

Black Resistance to School Desegregation in St. Louis during the
Brown Era

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Even today, Americans are aware of the remarkable inequalities in the segregated society of the Deep South prior to the Civil Rights movement and the mass resistance that it was confronted. The discriminatory practices and disproportionate funding of the educational system resulted in a movement to overturn the existing *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling of 1896 that deemed separate-but-equal facilities constitutional and replace it with legislation mandating integration. The renowned case that resulted in a federal step toward dismantling legal segregation was the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954.

As with any groundbreaking legislation intended to completely reorganize society's hierarchy, *Brown* was met with severe resistance. The majority of this resistance originated from white segregationists of the South. However, there was significant resistance from black Americans as well. With the mandate for public school desegregation, members of the African American society responded with varying reactions and views. Those who were victims of the inferior education system in the South or other parts of the country were strong supporters of the *Brown* case in most instances. However, there were members of the pre-*Brown* black society who managed to build separate-but-equal communities; communities that were the most successful at maintaining a separate-but-equal society with equivalent but segregated public school systems. Despite common misconceptions, communities such as those described did exist and St. Louis, Missouri was one of the most thriving examples,¹ whose black members were less accepting of integration as segregation continued to offer them particular opportunities. That is, a large number of black St. Louisans did live in a separate-but-more-or-less-equal society, where public schools were less discriminatorily funded in comparison to its Southern counterparts.

¹ Brian J. Daugherty ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008:177.

This essay discusses the reaction to the *Brown* decision within the St. Louis black community and explores the actions of a group of St. Louis Negro Teachers² that openly resisted public school desegregation. I describe this group's role within the entirety of the debate triggered by *Brown*. From what I have found, this group of St. Louis Negro Teachers main objective was to pass a bill in Missouri's legislation that would have given each school district local option regarding integration.³ Even though not successful, this group of Negro Teachers had a specific position within the St. Louis debate about school desegregation. I have found that among the massive amount of deliberation concerning school desegregation between white segregationists and black integrationists, another debate is unearthed. This debate, among black integrationists and black educators, is not whether or not school desegregation is a moral obligation or a necessary step toward civil rights, but rather the cost of integration. What aspects of the black community were African Americans willing to forfeit in exchange for promised equality of *Brown*? Was the loss of employment among African American teachers one of those aspects?

I begin this essay with a social and economic description of the black community in St. Louis, Missouri, prior to the *Brown* decision of 1954. I will then focus on discussing the schools provided to the African American students in St. Louis. After a fundamental explanation of the St. Louis African American society has been established, I will then concentrate on the general feelings and views that *Brown* initially faced throughout the nation. The essay will then discuss the specific direct action taken against *Brown* within the Missouri black community, specifically St. Louis. I argue two things. First, that there was significant resistance to the *Brown v. Board*

² For the entirety of this essay, I will refer to this group of African American teachers that resisted school desegregation as the "group of Negro Teachers" or the "Negro Teachers," as this is what the group was referred to by several newspaper and journal articles of this time period. The group did not have a formal name that I have found.

³ H.R. 114, 67th G.A.

of *Education* decision within St. Louis black community; resistance was led by a group of educators who fought to maintain their employment and therefore the mildly lucrative establishments that the “separate-but-equal” policies of *Plessy v. Ferguson* initiated in 1896 which strictly adhered to in the state of Missouri. Second, this resistance to public school desegregation in St. Louis was met with considerable counter-resistance among other members of the St. Louis black community, especially those involved with the St. Louis black press and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Missouri as a Separate-but-Equal Leader

