amounts it spent on each of its Negro school children by 20 percent (Rodgers 1975).

Rodgers (1975) believed increasing the amount of funding for Negro students was an
attempt to provide a semblance of equality in the dual school system. Granted, Negroes were
given the right to operate their schools within the general guidelines and standards of state
policy, much the same way White schools were supposed to operate. In principle, both
school systems were provided resources to serve students in their respective communities and
both systems had attained equal status in their communities. But in practice, Negroes were
never provided with equitable resources and the degree of control over operational decisions
White schools enjoyed.

**Are Separate Schools Necessary?**

Although inequities existed, some Negro scholars considered the segregated Negro
school an asset. As early as 1935, noted scholar and activist, W. E. B. DuBois (1935) argued
the need for separate, segregated schools for the nation’s two million Negro students. In an
article in the *Journal of Negro Education*, DuBois (1935) pointed out the critical role
segregated schools played in the lives of Negro students:

> They [separate schools] are needed just so far as they are necessary for the
> proper education of the Negro race. The proper education of any people
> includes the sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the
> part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings
> and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between
> pupils, and between teacher and pupil, on the basis of perfect social equality
> in equipment and housing, and the promotion of such extra-curricular
> activities as will tend to induct the child into life (328).

DuBois (1935) argued it was deceptive to think that race prejudice was softening to the point
that separate schools would be anachronisms and emphasized he was in no way making a
plea for more segregated schools. He was merely “calling a spade a spade” (1935, 328) and cautioned against desegregated schools simply for the sake of desegregation. He stressed the necessity for Negro students to be educated in environments of love and mutual respect. In fact, according to DuBois, Negro children in Northern integrated schools were not being educated. They were being “crucified” (329).

DuBois realized the depth of prejudice and its effects on children of color. Although adequate funding was certainly important, DuBois’ (1935) argument was for greater value and emphasis placed on the rights of Negro children’s souls. He (1935) insisted, “We shall get a finer, better balance of spirit; an infinitely more capable and rounded personality by putting children in schools where they are wanted, and where they are happy and inspired, than in thrusting them into hells where they are ridiculed and hated” (331).

Many of the students who attended Williston High School might agree with DuBois’ argument. Despite the limited resources and materials available at Williston, most of the participants of this research agreed the school had provided them a nurturing learning environment. The participants discussed the love, the sense of family, and “the strong sense of community where everyone felt a kinship to everyone else. It was almost like blood relationships” (It’s a Beautiful Thing 2002). DeShields (2002) recalled that as a Williston student she felt loved, cared about, and respected. She said being at Williston was just like being in the community where she lived. “You would walk down the street speaking to everybody, How to do, how to do. And if we didn’t speak, someone would call your mama and say your child didn’t speak to me today. So the school was the same way” (It’s a Beautiful Thing 2002).
Pearce (1997) described the love and compassion she and other students received at Williston.

We were in a cocoon bathed in a warm fluid where we were expected to excel. We had support. We had the discipline that we needed. We had so much love and the love was tough love. It wasn’t gooey, gooey love. Tough love! (cited in Applebome 1997, 214)

Other participants of this research also recalled the special relationships they experienced with their teachers at Williston High School. Students told stories of teachers giving students lunch money and clothing and no one felt “embarrassed because we were all blood relations” (It’s a Beautiful Thing 2002). Murphy (2002) shared a story of his special bond with Coach Corbin:

Coach Corbin was like a brother, a father, and a friend. I could go to Coach, and in those days, you could get a quarter and eat all day long. So, I’d go hit him for a quarter and at that time, Meadowlark was in school a year ahead of me. He’d hit him for a quarter. Someone else would hit him for a quarter and we’d take those three quarters and go to Eighth and Castle and buy enough to eat all day long. (Murphy Interview)

The school may have lacked the appropriate resources, but it did not lack love for the students. Contending there really was no room for argument as to whether the Negro needed separate schools or not, DuBois (1935) stressed, “The plain fact faces us that either he will have separate schools or he will not be educated” (329) and persisted that enduring bad schools and wrong education simply because schools were “mixed” (329) was a costly if not fatal mistake.
In addition to providing students a nurturing environment, Williston’s teachers also provided them a quality education. According to several former Williston teachers and students, Williston’s reputation for high academic standards was well known all over the state. Mrs. Todd (2002) recalled the high scores of many Williston students on Scholastic Aptitude Tests and freshman college placement exams, especially English and mathematics. She (2002) proudly recounted:

Many of our students went to the prestigious, Ivy-league colleges; because of their background, they were accepted. Once I remember, and someone else maybe can verify this, our students made such high marks on the SAT that the superintendent, Roland, did not believe it and made them retake the test and, of course, they did just as well the next time. This occurred one or two times.

(Todd Interview)

White educators, deeply entrenched in the mythology of Negro inferiority, deeply distrusted their achievements. McNeil was one of the students retested. He (2002) remembered a national reading test given to students during the end of his junior year at Williston:

[The teachers] said, “Wow!” The results came in. About five weeks later we started taking another test. And one of the kids asked, “Well, why are we taking so many tests?” They said, “You guys did so well, we think they don’t want to believe the results.” They meaning the superintendent of schools and whoever, so they want to do it again using a different test. What was happening was the reading levels were coming in with huge numbers of students reading at what would be college juniors or seniors levels and it was much higher or relatively a lot higher that what was happening at New
Hanover High. So, they kept doing these tests. I know two tests were done and again, the same results. A couple of years later or that same year, they started testing sophomores, and they, too, were performing at enormously high rates. (McNeil Interview)

McNeil (2002) recalled several students excelled at such high levels that they were identified as “appropriate college material” as early as the tenth grade (McNeil Interview). The students by-passed the eleventh and twelfth grades and were sent to college. McNeil (2002) asserted, “What that’s telling us is that there’s something going on here. Despite all of these books being inferior, despite not having access—there was something working” (McNeil Interview). Upperman-Smith (1998) also recalled high test scores. When she entered prestigious Spellman University in Atlanta, Georgia, her scores on the college placement tests were so high that she placed out of several freshman classes. However, she did, require a remedial physical education class (Williston Memories).

Summary

For over half a century following the Civil War, many Southern Whites opposed Negroes being educated. They considered Negroes inferior and undeserving of an education and, undeserving of their tax dollars. However, one of the major concerns was not so much whether to support Negro schools or not, but whether the two races ought to be educated together. As the separate-but-equal doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* replaced the provisions of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and Jim Crow laws permeated every aspect of the Negro life, the disparate policies of the dual school system in North Carolina endured. Nevertheless, some segregated Negro schools were still able to provide children with a quality education. The chapter offers as an example, the experiences of teachers and students
at Williston High School who, despite limited resources and materials, provided and enjoyed a warm, caring learning environment and academic success.

Chapter Six takes a more detailed look at teaching and learning at Williston High School. Teachers reveal the critical roles they played in providing their students high quality education despite second-hand books, limited resources, and the lack of support from the local school board. Students share stories of close relationships with teachers and their fellow students, participating in school activities, and developing their talents and skills. They discuss the high expectations their teachers had of them and of excelling despite overwhelming odds. Their life experiences offer an understanding of the character of Williston High School, and by extension, the character of successful segregated schools in the South.
It is the story . . . that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind.

Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story; rather it is the story that owns us and directs us.

[ACHEBE 1987, 114]

For centuries, historians have relied on oral history to preserve first-hand knowledge gained from persons regarding historical events, people, or places. Oral history continues to be a widely used research tool for recording the memories of participants and eyewitnesses to events of the past. Kyvig and Marty (1996) believed, “If the information and insights in those memories can be reached, they are potentially of immeasurable historical value” (110). The oral history interviews conducted for this research sought to uncover information on the schooling and learning experiences for teachers and students in Williston High School. The narratives preserve memories of the school which may not otherwise survive.

The former educators and students of Williston High School were excited about the opportunity to talk about their school. I invited them to speak from their hearts, to speak their minds, to speak the truth. One interviewee was so candid about a particular incident he requested I turn the tape recorder off while he related the incident to me personally. He did not wish to offend the person who was the subject of the incident. The faculty and staff spoke affectionately of their students and of their teaching experiences at Williston. The students spoke just as affectionately of their teachers and of their learning experiences. They revealed what they felt, what they did, and what they achieved. I allowed the voices of the
teachers and students to dominate the story of Williston High School. My goal was to present a valid picture of teaching and learning in a segregated Black school.

A Glimpse Inside Williston High School

Provided a Nurturing Environment

In her discussion of *Black Students and School Failure*, Irvine (1991) considered the foundation of Black students’ achievement and success was committed, caring, dedicated, well-trained teachers who sincerely desired to teach their students and were unafraid, and neither resentful, nor hostile. Irvine (1991) found, “This supportive relationship between teacher and students . . . a fundamental necessity from which all other solutions and interventions emerge” (125). She called teachers who possessed those qualities “warm demanders who serve as role models, motivation facilitators, guides, coaches, and mediators of learning for black students” (125).

Analysis of the oral history narratives indicated faculty and staff at Williston possessed the qualities Irvine espoused. They were genuinely interested in students as students and as people. Mrs. Smith\(^\text{12}\) (2002) acknowledged teachers were interested in students’ learning, but they also cared about them as individuals. They were concerned about the whole person. She remarked:

> When you teach a person, you have to care about them and they did. They cared about you as a person. There’s a difference between just imparting knowledge and really teaching. (Smith Interview)

The narratives indicated Williston teachers were knowledgeable about the students they taught and showed their love for students in many ways. Teachers often commented they did whatever they could to help their students. Mrs. Smith’s memories of teachers’
concern for the general welfare of their students are indicative. Although none of her teachers had children of their own, “they felt that every child they taught was their child” (Smith Interview). She recalled an incident when one of her teachers extended a special kindness to her. In 1948, Mrs. Smith won the prestigious honor of being voted Miss Williston. Unfortunately, her family could not afford to buy her a dress to wear at the coronation ceremony. The dress needed to be one of the school colors, maroon or gold. Mrs. Smith stated one of her teachers bought her a formal gold dress and also loaned her one of her personal furs to wear for the ride on the float in the local parade. She considered that kindness one of the most touching experiences of her life.

Some of the teachers furnished food or gave students money to purchase breakfast or lunch. According to Mrs. Smith (2002), “They readily knew that you could not learn if you had an empty stomach” (Smith Interview). Pearce (2002) also had fond memories of teachers going beyond the regular responsibilities of the classroom. She said students knew their teachers loved them because they would often bring them things. She remembered teachers brought students clothes and described incidents of teachers storing combs and brushes in their desk drawers so they could do students’ hair. She believed they wanted students to feel good about themselves (Pearce Interview).

In interview after interview, students remembered teachers who found a way to relate to them personally. Teachers and students mentioned classes were not only places to study academics, but places to learn lessons about life as well. Students shared personal experiences of being nurtured mentally, spiritually, and physically. Mrs. Smith (2002) recalled the importance of having spiritual moments included in the school day:
Devotional periods gave students something to hold on to other than your book bag and the desk you were in. You had something on a higher level to hold on to. They always made us aware that there is something greater than ourselves who’s responsible for us and everything we do. (Smith Interview)

Mrs. Helen Simpson (1990) also considered the devotional period an important part of the daily school routine. “Devotions gave me and the children the opportunity to have a formal greeting toward their school work and toward the day . . . And seems like to me, this gave a sense of direction to start the school work” (Teacher’s Video 2). Opportunities to participate in church activities extended students’ spirituality. Most often, the teachers who taught in the school were the same teachers who taught Sunday School and facilitated youth activities in the church. This is but one example of the sense of community in the Black community.

Students and teachers operated in a state of shared respect and trust. DeShields (2002) reminisced, “Students were treated with worth and dignity inside and outside the classroom. The teachers never talked down to us. It was as if we were always being lifted up by them” (It’s a Beautiful Thing). Pearce (2002) recalled most students were well behaved, primarily, because they did not want to disappoint their parents nor their teachers:

You knew that people had put everything in you and were counting on you.

Although we did little childish things, we never really did anything major.

Nobody ever really did anything serious because we knew our families were struggling. (Pearce Interview)

Black students, aware of the sacrifices their families and teachers made, did not take education for granted. Teachers and parents’ devotion was returned. Mrs. Margaret Green (1990), a former home economics teacher, recounted how her duties extended beyond the
classroom. “I guess I was much more than a teacher because back in those days when the football team went on the field, I fed them. When they dirtied up their uniforms, I washed them. I was the school nurse. I was a whole lot of things at Williston” (Teacher’s Video 1). In fact, teachers willingly participated in extracurricular activities, taking students on field trips, attending after-school activities, and supervising student organizations.

**Fostered and Developed Positive Self-Concepts**

Research [Hale-Benson 1982; Ladson-Billings 1994] supports the significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Positive self-concept greatly enhances the possibilities for academic success. Evidence from this research also underscores the importance of teachers helping students develop a strong sense of self. Williston High School teachers created classroom environments that fostered and developed positive self-identity and pride within their students. There was widespread agreement among the students of how teachers consistently preached to them that they were somebody.

Upperman-Smith (1998) remembered being told “she was somebody” as early as first grade (Williston Memories). Mrs. Smith (2002) recalled her teachers always told her, “You have to feel that you’re somebody and you have to use what God gave you” (Smith Interview). In addition to addressing the academic needs of their students, Williston’s teachers addressed the deeper psychological and sociological needs of the students as well. The teachers promoted the ideas of self-worth and ethnic pride in students and labored to help them realize their highest potential. Ms. Richardson (2002) also recalled the importance of building students’ esteem and instilling within them a sense of pride:

Teachers utilized every instance they could to bring in African American history in their teachings. And though the textbooks did not include this
information, teachers had a wealth of information themselves and gladly and willingly shared what they had or what they knew or what they read about or what they had been told - so though it wasn’t in the textbooks, we learned.

(Richardson Interview)

Williston High School’s teachers believed in the importance of teaching their students the knowledge and skills they needed to achieve academic excellence and to change the circumstances of their lives. My analysis indicates even though they were required to adhere to the State and county curriculum, Williston’s teachers consciously adapted the curriculum to fit the needs and interests of their students. They supplemented standard courses with lessons about famous Black Americans. Mrs. Smith (2002) remembered,

I can remember Black History was not a course that was taught, but our language teachers and our history teachers, United States History teachers took it upon themselves to bring out information we needed to know about Mary McLeod Bethune and Dr. George Washington Carver which wasn’t in our regular United States History textbooks. The United States History textbooks was more about the majority race and less about our race and the contributions many of our people made in this country to help make it great. Of course, they talked about slavery, but we were more than a slave in this country and still are today. What they gave then enriched our knowledge base. (Smith Interview)

However, some of the adaptations made to the curriculum were not always acceptable to administrators in central office. Mrs. Todd (2002) recalled an incident when the central office objected to the resources she had ordered for the Williston library. Her spring book
order included numerous books on desegregation, democratic government, freedom for all, and rights of individuals. She waited for the order to come in. Fall of the next school year came, but her books did not. She waited and waited. Finally, she called her supervisor to inquire about the order. The supervisor told her the superintendent chose not to place the order because there were too many books about integration. Mrs. Todd said she never received any books that school year (Todd Interview).

Given the history of Wilmington’s past, that denial of resources was not surprising. The schooling of Black students was to be based on the dominant ideology that reinforced the idea of the inferiority of Blacks and the superiority of Whites. The approved curriculum recommended the lifestyle of Whites as the preferred lifestyle of Americans. Blacks were encouraged to relinquish their cultural identity and adopt the values and lifestyles of White America, the ‘one true American’ culture. Mrs. Todd was supposed to order books that promoted the assimilation of Black students into the existing social structure of American society and culture. Clearly, the superintendent considered the books Mrs. Todd ordered in opposition to the implicit curriculum of the State.

Mrs. Todd ordered books based upon the ideals of liberty, equality, justice, and fair opportunity for all. The books were critical of the injustices of American society and focused upon the contradictions of the democratic ideals to the everyday experiences of Blacks. Those books Mrs. Todd ordered were meant to supplement the lessons being taught by Williston High School teachers. Although the teachers adhered to the required State curriculum, they also made adaptations to address the specific needs of their students. The teachers considered it important that students study and analyze the political and social circumstances of their lives from their own perspectives.
While Williston High School’s teachers endeavored to protect students as much as possible from the hostile outside world, they also knew how important it was to equip them with the knowledge base to make intelligent decisions regarding social injustices. As Wilson and Segall (2001) observed in their research of African American teachers at L. C. Anderson High School, a formerly segregated African American school in Austin, Texas:

Teaching against oppression requires teaching about oppression. By explaining the White racist stereotypes, African American teachers created classrooms where students could affirm one another and understand the meanings of the crises they encountered in the public world of segregation.

The teachers at Williston High School considered democracy more than a form of government. They considered it a way of life. They actively practiced democracy and structured their classrooms for democratic experience. Students were more than mere spectators or objects of instruction. They were subjects of the learning process engaged in creative and critical thinking. “[T]eaching/learning became a way of co-living and co-constructing positive identities” (Wilson and Segall 2001, 124). The books Mrs. Todd ordered would have further empowered students to challenge the problems that contradicted the basic ideals of democracy. This was an untenable threat to the White establishment.

