

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Honors Theses

Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale
Honors College)

2018

Education in Mississippi: Did Integration Elicit Equality?

Baylee Mozjesik

University of Mississippi. Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis



Part of the [Journalism Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mozjesik, Baylee, "Education in Mississippi: Did Integration Elicit Equality?" (2018). *Honors Theses*. 115.
https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/115

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College) at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

EDUCATION IN MISSISSIPPI: DID INTEGRATION ELICIT EQUALITY?

by
Baylee Mozjesik

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford May 2018

Approved by

Advisor: Professor Alysia Burton Steele

Reader: Doctor Kathleen Wickham

Reader: Doctor Debra Young

© 2018
Baylee Mozjesik
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

For my mom, who taught me the importance of independence and hard work; and for my dad, who through leading by example, taught me to be grateful yet humble for every opportunity in life, and showed me how to express compassion for others by simply doing the next right thing and by listening to my head, heart, and belly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Alysia Steele, whose guidance and encouragement as an editor and mentor have shaped me into a true multi-media journalist.

I would also like to express thanks to my readers, Kathleen Wickham and Debra Young, not only for their support during my thesis but also throughout my four years at the university.

Ralph Eubanks, without your wonderful book “Ever Is A Long Time” and the inspiration I drew from your story, I would not have this project.

Thank you, Jaby Denton, Ann Abadie, Jerry Mitchell, and Dianne Fergusson for showing me the importance of investing in the community, and embodying what it truly means to be an activist.

A special thanks to Cortez Moss and the Quitman County school district staff for inviting me onto your campuses with open arms and assisting me with this project.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for their constant support, reassurance, and love.

ABSTRACT

Education in Mississippi: Did Integration Elicit Equality? (Under the direction of Alysia Burton Steele)

Founding father Thomas Jefferson said, “Educate and inform the whole mass of the people ... they are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”

Preservation of liberty is not all that education has the power to impact; education provides the basis for life-long success and affords people the opportunity to alter their own future, and the futures of others. Yet, in a nation that has been plagued by racist sentiments for centuries, educational opportunities are still inequitable.

This truth is strikingly so across the state of Mississippi, from the Gulf Coast, to the Capital-River region, to the Delta. The Reverend Jesse Jackson even once referred to Tunica, a town in the Delta, as America’s Ethiopia.

During the Jim Crow era, Mississippi was not only composed of some of the most poverty-stricken counties in the nation, but also grappled with cultural prejudices that led to racial segregation in the public school system long after it was ruled unconstitutional. In most counties, the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision wasn’t fully implemented until 1970.

The articles presented examine education equality in Mississippi through interviews with residents who lived through desegregation, current educators, education program leaders and advocates, journalists, and historians. I review the relationship race and poverty have with accessibility to fair education, and investigate the past and the present in order to understand the future.

My research explores the idea that the delay of implementing *Brown v. Board of Education* and the lack of emotional buy-in to its application have strikingly contrasted

educational experiences of white and black students today. The articles encourage the reformation of education on a state level and champion for fair education for “the whole mass of the people,” regardless of race.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
PART II: THE PAST V. THE PRESENT.....	3
PART III: THE CRUSADERS.....	15
PART IV: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?.....	28
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	34

Introduction

Education is a means of opportunity. It affords people the chance to rise above their circumstances and attain success. The phrase “knowledge is power” is more than just a cliché; when someone is able to grow intellectually, they are able to grow as a human being and impact the world around them in a positive way. On the contrary, if someone is denied education and cheated of the chance to attain knowledge, they are inevitably put at a disadvantage. They are deprived of the opportunity to prosper.

Inequity in education is seen all over the world. Across the sub-Saharan region in Africa, “80 percent of out-of-school girls are unlikely to start school, compared to 16 percent of out-of-school boy.”¹ In the Middle East, even though there has been a recent push for education equality, women are not offered the same opportunities as the men, due to cultural conventions. Because Middle Eastern society is conservative, the communities usually object to the girls being educated by male teachers and participating in mixed sex education; also, many girls drop out in secondary school because of early marriage.² Although there are many factors that lead to inequity in education, cultural bias and societal restriction are common threads globally.

¹ “Barriers to Education: Gender Discrimination,” All In School, accessed 11 February 2018, <http://allinschool.org/barriers-to-education/gender>.

² Safa Faisal, “Muslim girls struggle for education,” *BBC News*, 24 September 2003, accessed 14 February 2018, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3130234.stm.

Known for being one of the most developed and powerful countries in the world, the United States, nevertheless, fights with attaining equal access to quality education for all of its citizens. Nationwide, poverty affects childhood education. The United States has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty globally, and 30 percent of children raised in poverty do not finish high school.³

Mississippi, one of the poorest states in the nation, also consistently ranks as one of the bottom in education. The disparity between educational opportunities for its wealthy and poor citizens is indubitable. The relationship between poverty and the lack of educational success is something that is present all over the nation, and all over the world. Yet, many maintain that alongside this, Mississippi has a long standing cultural bias that affects equal access to education just as much as poverty: race.

From the Brown decision to now, scholars, journalists, and advocates across the state assert that race plays a role in access to quality education in Mississippi, with the black children being denied the academic opportunities that their white counterparts are granted. Although by law integration was implemented into the Mississippi public school system, it is still in question whether or not its application elicited equality.

³ “The Effects of Poverty on Education in the United States,” ChildFund International, 4 November 2013, accessed February 14, <https://www.childfund.org/Content/NewsDetail/2147489206/>.

The Past V. The Present

Mississippi- a corner of the world where tradition is held tight, where heritage is celebrated and the past is idealized. Yet, when it comes to education, the similarities between the past and the present are uncanny.

Segregation was ruled unconstitutional by the federal government in 1954 in the landmark United States Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*. The ruling overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling from 1896, which allowed state-sponsored segregation for over 50 years. Although *Brown v. Board of Education* declared segregation to be a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment, many states, including Mississippi, found ways to delay implementing the ruling.

Most white Mississippians, officials and residents alike, saw integration as a threat to their livelihoods. From the highest form of state authority, this idea was spread; and government agencies not only turned a blind eye to Brown, but also actively aided in the delay of its implementation.