At the time of *Brown*, St. Louis was home to half of the 300,000 African Americans who lived in Missouri, with the other half distributed throughout the state and with heavy concentrations in Kansas City and the Southeast.⁴ St. Louis sustained the largest and arguably the most prosperous black community in the state of Missouri at this time.⁵ As compared to the South, the state of Missouri was regarded as an impartial and prosperous environment for African Americans even during the height of the Civil Rights movement. Even though an author regards Missouri as a Southern state in an article from a 1956 issue of the *Journal of Negro Education*, he also states that Missouri “is so closely allied in its interests with the Midwest that the Negro has not fared as poorly as he has in some southern states.”⁶ Even George Lipsitz, author of Ivory Perry’s biography *A Life in the Struggle*, regards St. Louis as a city that “had long enjoyed a reputation as a vital center for Afro-American life and culture.”⁷ Lipsitz goes on to explain that St. Louis had this reputation mostly because of its successful black high school,

⁴ Brian J. Daugherty ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008:177.

⁵ George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988: 66.

⁶ Albert P. Marshall, “Racial Integration in Education in Missouri.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 25, 3 (1956): 289.

⁷ George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988: 66.

Charles Sumner High School, the first black secondary school west of the Mississippi River, and black community hospital, Homer G. Philips Hospital;⁸ both institutions being located in one of St. Louis's most prominent black neighborhoods known as "The Ville."⁹

Dr. Priscilla Dowden-White introduces the idea of the manipulation of public culture by St. Louis African Americans during the interwar period. Despite legally mandated segregation, at this time in St. Louis black attempts to organize and develop an equal community peaked.¹⁰ Not only did privately owned black businesses flourish, but particularly institutions that directly involved the public realm, such as schools and hospitals.¹¹ Dr. Clarence Lang reiterates the importance of Dr. Dowden-White's argument of the manipulation of public culture, by stating, "black St. Louisans used clientage, racial pragmatism, and interracial negotiation to stake claims on a continuing share of educational and health care resources."¹² In general, the mobilization toward available and more equal institutions caused the St. Louis black community to become more successful and prosperous; more specifically aiding to the growing educational opportunities of the St. Louis black community.

To accommodate this large community, St. Louis City controlled the second largest segregated public school district in the United States prior to *Brown*¹³ and even though segregated, all schools within the St. Louis City school district, both black and white, were

⁸ George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988: 67.

⁹ "The Ville" is also known as the Grand Prairie area of St. Louis. The Ville is located south of Fairground Park and north of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, west of North Grand Avenue and east of Newstead Avenue.

¹⁰ Priscilla Dowden-White, "'Over this point we are determined to fight': African-American public education and health care in St. Louis, Missouri, 1910-1949." (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1997), 5.

¹¹ Priscilla Dowden-White, "'Over this point we are determined to fight': African-American public education and health care in St. Louis, Missouri, 1910-1949." (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1997), 6.

¹² Clarence Lang, *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936-75*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2009: 11.

¹³ Judge Gerald W. Heaney and Dr. Susan Uchitelle. *Unending Struggle: The Long Road to an Equal Education in St. Louis*. St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2004: 64.

funded comparably.¹⁴ According to a Metropolitan St. Louis Survey conducted in 1955,¹⁵ the average amount of funds spent per pupil in the larger St. Louis Metropolitan area was \$12,229.00.¹⁶ With this in mind, every student within the St. Louis City boundaries, which included some of the white and all of the black schools, was allotted between \$12,000 and \$18,000, right at and well above the average.¹⁷ In comparison, every other state that mandated segregated schools gave significantly less funding to black schools with the only exceptions being Delaware, Oklahoma, and Missouri.¹⁸

Missouri was even considered a leader among other states that mandated segregated public school systems in regards to the equal educational opportunities that the state provided to black students.¹⁹ Prior to *Brown*, all Missouri students, regardless of color, attended school during the same school term length and were taught using the same curriculum organized by a biracial committee of educators.²⁰ Each Missouri school district spent an equal amount of money on each pupil despite the student's race.²¹ Both black and white students in St. Louis and Kansas City were provided with the same textbooks chosen by a biracial committee of teachers.²² At the time of *Brown* all the teachers in the St. Louis and Kansas City school districts

¹⁴ Brian J. Daugherty ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008:177.