McNeil (2002) also shared memories of teachers supplementing lessons with Black history. He remembered, “We did some fairly interesting things. I can remember studying Egyptian culture and constructing scenarios, layouts, building pyramids and things like that” (McNeil Interview). The knowledge of the meaningful contributions African Americans made to the development of society contributed to students’ positive self-esteem, validated
McNeil credited Mr. Lowe, his civics teacher, for teaching his students, for going beyond civics and citizenship, and teaching them about manhood, how to be a Black man in a racist society and stand up for yourself and your family. McNeil (2002) recalled how Mr. Lowe and other teachers taught them about their rights as citizens and that they did not have to “take crap from anybody” (McNeil Interview). As a result of those teachings, McNeil (2002) said he never felt inferior to anyone.

I felt superior because I figured we could do more with less resources. I figured I could out-think, out-fight, out-whatever, any of those folks across the street. I’d love the chance to compete. I looked forward to it, you know.

That was that sense of pride. (McNeil Interview)

Mr. Lowe’s lessons impacted McNeil’s life and the history of Civil Rights. McNeil, a 1959 Williston graduate, was one of the four A & T State College students who began the sit-in movement in Greensboro, North Carolina, on February 1, 1960. Referred to later as the Greensboro Four, McNeil and three other Black teenagers, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair Jr. and David Richmond, were freshmen on academic scholarships at North Carolina A & T State College when they sat at the “Whites Only” lunch counter in the Woolworth Store in downtown Greensboro. Refused service that day, the Greensboro Four sat peacefully at the counter until the store closed and returned the next day with approximately 25 students. They were denied service again and again. It took five months before the counter was integrated (McNeil Interview 2002).

The Greensboro sit-in was not McNeil’s first act against discrimination. McNeil and other Williston students had participated in a boycott against the local Pepsi Cola Company
in Wilmington the year before. McNeil (2002) credited Mr. Lowe, his civics teacher, for encouraging students to stand up for their civil rights:

Again, it goes back to Graddy Lowe and others about standing up for our rights and not to take crap from anybody here. We’re American citizens with such rights; you know, the Bill of Rights. We don’t have to play second fiddle to anybody. Sit-in and stand up . . . It was a lifetime of actions. I mean, people historically say, well, what caused you to do it? It was a lifetime of events. (McNeil Interview)

McNeil described how Black people, including his parents, had been perennially humiliated. He (2002) listed all the ways they had been forced into inferior positions in society.

We couldn’t even go to . . . McDonalds and sit down and eat. We’d have to go get a . . . burger at the backside. Woolworth’s was no worse. You could go into a Woolworths and order from this counter and they treat you the same way and when you go order food, now you can’t sit down and eat it? If you wanted to get water, you had to get it from this stupid fountain and not that fountain. Or if you needed to go to a restroom, you have to go into this restroom which is going to be little dirtier and stuff than this restroom. That was the stupidest, dumbest crap . . . The hypocrisy was reeking. (McNeil Interview)

McNeil emphasized that he and many other Williston High School students never believed they were inferior to anyone. He said he watched as Black people across the nation were “stepping out” to claim their civil rights (2002). Some of his role models during that time
were the students in Little Rock, Arkansas. He remembered looking at what they were experiencing, and thinking, “They’re not part of the problem. They’re the solution. They’re taking this thing on” (McNeil Interview 2002). He said the experiences of those students significantly impacted him. In addition, he stated, “Graddy Lowe insisted that we stand up for our rights” (McNeil Interview 2002).

Although McNeil (2002) was passionately opposed to the inequities imposed upon Blacks, he was very modest about his leadership role in the Civil Rights movement and played down the fact that he is considered a national civil rights hero:

"We were all involved in that . . . But you’ve got to know that Black folks throughout the country were all thinking about how we could stand up and be a part of the solution. The very fact, that once we started this on February 1st with four and by the end of the week, five days later, it had spread to like 50 cities involving thousands, should be some indication of how this generation felt about this stuff. We look back on it and I guess we characterize it as a down payment on our manhood. It’s something we had to do. I’m sure it had been done before. Our parents fought back against this crap. They didn’t just sit back and take it. But there were limits to what they could do in that time.

For us, the time was to take it on. (McNeil Interview)"

The students’ actions in Greensboro served as the catalyst for sit-ins at segregated lunch counters throughout the Southern United States. Black and White students in urban cities across North Carolina staged sit-ins beginning the following week. Efforts to address discrimination would also take place in McNeil’s hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina. The education for manhood McNeil had received at Williston translated into the
resiliency and wits to resist oppression. That education had taken hold in an affirming and safe environment.

**Held High Expectations for Student Achievement**

Teacher expectations of students play a great role in determining how well students achieve in school. Most often student achievement is based on messages they receive from their teachers (Irvine 1991). The messages students received from their teachers at Williston indicated they had the capacity to learn. Teachers helped students develop an attitude of can-do and held them personally responsible for their own achievement. There were no excuses for mediocrity or failure. DeShields (2002) recalled, “The teachers knew that they could teach us and they made sure we learned . . . We were not allowed to slip by without doing our work because they knew that we could do the work” (It’s a Beautiful Thing). According to Upperman-Smith (1998):

> We were held accountable for all of our actions. Not only were we told we could achieve, we were expected to achieve. There was no getting around that. We were prepared after graduation. We had to be the best we could be because we were going to be judged by the color of our skin regardless of our talent.

(Williston Memories)

There was widespread agreement among students that they endeavored to live up to the expectations of their teachers and parents. As a result, they said, they learned to believe they could achieve anything and worked hard to fulfill their teachers’ expectations. Pearce (2002) recalled that teachers, emphatically, told students they were capable of high achievement “and you are going to do it” (Pearce Interview). She said it was just expected that students
strive for excellence, therefore, many of them did. She (2002) talked about Williston’s teachers continually raising standards:

No matter how well we did, we never quite hit the bar. That was the secret of Williston. You could type 100 words a minute, Ms. Burnett would say, well you need to do 115. To this day, Sandra Grady in Washington can do 148 words a minute with no errors and she credits Mrs. Burnett with that. She is the head of the Business Department at the University of the District of Columbia. If you sang like a mockingbird, it wasn’t good enough. You had to sing like an angel. So that’s what it was all about and we never reached . . . the bar. (Pearce Interview)

Other teachers and students also noted their teachers’ belief in students’ ability and their high expectations for their performance. Ms. Richardson (2002) believed this was the main reason most students strove for excellence:

I think the fact that teachers had high expectations made students strive and they wanted to do. It wasn’t a matter of having to force a child to do, it was a matter of guiding and the parents who did not have the experience of going to school knew that education was important and they instilled that idea in their children and they wanted to learn and wanted to gain experiences that their parents had not had nor the opportunities to have. (Richardson Interview)

Teachers consistently stressed to students that they could do whatever they set out to accomplish. “This kept their self esteem up and as a result of that, they wanted to do, and they were helping parents to see that their children were valuable and that they had certain skills” (Richardson Interview).
Williston High School’s teachers understood the crippling effects of racist society on the esteem of their Black students. The students’ experiences of race prejudice sometimes molded into self-hatred, inferiority complexes, powerlessness, and general inadequacy resulting in minimum performance and limiting their chances for success. Williston’s teachers engaged in activities and behavior that facilitated resistance to the stereotypes and fostered positive self-concepts in their students. They designed instructional, curricular, and extra-curricular programs that helped students to see themselves in a more favorable light.

While Williston High School’s teachers understood the importance of their students maintaining their ethnic identities, they believed it was equally important students learn to function successfully in the American mainstream. Teachers at Williston High School understood how important it was for Negro students to learn the acceptable ways of the dominant culture for their survival and their future success. Williston High School’s teachers not only verbalized to students how they were to perform, they modeled the acceptable behavior for their students on a daily basis.

Williston High School’s teachers demonstrated how the students were to dress by dressing professionally. Male teachers always wore dress shirts and neckties, female teachers dresses or skirts and always hose and high-heeled shoes. The teachers demonstrated how students were to behave in public by conducting themselves properly. They demonstrated how students were to speak by speaking and expecting students to speak using “standard” English in the classroom as well as in casual conversations. In addition to preparing students academically, Williston High School’s teachers believed it was their responsibility to prepare students for the challenges and the opportunities that awaited them after high school graduation and outside the Williston community.
During the interviews, teachers reflected on the challenging curriculum Williston provided students. It included foreign languages, advanced science and mathematics courses. According to Mrs. Drain (1998), teachers knew the capabilities of their students and pushed them to take the courses they were capable of completing well.

Teachers knew what your capabilities were, and if you had that capability, you were in that calculus class . . . You got it, too . . . They had calculus, geometry, and trigonometry. They weren’t called advanced classes, then, but they were advanced and they had good teachers. (Drain Interview)

The 1963-1964 Annual Principal Reports from Williston High School and New Hanover High School indicated the same academic courses were offered at both schools with the exception of Latin I, which was only available at New Hanover High School. However, the principal’s report indicates Williston did offer Latin II.

McNeil (2002) remembered his teachers pushing him to excel. He mentioned Mrs. Margaret Grady as a true pusher who made sure students were exposed to more than what was ordinarily expected of twelfth graders. McNeil (2002) remembered taking advanced trigonometry, chemistry, and physics, “all of those college prep kinds of things” (McNeil Interview). The 1964 annual principal’s report of the school indicated students took and excelled in advanced subjects such as Algebra II, trigonometry and advanced algebra, advanced biology, chemistry, and physics (Washington 1964).

When former students recalled how tough the teachers were on them, and how seriously they considered education, the conversation always included a discussion of Mrs. L. S. Williams, one of the senior English teachers, affectionately referred to as ‘L. S.’ The students remembered ‘L. S.’ as tough, and students did not ‘play’ in her class. Pearce (2002)
recalled students were required to recite part of “MacBeth” and Chaucer’s “Prologue to the Canterbury Tales” in Old English in order to pass Mrs. Williams’ class.

We had to learn a good deal of it and I remember everybody in my neighborhood having to learn it with me because we had to learn it. So I’d go and anybody who would listen to it, I’d go and take my book and hand it to them. We did that and one by one we went through MacBeth. (Pearce Interview)

Pearce (2002) recalled one student who had a very difficult time remembering and reciting Chaucer’s “Prologue to the Canterbury Tales”. The entire class tried to help the student learn it. Pearce recalled Mrs. Williams was so emphatic that the student pass her class she devoted an entire class period to allow students to work with him. The only way the student could learn the recitation was to sing it. Mrs. Williams permitted him to do that. The phenomenal thing was, “To this day, anybody in Wilmington who is over 52 or 53 still knows and can recite the “Prologue to the Canterbury Tales” (Pearce Interview 2002).

If it’s a professor somewhere now, if it’s the garbage man, if it’s your preacher, if he was a local person, we can all recite the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. We evidently all had Mrs. Williams to some point and it’s just amazing that something that was so difficult would stay with you. It was like many things we just memorized for the day and it was a fleeting thing, but this thing has stayed with us. (Pearce Interview 2002)

Pearce (2002) contended the stage was set for students to learn at Williston. Her teachers told them they were “going to learn stuff that people don’t expect you to learn . . . you’re going to learn Latin. You’re going to learn physics” (Pearce Interview). When
students asked why they had to learn Latin, L. S. responded, for example, “because Kenneth’s going to be an attorney and you need to know Latin to be an attorney and we all have to learn it because we don’t know who’s going to be what. So we all took out learning Latin” (Pearce Interview).

Ms. Richardson (2002) contended teachers really wanted students to excel. It was not odd to find teachers assisting students after school although they were not paid for working the extra time.

This was the kind of thing that you found teachers doing because they enjoyed doing it and wanted to do it. They loved teaching and wanted to see students excel. This was their means of helping the child to reach a goal. (Richardson Interview)

Teachers consistently encouraged students to strive to be the very best. They maintained students had to be much better than their White counterparts if they wanted to make something of their lives. Wilson (2002) remembered students being told they had to be ten times better than White students in order to make it in life:

We learned from the very beginning that we had to be ten times better. They instilled into us to be excellent, to be good, to be the best that we could be!

Excellence was a part of the whole education. Strive for excellence and they rewarded us when we were excellent and chastised us and disciplined us when we were not, when we stepped out of line. (Wilson Interview)

Clearly, Williston teachers embraced a will to excellence. The testimonials provided are strong evidence Williston was an institution that promoted excellence. High expectations yielded high results. Teachers believed their students had both the ability and the capacity
for academic excellence and inspired and motivated them to maximize their potential. Ms. Richardson (2002) remarked:

Mentally, [students] worked to the highest of their capacities and some of them exceeded the expectations of their parents and some of their teachers. Persons were never able to understand how Williston students all seemingly excelled, but they all came through the same channel with the same teachers who encouraged and the result was an outstanding student. (Richardson Interview)

The participants’ narratives reveal, too, many Williston teachers assumed a personal responsibility for educating all students in their classes and committed themselves to the development of each child in their care. Teacher Claude Blair (1990) believed “it was the teacher’s fault” if the students’ needs were not met. He maintained, “A teacher has to take an extra step, go the extra mile” so that “all 35-40 different personalities” would learn what was needed (Teacher’s Video 2). It was important to Williston teachers that they create classroom conditions that enabled students to achieve. Another teacher, Mrs. Ezell Johnson (1990), asserted:

When I entered the classroom, I gave every fiber of my being towards helping the children to learn. I believe then as I believe now that every child can learn something. It was my responsibility to set up atmospheres of learning for all who sat before me from day to day. (Teacher’s Video 2)

Almost all of the students emphasized the consistency to which teachers told them they could do or be whatever they desired; they had but to set goals and work hard to achieve them. Ms. Richardson (2002) and others contended many teachers never gave up on a
student. Teachers would get to school early or would stay late to tutor students, “to help them catch up” (Richardson Interview).

The alumni who participated in this research as well as those who participated in previously recorded testimonials believed they were able to achieve success in their later lives only because their teachers had cared for them and held high expectations for their performance. Students affirmed that Williston provided them with the necessary knowledge and skills to acquire good jobs and the opportunity to compete for better ones. Williston alumnus, Samuel St. George (1991), wrote that throughout his life he implemented “the many skills and Black pride that I had instilled by my teachers at Williston High School” (Williston Commemorative Banquet Program). He had been able to make a good life for himself and his family because of his teachers and credited them for his ability to instill Black pride in his children and to teach them where they came from. St. George (1991) testified, “I will forever be deeply grateful to all the teachers who showed me the right path to obtain a meaningful life” (Williston Commemorative Banquet Program).

Provided Opportunities for Students’ Growth and Development

The weekly assembly program was a teaching opportunity, a chance to capitalize on students’ talents, their abilities to speak, sing, dance, act, or play a musical instrument. Assemblies provided leadership opportunities for students and gave them the advantage of speaking before audiences. There were also opportunities for students to develop and enhance social skills, to learn respect for others, and how to behave properly and mannerly in public places. In his recollections of the assemblies, McNeil (2002) recalled the strict discipline and behavior expected of students. He also recalled the respect students held for teachers:
[Williston teacher] Alice Lofton used to walk into an assembly and the place would go quiet just like somebody had dropped a pin in there. She would raise her head and slowly, using the location of the head to scan the audience, and then, slowly walk down the aisle. It was a sense of dignity. But she commanded respect. I don’t care who the hooligan was, they quieted down.

(McNeil Interview)

Williston provided enrichment activities to develop students’ talents and to fill the cultural gap in the students’ lives. The opportunity to participate in numerous school activities also provided students with a sense of belonging. Clubs were an institutionalized part of school life. Teachers encouraged parents to help their children develop their individual skills and talents. Students and teachers cited examples of teachers encouraging parents of students who could sing well or play an instrument to get the child involved in music. DeShields (2002) recalled, “The teachers recognized when we had special talents . . . acting and singing, drafting and sports” and they would encourage them to develop their talents and abilities (It's a Beautiful Thing). She believed that, as a result, “We therefore built up confidence in ourselves and in our abilities. That confidence has lasted us throughout our lives (It’s a Beautiful Thing).

Almost every student was a member of at least one club or organization. Many students were members of more than one. There was something for everyone, academic and non-academic. Academic clubs included the Student Council, Crown and Scepter Club, College Bound Program, French Club, Spanish Club, and Library Council. Students could also participate in the Thespians, a drama club, and the glee club. There were social clubs like the Vikings, Vikettes, Uniques, Gaylettes, Gaylords, and Royalists. There was
cheerleading, marching bands, reading clubs, the school newspaper, and debating clubs. Boys could participate in an array of athletic teams including baseball, football, basketball, tennis, and track. Several of the clubs, organizations, bands, and junior and varsity athletic teams competed and won competitions on both a state and national level.

In 1963-1964, student participation in school activities at Williston was so high that Booker T. Washington, the principal of Williston, included the following comment in the section of the annual school report regarding co-curricular activities: “In a few cases, some students are engaged in too many activities. A study is now under way to determine how to limit the number of activities a student should participate in” (Williston Senior High School Annual Report, 1963-1964, 10).

Teachers or parents provided transportation so that each student who wanted to participate in extracurricular activities would be able to do so. Ms. Richardson (2002) recalled, “Transportation was not as affluent as it is now and the teachers had the means of transportation and they would take a student home at the end of the day with the parent’s consent” (Richardson Interview). Teachers also took students on out of town trips to band, glee club, and academic and sports’ competitions. Some students went on excursions to Washington, D. C.

Students were expected to excel in extracurricular activities. Mrs. O’Dell (1990), former director of the Williston Glee Club, pointed out that when she first began working at Williston she found teachers “who were really dedicated in inculcating in our students standards of excellence (Teacher’s Video 1). She (1990) believed it did not “matter what they were engaged in, vocal music, band music, athletics, competitions for academics, they
always seemed they had to be the very best because they were representing the greatest school under the sun” (Teacher’s Video 1).