In Charles W. Eagles book, *The Price of Defiance*, he recalls the, “subtle and informal code [that] continually confirmed the superiority of whites and enforced Negroes’ deference.”⁴ This clandestine code was practiced by white citizens across the state.

⁴ Charles Eagles, *The Price of Defiance* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 41.

Whether it be the state-funded Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, which created propaganda campaigns romanticizing Jim Crow, private groups like the Citizens Council, who worked to warn people of the dangers of black equality, state judges who ruled against integration, or everyday citizens who monitored their black neighbors for deviations from the established order, Mississippi was plagued with people against equality for black citizens, especially when it came to the integration of the public schools.

“It was created literally after the Brown decision in ‘54,” says investigative reporter and Mississippian, Jerry Mitchell, in reference to the Citizens Council. “It is commonly referred to as the ‘White Citizens Council’; they of course didn’t put the word ‘white’ on it themselves, but that is what people call it.”

He explains that the council formed in the Delta, then spread over all of Mississippi, and soon swept the nation, even though the most prolific factions were located in the South. The group formed essentially to fight court ordered desegregation, and operated under the principles of state rights and racial integrity.⁵

The beliefs of parties like the Citizens Council plagued the state. Even after the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964, in lieu of making a convincing effort to enforce integration, Mississippi officials reluctantly adopted the freedom of choice method. While freedom of choice declared that any student could choose to attend any school, white intimidation was used by the Citizens Council and its public equivalent, the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, to ensure that this was merely a ploy to appease the federal government.

⁵ Jerry Mitchell, Phone Interview, 7 February 2018.

Associate director and editor of the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* and the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, Ann Abadie, has spent her career working to understand Mississippi's history and learning how to make that comprehension useful and accessible to others.

She explains how white citizens were so easily able to stall integration, even after Freedom of Choice was permitted.

“If you look in the Delta, there were people that tried to discourage programs like Head Start that were trying to help black education,” says Abadie. “People would fire black workers if they were caught sending their children to these programs that benefitted black students.”⁶

Because of this, black children attending white schools, or even attempting to receive equitable educational opportunities, was still not a socially viable option even 10 years after the Brown ruling. These methods stalled absolute desegregation, where white and black students were purposefully mixed, for another six years in most counties across the state.

In 1969, the Supreme Court announced that the all deliberate speed standard was no longer constitutionally permissible, and ordered the immediate desegregation of Mississippi schools in the case *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*;⁷ and all districts in Mississippi were finally forced to comply with federal law and integrate their schools during the winter holiday of the 1969-1970 school year. While the decision

⁶ Ann Abadie, Personal Interview, 28 February 2018.

⁷ “Brown v. Board,” Teaching Tolerance, issue 25, 2004, accessed 22 March 2018, <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2004/brown-v-board-timeline-of-school-integration-in-the-us>.

changed the facade of the public school system, it did not change people's attitudes towards integration, or their feelings about the black community.

Across the state, white flight, defined as the move of white city-dwellers to escape the influx of minorities, began.⁸ Whereas this is a term commonly used to describe the geographical move of white citizens, in this case it also refers to their move out of the public school system itself. In Tunica County, when the students came back for Spring semester, not a single white child remained enrolled in the public school system. In that particular district, white enrollment dropped 100 percent.⁹ White families in Tunica, and many other counties around the state, no longer felt comfortable sending their children to the newly-integrated public schools and founded private church schools as a response. These schools served as a new way for Tunica County, and Mississippi as a whole, to keep education segregated. Yet this time, they achieved this disparity through the separation of private and public education.

“If you look at the start dates on a lot of the [private] academies, I’m not trying to beat them up. It is just reality, they were founded in the mid to late ‘60s, early ‘70s,” says Mitchell. “These things didn’t exist until they knew Brown was a reality that they couldn’t dodge anymore.”

Even now, 37 years following integration, the public high school in Tunica, Rosa Fort, is 99.1 percent black,¹⁰ while the private school, Tunica Institute of Learning, is 83

⁸ “white flight,” Merriam-Webster, 19 February 2018, accessed 1 March 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/white%20flight>.

⁹ *United States v. Tunica County School District*, 323 F. Supp. 1023 (1970).

¹⁰ “Rosa Fort High School,” startclass by GRAPHIQ, accessed 16 February 2018, <http://public-schools.startclass.com/l/51349/Rosa-Fort-High-School-in-Tunica-Mississippi>.

percent white.¹¹ In Jackson, the state's capital, the public school district is 79.3 percent black,¹² whereas two of the most prominent private schools, Jackson Academy and Jackson Preparatory School, are 93 percent¹³ and 95 percent¹⁴ white, respectively. In Quitman County, a district located deep in the Delta, the public schools are 96.2 percent black¹⁵ while the private school, Delta Academy, is 88 percent white.¹⁶ The current situations in Tunica, Jackson, and Quitman are not anomalies, and most counties' statistics mirror theirs.

“While we got rid of the dual school system, we didn't get rid of the housing patterns that created the dual school system,” says Mount Olive, Mississippi, native, Ralph Eubanks. “We still have red-lining. Even though we got rid of the laws, we didn't get rid of the customs, we didn't create equal access to housing. The same thing that happened with schools happened with neighborhoods; once black people moved in, and a significant number of black people moved in, white people moved out. White flight.”¹⁷

Eubanks was 12 years old when the separate but equal doctrine was abolished and his school district in Mount Olive was integrated.

¹¹ “Tunica Institute of Learning,” High Schools, accessed 16 February 2018, <https://high-schools.com/directory/ms/cities/tunica/tunica-institute-of-learning/00735341>.

¹² “Jackson Public School District, Mississippi Demographics,” Biggest US Cities, accessed 17 February 2018, <https://www.biggestuscities.com/demographics/ms/jackson-public-school-district>.

¹³ “Jackson Academy,” High Schools, accessed 17 February 2018, <https://high-schools.com/directory/ms/cities/jackson/jackson-academy/00735727>.

¹⁴ “Jackson Preparatory School,” High Schools, accessed 17 February 2018, <https://high-schools.com/directory/ms/cities/flowood/jackson-preparatory-school/00735716>.

¹⁵ “Quitman County MS,” startclass by GRAPHIQ, accessed 20 February 2018, <http://public-schools.startclass.com/d/c/Quitman-County%2C-MS>.