¹⁵ Although the survey was conducted after the *Brown* decision, I am still validating these numbers as constitutional steps had not yet been taken toward public school integration in Missouri at this time.

¹⁶ Colin Gordon. *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008: 58.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Brian J. Daugherty ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008:177.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Brian J. Daugherty ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008:177-178.

²² Ibid.

were evenly qualified and paid; every teacher had a college degree and all were paid in accordance with the same salary scale.²³

Many black teachers and administrators of the St. Louis City school district whom attended St. Louis's all black schools prior to the *Brown* decision regarded their schools as adequate or better.²⁴ The executive vice president of St. Louis's Harris-Stowe State College, Dr. George Hiram had attended Simmons Elementary School in the prominent black St. Louis neighborhood known as The Ville.²⁵ In an interview, he characterized his early educational experiences at Simmons as one with "remarkably fine teachers" and an abundance of books and supplies.²⁶ Doris Carter, principal of St. Louis City's Carver Elementary School, is another black St. Louisan educated under the segregated system. Carter attended Lincoln Elementary School from 1945 to 1954. In addition to never recalling a shortage of books or supplies, she remembered being taught by a talented and involved faculty that would frequently visit their students' homes.²⁷ She even gave credit to these teachers for inspiring her to become an educator.²⁸

Equality Instead of Integration

In the mid-twentieth century, at the pinnacle of the Civil Rights movement, many African Americans, even those living in the Jim Crow South, expressed that they would live in a separate-but-equal society as long as it was truly equal.²⁹ They were even willing to accept segregation in exchange for the access to decent jobs, housing, and education. Social scientist

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Judge Gerald W. Heaney and Dr. Susan Uchitelle. *Unending Struggle: The Long Road to an Equal Education in St. Louis*. St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2004: 11.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Judge Gerald W. Heaney and Dr. Susan Uchitelle. *Unending Struggle: The Long Road to an Equal Education in St. Louis*. St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2004: 11-12.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ James T. Patterson. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001: 37.

Gunnar Myrdal's findings reveal that even though southern whites were most concerned with thwarting social equality, blacks were least concerned with social inequality and were most troubled with the availability of jobs, housing, and education.³⁰ With this in mind, African Americans, in general, were definitely not interested in integration. Many blacks thought that society's principal problem was racial equality and the availability of equal facilities, not racial integration.³¹ Even NAACP representatives struggled to persuade members that integration would provide a better education for their black children as opposed to attempting to equalize the present segregated system.³²

Throughout the state of Missouri, integration remained unpopular even after the 1954 *Brown* decision had already been decided. In Columbia, a town located in central Missouri, only six out of 110 African American students chose to attend a formerly all white high school while the other 104 chose to continue at their all black high school.³³ In addition, seventy-two out of seventy-eight African American junior high students in Columbia chose to remain at the all black junior high school.³⁴

A similar situation resulted in the Southeastern Missouri town of Poplar Bluff. In 1955, a piece in the *Journal of Negro Education* discussing the status of integration in Missouri school stated, "all Negro children chose to continue at the Negro school" in Poplar Bluff.³⁵ This fact was reiterated on February 13, 1956 when the Poplar Bluff newspaper, the *Daily American*,

³⁰ Charles M. Payne. "'The Whole United States Is Southern!': *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race." *The Journal of American History* (June 2004): 89.

³¹ James T. Patterson. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001: xxvi.

³² Charles M. Payne. "'The Whole United States Is Southern!': *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race." *The Journal of American History* (June 2004): 90.

³³ George D. Brantley, "Present Status of Integration in the Public Schools of Missouri." *The Journal of Negro Education* 24, 3 (1955): 306.