Wilson (2002), a former member of the glee club, spoke very highly of Mrs. O’Dell. He recalled the glee club had somewhere between 50 to 70 students. Although rehearsals were held late in the evenings after school, students were always on time for glee club rehearsals. Mrs. O’Dell was very strict about being on time and if a student was not on time, then, he or she probably did not sing. Wilson (2002) described Mrs. O’Dell as very business like and she always explained everything fully:

She taught us how to sight-read the music. She taught us everything about music we needed to know - all of the different signs and signatures and notes and how to sing them. She taught us how to sing from the diaphragm; how to breathe properly; how to speak; and how to sing and recite the words so they were understood. She taught us breath control. She taught us how important it was to keep our eyes on the director. When we sang, there was nobody else but her in front of us. She was the only one we saw. (Wilson Interview)

The glee club sang everything from the Battle Hymn of the Republic and the Halleluiah Chorus to the soundtrack of Porgy and Bess. They “traveled into universities and sang better than university choirs. We won all kinds of awards” (Wilson Interview 2002). Wilson (2002) recalled the glee club was invited to perform at the United Nations. However, the Superintendent of New Hanover County Schools denied them that privilege.

Pearce (2002) remembered her experiences as a member of the Williston band and the high expectations Mr. Floyd, the band director, had for the band. Mr. Floyd trained them
“right” (Pearce Interview 2002) According to Pearce (2002), the band played “tough music, the 1812 Overture” (Pearce Interview):

All this was heavy stuff; deep stuff; and it wasn’t anything you could get a melody going and figure out what it was. It was stuff that was classical and didn’t necessarily make sense to us and you had to learn how to do it. You had to learn your measures and your beeps and your keys and your timing.

And we did that. (Pearce Interview)

Pearce (2002) remembered the times Mr. Floyd made band members hold a note for four beats and sometimes for “eight beats — a whole note doubled” (Pearce Interview). He forbade band members from taking a breath in the middle of a note. They had to learn how to hold their breath for eight notes. He also did not allow them to pat their feet as they played. He would put his foot on the student’s foot and say don’t move. He told them, “If you’ve got to do something, you move your toe inside your shoe. But you do not show that because a good musician didn’t do that” (Pearce Interview). Pearce (2002) said the band traveled throughout the state and won all of their competitions. “We would take home everything! I don’t remember a time that we didn’t. And that’s amazing. There must have been a time, but I don’t remember it” (Pearce Interview). The discipline they learned as band members remained with them as adults. Even their uniforms had to be in great shape. Pearce (2002) recalled:

We had white bucks that we wore with red soles and we had to polish those. They had to be tip-top and you couldn’t have any white polish on the red and no red on the white. It was just discipline and the discipline we were learning was going to stay with us all through life. I remember he used to punish us. I
remember very well somebody was cutting the fool in rehearsal and he made
them run around the football field. (Pearce Interview)

Mr. Floyd, himself a former Williston student, said his ambition was to make the
band the very best it could be. He (1990) acknowledged, “I was known for begging the
school board for funds. We got to a point I could be proud and the community and students
could be proud of the band” (Teachers Video 2). According to Pearce, parents in the Band
Boosters Club sold candy and other things to purchase uniforms because at one time, the
band did not have new uniforms. She remembered her aunt buying most of the candy
because she knew she was not going to sell anything. She also remembered the fun times the
band had going on trips.

Athletes, too, were held to high expectations. Coach Corbin did not believe in giving
grades to athletes just so they could participate in athletics. “They had to pass. That was the
first requisite and I did not go to teachers and say John Jones is failing; he fails period. I told
them to make him work” (Corbin Interview 2002). Coach Corbin was a firm believer that
students must earn grades. He (2002) believed, “If you’re going to do something, earn it, and
there must be a reason for you to do that. If not, you wouldn’t try to do it” (Corbin
Interview). Grades were the first thing the coach always set at Williston. He (2002) praised
some of the teachers who pushed grades hard. “I appreciated them and I think they
appreciated me when I got there because they said they didn’t worry about the kids whether
they got grades or not if they participated in sports” (Corbin Interview).

**Involved Parents**

Parents were involved in the schooling of their children in varying ways ranging from
home support of the students and schools to attendance at Parent Teacher Association
meetings, assembly programs, plays, recitals, and other school activities. Many of the parents were former Williston students themselves. Ms. Richardson (2002) believed even those parents who did not attend school activities, were still involved by insisting that their children do their work:

Every night you did homework. If it wasn’t written homework, you did some reading. So a part of the family routine every night was to do homework and parents insisted that that happen. There weren’t the kinds of entertaining ideas that we have today, but parents felt the need for an education. They saw the need of education and they wanted their children to be educated and well educated. (Richardson Interview)

Mrs. Moore (2002), divorced before she was thirty years old, contended that despite working six days a week to support her eight children, she made time to attend Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Similarly, Wilson (2002) remembered his parents being very involved in his education and recalled accompanying his mother to PTA meetings. His parents always came to school whenever he performed in the glee club or wherever he was going to make any kind of appearance in an event, “They were there in the audience” (Wilson Interview). Parents were always informed if students stepped out of line in school:

If you did something wrong, out of line, they [teachers] basically, went to your parents. They put it in our parents’ hands and our parents took care of business. If the parents weren’t around, then they [the teachers] took care of business. They felt like they were that close to our parents that they could take care of business. Parents would sanction it; they authorized it (Wilson Interview 2002).
Many parents were intimately involved in the day-to-day activities at Williston High School. Because of inadequate funding, parents sponsored various booster clubs that raised money for students’ academic and social needs.

**Williston High School: The Heart of the Black Community**

The participants in this research spoke very fondly of the familial atmosphere at Williston High School. The findings hold that everyone, administrators, faculty and staff, students and parents, all the members of the Black community formed a strong coalition that worked together for the good of the students and the community. Students and teachers discussed the fact that Williston High School was the center of the community. The school was like a family because to a large extent, everybody Black in the city and county attended it. There was a sense of connectedness. Students felt connected to at least one teacher. Interactions between students and teachers, between students and each other, and between parents, the community, and the school were frequent and meaningful. Their shared values and ideals bonded students and teachers together in very special ways. Mrs. Smith (2002) recalled students and teachers formed “a close-knit group” (Smith Interview).

In addition to the meaningful interactions teachers had with students, teachers also interacted well with each other. Ms. Richardson (2002) recalled:

I would think more or less because everybody felt very close and a part of it and they worked closely together. If teachers needed to share materials, they did. If teachers needed to leave a classroom for awhile for any emergency, another teacher would take over the class or watch the class while they were gone, or observe the class . . . So it was really very much like a family, a community. (Richardson Interview)
Former teacher, Mrs. Margaret Baham (1990) said being a part of Williston High School was such a beautiful thing because the school was such an intricate component of the community. People in the community used the school for recreational facilities, for dances, and for everything. “People felt free to go to the school anytime” (Teachers Video 1). Being at Williston High School was “an existence that was a total existence in itself. Anything you needed, you got there” (Pearce Interview 2002). Mrs. Moore (2002) recalled, “Williston was the [Black] community itself. Without Williston, I don’t know where we would have been.” (Moore Interview) Pearce (2002) reminisced quite favorably about the sense of family and community at Williston:

We had a triangle between the neighborhood which included the family, the church, and the school. And the three groups of people were all the same people so it was a kind of moving society. It was Sunday, you were sitting there with Mrs. Bryant, perhaps, in Sunday School, and the next day, you were sitting in her class. So, then of course, when you got home, she was up the street, the woman who was out on the street sweeping the sidewalk. So the discipline was reinforced without any word ever being spoken. (Pearce Interview)

Williston High School embodied the entire Black community for Wilson (2002) as well. He emphasized the support he received from everybody in the community. All of the elders in the community bonded to form a support structure for the children. He (2002) recalled,

Everything kind of centered or was under the umbrella of Williston.
Everybody wanted to go there. Everybody went there. It was like a place that
everybody could go whether you were Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, or what have you. Williston was that common ground that everyone could go and just be a human being. That’s where we all converged. (Wilson Interview)

Wilson cited various school events that exemplified awesome community support. He (2002) used graduation day as one example:

The whole community went, whether they had somebody in their family graduating or not. You knew somebody in the neighborhood was graduating but you went any way because just the graduation itself was an event. You had the band there which was by far the best band in the world. You had the glee club there, all the voices, all 100 and some voices on stage singing. You had your friends graduating, walking across that stage. You had family with you, sitting next to you. (Wilson Interview)

Wilson also talked about the community’s support of Class Night, a school-wide event held at Williston where “the graduating seniors got together and performed skits on stage, made fun of teachers, and just did fun, silly things they normally would not do” (Wilson Interview 2002). He participated in several ways. He was a singer and a ballet dancer on Class Night. He was not the only male ballerina, however. He recalled the night of one program:

All of the guys in sports [participated] so you had these big old linebacker guys in tutus out there flitting around. It was a fun night and everybody participated. All of the classes participated. They wore their colors. Our senior colors were, I think brown and tan or something like that. Some of the
teachers even got involved in some instances. Class Night was a fun event for
the entire Black community (Wilson Interview 2002).

Class Night was a community affair and had been a strong tradition in the community for
generations. According to Wilson, ‘everybody’ attended the event. He believed Williston
High School was the heart of the community because teachers, students, mothers, fathers,
and cousins were on common ground. Elizabeth Wright (1994) agreed. Recalling the sense
of community that existed at Williston, she contended, “In those days, residents, from the
barber to the doctor to the domestic worker, whether formally educated or not, whether
parent or not, felt they had a stake in their local schools. Their interest was generally repaid
with the serious labor of devoted teachers and dedicated principals” (2).

Mrs. Todd (2002) considered Williston High School the heart of the Black
community because other than the church, the school was where community social
interaction occurred. Williston High School was also the place where students learned
academic and civic responsibilities and got a touch of the outside world. Often too poor to
travel, students lived vicariously through the shared experiences of their teachers. Students
gained exposure to the larger world through presentations from guest speakers and by taking
field trips. Mrs. Todd emphasized that everybody knew each other and that many of the
parents attended the same churches that the teachers attended. “That helped to have an
impact on the students,” she believed (Todd Interview 2002).

A Fly in the Ointment

Noblitt and Dempsey (1996) contended, “There is some danger in retelling history,
for it forces us to face issues that have been silenced rather than resolved” (206). But if the
story of Williston High School is to be completely honest, then it must also “remember
stories not only of suffering received but of suffering inflicted” (Noblitt and Dempsey 1996, 206). Although all of the participants in this research shared positive experiences of their schooling at Williston, some shared negative experiences as well.

Interviewees discussed the preferential treatment or favoritism they perceived some teachers extended to students from prominent Black families including other teachers’ children. Two participants very carefully explained that those negative characteristics were not dominant qualities of most teachers, but they did exist among a few teachers. One of the students shared his distress at being treated negatively because of the dark color of his skin, he believed. Another alumni participant recalled a story shared by a student who believed teachers treated her differently because she was poor. Pearce (2002) termed the different treatment, “a fly in the ointment” and said many students did not realize the different treatment had occurred until the last ten years when former students began to sit down and discuss the past (Pearce Interview). Data also revealed students believed that some teachers’ children received preferential treatment.

Pearce (2002) reflected that some teachers treated her and her friends better when they hung out with certain students. “There was a little bit of a class system and it dealt along the lines of professional parents versus others and perhaps, a person who was darker skinned” (Pearce Interview). Pearce (2002) went on to assert:

Everything wasn’t the way we see it. And you go back and look at things and you see them through rose-colored glasses, but everything was not the same. This particular person was light, but she was poor. So it’s interesting just to know what other people’s views are. We have some universal things. We all knew our teachers loved us and were determined we were going to be the best
we could be. But there were some peripheral things that were going on and
that’s as it should be. So if the story is ever told, it should be told the way it
really was. (Pearce Interview)

Mrs. Drain (1998) remembered her experience having her daughter as a student in her
advanced English class. She emphasized that her daughter was held to the same high
expectations as the other students and was expected to perform to her best potential. She
shared an incident when her daughter received a B in her English class. She said her
daughter’s godmother, also a teacher, was angry and claimed Mrs. Drain had given her
daughter a B just because she was her daughter. Mrs. Drain told the godmother her daughter
received a B because she did not do what she was supposed to do, “so she had to suffer the
consequences” (Drain Interview). Mrs. Drain recalled her daughter did not make another B,
however. “She did her work” (Drain Interview).

Upperman-Smith (1998) also shared a story of a time when her brother was a student
in Mrs. Drain’s class. She said Mrs. Drain always gave students a syllabus at the beginning
of the school year with dates of tests and other assignments. Her parents and Mrs. Drain
were friends. During one grading period, her brother received a D in Mrs. Drain’s class.
Mrs. Upperman called Mrs. Drain to inquire why her son had received a D. Mrs. Drain
stopped her mother’s conversation and told her, “You are not going to be in college with
your son. He needs to see the consequences of his behavior” (Williston Memories). That
was the first and last poor grade her brother received in that class.

Murphy (2002) had a different story to share about his school experiences which
were often negative from the third grade through the tenth grade. Although he shared his
story without malice, the pain of his experiences was still evident:
See, you don’t know what segregation is until it happens to you from your own people. That’s where it started for me. That’s when I realized that things weren’t always the same when I first started going to school. If I was who I was and this little person was who he was, seems like things happened better for him than they did for me. I didn’t have sense enough to realize what was happening at that age. As you grew up, you start visualizing and seeing things in a different light. (Murphy Interview)

Murphy discussed an incident that occurred to him in the third grade and changed how he felt about school and his teachers. He had waited at home one morning for the rain to stop before he walked to school. There were no buses for Black students then. They had to walk to school no matter where they lived, no matter how great the distance or the weather. He got to school late, just as the tardy bell rang:

I won’t call this person’s name because that was a long time ago. But I’ll never forget it as long as I live. He said, where are you coming from. I said I’m just getting here because it was raining. He said, your people, and he was looking like me. [The teacher was a Negro.] Your people always make excuses. He said, you’re from nothing and you’re going to be nothing. At nine years old, I looked at him and said, how in the hell, and I’m sorry I ever said that, can you tell me what I’m going to be because I don’t even know what I’m going to be. (Murphy Interview)

He was sent to the principal’s office and suspended for a couple of weeks. His parents did not ask him what the teacher said to him. Teachers were always right. Instead, he got a beating for cursing at an adult. Murphy’s mother did not find out what had happened until somebody
came by his house a couple of days later and told her. His mother apologized to him, but Murphy said the apology could not take the beating back and he lost all respect for the teacher. Unfortunately, he still had to go to the teacher’s class because it was his homeroom class. He learned to ignore the teacher in his own personal way, but listened to what he was saying because he could teach. Murphy (2002) added:

But as far as a man, I lost all respect for him as a man. I sort of carried that with me as I went on through school with all the other teachers until I guess by the time I got to high school, I realized that what one person does to you doesn’t mean that everybody else is going to do to you. But that same experience happened a lot of times with other teachers because they would always separate you in the classroom. They would put one group up front, one group in the middle, and one group in the back. (Murphy Interview)

In describing the different groups, Murphy (2002) identified which students he believed were placed in the front, in the middle, and in the back of classrooms:

I guess who was in the loop or so and so’s children were up front. The kids who really had the good grades were put up front. The average kids were put there and even though you might have good grades, but if you hung out with a certain group of kids, it keeps coming back to where you were from. They didn’t bother you. You could sit wherever you wanted. You had to learn, I guess, the best way you could. (Murphy Interview)

Many students did not have the negative experiences he had, but that was the way it was for him. He said, “You keep hearing all these people say how nice it was at Williston. It was for some. It wasn’t for everybody else” (Murphy Interview 2002). Despite his negative
experiences, Murphy was quick to share that he harbored no resentment toward his teachers and acknowledged that many Williston teachers were very good teachers. “But,” he said, “they had their own thoughts and their own ideas about what was and who was and who wasn’t” (Murphy Interview 2002). Teachers did not tell all students they needed to further their education after high school. They told some students they needed to get a job or go into the military. A few teachers told him he was not going to amount to anything. Murphy (2002) believed the student’s background had a lot to do with how the student was treated.

As he grew up, Murphy also learned that talented or gifted students at Williston were treated differently and “could use their talents to get out of certain situations. If you had talent or were gifted, you could get out of that category” (Murphy Interview 2002). He was not gifted but “was blessed with athletic skills and I got good grades” (Murphy Interview 2002). His body began to develop when he was in the eighth grade and he and some of his friends decided to try out for the football team. He thought he could play pretty well because he played with grown men on Sundays during football season and was able to knock them down. When he made Williston High School’s football team as a freshman, he thought he was moving over to the elite crowd. People began wanting to hang around him and the older guys he hung around. He recalled an incident where he believed preferential treatment was extended to a select student. He believed the coach [not Coach Corbin] set up another student, a lighter-skinned boy, to take his position on the football team. He realized the coach treated boys of a lighter hue differently. He had been let down again by one of the male teachers (Murphy Interview 2002).