¹⁶ “Delta Academy,” startclass by GRAPHIQ, accessed 20 February 2018, <http://private-schools.startclass.com/l/120425/Delta-Academy-in-Marks-Mississippi#Student%20Body&s=2VFhfh>.

¹⁷ Ralph Eubanks, Personal Interview, 31 January 2018

“For a while we, [blacks and whites], were under the same roof, but still in different classrooms. It was like that for a while, all across the state, and that is kind of Mississippi’s dirty little secret,” says Eubanks, an author, journalist, and Ole Miss professor.

He says that because integration happened in the middle of the school year, the students were kept with the class they started with in the fall. The school slowly began to pull a few black students from their regular classes and put them in white classrooms to see how the incorporation might work.

Mitchell recalls the same experience during the first stages of integration.

“There was this token integration where there would be one or two black students in a white class. That is what early integration actually looked like.”

With the opposite of all deliberate speed, as the Supreme Court had mandated, the classrooms slowly became diversified through this act of token integration. In the fall of 1970, the students began being separated by ability or track. Yet, it was commonplace for black students to not be considered for the high level or college prep courses. Most of the white teachers assumed that the black students had not received as high of a level of education prior to integration, which was a key misconception.

“There were actually a lot of black PhD’s at that time,” says Eubanks. “My sisters had a Juilliard trained pianist teaching them in Collins, Mississippi, in the ‘60s. You had people like that in black schools all around the country.”

He says that this warped mindset that black students were either not as educated or simply not as capable as the white students led to racially separated classes within the newly integrated schools. Furthermore, the idea that whites were inherently smarter than

blacks also led to fewer black teachers in the classrooms. This was an issue that made black educators nervous about what might happen to their jobs after Brown even before integration was a reality in Mississippi. Their fears were ultimately validated, and many black teachers were pushed out of the schools.

“The Brown decision to today, we never really recovered with the percentage of black teachers,” says Eubanks. “We have fewer black educators today than we did when Brown passed.”

Contrary to what many white citizens believed at the time, white and black schools weren't harshly differentiated by the quality of teachers or quantity of intellectual students, but rather by the amount of funding allotted for each system.

“The spending was so different between the white schools and the black schools,” says Mitchell. “There was just so much more spent on the white children.”

In 1962, the Tunica County School District spent an average of \$172.80 on each white student, yet only \$5.99 on each black student. That same year in Clarksdale, the amounts were \$146.06 compared to \$25.07, respectively.¹⁸

The assumption that the segregated black school system was negatively influenced by a lack of educated teachers rather than a lack of funding tainted the way white teachers managed the black students once they entered integrated classrooms.

“That is where re-segregation happened within the walls, which still happens now,” says Eubanks. “A lot of that is a legacy of integration.”

¹⁸ William Sturkey, “The 1964 Mississippi Freedom Schools,” Mississippi History Now, May 2016, accessed 22 March 2018, <http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/articles/403/The-1964-Mississippi-Freedom-Schools>.

Isolation by track and the separation of whites and blacks between public and private schools are only two of the many traditions of pre-integration Mississippi that still exist in the education system today. While integration undeniably transpired, many argue that the anxieties that accompanied the implementation of Brown hindered its success.

“When integration happened there should have been this switch that flipped, but a lot of people didn’t want it to, so they didn’t let it,” says Eubanks. “I encountered a lot of those people along the way; for me that was probably the most distressing part of it all. I had white teachers tell me ‘you’ll never amount to anything,’ essentially because I didn’t know my place. I was always trying to do something that maybe I shouldn’t have done, that wasn’t appropriate for a black person to do.”

Sitting legs crossed, head hung low, Eubanks melodically recites Paul Laurence Dunbar’s poem “We Wear the Mask”.

“We wear the mask that grins and lies; it hides our cheeks and shades our eyes.
This debt we pay to human guile; with torn and bleeding hearts we smile.”

He ceases, “I wasn’t willing to wear the mask.”

Many black Mississippians, like Eubanks, were not willing to succumb to racial limitations; yet, the pressures from white society to stay in the roles assigned to them by Jim Crow remained. The emotions that drove the resistance of desegregation by white citizens were stronger than the force of the law itself.

“[White Mississippians] had this whole sort of pseudo-history that they believed, which was that white people were the geniuses and they are where all the great things about civilization arose; and that whenever the black society or black ‘blood’ became

equal, it would corrupt white society,” says Mitchell. “That was their mentality, that society would fall whenever [integration] happened. Some people still believe that.”

Although this mindset does not exist in society as outwardly as it did in the ‘60s and ‘70s, the effects of the racial hierarchies created by these fears are extremely evident in the education system even today. According to an article published by *The Guardian*, “US schools are, on balance, more segregated today than they were 45 years ago.”¹⁹ The re-segregation of schools not only brings up extreme legal and ethical concerns on a large scale, but also creates unequal access to opportunity on a daily basis. In Mississippi, this puts black children at a disadvantage, and these inequalities exist not only between public and private schools, but also amid public schools in different zones.

In the Mississippi Delta, Cleveland schools were virtually segregated until a ruling was made by the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi in 2016, over 60 years after the doctrine of separate but equal was ruled unconstitutional by the federal government. According to an article published by the *New York Times*, the judge on the case apologized for the lack of justice for so many years and ruled that, “the district must consolidate the virtually all-black D.M. Smith Middle School with the historically white Margaret Green Junior High School. [That] it must also consolidate the mostly black East Side High School with the historically white Cleveland High School, and review educational programs to identify new ones for the consolidation.”²⁰ The verdict came after the United States Government Accountability

¹⁹ Jamiles Lartey, “Two schools in Mississippi,” *The Guardian*, 27 August 2018, accessed 25 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/27/two-schools-in-mississippi-and-a-lesson-in-race-and-inequality-in-america>.

²⁰ Christine Hauser, “Mississippi District Ordered to Desegregate,” *New York Times*, 17 May 2016, accessed 28 January 2018,

Office confirmed claims that minorities, namely African Americans, receive fewer educational opportunities than their white counterparts.