³⁴ George D. Brantley, "Present Status of Integration in the Public Schools of Missouri." *The Journal of Negro Education* 24, 3 (1955): 306.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

featured an article with the headline “Both Races Appear Satisfied with Separate Schools in S.E. Mo.”³⁶ Al Daniel, the author of the article, expressed that there was no demand for public school integration and since no African American students have applied for admission to any all white schools, none had been refused.³⁷

Daniel also reported that similar circumstances existed in other Southeastern counties such as, Pemiscot, New Madrid, Dunklin, Stoddard, Scott, and Mississippi.³⁸ Clarkton, a small town located in Dunklin County also observed instant resistance to integration. After the Clarkton Public School Board voted to desegregate the schools in 1954, white parents were not the only group to immediately begin resisting.³⁹ African American parents were uncertain and apprehensive about integrating their children into the white schools, fearing that they would be subjected to racial violence.⁴⁰

In St. Louis City, nine high schools were in existence in 1954 including seven white and two black.⁴¹ Of the 4,275 black students enrolled in St. Louis’s only two black high schools, Sumner and Vashon, only 591, less than fourteen percent, integrated after the *Brown* decision.⁴² Of these 591 students, 425 of them left Vashon and Sumner high schools in order to attend Soldan-Blewett High School,⁴³ a high school in the Cabanne area of St. Louis located just a mile or so southwest from The Ville neighborhood.⁴⁴ The Cabanne neighborhood had already been experiencing a growing black population after World War II when many large single-family

³⁶ Albert P. Marshall, “Racial Integration in Education in Missouri.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 25, 3 (1956): 291.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Albert P. Marshall, “Racial Integration in Education in Missouri.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 25, 3 (1956): 292.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ According to research provided by *Southern School News* on March 3, 1955 and available via George D. Brantley “Present Status of Integration in the Public Schools of Missouri.” *The Journal of Negro Education* 24, 3 (1955): 305.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

homes had been converted into apartment buildings.⁴⁵ Therefore, integration allowed a more convenient high school location for the Cabanne black community who prior to *Brown* were obligated to send their children to either Sumner or Vashon. In addition, because the area was already in the process of being introduced to residential integration, the community was most likely more adaptable to educational integration.

Blacks were also concerned that forced racial integration within the education system could produce feelings of isolation or estrangement among black students.⁴⁶ A lawyer representing the NAACP actually responded to this particular fear by announcing that if integration led to an increase of black student dropout rates, that it was a necessary consequence since there are always causalities in any form of social change.⁴⁷ This was not the only fear among African Americans however. Throughout the country, even in the Deep South, much like southern whites, blacks simply did not want their children to unite with white people.⁴⁸ Many were suspicious that integration would influence desertion of their own culture and impose assimilation into the white culture.⁴⁹ However, the most common cause of anxiety, one that is of great significance to St. Louis, in particular, is the *Brown* decision's impact on black schools, principals, and teachers.⁵⁰

Resistance and Counter-resistance

African American educators served as leaders of the black community during the pre-*Brown* years.⁵¹ African Americans, especially those who benefited from flourishing black

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Charles M. Payne, "'The Whole United States Is Southern!': *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race." *The Journal of American History* (June 2004): 90.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001: xxvi.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

neighborhoods such as those in St. Louis, were proud of their schools and educators. Even after the *Brown* decision was made, the first black students who chose to transfer to previously all white schools were accused of disloyalty to their black schools and neighborhoods.⁵² Many black educators, along with black parents, were apprehensive of desegregation because they feared that it would easily demolish successful black institutions such as schools.⁵³ When these fears were expressed to the NAACP's executive secretary Walter White, who supported the NAACP's main intention of integration, he stated that "blacks needed to give up the little kingdoms that had developed under segregation."⁵⁴

In Missouri particularly, the fear for the lack of employment opportunities for black educators was at the heart of the overall concern for the loss of black institutions.⁵⁵ Throughout Missouri, African American citizens began expressing concern for the loss of their schools and teachers. For example, in the Southeastern Missouri town of Poplar Bluff, black residents 'wished to preserve the 'social and economic status of the negro teacher.'"⁵⁶ The principal fear was in the event of desegregation, "there will be a lowering of general standards resulting from the loss of Negro teachers who would not have teaching positions."⁵⁷ What would happen to the black educators, deemed the leaders of many black communities, when black schools were forced to close as their students were integrated into the white schools? This fear surfaced as a national concern and when it was suggested to the NAACP lawyer Robert Carter. He responded

⁵² Charles M. Payne. "'The Whole United States Is Southern!': *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race." *The Journal of American History* (June 2004): 89.