All was not over for Murphy, however. His math teacher, Mrs. Holmes, took a personal interest in him during his tenth grade year. Used to sitting in the back of the
classroom, Murphy sat in the back for one week in Mrs. Holmes’ class, but the second week, she moved him to the front of the classroom right next to her desk. Murphy wondered what he had done for her to move him and then she moved the rest of the class around until she had everyone seated where she wanted them. According to Murphy, “The hoodlums were in the back” (Murphy Interview 2002) where he once sat. One day he asked Ms. Holmes why she moved him. “She said because you have potential to be something and somebody, and I know the family you’re from and I don’t expect you to waste it because all the rest of them have survived it and I expect you to survive it” (Murphy Interview 2002). Murphy said that day also marked the beginning of other teachers showing interest in him. They also moved him from one area of the classroom to another area of the classroom. He began paying attention and did much better in school. He credited Mrs. Holmes for making the positive change in his life:

She sort of changed me . . . She made me come up there where I didn’t ever want to be. My math grades got better. I started being more active in the class instead of talking in the back. Got some of the guys mad with me because they said man you trying to be show-off . . . I said, well you should fight to get up front. I said, it’s more fun up front. You just feel better up front. From that point on, I think things started to turn around for me. I wasn’t that person that wasn’t going to make it anymore. Now, I started to be this person that’s got possibilities to become somebody. (Murphy Interview 2002)

Mrs. Holmes’ validation of Murphy motivated him to improve his performance in the classroom and to take responsibility for his learning. Even though he believed he was treated
differently by a few teachers, Murphy did not harbor ill feelings toward Williston or any of his former teachers:

I always speak highly of Williston because without it and the education I got from it, no telling what could have happened to me. Like I said, every teacher in it wasn’t an angel and where I speak badly of some, others speak highly of that person. But I wasn’t in a circle. From the first grade until the tenth grade, I wasn’t in anybody’s circle. I was just me and there were a lot of others, just us. Some kids are fortunate. When they speak highly of some of these teachers, I have that same respect for those teachers, but not that [highly]. Because I remember them as something else and some of them I love to death. Some of those teachers, I wouldn’t trade for anybody. (Murphy Interview)

Murphy’s experiences at school were more serious to him than the “fly in the ointment” described by Pearce (2002). Murphy had been deeply hurt by his teachers, Negro teachers “who looked just like him” (Murphy Interview 2002). Murphy believed he was mistreated because of his dark skin color. Informal conversations with other Blacks and research [Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992], too, indicated Murphy’s perceptions were indeed real. Within the African American race, perceptions and attitudes about skin color have persisted. Historically, race discrimination between Whites and Blacks has been openly discussed in America. However, intraracial color discrimination has not been so openly discussed and remains a topic of discussion among Blacks primarily behind closed doors. According to Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992), intraracial color discrimination “is an embarrassing and controversial subject for African Americans” (1). Skin color is not only
significant in the White community but in the Black community as well. Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) argued, “the color complex is a psychological fixation about color and features that leads Blacks to discriminate against each other” (2).

Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) traced the color complex to incidents of interracial mixing in America’s early history. English sailors arriving in the New World seduced or raped Native American females. White sailors aboard slave ships raped African slaves. White indentured servants and African slaves working side by side frequently became friends and sometimes lovers. Free White men married African slaves. White women had sexual relationships with African men, a practice that caused such great concern among White men that they designed laws prohibiting those particular transgressions. African males also married Native American women. In fact, according to Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992), the rapid proliferation of race mixing between Whites and slaves caused colonial Whites great alarm. It was essential to keep the two races separated if slavery was to gain moral acceptance. “White leaders knew that if sexual relations with Africans continued unchecked, ethical questions about slavery would surely follow” (12-13).

Thus, the mixing of White and Black genes produced mixed-race children, mulattoes. Whites’ concern, then, became the status of mulatto children. Would they have the free status of the White father or the slave status of the Black mother? In 1622, Virginia reversed traditional English law and declared that children born in Virginia would have the same status as the mother. Previously, the child’s status was determined by the status of the father. In Virginia, Maryland and the upper South, lawmakers established the “one-drop rule,” a person would be considered pure African if he or she had even one drop of Black blood (Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992, 14). “[R]ace mixing between masters, slaves, and lovers,
both White and Indian produced a population of Negroes more racially mixed than pure” (Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992, 23).

Historically, mulattoes in the South were given preferential treatment over the dark-skinned Negro and were assigned work in the slave owners’ houses rather than in the fields. According to Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992), “Mulattoes in the slave quarters were an economic asset, in the form of slave property, but a racially mixed child in the “big house” created havoc and shame” (22). Mulatto slaves were often bred and sold for huge profits; many mulatto females were kept as concubines by “respectable White gentlemen” (Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992, 18). “Proper acting” (15) mulattoes, the mulatto elite who had money and education were allowed to apply for legal status as ‘White.’ Sometimes, mulattoes with very light-skin and White features “got around the law by simply passing as White” (Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992, 15).

After the Civil War, the mulatto elite often segregated themselves into separate communities, preferring to intermingle and intermarry only with each other. They actively discriminated against dark skinned Blacks and reserved membership in social clubs, churches, sororities and fraternities, colleges, universities, and businesses for the lighter-skinned Black. Today, within and outside the Black community, color discrimination persists along with the beliefs that light-skinned Blacks are intellectually superior to dark-skinned Blacks, and that dark-skinned Black men are more criminally dangerous and sexually driven than lighter-skinned Black men (Russell, Wilson, and Hall 1992).

Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) reported a disproportionate number of inmates are dark-skinned Black men. According to Edwards, a sociologist, socio-economic status is an important factor in the way skin color affects Black people. Darker-skinned Blacks of
middle to upper class status may overcome color discrimination. However, lighter-skinned Blacks at every level of socio-economic status fare better in the job market and with law enforcement. For many Blacks, the lighter the skin color, straighter the hair, narrower the nose and thinner the lips, the better are one’s chances for success in the United States.

Even at the age of 64, Murphy remains wounded by the intraracial discrimination he experienced as a student at Williston High School. Russell, Wilson, and Hall (1992) considered intraracial color discrimination a serious issue that needs to be openly addressed not only in the Black community, but in the White community as well. They believed the effects of color bias on the Black community should be documented, that Whites in positions of authority should be educated about the issue, and that Black parents need to educate their children about color bias. They contended that future generations of Black children would be damaged if the issue is not properly addressed.

Coach Corbin (2002) shared his disgust at the discriminatory manner in which some teachers treated certain students. As an example he cited a group of girls who lived in a poor area of Wilmington who were never given the opportunity to become cheerleaders even though they displayed more talent than some of the girls who were selected. He related another incident when one of the teachers gave him a list of about five girls from which the baseball team was to choose one girl as ‘Miss Baseball’. The team told him that none of the girls on the list had ever attended one of their games. He allowed the team to choose a young lady who they wanted to represent them as ‘Miss Baseball’ even though she was not on the list.

The coach also expressed his disgust at the negative treatment some students who lived in the housing projects received. Some teachers considered students who lived in
poorer areas of the city to be less capable of academic achievement than students who lived in more affluent areas of the city. He would take those students who were mistreated under his guidance. Lee Monroe’s story served as an example:

Look how far he’s gone now. I took him under my wings because I saw him coming down the hall one day. I said, Lee, you’ve got to play some ball for me out there . . . I said, you be in the gym Monday and we’ll talk about it there.(Corbin Interview 2002).

Monroe had lived in Taylor Homes, the housing projects on the north side of Wilmington. He played basketball at Williston High School during his junior and senior years. Coach Corbin was able to get Lee a scholarship to attend Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina. After graduating from Shaw, Monroe continued his education at the University of Cincinnati where he earned a Master’s Degree in Education, and a Doctorate in Education from Virginia Poly Institute and State University. Dr. Monroe served as Senior Education Advisor to former North Carolina Governor, Jim Martin and later, as president of Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas. Dr. Monroe is currently president of Vorhese College in South Carolina.

Carl Brown also lived in Taylor Homes Projects. Participating on a panel of former Williston High School students and teachers at a local program in honor of Williston High School, Brown (1998) spoke very fondly of Coach Corbin and referred to him as a mentor and friend. Brown was a poor boy who grew up in Taylor Homes projects and graduated from Williston High School at the age of fifteen. He credited Coach Corbin with helping him to win a scholarship to attend college in Little Rock, Arkansas. Brown repeatedly conveyed to his audience the strong sense of pride Williston High School teachers evoked in
him and other students. Teachers often told him he could be whatever he wanted to be. It was all up to him. Teachers stressed to students they had to be twice as good [as Whites] if they wanted to succeed. He (1998) remarked, “I can’t get the kind of academic experiences I had at Williston out of mind” (Williston Memories). He carried the high values he was taught at Williston High School with him all over the world.

Brown returned to work in Wilmington after many years of serving in various prestigious capacities around the world. Currently the Vice-President of Institutional Services at Cape Fear Community College in Wilmington, Brown attained a master’s degree at Cornell University and worked there as an adjunct professor. He went on to work at Columbia University Hospital where he published articles on microbiology and chemotherapeutics. Brown has worked with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and also served as a senior executive at several Fortune 100 corporations. Brown (1998) lauded his former teachers for instilling within him the sense of fortitude to face the challenges of college and of life and credits them for what he has been able to accomplish in his life:

None of that could have happened without the commitment of teachers at Williston. Everywhere I go, I carry a piece of them with me. Whenever I face a problem, I think of what the teachers, coaches, and administrators of Wilmington would think if I walked away from it. (Williston Memories)

Brown passed the values he learned at Williston to his children.

When Mrs. Moore talked about her experiences as a struggling single parent who worked several jobs trying to support her eight children, I asked if her children were treated differently because of their economic situation. Her response echoed Murphy’s earlier comments about teachers treating students who exhibited special talents or gifts better than
they treated other students. She responded that, initially, her oldest son may have been treated differently because he was poor, but after the teachers found out about his musical talent, they accepted him because he represented both the school and the community so well. According to Mrs. Moore (2002), her son was a very talented singer and attended St. Paul College in Virginia after graduating from Williston High School. He later attended Julliard School of the Arts in New York City. Her son became an internationally known professional opera singer and the director of Human Resources at the headquarters of Helen Keller International. Mrs. Moore (2002) emphasized she did not believe her children would have excelled anywhere else (Moore Interview).

**Williston High School: The Greatest School Under the Sun**

Joyce S. Jackson (1991) praised her teachers at Williston and credited them with enabling her to compete academically with others of all races. Jackson said she was able to reach her goals and live a very productive life because of the dedicated teachers at Williston. “Their teaching instructions were second to none. The quality education that I received played a major role in who I am today” (Williston Commemorative Banquet).

Several of the participants of this research explained what Williston High School meant to them or why Williston High School was considered “the greatest school under the sun.” To Wilson (2002), Williston meant:

Excellence, family, community, and truth. Excellence because that’s what it espoused. Family because we all knew each other. We all got to know each other. Community because that’s what it was. It was the heart of the community. (Wilson Interview)
His experience at Williston High School was so rewarding because all around him were people who cared for him, guided him, and nurtured him. “They are the reason I am what I am today. I’m very thankful (Wilson Interview).

Pearce (2002) considered her experience at Williston High School “an existence that was a total existence in itself” and reiterated the importance of high expectations of teachers. (Pearce Interview) Teachers kept raising the bar. According to Pearce (2002), “No matter how well we did, we never quite hit the bar. That was the secret of Williston.” (Pearce Interview) When she looks back over her days at Williston, Pearce (2002) knows “only God could have laid it out the way it was laid out” (Pearce Interview). God did not move their mountains, “but He gave us the teachers that made us leap over mountains everyday. Everyday” (Pearce Interview 2002). She is so grateful for all they did for them.

Mrs. Smith (2002) believed the major goal of Williston’s teachers was to prepare children to go to college. She fervently asserted:

I can truly say that we’re standing on the shoulders of those great teachers, dedicated teachers, teachers who cared about their students, who taught their students well, and of course, they went outside of the range of their subjects to bring in new information. (Smith Interview)

Williston teachers knew their subject matter. “They took you from the level they found you and when you got out of that class, you were on a higher level, maybe a grade or two higher” (Smith Interview 2002).

McNeil (2002) considered Williston the greatest school under the sun. He praised Williston for empowering him and many other students to make significant accomplishments in their lives. In a non-boastful manner, McNeil asserted he has “achieved the top positions
in whatever he has been involved with. It took some time to do that, but you know, it goes right back to there [to Williston High School]. We started building from there, everything we learned. But that was the basis” (McNeil Interview 2002). McNeil (2002) made little of the fact that he and three other students at North Carolina A & T State College were partly responsible for initiating a worldwide series of civil rights actions.

In our time, it was not normal to take on the Klan. Up here, by Laurinburg around by Fayetteville, the Lumbee Indians up there took them on one night and ran them. They used to come in and drive by and attack various parts of the Black community like Tom Jervay’s home, in the past, in the old days. We would arm it with guys who were going to protect the home. Yeah, there’s fear, but we’ve got to deal with it. And so we did that. And the women did it. We did it day after day. I served as a soldier in Viet Nam and all those arenas. We made it work and a lot of it’s based on values and the things we learned. Our lives and our values that we picked up here were worthwhile. Things of value enough that if you have to be exposed to some negative elements, that’s the way it is. (McNeil Interview)

Williston’s teachers provided students the tools to conquer a racist society. Students were “given the courage which prepared us to take the leadership. We were blessed. I hope we are not that unusual. I’d like to think that we’re not. My prayers are for the future” (McNeil Interview 2002).
I have seen a land right merry with the sun, where children sing, and rolling hills lie like passioned women wanton with harvest. And there in the King’s Highway sat and sits a figure veiled and bowed, by which the traveler’s footsteps hasten as they go.

On the tainted air broods fear. Three centuries’ thought has been the raising and unveiling of that bowed human heart, and now behold a century new for the duty and the deed. The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line.

[DuBois 1903/1993, 36-37]

In 1964, Williston High School showed tremendous growth since graduating its first class of seven students in 1923. In 1964, 200 students graduated from the school. Williston’s progress mirrored the progress of other Black schools in North Carolina. A report filed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction documented the progress of Black schools in the state from 1921 until 1961. Some of the improvements included the following:

- High school enrollment increased from 16,817 to 68,255.
- The number of schoolhouses decreased from 2,442 in 1920 to 996 in 1960 due to consolidation.
- The number of classrooms increased from 6,068 in 1930 to 10,360 in 1960.
- The number of one-teacher elementary schools decreased from 1,153 in 1930 to 11 in 1960.
- The number of accredited high schools increased from 7 in 1920 to 208 in 1960.
- The number of high school graduates increased from 59 in 1921 to 10,837 in 1960.
The number of teachers, principals, and supervisors increased from 4,556 in 1924 to 10,137 in 1960.

The average [scholarship] of all these school workers was about three and one-half years of high school training in 1924 and about four and one-third years of college training in 1960 (Ferguson 1962, 10-11).

Although Williston High School and other Black schools in Wilmington had grown significantly since their founding, vast inequities continued to exist between Black and White schools.

**Challenging Separate but Equal in Wilmington, North Carolina**

In 1950, Dr. Hubert Eaton, a local Negro Wilmington physician, presented a list of the deficiencies in the city’s Negro schools to the local school board. In addition to lack or insufficient resources, Eaton found the Negro schools were so crowded classes had to be taught in the auditoriums. The Negro schools had no lockers, cafeterias, or gymnasiums, all of which were available in the White schools. Eaton (1984) contended the differences between the school facilities attended by White children and those attended by Negro children were shockingly evident and too numerous to identify at that time (Eaton 1984).

Teachers and students recalled insufficient resources, materials, and facilities at Williston High School. They remembered receiving second-hand books and furniture from the White schools. Wilson (2002) recalled, “Our books were always raggedy and torn with their [White students’] names in them” (Wilson Interview). Pearce (2002) noted the only inferior thing about her education at Williston “were the resources we got and they were out of our control” (Pearce Interview). She talked about books with torn pages and books with the answers already written in them, some right, some wrong. Used books were so common,
Pearce thought all students, Black and White, had used books. What bothered her the most, however, were the torn and missing pages, especially when she had homework to do. Pearce (2002) remembered, “being ticked off because I needed all I could get to learn because I was never that smart, and then, when you turn the page and two to three pages, or a chapter could be missing” (Pearce Interview). Teachers made copies of missing pages for students and told them, “This is the way it is in the world and that you have got to be prepared for that” (Pearce Interview 2002). Books were the only thing that was inferior, however. The education she received was second to none (Pearce Interview 2002).

Coach Corbin (2002) also had memories of used and limited resources. The only funding the sports teams at Williston received came from what they earned at the games. The county provided funds for New Hanover High School, the White school, but nothing for Williston.

Everything we made from our football games and basketball games went into our own fund. That’s all we had…it was the latter years that they would contribute just so much and it wasn’t that much because everything went to Hanover. They had everything they wanted. We took what was left over (Corbin Interview 2002).