Even though the trial took place over half a century after *Brown*, the rhetoric used during the ruling transports many back to the era of Jim Crow. In Cleveland, and many other communities across Mississippi and even across the nation, the legacy of animosity towards the black community is so resilient that it isn't just found in hushed conversations, it is significant enough to be debated over in open court.

“White segregationists weren't good anywhere, but they were really, really bad in the Delta,” says Abadie. “You had these poor, isolated communities across the state; pockets where [the white segregationists] were so hateful. That is why that legacy is still evident in those places.”

Cleveland, like many other towns in Mississippi, struggles with collapsing the deeply-rooted racial hierarchy put in place by their ancestors. Yet, there are a few places in Mississippi where integration did in fact take hold.

“There was never any emotional support, but in the few communities where they felt there needed to be, that is where [integration] worked: Tupelo, Oxford, places on the Gulf Coast,” says Eubanks. “The places that still have the best public schools in the state today are places that made that decision back then to make it work.”

“Having the university in Oxford made a big difference for that community,” says Abadie. “At that time, [the city] was more progressive than anywhere else in the state. Ole Miss brought people from other communities, areas, and states, so it included people

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/18/us/cleveland-mississippi-school-district-desegregate.html>.

who had been accustomed to integrated school systems, people who were more open minded and wanted to discard the Jim Crow and slavery legacy of the past. Tupelo also had similar progressive leadership.”

Along with relatively liberal community leaders, places like Oxford and Tupelo share another quality that has aided in their ability to enforce integration without major social unrest from the white citizens: small black populations.

“Those are places that maybe the black population was only 30 percent. But in a place like Tunica, where you have over 70 percent of the population being black, that meant white people would be the minority,” says Eubanks. “This idea of being a minority meant being inferior. That is the language we always use. The minority is the inferior person. No-one wanted to be in that position.”

Tradition, heritage, state pride: all of these things alongside ignorance contribute to the lack of progress that Mississippi’s education system has made in regards to equal opportunity for all of its citizens. Although the Cleveland re-integration case can be seen as a win, it is a small victory in a larger battle; a battle that is statewide and, oftentimes, ignored by those in power.

Not only is the issue of equal access to quality education for black Mississippians often discounted, but state lawmakers also actively oppose progress for public schools by advocating for state-funded private schools.

“It is interesting that there is now this big push to give state tax money to the private schools,” says Mitchell. “It is just fascinating to me because basically back in the ‘60s when all of this was going on the courts said ‘you can’t do that’, but they are obviously trying to do it now.”

Mississippi continues to reckon with how to appreciate the past and preserve their heritage while still moving forward and creating new traditions that benefit the whole mass of the people, regardless of race. Regrettably, education has continued to be a casualty of this struggle.

“[Segregation] is part of the legacy of our whole racial hierarchy in this state, it is the residue of Jim Crow, and we are still dealing with it. This is the great power of the Civil Rights Museum [in Jackson] is that you see that,” says Eubanks.

“But, I don’t look at the museum and what it represents as much as a way to say ‘look how far we’ve come’, but I look at it as a way of thinking ‘look how much work we still have to do’”.

The Crusaders

Standing in downtown Marks, Mississippi, one can hear the occasional howl of trains rattling the sleepy streets. They come and go swiftly, leaving behind only a shuddering silence and the tracks themselves: the silence of an ignored corner of the world, and the tracks that served as its racial dividing line for decades.

Marks is located in Quitman County deep in the Delta, a rural area ill-famed for its impoverished and underdeveloped communities and racial tensions. An area that, for many reasons, has long struggled with providing all of its children with adequate educational opportunities. The Mississippi Delta Report states that, “high rates of poverty coupled with a legacy of unequal educational opportunities for people of color, who make up more than one-third of the population, have left Mississippi’s children at a substantial disadvantage compared with the rest of the nation.”²¹

The Quitman County Schools fall into this Delta stereotype. Out of the 367 students in the middle school alone, 364 are eligible for free lunch, meaning that their family income is below \$15,171.²² For a family of four people in the United States, the

²¹ “Racial and Ethnic Tensions,” The Mississippi Delta Report, vol. 7, no. 2, accessed 17 February 2018, <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/msdelta/ch2.htm>.

²² “Quitman County Middle School,” startclass by GRAPHIQ, accessed 20 February 2018, <http://public-schools.startclass.com/l/51234/Quitman-County-Middle-School-in-Marks-Mississippi>.

national poverty line is set at \$25,100.²³ This rampant poverty is a response to the area's rural, isolated surroundings coupled with the long-running cycle of an uneducated population and unskilled workforce. From the time that integration started in 1969, the public schools in Marks have been relatively underfunded by the state government and as a result of the un-investment financially and emotionally have, for decades, seen the negative effects on the children's motivation, test scores, and proficiency rankings.

Yet, over the past few years, the overall performance of the students and the academic culture at the schools have steadily improved. Quitman County Middle School, for example, has improved from an F school to a D school within the last two years, and is on track to move up to a B ranking after state exams in May. With the odds stacked against them, this unsuspecting town is setting an example of the great influence community action and progressive leadership can have on bettering educational equity and opportunity, for all citizens.

With work-worn hands, Quitman County native Jaby Denton flips through a pamphlet for the Marks Project, an organization that he co-founded a little over two years ago to provide community outreach and educational opportunities for the residents of his hometown.

Denton's easygoing energy and Southern drawl are contrasted by his tailored, navy blazer as he explains how he, a farmer by trade, got involved with reforming education in the Quitman County school district.

²³ "Federal Poverty Level," HealthCare, accessed 19 March 2018, <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-FPL>.

“I moved back to Marks three years ago [from Oxford], not really knowing what I was going to do. I had been working with Marks Youths Unlimited remotely, which was an athletic program that I basically had been completely funding for over 10 years ... But once I got back over there and saw [the program] every day, I quickly realized we needed to do so much more with the kids than just athletics.”²⁴

In response, Denton created a program called Straight Talk, using the Marks Youth Unlimited kids as their core. They met once a week and the program leaders provided the children with food while speakers such as Parchman Prison inmates, law enforcement officials, pastors, sharecroppers, and many others to shared their stories with the group. Straight Talk served 30-40 boys ages 8 to 14 and was centered around character building. The program was founded on the principles of the Martin Luther King quote, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

Although the program had a positive influence on the kids and the community, after a year Denton realized it wasn’t making the progress he had envisioned. While character building was advantageous, he began to see how much the school system was failing the majority of the children on a practical level; he understood that education affected the kids in a more tangible sense in every aspect of their lives, especially when it came to literacy.