⁵³ James T. Patterson. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001: 7.

⁵⁴ Charles M. Payne. "'The Whole United States Is Southern!': *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race." *The Journal of American History* (June 2004): 90.

⁵⁵ Brian J. Daugherty ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008:180.

⁵⁶ George D. Brantley, "Present Status of Integration in the Public Schools of Missouri." *The Journal of Negro Education* 24, 3 (1955): 306.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

that the NAACP and its legal team “really had the feeling that segregation itself was evil—and not a symptom of the deeper evil of racism.”⁵⁸ He also indicated that the box that blacks were forced into was segregation itself, and the majority of the nation would come to realize this as well.⁵⁹

While national leaders of the NAACP were speaking out against anti-integration efforts, the St. Louis branch of the NAACP reaffirmed this stance against segregation. In a 1953 issue of the *St. Louis Argus*, a St. Louis based African American newspaper, an article was featured discussing the St. Louis NAACP’s views on anti-integration attempts. According to this article, the St. Louis NAACP “deplored the efforts of ‘selfish interests who would perpetuate segregation unless a particular job can be guaranteed.’”⁶⁰ Also included, was a statement made by the St. Louis NAACP branch blatantly singling out black teachers whom condone and work toward maintaining segregation; stating that any “Negro teacher” fitting this profile “contributes little of value to any child” and that the African American public “should not assume that integration will mean the loss of jobs for Negro teachers in Missouri.”⁶¹ This statement was followed by the *Argus*’s reports of “a small group of Negro leaders working in the state to safeguard Negro teacher’s jobs in the event segregation in education is abolished...working quietly to weaken the chances of the anti-segregation bills in education now before the Missouri Assembly.”⁶²

Throughout a series of articles, the *St. Louis Argus* refers to this “group of Negro teachers.” However, the *Argus* fails to mention any specifics about the group itself or the

⁵⁸ Charles M. Payne. “‘The Whole United States Is Southern!’: *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race.” *The Journal of American History* (June 2004): 90.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “NAACP Scores Teachers Who ‘Condone’ Bias,” *The St. Louis Argus*, April 24, 1953, page 1.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

individuals involved. The origin of the secrecy about the group could be derived from the group itself or from the *St. Louis Argus*. The group of teachers could have been attempting to conceal their identity in order to maintain respect within their community. Alternatively, the *St. Louis Argus* was closely allied to the NAACP and regularly highlighted this position via the newspaper. It could also be that the *St. Louis Argus* purposely excluded detailed information about this group in an attempt to refrain from promoting them. It is also likely the combined attempts by both sets created a very complex uncertainty about this group of Negro teachers. Although it is unclear who this group actually is and what individuals were involved, it is apparent what their thoughts were about school desegregation.

One attempt to fight desegregation surfaced with the anti-segregation House Bill 112, otherwise known as the Tyus-Jones Bill. House Bill 112, supported by Representatives Leroy Tyus and A. Clifford Jones, was intended to break down mandated segregation in the five Missouri state supported universities and colleges.⁶³ It states “any otherwise qualified citizen of the state of Missouri who complies with entrance requirements, shall be admitted to any state supported institution of higher learning without regard to race, color, or religion.”⁶⁴ This bill received obvious support from Missouri integrationists, but was met with resistance by “an organized group of Negroes that had expressed strong opposition to the bill’s passage.”⁶⁵ It was thought, if bill 112 passed then the desegregation of all of the lower levels of public education would be soon to follow. The *St. Louis Argus* quoted Representative Tyus; “the legislator said the group was made up of those persons who stand to ‘gain by segregation’ and so would stymie progress in the state.”⁶⁶ As suggested by the *Argus* in an article a few weeks prior, this