Any new books Williston ordered went to New Hanover. Mrs. Todd recalled an incident when she placed an order for books at central office and central office staff gave the funds to New Hanover High School and none to Williston. “All of the funds were used to build up and rebuild the library at New Hanover High,” she lamented. (Todd Interview) She only became aware of the disparity when someone brought her a copy of the Hanoverian, a newsletter from New Hanover High. Mrs. Todd (2002) recounted the incident:
When I was reading about all of that money, and I had been waiting all year for those funds to order some books, and when I read that all of this money had been given to New Hanover High and the library and Williston did not get any, I simply, got in touch with one of the assistant superintendents and told them I know what you did with that money. Now if you do that again, I’m going to write HEW directly. (Todd Interview)

Coach Corbin (2002) recalled a time when a biology teacher at Williston ordered some glass slides for students to use in his class. He never received them. Coach Corbin (2002) discussed the following incident:

But he just happened to have gone over to New Hanover and was talking with the biology teacher there. He said come on inside. Get all you want. He had boxes and boxes of empty slides. He said take all you want because we don’t use all of these. What he took lasted him for about two years. But that was the school system here at Williston. It was unequal. Not equal. Not by any means. (Corbin Interview)

Ms. Richardson (2002) agreed that funding at Williston was unequal to the funding of New Hanover High School. She maintained everything Williston received was second hand, but most teachers never focused on what they lacked. Instead, they “just looked past that and accepted the differences because that was the only way they had of moving ahead . . . “We did the best that we could with what we had because what we were trying to do was prepare the children for life and complaining was not helping in that direction” (Richardson Interview 2002).
Eaton (1984) also claimed fewer courses were taught in the Black schools than were taught in the White schools. The 1950-1951 High School Principal’s Annual Reports in course offerings. Standard courses in English, math and science were available at both schools. Only Williston High School offered courses in auto mechanics, brick masonry, and woodwork (Rogers 1949-1950). Those subjects were not listed on the New Hanover High School Report. The following is a list of courses offered at New Hanover High School that were not available for Williston High School students during the 1950 – 1951 school year:

- Agriculture I and II
- Home Economics IV
- Metals I and II
- Consumer Education
- General Business
- Shorthand II
- Business English
- Salesmanship
- Machines and Clerical Practice
- Spanish I and II
- Latin III
- Occupational Trends
- Library Science
- R. O. T. C.
- Shop Math
- Basic Electricity
Remedial Arithmetic
Consumer Mathematics
Family and Community Living
Mechanical Drawing I and II
Woodwork I and II
Bible I and II
Airplane Engines (Spencer 1950-1951, 1).

Eaton was not a native of Wilmington. He had come to practice medicine in Wilmington from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Frustrated with the inequities of the Negro schools, Eaton decided to challenge the New Hanover County School system and sought legal counsel from a law firm in Richmond, Virginia. The attorneys notified the superintendent and the local school board by letter that they had been retained to investigate whether or not the Negro school children were receiving an education inferior to the one being provided for White children. The lawyers sought the board’s permission to inspect all of the schools in the county to determine if the complaints from Wilmington’s Negro citizenry were valid. They told the Board that educational experts would join them on the school visits. The school board attorneys denied the request. Eaton’s attorneys advised him to file a formal petition with the school board. With the assistance of one of his colleagues, Dr. Roane, formerly of Hartford, Connecticut, Eaton formed the Wilmington Committee on Negro Affairs (Eaton 1984).

Eaton (1984) recalled the difficulties the committee had in developing an adequate list of petitioners and potential plaintiffs. Many Negroes in the community worked in White homes or in White-owned businesses and refused to sign the petition for fear of losing their
jobs. According to Eaton (1984), many others, young and old, remembered the 1898 race riot and feared for their safety. The two doctors, unafraid of reprisal from the White community, spearheaded the effort. They both owned their own medical practices and “did not have the pervasive fears of native Wilmingtonians” (1984, 43). After receiving the petition, the school board agreed to meet with the plaintiffs.

Their meeting marked the first public confrontation between Negroes and Whites in Wilmington since the 1898 riot. About 25 Negroes attended the meeting. Eaton (1984) recalled that near the end of the meeting, School Board Attorney Hogue referred to the race riots of 1898. According to Eaton (1984), “However innocuous his intention, his statement was inescapably interpreted as an effort to intimidate, to warn that it could happen again” (45). Eaton (1984) commented on the violence of 1898 when he discussed his 1951 candidacy for the county board of education:

The first problem was, again, the ghost of the 1898 race riot with its pervasive negative influence on colored citizens. Many colored Wilmingtonians had been children during the riot, and a half century later they had fearful memories of it. They had been conditioned and disenfranchised by the repression that followed. In a county with a colored population of 23,000 out of a total of 65,000, only 1,800 Negroes were registered to vote. My first task was to persuade other colored citizens that the tenor of politics had changed in the past years, and it was now possible to vote without fear of reprisal (123).

Subsequent to the Board’s refusal for school visits, Eaton and his team filed suit on March 12, 1951, against the New Hanover County Board of Education, challenging segregated schools on the basis of the separate but equal doctrine set forth in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Eaton 1984). The plaintiffs were seeking equity in the allocation of funds. On May 9, 1951, Eaton, the other plaintiffs, and the attorneys were allowed to inspect the schools. In their report, the attorneys (1951) contended:

The inequality existing between the white and Negro schools is both cumulative and current. The reason for this disparity is that New Hanover County has failed in its constitutional obligation to maintain the required degree of equality in the schools for both races (cited in Eaton 1984, 47).

Almost a year later, during a pretrial hearing in Tarboro, North Carolina, the New Hanover County Board of Education agreed to enter a consent judgment and admitted that the schools for White and Black students were, in fact, unequal. “[T]he judgment permanently restrained the school board from operating schools for colored children not equal in any way to the schools provided for white children” (Eaton 1984, 48).

In a bond proposal to the county commissioners, the New Hanover County Board of Education agreed to accommodate the Negro schools in the county in the following ways:

- Build a new Williston Senior High School that would include a gymnasium, showers, offices, facilities for physics, chemistry, biology, home economics, arts, music, and drama along with thirteen classrooms and a library.
- Convert the old Williston into a junior high school and build an auditorium to seat 1,000 people.
Add thirteen classrooms, a library, and toilets at Williston Primary School and remodel the cafeteria.

- Build an office suite at Peabody School.
- Remodel the lunchroom at the Peabody Annex and add new equipment (Eaton 1984, 48-49).

The Board of Education built a new Williston High School. On May 16, 1954, as the School Board was formally dedicating the new school, built to comply with the separate but equal law, the United States Supreme Court found the separate but equal law unconstitutional. The Court overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* and ordered the desegregation of public schools in four states and in Washington, D.C. (Eaton 1984, 50-51). How ironic that the dedication of the new Williston, a segregated school, coincided with the Supreme Court’s ruling that segregation was illegal. Justice Harlan’s prophetic opinion had come to pass in the *Brown v Board of Education* decision. Believing separation based on race could not be justified on any legal basis, Justice Harlan had included the following prophecy in his dissent in *Plessy* (1896):

> The thin disguise of equal accommodations for passengers in railroad coaches will not mislead anyone nor atone for the wrong this day done ... The judgment this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the *Dred Scott* case (163 U.S., 559, 562).

**Challenging Separate but Equal in Missouri**

The Supreme Court heard only three cases involving the education of Negroes between the *Plessy* decision of 1896 and 1930. Although the cases did not directly challenge segregation, the decisions reaffirmed the separate but equal doctrine set forth in *Plessy*. 

203
*Cumming v. Richmond County* (1899) involved Negroes in Augusta, Georgia, demanding an end of public support for two White high schools after the only Black high school had been closed. The Supreme Court held that their request was improper. In the second case, *Berea College v. Kentucky* (1908), the Supreme Court ruled segregation was mandatory and denied the private college the right to teach both races. The Supreme Court in *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927) ruled the state of Mississippi could classify a Chinese child as Colored and require her to attend a Negro school (Low & Clift 1981).

One hundred thirteen school segregation cases made their way into the courts in twenty-nine states and in the District of Columbia by 1953. The constitutionality of the practice was unsuccessfully challenged in each of the 44 instances in which it was raised. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) arose out of the political concerns of a White Jewish woman from a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri, Esther Brown, who was shocked by the poor conditions she saw at the local Negro elementary school as she drove her Negro maid home to South Park.

Although she was in no way related to Oliver and Linda Brown, the father and daughter named as lead plaintiffs in the Brown case, Esther asked the local school board to make improvements at the school. The Board listened politely and offered to put new light bulbs in the Negro school and to move used desks from the White school to the Black school. Esther became infuriated when she discovered the community had planned a new bond issue to build a brand new school for White children while the Negro school was literally falling apart. With support from the Negro community, she campaigned against the bond issue which passed despite Negro opposition. She, then, organized a three-week boycott of the
local Negro school. Negro parents set up private schools in homes and churches (Marcus and Stickney 1981).

In her search for legal representation to challenge the segregated schools, Esther persuaded the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to take her case and raise funds for legal expenses. She hounded Thurgood Marshall to send help from the organization’s national headquarters in New York. Esther lost a baby in a miscarriage, her husband lost his job, and a cross was burned on their lawn. However, she and the plaintiffs won the lawsuit and South Park’s Black children were admitted to the White school (Marcus and Stickney 1981).

Reeling from her victory in South Park, Esther sought to further challenge segregation in Wichita and Topeka schools. Wichita schoolteachers, afraid of losing their jobs, opposed a lawsuit. The Wichita NAACP also refused to join, but the Topeka branch was ready to fight. On February 28, 1951, after several years of organizing, Elisha Scott, a local NAACP attorney who had handled the South Park litigation, filed the most famous civil rights case in American history on behalf of Linda Brown, the daughter of Oliver Brown, a welder and assistant pastor at a local church. Brown was fed up with his daughter’s long and dangerous trip to school each day. Eleven other plaintiffs, members of Oliver’s church joined the lawsuit. This suit evolved into Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, et al against the school board, commonly referred to as Brown v. Board of Education (Marcus and Stickney 1981).

At the trial, Brown testified that Linda had to walk across Topeka’s main industrial street and railroad tracks to catch the bus to her segregated school. He considered it too dangerous for her to walk across the railroad switchyards. Sometimes, she had to wait in the
rain and snow for the bus to arrive. On top of that, once she arrived at school, she had to wait outside for thirty minutes until it opened. The plaintiffs acknowledged that the school facilities and services provided for both White and Negro students were roughly comparable, but the Negro parents charged that the segregation of White and Negro students denied their children their constitutional right of equal protection of the law (Powledge 1991).

Lawyers from the NAACP tried the *Brown* case along with four other class-action lawsuits involving state-imposed school segregation. In Virginia, 117 Negro students opposing the extreme inequities in their school initiated *Davis v. Prince Edward County*. The students wanted the county to replace their old school with a new school building complete with indoor plumbing. The *Briggs v. Elliott* case involved Negro parents in South Carolina seeking new schools equal to White schools. Parents of students in two Wilmington, Delaware schools, combined in the case of *Belton v. Gebhart* to seek school desegregation. In the District of Columbia, students in *Bolling v. Sharp* opposed unequal school facilities and resources. The students were denied admission to all White schools. Each case was tried in its respective district

(Available at http://www.kawvalley.k12.ks.us/brown_v_board/other_cases.htm).

The NAACP brought in numerous social scientists who testified segregation imposed serious social and psychological handicaps upon Negro children (Low and Clift 1981). At the end of the trial the three judge court noted that *Plessy* had not yet been overruled by the Supreme Court. They unanimously found the facilities at the Negro and White schools, separate but equal. Yet, they also ruled that de jure segregation harmed Negro children and “deprive[d] them of benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system” (Ashmore 1954, 32), a finding that dictated the NAACP’s final assault on school segregation.
The five cases consolidated and only because Brown was the first name alphabetically in the first set of cases on the Supreme Court’s docket were the cases later grouped under the name *Brown v. Board of Education* (Low and Clift 1981).

In December, 1952, the cluster of cases were retried before the United States Supreme Court. The central issue was whether separate elementary and secondary schools were Constitutional. The Court sought to determine (1) if separate schools could still be equal, (2) did separate and unequal schools disregard the Constitutional right of Negroes to equality before the law as stated in the *Fourteenth Amendment*, and (3) should the legal premise for Jim Crow-Plessy be overturned (Irons 2002). Attorney Thurgood Marshall argued the segregation of schools was a continuation of the abominable Black Codes passed after the Civil War to keep Negroes in an enslaved condition. Attorney Marshall reminded the Justices that the *Fourteenth Amendment* was passed, primarily, in response to those laws and was meant to ensure Negroes equal protection of the law. Attorney Marshall (1952) maintained segregation singled Negroes out and applied to them only, not to Whites:

> The only way to justify this distinction . . . would be to find that for some reason Negroes are inferior to all other human beings . . . and that the people who were formerly in slavery . . .shall be kept as near that stage as is possible . . . The time had come . . . for this Court [to] make it clear that this is not what our Constitution stands for (Marshall 1952 cited in Irons 2002, 34).

Reportedly, the political skills of California governor Earl Warren, appointed by President Eisenhower to replace Chief Justice Fred Vinson who had died, successfully secured a unanimous verdict for desegregation. Warren’s opinion echoed some of Marshall’s expert witnesses’ who argued segregation generated feelings of inferiority in the hearts and minds
of Negro schoolchildren. Warren contradicted the *Plessy* ruling which stated Negroes, themselves, were totally responsible for any feelings of inferiority conferred by segregation. Warren (1954) proclaimed in his landmark decision:

We cannot turn the clock back to 1868 . . . when the [Fourteenth] amendment was adopted, or even to 1896, when *Plessy versus Ferguson* was written . . .

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment (cited in Bennett 1969, 311-312; Powledge 1991, 59-60).

It was done. With a unanimous ruling that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal, *Brown* overturned the precedent of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and ended federally sanctioned racial segregation in the public schools. The 1954 *Brown* decision successfully reversed the doctrine of separate but equal accommodations and institutions for Negroes and Whites. The Court ordered public schools to desegregate with “all deliberate speed” (Bennett 1969).

**North Carolina’s Resistance to Brown**

In practice, segregated public schools for Negro students continued in most North Carolina communities until the end of the 1963-1964 school year. The year of the Civil Rights Act, 1964, marked the formal end of the dual school system for North Carolina students (Rodgers 1975). That was the last year the State collected data on the two school systems. The official beginning of a desegregated school system in North Carolina is
recorded to have occurred in the 1964-1965 school year even though, according to Rodgers (1975), “many schools were attended exclusively by either blacks or whites for a few years after that time” (1). Little movement toward school integration occurred between Brown and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 throughout North Carolina and in the South. North Carolina statutes shielded local school units from the power of the federal courts.

During a joint session in the spring of 1955, the North Carolina General Assembly resolved “the mixing of the races forthwith in the public schools throughout the state cannot be accomplished and should not be attempted (North Carolina General Assembly 1955, 21). Under the leadership of Governor Luther Hodge, the General Assembly resolved:

The schools of our state are so intimately related to the customs and feelings of the people of each community that their effective operation is impossible except in conformity with community attitudes. The Committee feels that the compulsory mixing of the races in our schools, on a statewide basis and without regard to local conditions and assignment factors other than race, would alienate public support of the schools to such an extent that they could not be operated successfully (North Carolina General Assembly 1955, 22).

Racism was deeply ingrained in Southern culture. The passing of laws not a powerful enough force to change historically, socially, religiously and economically constructed beliefs and fears. The General Assembly recommended that the State come up with other means of satisfying the requirements of the Supreme Court’s decision before abandoning or altering the present school system (North Carolina General Assembly 1955, 22).

Governor Hodges authorized legislation giving local school systems complete control over the enrollment and assignment of children in public schools and ratified the Pupil
Assignment Act during the 1955 session (North Carolina General Assembly, 1955). The Act served several purposes:

- To give local school districts the authority to deny Negro students admission into White schools without citing race as the reason.
- To discourage Negro students from challenging school assignment decisions in the first place.
- To create a prohibitive number of targets (the 140-plus school districts in North Carolina in 1955) instead of one for potential civil rights lawsuits.
- To give local school officials a number of workable strategies for avoiding school desegregation that were legal under state law (North Carolina General Assembly 1955, 22).

Until 1969, in an effort to avoid legal responsibility for evading the desegregation of local school districts, the state attorney’s office lent its legal expertise and financial resources to any school district sued for failing to allow Negro children to attend school with White children. Celcelski (1994) noted that no prominent White politician in North Carolina openly supported school desegregation until the 1970s.

The General Assembly called an extra session on July 23, 1956, to respond to the Brown decision. Legislators passed a series of laws and resolutions in opposition to school desegregation. They engineered laws and resolutions so as to not appear to openly challenge the Supreme Court. One such law was House Bill 1, An Act to Amend Article IX of the Constitution of North Carolina so as to Authorize Education Grants and to Authorize Local Option to Suspend Operation of Public Schools. Another law, House Bill 3, Article 35, Education Expense Grants legislated funding for private schools.
The value and importance of our public schools are so intimately related to the customs and feelings of the people of each community that their effective operation is impossible except in conformity with community attitudes. Our people need to be assured that no child will be forced to attend a school with children of another race in order to get an education. It is the purpose of the State of North Carolina to make available, under the conditions and qualifications set out in this act, education expense grants for the private education of any child of any race residing in this State. In so doing, it is the hope of the General Assembly of North Carolina that all peoples within our State shall respect deeply-felt convictions, and that our public school system shall be continually strengthened and improved, and sustained by the support of all our citizens (North Carolina General Assembly 1956, 4).

House Bill 4, An Act to Provide for a Local Option to Suspend Operation of Public Schools, gave local education units “full and meaningful choice as to whether a public school, which may have some enforced mixing of the races, shall continue to be maintained and supported in that community” (North Carolina General Assembly 1956, 9). The law further provided “orderly procedures, consistent with law, for the effective expression of such choice” (North Carolina General Assembly 1956, 9). House Bill 6 provided funds for education expense grants and for the administration of the education expense grant law (North Carolina General Assembly 1956).