“[Marks Elementary School] was the flagship school for the Barksdale Reading Institute, written up in the *New York Times* and everything, and here we had kids who went through that program who were in the 6th and 7th grades and couldn’t read,” says

²⁴ Jaby Denton, Personal Interview, 20 February 2018.

Denton. “That is when I realized there was something more I needed to do, I just didn’t know what at that time.”

Denton confesses that he was ready to give up; but instead, he called a friend from Oxford, Lance Reed. Reed introduced Denton to Jason Stoker, a man located in Starkville, who was doing mission work with orphans in Africa through a project called Reclaimed. All three started talking about Marks and the Delta, and Stoker expressed that Reclaimed had been looking to do work closer to home. After their conversation, he professed that Quitman County’s struggles were calling his organization to lend a helping hand.

With the support in place, Denton and Stoker went to the newly elected school superintendent of Quitman County, Dr. Evelyn W. Jossell, and asked what they could do to help. She expressed that recruiting suitable teachers was a huge obstacle due to the fact that Marks has very little access to housing, and is in a less-than-desirable community due to its isolation. At the time, most of the teachers commuted from neighboring towns such as Batesville and Oxford, or were temporarily employed and sent in by groups such as Teach For America.

In response, Reclaimed bought an old, 8,000 square foot abandoned building in downtown Marks, and renovated the upstairs, creating seven apartments for seven teachers. They named the residence The Village. The space created a way for the district to recruit teachers with free, convenient housing as incentive.

Recent Ole Miss graduate and Mississippi native, Daniel Myrick, moved to Marks to teach through the Reclaimed Project in 2016. This past year, he was awarded Teacher

of the Year at Madison S. Palmer High School and continues to invest in the community through his work in the classroom.

“I came to Marks because of Reclaimed's vision to encounter a community in need through education,” says Myrick. “The community has embraced what we are doing here, and we have had some great progress in such a short time.”²⁵

The Village is not only a way to entice educators to move to Marks, but also a method to encourage them to interact with the community and give them the opportunity to form bonds with the other teachers. Myrick’s fiancé, Kendall Wilke, also fell in love Reclaimed’s mission and has accepted a job to work for the organization alongside her future husband. She too hopes to be a part of bettering education in Quitman County.

“I know I need to be here a few years to even see true results,” says Myrick. “My students loved hearing that my future wife is moving to Marks. They are so used to people leaving.”

As word spread about what Reclaimed was doing in Marks, a man from Taylor, Mississippi, Mitch Campbell, reached out to Denton about getting involved. Through conversation, the two realized that they were monetarily limited going solely through a faith-based organization. To acquire the large amount of funding their visions required, they needed to be able to go into board rooms and get corporate backing. Their solution was the Marks Project, and they created it with the purpose of being an umbrella of support for anything going on in Quitman County: economic issues, recreation, but most importantly, education.

²⁵ Daniel Myrick, Email Correspondence, 26 March 2018.

The Marks Project and Reclaimed are two pieces of a larger community of people in Quitman County who are determined to have a positive influence on educational opportunities in the district. Cortez Moss is another one of those optimistic and significant pieces.

Before accepting the position of principal at Quitman County Middle School, Moss was an educator in Greenwood and Clarksdale, two other Delta towns with similar issues in regards to equitable educational opportunities for its minority population. As Teacher of the Year two years in a row at Greenwood High School, a faculty of over 40 teachers, Moss gained the experience and motivation he needed to restore the overlooked system in Quitman County.²⁶

The Quitman County school district is 46.9 percent more African American than the Mississippi public school average,²⁷ and is in an area that is oftentimes ignored by state officials. To pick up the slack, Moss focuses on data and analytical thinking to understand each and every student independently, and to gage their strengths and weaknesses.

Statistics and figures are displayed on brightly colored posters throughout the hallways, and progress reports of students adorn the classroom walls. The emphasis that Quitman County Middle School places on growth is something that is evident to anyone who steps through the doors; and its significance is taught to the students through the school's motto "Our Education is Freedom."

²⁶ "Greenwood High School," startclass by GRAPHIQ, accessed 22 March 2018, <http://public-schools.startclass.com/1/50670/Greenwood-High-School-in-Mississippi>.

²⁷ "Quitman County MS," startclass by GRAPHIQ, accessed 20 February 2018, <http://public-schools.startclass.com/d/c/Quitman-County%2C-MS>.

Though the students have cultural and economic disadvantages, Moss believes that through the school's motto and virtuous leadership, the children will begin to see that they have a future, regardless of what history has shown them.

“Every student in that school, he knows everything about them,” says Denton. “Their scores, their strengths and weaknesses, he knows it all. He is building a program where everything is tailored to each student and what they need. If we had a Cortez Moss in every school in every school district, [Mississippi] would be a totally different place.”

This new wave of emphasis on leadership that Moss embodies began with the induction of Dr. Jossell as superintendent. Sherry Wood, a librarian in the district for over 40 years, recalls the significant impact that Jossell had on the teachers and administrators.

“[Jossell] came in and turned things around,” says Wood. “She said things had been going wrong for so long that people believed it was right, but it wasn't, and that we needed to clean up the schools, clean up [the students'] behavior, and begin truly educating them again. But everybody had to decide ‘yes this is what we want.’ This has happened now, slowly ... They still may not read, but they are listening to adults more and they are learning more. I can see it in the classrooms.”²⁸

Between Jossell, Moss, and the influx of teachers that the schools were able to recruit and the old ones they were able to keep with the help of Reclaimed and The Marks Project, Quitman County Schools finally have the support to begin heading in the right direction. They feel that there are finally realistic plans and the right people in place to execute them. Moss explains that for a while, the biggest issue was getting people to

²⁸ Sherry Wood, Personal Interview, 27 February 2018.

recognize that inequality was happening and express that the children of Quitman County are being put at an extreme disadvantage due to their backgrounds and circumstances.