⁶³ H.R. 112, 67th G.A.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ “Anti-Segregation Bills-Mo. ‘Political Footballs,’” *The St. Louis Argus*, May 1, 1953, page 1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

group is associated with an organized group of “Negro leaders,” from Jefferson City and St. Louis and led by a St. Louis elementary school principal, fighting “to safeguard Negro teaching jobs.”⁶⁷ According to the *Argus*, the group is “working toward an amendment or bill which would safeguard Negro teachers’ jobs in the event segregation is abolished.”⁶⁸

The St. Louis NAACP branch and the *St. Louis Argus* both refer to support of a bill by the Negro teacher group. This bill is presumably House Bill 114 which if passed would have granted local option to all school districts on the question of segregation,⁶⁹ which according to the *Argus* would ensure that schools would admit any student who resided within the school district.⁷⁰ Although this bill could be viewed as another anti-segregation bill, as it was in the *Chicago Defender*,⁷¹ the bill itself does not mention negating segregation and essentially relies on school district boundaries and de facto residential segregation. Even though the anti-segregation bill 112 only affected higher learning institutions, bill 114 was concerned with all school levels therefore the *Argus* presumes that proponents of this piece of legislation were clearly fighting for African American teachers.⁷²

Even though it is apparent that the group in question was most likely made up of St. Louis African American educators anxious at the prospect of losing their jobs, but more specifically who was this group? The *Argus* suggests that the group of Negro teachers fighting against the anti-segregation Tyus-Jones bill and the group of Negro teachers supporting bill 114 involve the same members. Considering that in both instances the groups were made up of a group of African American educators looking to secure their jobs in the case of integration, this

⁶⁷ "Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers," *The St. Louis Argus*, April 17, 1953, page 1.

⁶⁸ "Anti-Segregation Bills-Mo. 'Political Footballs,'" *The St. Louis Argus*, May 1, 1953, page 1.

⁶⁹ "Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers," *The St. Louis Argus*, April 17, 1953, page 1 and 6.

⁷⁰ "Bills Hit Jim Crow In Missouri Schools," *Chicago Defender*, February 7, 1953, page 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² "Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers," *The St. Louis Argus*, April 17, 1953, page 1 and 6.

could be the case. Although it remains unspecified, one can presume that these two instances involved the same group of individuals. However, one question remains. What demographic of the St. Louis black community did the group of Negro Teachers represent? A closer look at the representation of this bill might suggest an answer.

Representative Walter Victor Lay of the tenth district of St. Louis City and John Wilson Green of the seventeenth district of St. Louis City introduced House bill 114. As districts for the Missouri House of Representatives were reestablished at the turn of the twenty-first century, in 1953 district ten and seventeen of St. Louis City collaboratively covered the area between Natural Bridge Road and Market street (North to South) and Kingshighway Boulevard to the Mississippi River West to East).⁷³ Enclosed in this area are the Ville and the Greater Ville neighborhoods, which were established previously in this essay as the livelihood of St. Louis's black society.

Considering the Missouri House Representatives of the larger Ville neighborhood introduced this anti-integration bill and primarily because this community flourished under a self-regulated, self-reliant, and segregated system, I suggest that the Ville neighborhood most likely also housed the group of Negro educators in question. This notion provides some insight about this group of Negro educators and precisely why they were fighting against integration. As already discussed, the Ville offered the St. Louis black society a refuge within the larger segregated society. With control of their own major institutions, such as schools, black St. Louisans were in most cases not forced to accept substandard services like other black communities were throughout the rest of the nation. Segregated schools, as did other facilities and businesses, contributed to a secluded job market that in turn directly benefited their own

⁷³ Toberman, Walter H. *State of Missouri Official Manual for the Years 1953-1954*. Published by Secretary of State Walter H. Toberman, 1953: 1078.

community since most people confined by segregated communities remained in their communities. Segregation, in this case, was a guarantee for the St. Louis black community that a white teacher would not be hired over a black teacher or that black parents would opt to send their children to black schools instead of white. This type of system insured that success would be bounded to their community. However, when desegregation became an alternative, this guarantee faded.