Legislators also passed a series of resolutions during the 1956 Extra Session of the General Assembly. Resolution 4 was entitled, A Joint Resolution of Condemnation and Protest Against Oppressive Usurpation of Power by the Supreme Court of the United States,
Calling upon the Several States of the Union and the Congress of the United States to Bring to an End this Tyrannical Usurpation of Power. The resolution voiced the State’s opposition to the Supreme Court’s Brown Decision of 1954 (North Carolina General Assembly 1956). Both the House of Representatives and the Senate resolved, “That the State of North Carolina does condemn and protest the oppressive usurpation of power by the Supreme Court of the United States” (North Carolina General Assembly 1956, 21). Referred to later as the Pearsall Plan, the set of laws passed during the 1956 Extra Session gave local school units the authority to close their schools by popular referendum if desegregation occurred and permitted the State to provide funds for White students to attend private schools. The laws were later found unconstitutional (Cecelski 1994). To further ensure racial segregation in the public schools, the State also instituted “a false rubric of democratic choice” (Cecelski 1994, 25). This freedom of choice plan allowed students to ask for reassignment from the school the local school board designated them attend (Cecelski 1994). That plan was found to be unconstitutional as well (Eaton 1984).

Together, the Pearsall Plan and the Pupil Assignment Act permitted local school boards in North Carolina to delay school desegregation for more than ten years, longer than many other school districts in Southern states where violence against school desegregation had taken place (Cecelski 1994). The Pearsall Plan was widely endorsed by White politicians, policymakers, and newspapers and very strongly advocated by the right wing of the Democratic Party, often in the form of militant resistance. “Militancy had prevailed in other southern states, where political leaders closed public schools entirely, persecuted NAACP members, and challenged federal authorities to force them to mix black and white students” (Cecelski 1994, 26).
The State’s anti-desegregation laws gave White school leaders “the necessary tools for delaying, rebuffing, or frustrating any efforts by black citizens to integrate the public schools” (Cecelski 1994, 27). To further thwart school desegregation in the state, numerous school boards initiated to improve conditions and facilities in Black schools and, in some instances, build modern schools for Black students. They raised new funds and diverted huge portions of their school budgets to Black schools for the first time (Cecelski 1994). “At bottom, they preferred the fiscal costs required to improve the black schools to racial intermixing and its political costs” (Cecelski 1994, 27).

**Wilmington, North Carolina’s Resistance to Brown**

Like most school districts in the state, New Hanover County refused to abide by federal desegregation legislation. Ten years after his initial lawsuit, Eaton (1984) brought another suit against the school board seeking full compliance of the desegregation school law. With his daughter the lead plaintiff in the suit, Eaton filed *Carolyn Eaton et al v. New Hanover County Board of Education* in 1964. Three months later Congress passed *Title IV, Desegregation of Public Education* under the Civil Rights Act. Title IV gave the United States Attorney General the authority to sue a school board for denying students equal protection of the law. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) was, in the mean time, monitoring New Hanover County Schools to determine compliance under *Title IV*. Local schools in the county continued to operate under the freedom of choice basis (Eaton 1984).

Some Black students chose to attend White schools. Others like Upperman-Smith chose to remain at Williston High School. Upperman-Smith (1998) declared it was the first time she openly challenged her parents. In 1964, the New Hanover County School system
began handpicking Black students from Williston to integrate New Hanover High School, the White high school in the county. The primary criterion was that the student was smart. During those days children did not challenge their parents, but Upperman-Smith defiantly told her parents she would drop out of school before she would go to New Hanover High School. Upperman-Smith wanted to attend Williston High School; she wanted what Williston High School gave its students. She wanted that “confidence held by Williston graduates, that confidence that enabled them to go anywhere to do anything they wanted to do” (Williston Memories 1998). Upperman-Smith won the fight with her parents and remained at Williston High School. Black students like Upperman-Smith, were not anxious to integrate White schools. They recognized the advantages, despite unfair dispersion of resources, of being in an all Black school.

In April 1866, the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) sent inspectors to Wilmington, North Carolina, to study the dual school system. Under some duress brought on by this study, the local school board voted to sign the new desegregation guidelines mandated by federal law, although schools continued to operate under the freedom of choice plan. By the 1966-1967 school year, 353 Black students in Wilmington had chosen to attend White schools. By the 1967-1968 school year, the number had increased to 582 Black students. New Hanover County Schools continued operation under a dual school system. In 1968, HEW authorized the local school board “to remove the vestiges of de jure segregation in public schools or risk the loss of more than $600,000 in federal education funds” (Eaton 1984, 96). Under this new ruling, the board was required to formulate a student assignment plan for total school desegregation by the upcoming 1969 school year or risk losing federal education dollars (Eaton 1984).
On July 23, 1968, the judge in *Carolyn Eaton et al v. New Hanover Board of Education* found the board of education guilty of not abiding by the desegregation law and mandated they devise plans to desegregate the school system (Eaton 1984). In the same year, HEW required the Board to make improvements and renovations to Williston Senior High School to bring it up to par with New Hanover, the White high school in Wilmington. Renovations were estimated to cost $200,000 or more. Eaton (1984) charged, “The off-the-record answer the commissioners sent back to the board of education was: We will not allocate one damn penny for the improvement of Williston High School” (100).

On June 26, 1968, more than 1,000 people from the Wilmington community, Blacks and Whites, attended a special school board meeting. Many must have heard rumors of the board’s decision to close Williston High School and were there to oppose the decision. After listening to the arguments of the local citizens, the New Hanover County School Board voted unanimously to close Williston High School (Eaton 1984). The New Hanover County School Board closed Williston High School in June 1968.

**The Black Community Reacts to the Closing of Williston High School**

The closing of Williston was only one of numerous Black school closings in southern school districts. Most of the formerly all Black schools were closed between 1968 and 1970. White leaders adamantly opposed integrated schools and fought to protect the interests of their constituency “for whom the mingling of black and white children amounted to the severest violation of Jim Crow” (Cecelski 1994, 31). Many White leaders were determined that for school desegregation to occur, it “was going to respect traditional patterns of privilege and power” (Cecelski 1994, 32). By 1973, 93 of the 226 formerly all Black high schools in North Carolina were closed (Rodgers 1975). As many as two-thirds of those
schools were forced to close in the two years from 1968 to 1970. By the fall of 1970, only 40 formerly all Black high schools were still operating. By the fall of 1972, the number of all-Black high schools in the state was reduced to thirteen (Rodgers 1975). Twenty-five schools in North Carolina operated their last year with first through eighth grades. Five schools had only fifth through ninth grades or seventh through ninth grades. By the fall of 1972, only 40 formerly all-Black high schools in North Carolina still operated as high schools. By 1972, the number of Black high schools in the state had decreased to only thirteen (Rodgers 1975).

The closing of Williston High School disrupted life in the Black community. Students, administrators, faculty and staff and many other citizens within the community were deeply affected. Pearce (1997) remembered:

It’s like time stopped when Williston’s doors closed. Time stopped, but it didn’t stand still. It went on and on and the way we knew things to be was no more. That is the sad thing about, and I don’t call it integration. I call it desegregation. Our schools were desegregated. Our school was closed in the middle of the night. (cited in Applebome 1997, 213)

Pearce (1997) likened the school closing to a death in the family. “Why? Why close our school?” she asked (cited in Applebome 1997, 213). Williston alumnus, Kenneth McLaurin, who served as principal of Williston Middle School, formerly, Williston High School before desegregation, expressed his sorrow regarding the closing of Williston in the following way:

Sent into an unknown world by the powers who had made decisions behind closed doors, teachers and students were precisely misplaced without benefit of preparation. Being snatched from the comfort of our own environment was unreal. It was like a nightmare . . . unwarranted and unjust. We lost the bond
between school, parents, and teachers. We lost the ability to love and live together in the way to which we were accustomed . . . It still hurts! (cited in Applebome 1997, 213)

Many Blacks believed integration was not the right answer. Some people in the Wilmington community believe the school board’s decision to close Williston was entirely racist, “an act of destruction against the black community, removing an institution blacks could identify with” (Eaton 1984, 109). Some rightly feared desegregation would alleviate the jobs of many African American professionals, particularly African American schoolteachers (Low & Clift 1981). Indeed, the more than 100 faculty of Williston were displaced or lost their jobs. Several former Williston teachers were assigned positions in the city’s two newly desegregated high schools.

Mrs. Drain (1998) was an English teacher at Williston when it was abruptly closed during the summer of 1968. She recalled the way she had been notified, “You [Williston teachers] got a letter. Nobody knew it was closing. You did not know until it was done and it came out in the headlines” (Drain Interview). None of the Williston teachers knew if they would have a job or not. Some teachers eventually received letters from the school board telling them Williston had been closed and naming the school to which they were assigned. Mrs. Drain recalled that after receiving the letters, Williston teachers wondered what they were going to do. They had never taught White children. There was deep unease. “They’re children, but they have different experiences. They have different attitudes. They’re different from us and that’s all there is to it” (Drain Interview 1998).

The school closing affected Black students in negative ways. Black students were reassigned to two White high schools, either John T. Hoggard, on the south side of city, or
New Hanover High on the north side of the city. Drain (1998) argued, “when the kids went over there [to the different schools], they went at a great disadvantage because you don’t put anybody into a situation unless you give them a lit bit of training, a little bit of background” (Drain Interview). Black students had had very little, if any, experience in situations where they were expected to act as peers with White students. When the Black students went to the other schools, “they were minorities to begin with and then, they were a minority number” (Drain Interview 1998). Mrs. Drain believed Black students were at a disadvantage because neither the White students nor the White teachers wanted them in their school. Black students lost the sense of family, the sense of connectedness and belonging they had experienced at Williston High School. They had lost established relationships with the teachers at Williston and with other students. Theirs was a significant loss.

In addition, Black students at Williston High School had numerous opportunities to participate in meaningful extracurricular activities, to develop and practice leadership skills, and to enhance their personal talents and skills: They did not have those opportunities in the newly desegregated schools. Mrs. Drain (1998) described the disenfranchisement Black students were subjected to in White schools. Some of the brilliant students gained White teachers’ attention. However, opportunities to participate in Glee Club or drama club or any other areas were denied. The Black child who was not academically outstanding had no opportunity to achieve success.

Black students were deeply scarred by their marginalization and the explicitly racist rules of participation in White schools. Drain (1998) asserted,

They were being trampled upon. They didn’t get any justice for whatever happened. They didn’t get any justice. They were kicked out of school for
the least [infraction]. They were punished more than anybody else. They
were not dealt with as the White kids were. And those kids felt that. And
they figured it’s time for us to do something. And they did. They became
active. (Drain Interview)

Desegregation had removed Black students from their ‘safe place’, the segregated Black
school, which they had considered their own. As Wilson and Segall (2001) affirmed:

The closure of African American schools cut away the roots of the African
American communities. The history of accomplishments through the
collective memories of the African American communities was ignored when
students were bused across town to formerly White schools. The White
schools maintained their culture while deliberately excluding the African
American students, teachers, and administrators. African American’s culture
was denigrated and isolated, when parents were no longer welcomed at their
child’s schools (126).

In 1971, some of the Black students attending Hoggard High School requested
permission from the school administration to have a program commemorating the birthday of
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Fifteen Black students were suspended from the school on
Friday, January 15, 1971, for attempting a sit-in after school administrators denied their
request. The following week, a Black female student was cut by a bottle thrown during a
fight between Black and White students at a restaurant near New Hanover High
School the next day. One hundred Black students met at a local church that night to plan a
boycott in protest of Williston High School’s closing three years earlier. This was the
beginning of violent activities. The “schools became biracial battlegrounds in which students . . . struggled with their personal reflections of individual separation” (Wilson and Segall 2001, 127).

The students met again the following Monday with Ben Chavis, a young minister sent by the North Carolina-Virginia Commission for Racial Justice to help the students formulate plans for a boycott. The students petitioned the school board (1) to reopen Williston High School, (2) to set aside Dr. King’s birthday as a holiday, and (3) to add a Black studies course in the schools. A series of violent incidents, marches, boycotts, property destruction, and killings occurred in the city for the next five weeks. In 1972, when the battle over desegregation was over, the Wilmington Ten, nine young Black men and one White woman were charged with firebombing a White owned grocery store. They were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 7 to 34 years (Eaton 1984). After serving several years in prison, their convictions were finally overturned.

Coach Corbin (2002) believed “integration started at the wrong level” (Corbin Interview). He believed it would have worked better had they started desegregating schools in the primary grades. Corbin (2002) argued that high school students have already been indoctrinated in racism. If school desegregation had started with young students there may not have been such terrible violence. White students did not want to go to Williston and the Black students did not want to go to the White schools. Corbin (2002) claimed,

When the Black kids went to Hoggard, they saw that a lot of those youngsters weren’t as smart as they were. Believe it or not, they weren’t as smart as they were because we, as Black teachers, had pushed our kids a little harder. When they got to the White schools up there, just getting by was it. For instance, I
got letters off to get these athletes in schools. The White coaches at Hoggard and, I guess, New Hanover, the same thing, said we don’t have to get those letters off. If they’re going to school, they’ll go anyway. A lot of the kids fell through the holes because no one pushed for them. (Corbin Interview)

Pearce (2002) agreed with Corbin that a whole generation of Black students were left “by the wayside” (Pearce Interview). Everyone in the Black community was intent on saving the next generation (Pearce Interview).

Linda Brown, the subject of the Brown v. Board of Education lawsuit, still lives in Topeka, Kansas, and is now a mother and grandmother with children and grandchildren who attended desegregated schools. In 1994, Brown told a reporter on the fortieth anniversary of the Brown decision:

Sometimes I wonder if we really did the children and nation a favor by taking this case to the Supreme Court. I knew it was the right thing for my father and others to do then. But after nearly forty years, we find the court’s ruling remains unfulfilled (cited in Irons 2002, 316).

It has been 49 years since the Supreme Court’s Brown v. Board of Education decision declared that separate schools were inherently unequal. Noblitt and Dempsey (1996) suggested, “we can outlaw behaviors but we cannot control beliefs” (196). Brown may have changed conditions but it did not change hearts and minds. Black students, regardless of class statue or geographical locale, have consistently fallen behind academically since the Brown decision nearly five decades ago. Desegregated schools have not assured Black students equal educational opportunity.
Summary

Through the voices of teachers and students, we were able to gain a greater understanding of teaching and learning in Williston, a segregated Black school in Wilmington, North Carolina. The findings hold very strongly that despite the hostile outside environment and limitations placed upon Black students and teachers by a racist society, Williston High School was an educational force in the lives of many Blacks in Wilmington, North Carolina. Williston High School’s teachers consistently stressed to students the necessity of having goals in life and that education was the only hope for ever reaching progress. Teachers encouraged students to aim at the stars and pushed students to develop their talents so they could be of service to others. Black students were expected to be the kind of leaders who would empower the community to benefit from their leadership.

Students were consistently told they could achieve whatever they conceived in their hearts and minds. They were always encouraged to do better. The messages they received at home and at school did not permit them to view themselves as limited because of their race. However, some students believed they were treated differently because of their darker skin color or socio-economic status. Nevertheless, those students credited Williston High School for contributing to the success they experienced in their later lives.

Participants in this research discussed the inequality of resources and facilities at Williston High School. Teachers lacked sufficient materials and supplies. Second-hand books from White schools were so common that Williston High School students believed all students, both Black and White, used hand-me-down books. Classrooms were often overcrowded because they lacked required space. The library was underfunded and understocked. Neither the band nor the athletic department received financial support from
the school board and were forced to rely solely upon the sole support of parents and the Black community. Science laboratories in the school lacked adequate materials. Unwilling to continue to accept crumbs from the school board, some Black parents and members of the Wilmington community stepped out of the shadows of Wilmington’s violent past and sought legal recourse in order to secure equality of resources and facilities for Black students.

Black parents in other parts of the United States challenged the disparities in school funding as well. The result was the victory of Eaton v. New Hanover County Board of Education in Wilmington, North Carolina, and Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas. The courts in both cases determined that separate schools for Black students were inherently unequal from schools for White students. The North Carolina judgment ordered the New Hanover School Board to refrain from operating unequal schools for Black children. The United States Supreme Court demanded the desegregation of public schools nationwide with all deliberate speed.

Undaunted by unequal funding, resources, and facilities, Williston High School teachers embraced a will to excellence and set high expectations and standards for student achievement. They enriched students’ learning with curricular and instructional strategies that stimulated their interests, their growth and development. They focused on issues that directly related to students’ lives. They fostered their students self-pride and positive self-concepts and empowered students to take charge over their lives and their future direction. Williston High School teachers provided a warm, nurturing learning environment that made many students feel secure and connected, a part of the larger school family. Although there were some students who were made to believe they were not a viable part of the school
family, those students also acknowledged the quality of education they received and credited Williston High School for empowering them to achieve success in their later lives.

Years after the New Hanover County Board of Education closed Williston High School, many in the Black community continue to lament the loss of what they consider, “the greatest school under the sun.”
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY

Even so is the hope that sang in the songs of my fathers well sung.

If somewhere in this whirl and chaos of things there dwells Eternal Good, pitiful yet masterful,
then anon in His good time America shall rend the Veil and the prisoned shall go free.

Free, free as the sunshine trickling down the morning into these high windows of mine,
free as yonder fresh young voices welling up to me from the caverns of brick and mortar below
– swelling with song, instinct with life, tremulous treble and darkening bass.

My children, my little children, are singing to the sunshine.