“I see a change in terms of awareness; I think folks are cognizant of the issues. Do we now know how to address them? No. But I think we are in stage one, which is that folks are aware that [education equality] is an issue,” says Moss, “We don’t know how to solve it, but the awareness is the main thing. And it has taken a while for a cross section of people to recognize these issues that exist. It’s not just the black civil rights leaders that realize it anymore.”²⁹

Moss’ vision is not limited to Quitman County Middle School. He hopes that his efforts in the small community of Marks will spark awareness on a larger scale, and inspire others to take action in the movement for equitable educational opportunities for all of the children of Mississippi.

Denton explains that while people are recognizing the issues in their own local communities, there is still a long way to go on getting that acknowledgement from the state level.

“If you have a 14-year-old black man who can’t read, the odds are so against him. And that is the dirty secret that legislators don’t talk about, that they sweep under the rug; but it’s a reality.”

“We have a group of state leaders who will only see things one way,” says Moss. “So we have a lot of work to do to dramatize what’s happening in these areas for [them]. They very rarely come here. If they spent a day in our buildings, I think they would

²⁹ Cortez Moss, Personal Interview, 27 February 2018.

govern differently; if they had to sit in classrooms or teach for one day, they would govern differently.”

Until progressive local leaders can provoke this recognition on a larger scale, Moss not only works hard to make sure the best teachers possible are in his school, but also holds programs and creates involvement opportunities for the students. For Black History Month, Moss put together events and invited people from across the state to speak and perform. One of the groups that visited the middle school was a drama troupe from Delta State. They performed pieces about Civil Rights heroes, all while highlighting the importance of black leadership and activism.

“We spend a lot of time making sure our students have experiences,” says Moss.

Teach For America representative and Quitman County Middle School teacher, Brooke Hines, says she sees the difference that these experiences make for students, especially when they have not been exposed to people taking the time and caring enough about their success to make involvements like that accessible.

“You see the kids in the assembly engaging with what is being said, and that was really cool to see them get motivated. Some people can really have that control over the children as well, and make them believe,” says Hines in reference to the Black History Month performance.

Yet, she says that these moments of optimism and hopefulness come and go for her. Hines explains that teachers should be the people the children should look up to help them achieve success, and oftentimes in towns like Marks, the educators aren’t those role models.

“They are used to teachers giving up on them,” says Hines. “Quitting after a semester or even two weeks after getting into the classroom, and that constant giving up on them is super unhelpful to the situation and to their confidence. But I think things like [the Black History Month programs] help.”³⁰

Myrick also does what he can to provide experiences for his students in the high school that go beyond the classroom. Although the effort he puts in goes beyond his duties as a teacher, Myrick feels there is a direct link between his investment in the children, and the children’s investment in their own studies.

“I get to see subtle but good changes in my students. My students getting exposed to new experiences is one of my favorite times of seeing them grow,” says Myrick. “This happens from things like field trips to Ole Miss, gardening, hatching chickens, and exploring real world examples of our standards. Getting to experience things with them allows us to see and understand each other better, which also helps us deal with conflict and work better.”

Another progressive approach that district leadership has taken to bettering education came from Moss. He believes that alongside offering experiences to his students, making the middle school an extremely incentivized campus has made a huge difference. His approach is to reward the students for good behavior rather than always going straight to severe punishment for bad behavior. Because most of the students aren’t receiving motivation to succeed in school from anywhere else, Moss and his staff want to make sure that the students know that hard work, good grades, and strong character are acknowledged have positive outcomes.

³⁰ Brooke Hines, Personal Interview, 27 February 2018.

Even with all of the hard work that groups in the community and individuals within the schools are doing to inspire the Quitman County youth to greatness and afford them the best education possible, the children are still foundationally at that same disadvantage. Because of inadequate funding and racial prejudices, they are still starting with a hindrance.

“I can’t just tell them ‘if you just work hard enough you’re going to get there’ because, you know, it’s just not that simple,” says Hines. “They are starting from behind. It is so much embedded in this community that they know exactly where they’re starting, and it shows in the classroom. Some kids know that they don’t have the same opportunity as others.”

Desegregation materialized in Quitman County during the 1969-1970 school year. This was 16 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* mandated that schools across the country integrate with all deliberate speed, which was not sincerely accomplished in the state of Mississippi. When integration was finally mandated in Quitman County, it led to white flight, and white un-investment in the public school system. Many of the white students left and enrolled in the private school in Marks, Delta Academy.

Opened in the mid ‘60s and starting with only four classrooms, by 1969 Delta Academy hosted grades K-12. The school’s website notes in their history that, “the high school was in demand and the Board found it necessary to more than double the size of the high school in the year 1970-1971.” The influx of students enrolling at Delta Academy ensued right after integration occurred in the public school system.³¹

³¹ “History,” Delta Academy, accessed 19 March 2018, <https://www.deltaacademy.org/history.htm>.

“Integration was useless,” says Moss. “The goal of integration should be to make sure that both sides have equal resources. If that does not happen, then it essentially fails because that is the goal of integration; it’s not just about putting a white child and a black child side by side, it is about equal resources,” says Moss. “We don’t have an equitable formula based on geography. It is hard to talk about equity of race when there isn’t even an equitable formula across geography.”

Lack of resources is one of the main issues that majority black communities like Marks face. The history of the Mississippi state government overlooking geographically challenged and minority dominated communities is what led people like Denton to take action on a local level.

“The way I sell what we are doing in Quitman County, is that we only have a little of 1,000 kids in the district. It is a small area. We can do a lot of trial error without spending a ton of money, so we can find what does and doesn’t work,” says Denton.

Yet, Wood states that she doesn’t see equal funding as being the only solution to the problems that schools like the Quitman County Middle schools face.

“You don’t throw money in as to be the only solution,” says Wood. “You have to have somebody who knows how to use the resources effectively and to make the most of what [has been given]. You can always have more, but if you can’t use what you already have efficiently and effectively, then you might as well not have it.”

Although state and nationwide recognition of inequity in education is the ultimate goal, the people involved in the reformation of the Quitman County school system agree that taking action in their own community is the appropriate first step; and is the step that other communities across Mississippi can follow.