According to an article in a 1957 issue of the *Journal of Negro Education*, one out of every five teachers in segregated states was an African American where as one out of every 72 teachers were African American in the remaining 31 non-segregated states.⁷⁴ This statement supports black St. Louis teachers' fears that integration could possibly lead to a decline in available teaching positions since non-segregated schools have hired very few black teachers. However, black teachers had other concerns in addition to losing their jobs. Some teachers expressed the fear that integration would bring an end to cultural leadership provided by African American teachers and in turn cause black students who want to become teachers to lose incentive.⁷⁵ In addition to hindering racial pride, there was a general concern among black teachers that white teachers would simply not be able to teach black students due to meager toleration or lack of understanding.⁷⁶

Despite the genuine concerns of African American teachers, the black integrationists among St. Louis had larger concerns. The *St. Louis Argus* represented this view by stating their position that "desegregation should not be jeopardized by the fear that Negro teachers would be jobless...we favor desegregated faculties...we view dimly any organized teacher

⁷⁴ Jonas O. Rosenthal, "Negro Teachers' Attitudes Toward Desegregation." *Journal of Negro Education* 26, 1 (1957): 63.

⁷⁵ Jonas O. Rosenthal, "Negro Teachers' Attitudes Toward Desegregation." *Journal of Negro Education* 26, 1 (1957): 70.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

resistance to desegregation...it would appear uncalled for and entirely in poor judgment...”⁷⁷

An editorial in the *Chicago Defender* blatantly identifies the fear of the loss of black teachers’ jobs as a fallacy. The writer’s belief is that because African Americans have limited employment opportunities, the education field is more concentrated with African Americans; therefore, more African Americans are likely to get hired.⁷⁸ Another result of this, as stated by the author, “many Negro teachers [would] be absorbed into jobs of greater remuneration and scope.”⁷⁹

Results of Desegregation

Bill 114 died quickly in the Missouri State Assembly, however bill 112 passed in March 12, 1953.⁸⁰ Although bill 112 opened all Missouri state supported universities and colleges to African Americans, the bill left the larger school system segregated. At this time, the *Brown v. Board* of education case was becoming a national debate. The United States Supreme Court had already decided that it would hear all of the school desegregation cases collectively, therefore making *Brown* a national issue.⁸¹ Even though bill 112 and 114 failed to integrate all students, St. Louis integrationists hoped that *Brown* would. However, when the Supreme Court overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* in lieu of *Brown* on May 17, 1954 not much changed in regards to segregation in St. Louis. *Brown* gave the same results as bill 114 would have; schools could no longer deny any student within the school district in which they live on the basis of race. The significance being that school districts were drawn according to the already standing

⁷⁷ “Negro Teachers and Desegregation,” *The St. Louis Argus*, May 8, 1953, page 14.

⁷⁸ White, Walter. “Writer Notes Fallacies In Thinking About Education,” *Chicago Defender*, January 1, 1953, page 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ House Bill 112; Records of the House of Representatives; 67th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1953; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City. Missouri House; House Bill 114; Records of the House of Representatives; 67th General Assembly, 1st Session, 1953; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City. Missouri House.

⁸¹ The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. “Timeline of Events Leading to the *Brown v. Board* Decision, 1954.” U.S. Archives. <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brown-v-boardtimeline.html>.

neighborhoods, giving almost no desegregation results.⁸² Many historians have also debated that *Brown's* desegregation policies were partly to blame for the “white flight” phenomena that occurred in St. Louis and other cities throughout the country shortly after the case was implemented; causing cities to remain segregated and vacant.⁸³

In sum, *Brown* did not result in the mass firing of black St. Louis educators.⁸⁴ Mostly because St. Louis, home to half of the African Americans in Missouri, had a large community to fall back on. The majority of black students remained within their original school districts and most of the previously all black schools remained open. In this instance, the vibrant community that African Americans had made for themselves acted as a safety net for black teachers' jobs. However, this was not the case throughout the Missouri and the entirety of the Nation.