[DuBois 1903/1993, 207]

In this research, I examined the development of education for Blacks in the United States beginning with African slaves’ fervent desire to learn to read and write. I also examined the political, ideological, and institutional factors that shaped education for Blacks following the Civil War and explored the historical context of public schools in North Carolina. I focused, specifically, on Williston High School in Wilmington, North Carolina, to gain a greater understanding of teaching and learning in a segregated Black learning institution. The data indicated Williston High School provided many Black students with a strong public school experience that enabled them to succeed in their adult lives.

Chapter Seven will summarize and offer implications of this research.

The Quest for Education

Kidnapped or sold as slaves and brought to America, life for Africans differed distinctly in colonial America from the lives they knew on the continent of their birth. They were stripped of their humanity and denied any semblance of dignity. They were denied the
right to speak in their native tongues, the privilege of practicing their customs and religions and the basic rights and privileges of citizenship in the land they built through struggle and toil. They became nameless, stateless and unconditionally submissive to the slaveholders’ will. Their children were sold away from them, husbands and wives, too. Slaveholders justified their inhumane treatment and deemed Africans inhuman, mere chattel that had to be enslaved to save them from their own wretchedness. Immediately after the Civil War, former slaves took steps to regain their humanity; they secured jobs, homes, clothing, and food. To achieve full freedom, the former slaves needed economic stimulus and land (Butchart 1980). Instead, they were given limited enfranchisement and a special type of education.

The former slaves were stamped with a badge of inferiority that consistently subjected them to racism. Although laws stated they were free, the freed men and women learned the principles and ideals of a democratic society did not apply to them. “The promises of ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ [in the Constitution] were clearly gifts for some, not rights to be enjoyed by all” (Emerson 1994, 70). As Whites sought to maintain the subordinate status of former slaves, the separate-but-equal doctrine of Plessy v. Ferguson replaced the provisions of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and Jim Crow laws dictated every aspect of Negro life including the schools. In reconstructing the South, Northern Whites concentrated on “the problems of white conciliation and accommodation” (Butchart 1976, vi) rather than on the problems and concerns of Negro citizens.

**Education to Subordinate**

Butchart (1976) contended the primary goal of Reconstruction was to preserve the republic. Significant, too, was redefining the place millions of ex-slaves would hold in the restructured South. Education for freed men and women became “a tool of dominant class
control” (Butchart 1976, 474) whereby northern freedmen’s aid societies transformed the South, reassured White supremacy and bourgeois hegemony, and pressed the South toward fuller integration into the American industrial capitalistic system. Through freedmen schools, the North established the concept of free labor. “Plant a free soil, free labor society in the South and it would rapidly become a region like the North, marked by economic development, social mobility, and political democracy” (Butchart 1976, 63).

While Negroes maintained an intense desire for education, Southern Whites maintained their opposition to Negro education. Whites’ opposition to Negro schools was more than a deep hostility to the essential idea of educating an inferior caste. Instead, Butchard (1976) believed the opposition was prompted by racism, rebellion and political considerations and “a continuation of a peculiarly southern way of dealing with problems, frustrations or fears” (474). Opposition was part of a broader effort to reassert White supremacy in all areas of Negro life.

Wealthy northern capitalists seeking to extend corporate capitalism into the South knew the value of mass education to the ruling class and advised and assisted Southerners in their educational efforts. Southern opposition to educating the Negro waned as the planters realized the North’s true purpose for Negro education was to attain “an even more orderly, stratified society” (Butchart 1976, 477). According to Butchart (1976), Southerners reasoned, “The best way to manage the Negroes [was] to educate them and increase as far as practicable their wants and dependence upon the white man” (474).

The Southern bourgeoisie found that educating the Negroes was “much more subtle than enforced ignorance” (Butchart 1976, 478). Providing Negroes with mass public education successfully decreased their discontent, diverted their attention from Northern
migration, and ensured a substantial labor force for the South (Butchart 1976). The freedmen schools provided Negroes an illusion of freedom, an illusion of the opportunity for success. Butchart (1976) argued,

The freedmen schools would promise Negroes access to power which they could not provide. The schools perpetuated the myth of the American Dream by creating a black bourgeoisie that appeared to illustrate the potential for mobility, but in fact gave that black elite a mockery of the elements of the Dream. The schools then gave to the masses of black people an ideology that explained the failure of the rest of the race by blaming the race and the individual (519).

Freedmen education defined the subordinate role of the Negro in American society. However, the Negroes’ views and desires for education contrasted greatly with those of both northern and southern Whites.

Denied access to land, political power, justice, and an economic stake in American society, former slaves believed quality education would assist them in attaining their goals. For over two hundred years, they had broken their backs and worked the land to build the wealth of the South. After the Civil War, they desired to reap the benefits of their labors. They desired to fulfill the promises of freedom and wanted to participate fully in mainstream society. They wanted a fair chance to meet the challenges and demands of life.
In 1866, former slaves flocked to Wilmington, North Carolina, one of the most racially tolerant cities in the South, supposedly, a land of opportunity for Negroes. They raised funds, accepted contributions, and established Williston Free School for Negro students in the southern part of the city. In 1873, the school became a part of the newly formed Wilmington Board of Education. The name was changed to Williston Graded School and an all Negro faculty and staff replaced the all White faculty and staff.

Negroes in Wilmington achieved noteworthy economic, educational, and social successes. They owned businesses, companies, and a newspaper. They held professional jobs as lawyers, teachers, and druggists. Armed with the privilege of enfranchisement, they exercised their new freedom and achieved local and state government jobs and appointments. However, these liberties were short-lived. Southern Whites determined that the ex-slave would not enjoy the fruits of liberty. Intolerant and fearful of Negro progress and rule, Whites engaged in violence and took back the political and social dominance they had enjoyed before the Civil War.

In 1898, various contending White forces in Wilmington, North Carolina, burned down the Negro newspaper and invaded a Negro neighborhood killing Negroes and running numerous others out of town. A political coup unfolded and White supremacists took control of the city. An adverse period of political, social, and economic decline followed for Negroes in Wilmington. Although, Negroes in cities across the United States experienced similar violence during the period of Redemption in the 1870s through 1890s, Negroes in Wilmington, North Carolina, suffered a catastrophe unlike Negroes in any other city in the
state (Godwin 2000). The mental and psychological scars of the 1898 violence significantly shaped Black life in Wilmington in the following years.

However, Negroes in Wilmington maintained an incessant desire to improve the circumstances of their lives and to pursue an education. Southern Whites remained opposed to Negro education and developed legal ways to underfund Negro schools. Nevertheless, despite the overwhelming odds, despite the inequality of educational opportunity, Negroes in Wilmington were able to provide quality education for their children. Their greatest opportunity for achievement was Williston High School.

In 1919, Williston Graded School became Williston Industrial High School. A full college preparatory and liberal arts curriculum was added along with eighth through twelfth grades. In 1923, Williston High School was accredited and received the highest rating of any Negro school in North Carolina. Accreditation was achieved despite inadequate funding and the lack of proper resources and materials. Rather than dwell on what they did not have, teachers made the best of the resources and materials provided and concentrated on educating the students.

According to my research, Williston High School’s teachers and parents believed that providing students a quality education was the single most important factor for advancement. The entire school and Black community were geared to supporting the academic, social, and civic development of the students. Williston High School’s teachers took the responsibility of educating students seriously. They understood the importance of being held accountable and assumed personal commitment to student learning. They provided a loving and nurturing environment. Williston High School’s teachers believed in the students and taught them to
believe in themselves. Teachers held high expectations for student achievement and embraced a will to excellence. Excellence was an integral part of the whole educational experience.

Williston High School’s students were held to high standards, academically, socially, and spiritually. Williston High School’s teachers inspired their students to excel. Students were consistently told they must excel. No excuses were permissible for mediocrity or for failure. Williston High School’s teachers rewarded students when they were excellent and chastised and disciplined them when they were not. They were firm disciplinarians and believed in making sure students did their work well. Students characterized Williston High School as a school of excellence dominated by competent, strict, but loving and highly qualified teachers who took a personal interest in them, both inside and outside the classroom. There was often positive interaction between teacher and student.

The interviewees revealed that Williston High School’s teachers were committed to providing students the best possible education despite the limited facilities and resources. Students strove for great gains despite difficulties, many being made to believe they were important in their own right and capable of making their mark in the world. Williston High School’s teachers passed on their knowledge in a structured environment and set as their goals the development of the total student. They motivated and inspired students to achieve their highest potential.

Williston’s teachers reaffirmed students’ sense of dignity and self-worth. Williston High School’s teachers supplemented the State curriculum with a curriculum that honored and valued the rich contributions of Blacks in Africa and in America. Black history was an integral part of students’ learning and was not reserved for February, the one month
designated for that purpose late in the 20th century. Students gained a sense of who they were and were able to transform that knowledge into positive tools of change.

Williston High School’s teachers taught students to study and analyze the political and social circumstances of their lives. Importantly, they encouraged them to develop constructive alternatives to the oppressive, unjust, and undemocratic conditions that engulfed them. It was only natural that Williston’s students took the lead in civil rights activities against oppression. Their schooling experiences at Williston High School empowered them to stand up for their civil and human rights and to make effective changes in their lives and in their community.

Williston High School’s students were expected to possess good character and value education. Teachers impressed upon their students the necessity of furthering their education beyond high school and of using their God-given talents “because if you don’t use it, it would be taken away” (Smith Interview). Teachers not only encouraged educational advancement, they actively helped students obtain the financial means to attend college. Lee Monroe and Carl Brown are only two examples of the many students whom teachers assisted to achieve their goals. Williston High School’s teachers were positive role models who stood before students everyday as symbols of hope, examples of what the students could accomplish in their own lives.

Williston High School’s students were expected to not only achieve success for themselves, but to become contributing citizens of their communities. All of the alumni in this research reached back to serve the Wilmington community in their adult lives. For more than 35 years, Murphy worked as an athletic director for Wilmington’s youths. Although he has “retired,” Murphy continues in that capacity. Wilson established several mentoring programs
in the public elementary, middle and high schools. He developed students’ talents and skills in youth drama and music troupes. He worked as a recreation center director with daily activities provided for the mental, spiritual and physical development of youths. Pearce established a day care facility that serves the elderly in the community. The facility engages the elderly substantially, mentally and physically. McNeil defined his manhood and directly confronted racism, sparking national sit-ins and boycotts. Mrs. Moore has served as a voice for the oppressed for more than 50 years and is currently vice-president of one of the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organizations, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Williston High School’s teachers maintained a strong connection within the community. They taught students at school and in the church. They facilitated church programs. They could depend on parental support. Parents were actively involved in the schooling of their children, whether they encouraged them at home, attended school activities, or raised funds. Many parents of Williston High School students had also attended the school, had been taught by the same teachers, and participated in the same activities. The parents understood the significance of a high school education and had a fundamental belief that education was the children’s key for the future. They were willing to work to ensure their success.

The Black church, the Black home, and the Black community collectively shared responsibility for the education of Williston High School students. Williston High School was the lifeline, the heartbeat and strength of the Black community. Williston High School was the single place where the entire Black community converged, the educated and the non-educated, the middle class and the poor. All classes, all socio-economic groups were tied to the school.
Historically, Williston High School’s faculty and staff did not fight the local school board for increased appropriations or for additional resources, supplies, and materials. They did not dwell on what they lacked. Instead, they concentrated on their students and provided them the best education possible despite seemingly insurmountable odds. Williston High School was the center of hope for Black Wilmington — the escape route from poverty, the pathway to social mobility. Williston High School’s teachers assumed personal responsibility for the academic, spiritual, physical, and moral growth and development of their students.

The community of Williston High School empowered students to become college presidents, doctors, lawyers, teachers, principals, guidance counselors, athletic directors, storytellers, pilots, and caretakers of the elderly. The experience of Williston High School enhanced students’ opportunity to maximize their potential and achieve success. To many students, teachers, and parents, Williston High School was, indeed, the greatest school under the sun.

**Implications**

**Touching the Spirit of the Black Child**

*True education occurs when there is that “divine dance” between the teacher and the student.*

*True education is caught in that instant that becomes a moment, that turns into a path of perfection. It is when the teacher “touches the spirit” of the student and opens up the passion for knowledge and inspires the student to love learning.*


Black students have experienced adverse effects in North Carolina’s desegregated public schools (Hale-Benson 1982). Standardized test results ranging from the Scholastic Achievement Test to the National Assessment of Educational Progress to State-based tests of
achievement indicate the vast majority of Black students in North Carolina’s schools consistently experience educational failure. Significant gaps in achievement exist between them and White students (Jencks and Phillips 1998). See Appendix I for test score results.

Public schools in the United States are traditionally based upon White standards and values and are designed to maintain the dominant status quo. The emphasis of traditional education has been upon molding Black students to fit into an educational process designed for White middle class students. Since the Supreme Court’s Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954, Black students have been forced to endorse White values and characteristics and to disclaim their own ethnic characteristics. They have tried to acquire Euro-American cultural characteristics in order to be considered true Americans and to be accepted as effective citizens. School curricula, policies, and practices are often irrelevant and disconnected with the world Black students experience on a daily basis. The curriculum is ineffective in providing Black students the knowledge and skills they need to effect real and substantial changes in their lives.

Williston High School’s teachers understood the importance of focusing upon and working with issues that related to their students’ experiences. Rather than insisting that students be made to fit the standard curriculum, teachers adapted the curriculum to better fit their students’ needs. Williston’s teachers incorporated the perspectives, experiences, and contributions of Blacks into the curriculum. Black history was an integral part of the curriculum. Thus, the curriculum became more relevant to students because aspects of their culture were integrated. Williston High School’s teachers instilled within their students a rich consciousness of their cultural heritage fostering students’ self-esteem. In addition, students
were taught to critically assess the reasons behind their oppressive state and to develop constructive solutions to alter those conditions as they assumed adult roles.

A recurring theme in this study indicated Williston High School’s teachers believed in the intellectual capabilities of their students and maintained high expectations for their achievement. Teachers did not question if their students could learn. They did not allow students to become victims of their circumstances. Rather, they cultivated an environment which developed and enriched students’ academic and social lives. They embraced a will to excellence. Williston High School’s teachers provided students with meaningful academic and social experiences and empowered them with a sense of purpose and responsibility. Students at Williston High School had the advantage of a total learning experience.

The Need for Further Study

Most studies of segregated schools have focused primarily on the negative aspects, inadequate resources, substandard facilities, and unequal funding. Seldom have accounts focused upon the positive teaching and learning that took place (Walker 1996; Wilson and Segall 2001). Results of my research indicated despite the inequities in segregated Williston High School, educational excellence occurred. My research overwhelmingly indicates the wholesale failure of Black students is preventable. The research supports the positive efforts to produce high achievement for Black students.

By continuing the focus on nearby history, educators may gain knowledge of success stories lying untold in other segregated schools. The knowledge gleaned can be used to inform educational practice and lead to successful learning for all students. Although the results of my research cannot be used as the recipe for practice, much can be learned from Williston High
School’s teachers’ success. The results from this research can contribute to the knowledge and skills educators need to work effectively with Black students.
Chapter One

1 The terms Black, African American, Negro, and Colored will be used interchangeably in this research and will in most instances, attempt to reflect the time period of the discussion. Similarly, the terms White and European American will be used interchangeably. The terms will also reflect the appropriateness of the time period being discussed. The author, however, prefers the term African American as she believes it truly reflects the ethnicity of the people.

Chapter Three

2 Although they were not acknowledged as citizens or as equals with Whites, some slaves served in the Continental Army in the fight against the British in the Revolutionary War. As a result, many who served were given their freedom in return for their military service. Some free slaves were also born into freedom. In 1790, 60,000 free Africans lived in the colonies. By 1860, the number had swelled to approximately 500,000. Although free slaves were technically free, they lived, daily, with the contradictions of that freedom. They were beaten, cheated, watched, and harassed. They were denied entry into some colonies and many were kidnapped and sold back into slavery (Ploski and Williams 1989; Asante 1995).