“Our goal isn’t just to find a solution to education and the environment in Quitman County, but it is a model that can be recreated anywhere else,” says Denton about ventures like the Marks Project and Reclaimed. “But it doesn’t take a million dollars to do what we are trying to do, simply because we are so small and we have a very receptive school district who welcomes us in to help.”

Moss also attests that what he is doing in the middle school is a small-scale version of something that could generate change nationwide.

“Our model of investing through people can be used in any county, which is not true for everything we do. But if school leaders have the mindset to invest in people and motivate people and hire the best and brightest, then allow them to be their authentic selves, that can be replicated,” says Moss.

Inequity in education is an issue that Mississippi has been grappling with long before integration, and the effects that this cycle has had on generations of black and impoverished citizens are indefensible. Yet, there is promise in those taking action within their own communities.

Denton resolves his concerns with confidence in his own work, and the work of like-minded citizens of Mississippi.

“Even though the overall picture is bad, there truly are good things happening in small areas across the state. That is where I find hope.”

Where Do We Go from Here?

Between notorious events like the riots in Charlottesville, the unfounded death of Trayvon Martin, and everyday occurrences of racism in communities across the nation, black Americans find themselves wondering when widespread change will occur in the direction of equality, and as a nation, how we are supposed to get there.

Mississippi, the state with the highest black population in the country, has long dealt with its grim past when it comes to racial discrimination.³² Overcoming slavery and segregation were only the tips of the iceberg, and a lot of the emotions that fueled those battles still linger in the streets, senates, churches, and schools.

Although there are progressive pockets around the state vigorously working to elicit change, the majority of the population, whether through animosity or true oblivion, ignore the struggles of impoverished and minority communities. Legislators and political groups who are supposed to govern with the interest of the whole of the population in mind often disregard those who are most in need, creating a greater disparity between the wealthy and the poor and the whites and the blacks, especially when it comes to education. This leaves people asking the question: where do we go from here?

While integration's goal was to create equal access to knowledge for all citizens, the result of Mississippi's tactics in avoiding genuine equality during the integration has left the system damaged even 60 years later. Those who opposed

³² "Mississippi," Black Demographic, accessed 5 March 2018, <http://blackdemographics.com/states/mississippi>.

true integration during its implementation created a long-running system of inequity. Yet, these people held a genuine belief that by doing so they were preserving the integrity of the legacy of the state.

“Where the truth lies is that it isn’t just what they wanted to believe, they actually believed it,” says Eubanks. “You realize that that was part of peoples engrained belief system, that this not only came out among the masses, but also from the highest form of government and was spread.”

He warns about how dangerous discriminatory ideas emerging from the mouths of respected leaders can be, and sees these effects in the current day.

“We saw that happen in Mississippi in the ‘60s, and we are kind of witnessing that right now on a national level. To me, that is the scariest thing about all of this. I see the parallels, and when I try to point out those parallels people don’t want to think about it. It truly is so scary.”

When it comes to education, a lot of the rhetoric used by leaders is guarded and not mutual to their actions. One of the central explanations for why inequity is so rampant in Mississippi’s education system is that while select local organizations and individuals acknowledge that it is an issue, the majority of those in power do not.

“On the whole, we haven’t had people representing [these underfunded] communities in the legislature,” says Abadie. “The leaders in the state make a big difference. If you have someone who wants to make a difference, they will, but this administration just doesn’t.”

The current government in Mississippi is unclear in their objectives on how they will serve underfunded communities when it comes to education. In March 2018, the

Senate failed to pass an overhaul of Mississippi's school funding formula created by GOP leaders that had been two years in the works. The bill was rejected not only by Democrats, but also by eight Republicans who went in contradiction of their party and voted to kill the plan.³³

Proponents of the bill assert that the new proposal would have left room for additional funds to be allocated to special education, gifted students, and others in need of additional resources, including low-income students. Yet, its cynics point out that on projection, one fourth of the state's school districts would have actually seen a decline in support due to the plan's emphasis on enrollment rates as means to allocate funding. For rural towns with declining populations, which are already the most underfunded, this would have had an extremely negative long-term effect. Many also call attention to the sad truth that as history shows, just because legislators say the funding formula would have benefitted impoverished areas and minority students doesn't guarantee that it actually would have.

"A lot of our issues with the discussion of race are issues, and this comes up with education especially, with language," says Eubanks. "People are very canny with the way that they use language now that keeps them of being accused of racism. We've been seeing that a lot since Charlottesville."

The lack of belief in the words of state leaders is a response to the state's history of empty promises and racism, outward and subdued, that has run rampant in the

³³ Bracey Harris, "Senate Republicans break ranks," Clarion Ledger, 1 March 2018, accessed 5 March 2018, <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/politics/2018/03/01/historic-school-funding-overhaul-appears-dead-2018-session/384637002>.

legislature and among prominent Mississippi leaders for generations. This has left those at the hands of the injustice wondering who they can trust to follow through with promises of support, and who will actually assist in the struggle for equality.

“I was substitute teaching in the high school, which is completely out-of-the-box for me, and at that time a lot of the things [about the Marks Project and Reclaimed] were just visions. The playground wasn’t built yet and we were still trying to scrap for money for the teacher housing. Everything I was telling them that I was envisioning we could do, and everything we have now done, wasn’t a reality yet,” says Denton.

“At the end a young girl at the front raised her hand and said, ‘Mister, I don’t believe a word you just said.’ I took a step back and asked, ‘Why?’ She said, ‘All of our lives people have been coming in here telling us what they are going to do to help us and nobody has ever done anything, why should I believe you?’ That was a pivotal moment for me,” he says. “Because she was right.”

Outwardly recognizing the issues, advocating for equality, and putting in the effort to elicit change are all simple things that individuals and local organizations are doing in isolated communities across the state in hopes to provoke greater difference.

President of the League of Women Voters Oxford/ North Mississippi, Dianne Fergusson, says that her group focuses on voter registration and voter education, while also taking a stand on defending public education as a whole.

“One of the statistics we like to throw around is that there are 350,000 unregistered voters in Mississippi that are eligible to vote. But there are reasons they have not registered,” says Fergusson. “We strive to cut that in half by the November elections.

The people who are not voting do not have a voice and are not represented, but they are the ones who need to be represented probably the most.”