Even in *Brown's* birthplace of Topeka, Kansas, several black teachers did not receive contract renewals for the next year on the March 15, 1953 deadline; moreover, throughout Kansas most teacher vacancies had been filled with white teachers, as the school boards had been anticipating desegregation for several years.⁸⁵ In Kansas City, Missouri, home to the second largest concentration of African Americans in Missouri at this time, 59 percent of black teachers lost their jobs while Kansas City school districts were maintaining the practice of only hiring African American teachers in formerly all black schools.⁸⁶ St. Charles, Missouri, a small city

⁸² *The St. Louis Argus*, “Map of New City High School Districts Set Up to End Segregation,” November 16, 1954, page 1-8D.

⁸³ Expressed in the following secondary sources: Clotfelter, Charles T. *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Segregation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004; Gordon, Colin. *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008; Daugherty, Brian J., ed. *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008; Judge Heaney, Gerald W., and Dr. Susan Uchitelle. *Unending Struggle: The Long Road to an Equal Education in St. Louis*. St. Louis: Reedy Press, 2004.

⁸⁴ Jonas O. Rosenthal, “Negro Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Desegregation.” *Journal of Negro Education* 26, 1 (1957): 64; Doddy, Hurley H. “Desegregation and the Employment of Negro Teachers.” *Journal of Negro Education* 24, 4 (1955): 405-6.

⁸⁵ “Organize To Safeguard Jobs Of Mo. Teachers,” *The St. Louis Argus*, April 17, 1953, page 6.

⁸⁶ Jonas O. Rosenthal, “Negro Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Desegregation.” *Journal of Negro Education* 26, 1 (1957): 66.

just west of the Missouri River and St. Louis, had only desegregated elementary schools by fall of 1955 and as a result five out of seven black teachers at Franklin Elementary school were dismissed.⁸⁷ Similar cases were reported in almost all other parts Missouri, especially in smaller towns. In the Northeastern town of Moberly, Missouri the school board closed their black schools cut fifteen total positions, eleven of which were black teachers.⁸⁸ Similar cases resulted in the small towns of Hannibal and Slater.⁸⁹ In Springfield, only one African American teacher had been hired to an all white school as of fall 1955; however, no information was given on the state of the black schools in Springfield.⁹⁰

Conclusion

As the nation was pressed with the *Brown* case and public school desegregation was becoming more of a possibility, a debate among black integrationists and black educators emerged within the black community of St. Louis. Although there is evidence of similar debates throughout the nation, St. Louis served as an interesting case study. The prominent and self-sufficient black communities of St. Louis give historians a different scope in which to view the effects of segregation and desegregation. Segregation in St. Louis for the most part did not cause an upheaval of mass black resistance during the Civil Rights movement; neither did the prospect of public school desegregation. However, black resistance to school desegregation in St. Louis did exist. Although I encourage more research to be done on this matter, understanding that this type of resistance did not play a minor role in the entire *Brown* debate is essential. Historians cannot begin to look at school desegregation in St. Louis without first recognizing this resistance

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Brian J. Daugherty ed., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas, 2008:180.

⁸⁹ Doddy, Hurley H. "Desegregation and the Employment of Negro Teachers." *Journal of Negro Education* 24, 4 (1955): 406.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

among black educators and the less than common black community in which they lived and worked. Observing the construction of the St. Louis black community, especially that of the Ville, is imperative to understanding more about this group of St. Louis Negro teachers that resisted school desegregation for the sake of their jobs, the wellbeing of their students, and the success of their society. I have only begun to scratch the surface of this topic and I thoroughly promote historians to examine my evidence and build on my research.

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