Chapter Four

3 The Act of 1866, Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, That the district courts of the United States, within their respective districts, shall have, exclusively of the courts of the several States, cognizance of all crimes and offences committed against the provisions of this act, and also, concurrently with the circuit courts of the United States, of all causes, civil and
criminal, affecting persons who are denied or cannot enforce in the courts or judicial
tribunals of the State or locality where they may be any of the rights secured to them by the
first section of this act; and if any suit or prosecution, civil or criminal, has been or shall be
commenced in any State court, against any such person, for any cause whatsoever, or against
any officer, civil or military, or other person, for any arrest or imprisonment, trespasses, or
wrongs done or committed by virtue or under color of authority derived from this act or the
act establishing a Bureau for the relief of Freedmen and Refugees, and all acts amendatory
thereof, or for refusing to do any act upon the ground that it would be inconsistent with this
act, such defendant shall have the right to remove such cause for trial to the proper district or
circuit court in the manner prescribed by the " Act relating to habeas corpus and regulating
judicial proceedings in certain cases," approved March three, eighteen hundred and sixty-
three, and all act amendatory thereof. The jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters hereby
conferred on the district and circuit courts of the United States shall be exercised and
enforced in conformity with the laws of the United States, so far as such laws are suitable to
carry the same into effect; but in all cases where such laws are not adapted to the object, or
are deficient in the provisions necessary to furnish suitable remedies and punish offences
against law, the common law, as modified and changed by the constitution and statutes of the
State wherein the court having jurisdiction of the cause, civil or criminal, is held, so far as the
same is not inconsistent with the Constitution and laws of the United States, shall be
extended to and govern said courts in the trial and disposition of such cause, and, if of a
criminal nature, in the infliction of punishment on the party found guilty.
Sec. 4. And be it further enacted, That the district attorneys, marshals, and deputy marshals of the United States, the commissioners appointed by the circuit and territorial courts of the United States, with powers of arresting, imprisoning, or bailing offenders against the laws of the United States, the officers and agents of the Freedmen’s Bureau, and every other officer who may be specially empowered by the President of the United States, shall be, and they are hereby, specially authorized and required, at the expense of the United States, to institute proceedings against all and every person who shall violate the provisions of this act, and cause him or them to be arrested and imprisoned, or bailed, as the case may be, for trial before such court of the United States or territorial court as by this act has cognizance of the offence. And with a view to affording reasonable protection to all persons in their constitutional rights of equality before the law, without distinction of race or color, or previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, and to the prompt discharge of the duties of this act, it shall be the duty of the circuit courts of the United States and the superior courts of the Territories of the United States, from time to time, to increase the number of commissioners, so as to afford a speedy and convenient means for the arrest and examination of persons charged with a violation of this act; and such commissioners are hereby authorized and required to exercise and discharge all the powers and duties conferred on them by this act, and the same duties with regard to offences created by this act, as they are authorized by law to exercise with regard to other offences against the laws of the United States (http://www.toptags.com/aama/docs/crts1866.htm).
The Republican and Democratic parties during this period differed considerably from the two parties of the latter twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Republican Party was established in 1854 in opposition to slavery and to the South’s position that Congress had the right to recognize slavery in a territory. Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 election as a Republican candidate. The 14th and 15th amendments of the Constitution were passed under Republican leadership. Maintaining dominance over the party, Republicans formed a bi-racial coalition with Blacks who won hundreds of elected positions and numerous administrative appointments. When White Southerners began to rally under the banner of White supremacy, Northern Republicans lost interest in the South and became the party of business interests.

The Democratic Party, the oldest existing political party in the United States, was established in 1792 to counteract supporters of Thomas Jefferson who used the name, Republican. Southern Democrats desiring to protect slavery in all the territories split with Northern Democrats who adopted an anti-slavery platform in the 1860 presidential convention. Identifying itself as the White man’s party, Democrats were determined to take control over the South even if it meant using fraud, intimidation, and violence. The Democrats controlled every state in the South by 1877 when Reconstruction officially ended and maintained control until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Available at http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_org_populist.html).

The American Freeman’s Union also referred to as the American Union Freedmen’s Commission was financed by northern philanthropists to assist in advancing Negro education. The organization not only helped build Negro schools, but also supplied teachers
In 1865, according to Butchart, a national merger of eastern and western freedmen’s aid societies created the American Freedmen’s Aid Commission. In 1866, a final reorganization established the American Freedmen’s Union Commission.

The organizers of the Commission cited several advantages of the national Commission. They included an end to competition for funds and students, a more concentrated effort to work on problems affecting the freedmen, increased visibility and opportunities for funding, a clearinghouse for domestic and foreign aid to enable standardized education for freedmen, and the potential end to the development of systems of parochial schools in the South (Butchart 1980).

The American Tract Society (ATS) originated as a nondenominational evangelical organization, but by the 1860s, was dominated by the Congregationalists. Butchart claimed the curricular material of the ATS reflected a pervasive racist ideology portraying Whites as superior to Negroes and Negroes in a racially demeaning manner.

The Populist Party was an independent third party based on agrarian reform, formed by farmers in the 1890s in response to their disgust with the Democrats (Reaves 1998).

Fusion politics was born following the 1894 and 1896 elections when Republicans aligned themselves with the Populists to form the coalition called the Fusionists.

Chapter Five

The term Colored reflects the appropriateness of the time period being discussed.

During the late nineteenth century, the normal school accepted students who had not attended high school but were able to pass an examination in “easy reading, spelling, writing
and the fundamental rules of arithmetic (Westin 1967, 85). However, in the early twentieth century, a high school diploma was necessary for admission into the normal school and the normal school advanced to higher academic and professional standards for teacher preparation. Some students who were educated in the normal school were required to pledge at least three years of service in the teaching field (Westin 1967).

In 1877, the North Carolina legislature passed legislation appropriating $2,000 to establish a normal school to train Negro teachers in the state. The first Negro normal school in North Carolina was located in Fayetteville and started with 42 students in September 1877. In 1881, the legislature appropriated $2,000 for an additional four normal schools in the state (Noble 1930).

11 According to Anderson (1988), the Southern Education Movement was controlled by the Southern Education Board, a propaganda agency primarily composed of young White Southern men “who magnified the virtues of the dominant Northeast” (86). The purpose of the agency was to develop southern education. The Southern Education Movement was a collaborative effort of northern and southern reformers to shape the policy and programs of the Southern Education Board. In 1902, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. established another agency, the General Education Board.

Chapter Six

12 Teachers are afforded titles of respect, Ms., Mrs., or Mr.

13 In early June, 1963, an estimated 200 Negroes participated in pickets and sit – ins against segregated retail stores, restaurants, and theaters in Wilmington, North Carolina. In mid-June, 1963, approximately 173 Negro demonstrators were arrested for trespassing after
refusing to leave a segregated hotel and three segregated restaurants in Wilmington.

According to Waynick, Pitts, and Brooks (1964), the local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Congress of Racial Equality were the sponsors of the “well-organized and orderly marches (176).

In 1963, in an effort to address some of the escalating problems dealing with race relations in cities in North Carolina, Governor Sanford required cities and counties to establish bi-racial committees to formulate and implement plans to handle race-related problems in an orderly manner. In May, 1963, Wilmington mayor, O. O Allsbrook, formed the Wilmington – New Hanover County Biracial Committee composed of 18 White members and 8 Black members. Subcommittees were comprised of the following members:

- Public accommodations – three White and two Negro members.
- Employment – four White and no Negro members.
- Education – five White and no Negro members.
- Public relations – three White and one Negro member.
- Youth – two White and two Negro members.
- Health, Welfare and Safety – three White and two Negro members (Waynick, Pitts, and 1964, 176).

According to Waynick, Pitts, and Brooks (1964), the goals of the Committee were to “create a better understanding between the races in the community, to serve as a means of communication between the people affected by racial problems, to seek peaceful and lawful solutions to community problems, to encourage businesses serving the public to adopt voluntarily a policy of open public accommodations, to encourage employment of qualified people without
regard to race, and to encourage all citizens to eliminate discrimination based
on race, creed, or color (176-177).

In 1964, Waynick, Pitts, and Brooks (1964) indicated the Biracial Committee reported the
following improvements had been made in Wilmington, North Carolina, as a result of their
efforts. Negroes were being appointed to local boards and commissions. Thirteen local
merchants had hired 22 Negro sales clerks. A cafeteria, a restaurant, and all lunch counters
in the city agreed to desegregate. The public library was desegregated. However, theaters,
motels, hotels, and hospitals in Wilmington remained segregated. (Waynick, Pitts, and
Brooks 1964). Some Negro students were already attending predominantly White schools in
the city.


247


Douglass, F. (1845 [1993]). *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* New Jersey: Random House. [first published as the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave in 1845*].


THESES, DISSERTATIONS, AND ESSAYS


252


**COURT CASES**


**ORAL HISTORIES**


Oral history interview of Inez Richardson with Diane E. Emerson (June 14, 2002).

Oral history interview of Bertha Todd with Diane E. Emerson (June 14, 2002).

Oral history interview of Linda A. Pearce with Diane E. Emerson (June 30, 2002).


Oral history interview of Lillian Quick Smith with Diane E. Emerson (July 18, 2002).

Oral history interview of Dolores Moore with Diane E. Emerson (August 30, 2002).

Oral history interview of William E. Murphy with Diane E. Emerson (July 4, 2002).


ARTICLES


Commission to Study Public Schools and Colleges for Colored People in North Carolina 1937.


NOTES


North Carolina General Assembly, 1956.

PAPERS AND ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

A Digest of Regional Accrediting Standards for Secondary Schools. The Commission on Secondary Schools of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (N. D.)

Carr Letter (1915).

General Correspondence. 1907-1950. State Department of Public Instruction.

Informational and explanatory letter about industrial work in public schools of the state.


Library, State Legislative Building.

Outline of Plan for Statewide Activity in Training Teachers for Industrial Work in Colored Schools. Department of Public Instruction.


VIDEOCASSETTES

It’s a Beautiful Thing. 2002. Produced by Ernest Ennett. 60 min. Videocassette.

Teacher’s Video #1. 1990. Produced by Special Times Video. 2 hours. Videocassette.

Teacher’s Video #2 1990. Produced by Special Times Video. 2 hours. Videocassette.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES


www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/fbact.

http://www.usconstitution.net/eman.html.


Appendix A: Letter of Confirmation

Example

Diane E. Emerson
4909 Wallingford Drive, Unit B
Raleigh, NC 27616

July 8, 2002

Coach E. A. Corbin
22211 Andrew Jackson Highway East
Bolton, NC 28423

Dear Coach Corbin:

Thank you for consenting to participate in the oral history of Williston Senior High School. I look forward to interviewing you at your home on July 18, 2002, at 10:00 o’clock.

Please feel free to call me at _________________ if you need to speak with me before our meeting. I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Diane E. Emerson
Appendix B: Teacher Questionnaire

Name______________________________________________________________

Address___________________________________________________________

Telephone_________________________ Age____________________________

Bachelor’s Degree

Name of Institution ________________________________________________

Major ___________________________________________________________

Year _____________________________________________________________

Name of Institution ________________________________________________

Major ___________________________________________________________

Year _____________________________________________________________

Master’s Degree

Name of Institution ________________________________________________

Major ___________________________________________________________

Year _____________________________________________________________

Name of Institution ________________________________________________

Major ___________________________________________________________

Year _____________________________________________________________

Area(s) of Certification __________________ ____________________________
Courses Taught_________________________ _____________________________

_________________________ _____________________________

Grades Taught__________________________ Year(s)_______________________

___________________________ Year(s)_______________________

Participation in Extracurricular Activities___________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Number of Years Teaching Experience ________ Administrative Experience______

Number of Years taught at Williston__________ Other school(s)_______________

Did you attend Williston as a student?___________
Appendix C: Interview Guide

Date ____________________________________________________________

Interviewee’s Name_________________________________________________

Year(s) at Williston ____________________________________________________

Position at Williston __________________________________________________

Subject(s) Taught _____________________________________________________

• Why did you become an educator?

• Describe a typical day in your class/library.

• Talk about your relationship with your students? Colleagues? Principal? Parents?

• What do you consider your most rewarding experience as an educator?

• What do you consider to have been your students’ greatest needs?

• What role did Williston play in the community?

• What role did central office play in the daily activities of the school?

• What do you consider the worst part of your job as an educator at Williston?

• If you could return to one day or event at Williston, what would it be?

• What do you consider the best thing about Williston? The worst?
Appendix D: Student Interview Questions

Name________________________________________________________________

Age__________________    Graduation _________________

Community you grew up in _____________________________________________

Household (siblings, etc.)_______________________________________________

What interested you as a child?

What values were instilled in you as a child?

Who instilled those values parents, neighbors, community?

Who were your friends? What type of activities did you participate in? –

Where did you attend school? Elementary, junior high? College?

What role did education play in your life as you grew up?

Describe your school experiences.

Describe a typical school day. Academic? Extracurricular?

Did a teacher/educator play a significant role in your life? Who? What did he/she/they do to inspire/motivate you?

Talk about your relationship with your teachers? Fellow students? Principal?

What do you consider your most rewarding experience as a student?

What was the best thing about Williston? The worst?

What role did Williston play in the community?

If you could return to one day or event at Williston, what would it be?

When someone mentions the name Williston, what immediately comes to your mind?
Appendix E: Release Form

I, ________________________________, do hereby release my tape-recorded interview to Diane E. Emerson to be used in research. I give my permission for the edited transcripts to be copyrighted and published.

I waive claims to any payments.

_______________________________________________ Interviewee

_______________________________________________ Date
Appendix F: Thank You Letter

Example

Diane E. Emerson
4909 Wallingford Drive
Unit B
Raleigh, NC 27616
919-790-3519
dianee@ncleg.net

August 7, 2002

Coach E. A. Corbin
22211 Andrew Jackson Highway East
Bolton, NC 28423

Dear Coach Corbin:

I am so very honored for having had the opportunity to interview you. I appreciate your participation in my research of Williston Senior High School. Your interview is a significant part of the study.

Please review and edit, if necessary, the attached transcript of our tape-recorded interview. I will call you in a few days and if you’d like, you may dictate the corrections to me via the telephone or you may mail them to me.

Again, I am grateful for your assistance in my project. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Diane E. Emerson
Appendix G: Chronology of Williston High School

1865 Freedmen’s Bureau opened four schools and began teaching Wilmington Freedmen to read and write

1866 Site for colored school acquired by a Massachusetts gentleman, Mr. Williston, on 7th Street between Nun and Ann

1870 Ground on which stood deeded to County Board of Education

1873 Williston Graded School sold to Wilmington Board of Education

Williston Graded School is the first Black school added to the city’s free schools

1874 First female Black principal

1895 Annexed

1896 Three attempts to burn Williston down

1905 Williston Graded School added agricultural plot

1905 198 boys enrolled in the school; 316 girls; 8 teachers

1912 U. S. Congress donated 34 acres of land to the board of education for a new Williston Industrial School

1914 Contract awarded

1915 New two-story brick Williston Industrial School opened in February

1915 7th Street building demolished

Professor D.C. Virgo began his tenure- ushered in new era agricultural crops cultivated

1917 300 honor pupils

Commencement Exercise

1918 State Legislature required four additional years of education

1922 First annex built; 1,564 pupils in 26 classrooms

1923 American Missionary Association turned over secondary education to local board
First seven pupils graduated

1924 60% increase in pupil enrollment since 1915

Expansion needed

Auditorium needed

115 Sixth grade students in two small classrooms; 57 students per teacher

108 Eighth grade students; 54 students per teacher

948 students in primary grades; 15 classrooms; 64 students per teacher

157 students in the senior high school; 40 students per teacher

1,564 students in twenty-six classrooms

Williston condemned unsafe and unsanitary

Began using the former Williston building for primary classes

1925 A second annex with nine classrooms was built using the school’s own funds

1926 27 graduates

1927 48 graduates

1929 School had 12 rooms, ten rooms short as required by a new state law

963 total students required 29 classrooms

Approximately 140 students

1931 Third Williston school opened; three-story brick building erected

953 students; 600 in high school; 26 teachers; 55 graduates

1936 Building destroyed by fire; all furniture and equipment destroyed

The Primary School was used temporarily: primary students in morning; industrial school students in afternoon two classes held at Central Baptist Church and St. Stephens A. M. E. Church annex

266
Williston rebuilt using original plans

1937 Fourth new Williston Industrial School completed

1938 Williston restored to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools accredited list

        New school dedicated on May 24, 1938

        47 girls, 20 boys graduated in June

1939 Williston High School band organized

1953 Williston Senior High School built; rebuilt using original plans

1968 Public school system desegregated

        Williston Senior High School closed to desegregation

        Williston Senior High School became Williston Middle School
## Appendix H: Educational Progress of Negroes 1920-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1920-1921</th>
<th>1930-1935</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school enrollment</td>
<td>16,817</td>
<td></td>
<td>68,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of schoolhouses</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td>996 (decrease due to consolidation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of classrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,068</td>
<td>10,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of School property</td>
<td>$2,387,324</td>
<td></td>
<td>$160,005,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of one-teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elementary schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of accredited</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of high school</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Promotions</td>
<td></td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of school buses</td>
<td></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,746</td>
<td>152,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transported</td>
<td></td>
<td>$38,541</td>
<td>$2,593,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures for bus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers, principal</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,556</td>
<td>10,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s, and supervisors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average scholarship of the</td>
<td>3 ½ years of high school</td>
<td>4 1/3 years of college</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above educators</td>
<td>education</td>
<td></td>
<td>education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total college enrollment</td>
<td>295</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of college graduates</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix I: North Carolina End of Grade/Course Results

#### End of Grade Mathematics
Percent of Students At or Above Achievement Level III 2002-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Subgroup</th>
<th>Math Grade 3</th>
<th>Math Grade 4</th>
<th>Math Grade 5</th>
<th>Math Grade 6</th>
<th>Math Grade 7</th>
<th>Math Grade 8</th>
<th>Math Grade 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>92.1</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>&gt;95.0</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>93.6</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>92.6</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>53.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The percentage and number of students are not shown if the percentage is greater than 95 percent or less than 5 percent.*

#### End of Grade Reading
Percent of Students At or Above Achievement Level III 2002-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Subgroup</th>
<th>Reading Grade 3</th>
<th>Reading Grade 4</th>
<th>Reading Grade 5</th>
<th>Reading Grade 6</th>
<th>Reading Grade 7</th>
<th>Reading Grade 8</th>
<th>Reading Grade 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>84.7</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## End of Course Tests
### Percent of Students At or Above Achievement Level III
#### 2002-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Subgroup</th>
<th>Algebra 1</th>
<th>Algebra 2</th>
<th>Biology</th>
<th>Chemistry</th>
<th>ELPS</th>
<th>English I</th>
<th>Geometry</th>
<th>Physical Science</th>
<th>Physics</th>
<th>U.S. History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Racial</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>