Fergusson worked in the Mississippi public school system for her entire career, and emphasizes the significant influence voter education and registration of people in those lower income communities can have on the schools.

“If we had more people who were involved in the situation, who knew how poorly public education is being funded, and who had a way to express that, that way being the ballot, I think we would see a difference. We would get closer to better education, more equal education, and give more opportunities to people across the state,” says Fergusson.

“Things are definitely better now than they were in the ‘60s,” says Abadie. “The whole society is better, because the discriminatory laws are off the books, but that doesn’t mean that the implementation has been good or lived up to what it was expected to be. We have a long way to go ... a long, long way. But I believe we are heading in the right direction.”

In Mississippi, there are administrators, teachers, program leaders, and parents working on the local level in hopes that their commitment to the children and those children’s ultimate success will one day catch the attention of the state government. There are also journalists, advocates, and lobbyists directly calling for action and change from the state administration. In many different ways and on many different levels, Mississippians are advocating for education equality. People across the state and from all walks of life finally realize that there is a problem, and that time is up. It is finally

recognized that a solution to education equality is crucial to building a healthy society as a whole.

“It all begins with education,” says Fergusson. “Mississippi has to wake up and realize that you get what you pay for.”

Whether the push for equality will come directly from the state government or not, through small community action Mississippi is moving forward in the crusade for equitable opportunity for all of its citizens. In a grim situation of institutionalized discrimination and long standing racial prejudices, the light is found in everyday people working to do what they can to elicit change and inspire others to do the same. The road to equality in education may not be faultless, but it is long overdue, and that recognition is what will fuel its success.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Abadie, Ann. Personal Interview. 28 February 2018.
- “Barriers to Education: Gender Discrimination.” All In School. Accessed 11 February 2018. <http://allinschool.org/barriers-to-education/gender>.
- “Brown v. Board: Timeline of School Integration in the U.S.” Teaching Tolerance. Issue 25. 2004. Accessed 22 March 2018. <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2004/brown-v-board-timeline-of-school-integration-in-the-us>.
- “Delta Academy.” startclass by GRAPHIQ. Accessed 20 February 2018. <http://private-schools.startclass.com/l/120425/Delta-Academy-in-Marks-Mississippi#Student%20Body&s=2VFhfh>.
- Denton, Jaby. Personal Interview. 20 February 2018.
- Eagles, Charles. *The Price of Defiance*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Eubanks, Ralph. Personal Interview. 31 January 2018.
- Faisal, Safa. “Muslim girls struggle for education.” *BBC News*. 24 September 2003, accessed 14 February 2018. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3130234.stm.
- “Federal Poverty Level.” HealthCare. Accessed 19 March 2018. <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-FPL>.
- “Greenwood High School in Greenwood, Mississippi.” startclass by GRAPHIQ. Accessed 22 March 2018. <http://public-schools.startclass.com/l/50670/Greenwood-High-School-in-Mississippi>.
- Harris, Bracey. “Senate Republicans break ranks to kill historic school funding overhaul.” *Clarion Ledger*. 1 March 2018, accessed 5 March 2018. <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/politics/2018/03/01/historic-school-funding-overhaul-appears-dead-2018-session/384637002>.
- Hauser, Christine. “Mississippi District Ordered to Desegregate Its Schools.” *New York Times*. 17 May 2016, accessed 28 January 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/18/us/cleveland-mississippi-school-district-desegregate.html>.
- Hines, Brooke. Personal Interview. 27 February 2018.
- “History.” Delta Academy. Accessed 19 March 2018. <https://www.deltaacademy.org/history.htm>.

- “Jackson Academy.” High Schools. Accessed 17 February 2018. <https://high-schools.com/directory/ms/cities/jackson/jackson-academy/00735727>.
- “Jackson Preparatory School.” High Schools. Accessed 17 February 2018. <https://high-schools.com/directory/ms/cities/flowood/jackson-preparatory-school/00735716>.
- “Jackson Public School District, Mississippi Demographics.” *Biggest US Cities*, accessed 17 February 2018, <https://www.biggestuscities.com/demographics/ms/jackson-public-school-district>.
- Lartey, Jamiles. “Two schools in Mississippi.” *The Guardian*. 27 August 2018, accessed 25 January 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/27/two-schools-in-mississippi-and-a-lesson-in-race-and-inequality-in-america>.
- “Mississippi.” Black Demographics. Accessed 5 March 2018. <http://blackdemographics.com/states/mississippi>.
- Mitchell, Jerry. Phone Interview. 7 February 2018.
- Moss, Cortez. Personal Interview. 27 February 2018.
- Myrick, Daniel. Email Correspondence. 26 March 2018.
- “Quitman County MS, Public Schools.” startclass by GRAPHIQ. Accessed 20 February 2018. <http://public-schools.startclass.com/d/c/Quitman-County%2C-MS>.
- “Quitman County Middle School in Marks, Mississippi.” startclass by GRAPHIQ. Accessed 20 February 2018. <http://public-schools.startclass.com/l/51234/Quitman-County-Middle-School-in-Marks-Mississippi>.
- “Racial and Ethnic Tensions in American Communities: Poverty, Inequality, and Discrimination.” *The Mississippi Delta Report*, vol. 7, no. 2. Accessed 17 February 2018. <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/msdelta/ch2.htm>.
- “Rosa Fort High School in Tunica Mississippi.” startclass by GRAPHIQ. Accessed 16 February 2018. <http://public-schools.startclass.com/l/51349/Rosa-Fort-High-School-in-Tunica-Mississippi>.
- Sturkey, William. “The 1964 Mississippi Freedom Schools.” *Mississippi History Now*. May 2016. Accessed 22 March 2018. <http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/articles/403/The-1964-Mississippi-Freedom-Schools>.
- “The Effects of Poverty on Education in the United States.” ChildFund International. 4

November 2013. Accessed February 14.
<https://www.childfund.org/Content/NewsDetail/2147489206/>.

“Tunica Institute of Learning.” High Schools. Accessed 16 February 2018. <https://high-schools.com/directory/ms/cities/tunica/tunica-institute-of-learning/00735341>.

“white flight.” Merriam-Webster. 19 February 2018. Accessed 1 March 2018.
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/white%20flight>.

Wood, Sherry. Personal Interview. 27 February 2018.

