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# Under the Cover of Apathy: The Struggle for Equality in Bowling Green, Kentucky

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**Under the Cover of Apathy:  
The Struggle for Equality in Bowling Green, Kentucky**

A Thesis for the Honors Program

by

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Spring 1997

Approved by

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## Abstract

In the years surrounding the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, many states passed Jim Crow laws to limit the rights of black citizens. Jim Crow laws and practices invaded nearly every facet of life in the South. Bowling Green, Kentucky, was no different. By the early twentieth century, it had a number of Jim Crow facilities and institutions, supported by custom and often times with the force of the law. At that time, Bowling Green was home to a thriving black community despite prejudice and inequality. Black children, for example, attended separate elementary schools in the city and county school systems, and they all attended one segregated high school. Middle-class black leaders joined together to fight the institution of segregation, with black doctors and ministers becoming school officials and community leaders. When industry discriminated against black men, and black women were ignored in public department stores, the African-American community depended on the local churches for hope and for guidance. As occurred throughout most of the South, the black churches in Bowling Green not only provided religious leadership but also social and moral examples. In the years since *Brown v Board of Education*, however, the predominant view held by the black community is that with the end of segregation they lost their rallying point. Before, they had placed their hopes and energies into the idea of being freed from discrimination. Today, their future is less clear. Many feel that they are unable to reach black children in an integrated system as well as they could in a segregated one.

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## Preface

In the years surrounding the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, many states passed segregation laws to limit the rights of black citizens. Jim Crow laws and practices invaded nearly every facet of life in the South. Bowling Green, Kentucky, was no different. By the early twentieth century, it had a number of Jim Crow facilities and institutions, supported by custom and often times with the force of the law. At that time, Bowling Green was home to a thriving black community despite prejudice and inequality. Black children, for example, attended separate elementary schools in the city and county school systems, and they all attended one segregated high school. Middle-class black leaders joined together to fight the institution of segregation, with black doctors and ministers becoming school officials and community leaders. When industry discriminated against black men, and black women were ignored in public department stores, the African-American community depended on the local churches for hope and for guidance. As occurred throughout most of the South, the black churches in Bowling Green not only provided religious leadership, but also social and moral examples.

Finally, in 1949, black citizens formed a "Negro Chamber of Commerce," and they began to have more say in their own community. They were mainly concerned with their schools. A year after the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Bowling Green city school system opened a brand new school for blacks. The school plant was the best in the county, but the students still received inferior supplies, health

services, and cafeteria services. Black Bowling Green was content to let race relations take their course.

Despite the order in *Brown*, Bowling Green would not begin integration until 1963. In that year, a group of parents and students from High Street School, the black school, filed a complaint asking that the schools be integrated. The judge in the case ordered the integration of the Bowling Green schools on the basis of *Brown*. Token integration took place that fall, but no real integration took place until the 1965-1966 school year. After that, obvious color walls seemed to disappear.

The predominant view held by the black community is that with the end of segregation they lost their rallying point. Before, they had placed their hopes and energies into the idea of being freed from discrimination. Today, their future is less clear. Many feel that they are unable to reach black children in an integrated system as well as they could in a segregated one. They often feel that their children are being overlooked and are suffering more from being with white students and teachers than when they were separated. Following integration, many members of the black community believe that they lost an important symbol in the black school and much of their hope for something better. Whether the white community agrees or not, these feelings are a reality to many of the black citizens of Bowling Green.

## **Under the Cover of Apathy: The Struggle for Equality in Bowling Green, Kentucky**

“The arbitrary separation of citizens, on the basis of race...is a badge of servitude wholly inconsistent with the civil freedom and the equality before the law established by the Constitution. It cannot be justified upon any legal grounds.” This is part of the eloquent lone dissent by Justice John Marshall Harlan in the landmark United States Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, in 1896.<sup>1</sup> It all started with a Louisiana law passed in 1890 separating all railroad passengers into cars by race. After two years of agitation, Homer Plessy, a very light-skinned black man, boarded a Louisiana train in 1892 and sat in the white coach. When Plessy refused to move, he was arrested. Plessy’s case eventually came before the Supreme Court, and in 1896, it handed down the momentous decision. The majority decision established the legal basis for the doctrine of “separate but equal.” In the opinion, the justices held that “The object of the [Fourteenth] amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.”<sup>2</sup> They also held that if the enforced separation of the two races “stamps the colored race with a

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<sup>1</sup>*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

badge of inferiority...it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.”<sup>3</sup>

The Supreme Court upheld the Louisiana law. By extension, the ruling meant that states could legally segregate the races in public accommodations, such as railroad cars and public schools, so long as the accommodations were allegedly equal. The problem with this notion, of course, was that every facet of life in the South became increasingly separate--schools, dining areas, trains, and later buses, drinking fountains, and lunch counters--but they were never equal. The lone dissenter, Justice Harlan, was a man unique to his time. To quote from his dissent: “We boast of the freedom enjoyed by our people above all other peoples. But it is difficult to reconcile that boast with a state of the law which, practically, puts the brand of servitude and degradation upon a large class of our fellow-citizens, our equals before the law.”<sup>4</sup>

*Plessy v. Ferguson* gave the Supreme Court’s stamp of approval to legalized segregation by the states. It would be almost sixty years before the “separate but equal” doctrine could be overturned in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954. With the blessing of the Supreme Court, the floodgates of legislation opened. Every Southern state, the states of the former Confederacy and Kentucky, enacted its own “separate but equal” laws. They gave the force of law to what had already become a fact of life, a new kind of slavery--called “Jim Crow.”

The term “Jim Crow” came from a white entertainer in blackface named Thomas Dartmouth Rice. He wrote a song-and-dance tune that became a huge hit in the 1830s:

Weel a-bout and turn a-bout  
And do just so  
Every time I weel about  
I jump Jim Crow.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., dissent.

<sup>5</sup>Stetson Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide to the USA* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.,



The name “Jim Crow” created an image of a comical, jumping, stupid ragdoll type of man. At the time of the *Plessy* decision most white people viewed blacks in this light at best. The custom of Jim Crow separated whites and blacks in nearly every aspect of life. Jim Crow railroad cars came first, followed by things like separate waiting rooms, factory entrances, and even factory windows. The customs and laws went so far as to dictate that white nurses couldn’t treat black patients. Although most did not have the force of law until later, the customs were not new. Historian C. Vann Woodward does not himself believe that Jim Crow originated before the 1890s, but he cites some scholars that believe the Jim Crow system sprang up immediately after the end of slavery to take its place. “Well before the end of Reconstruction separation had crystallized into a comprehensive pattern which, in its essence, remained unaltered until the middle of the twentieth century.”<sup>6</sup>

The first Jim Crow law did not appear in the South until more than a decade after the end of Reconstruction, but practices often exceeded the law.<sup>7</sup> Voting restrictions and exclusion from jury service contributed to the second-class status of blacks. Separation of the races was the rule in churches, military life, public institutions, and public services. Before 1900, the only laws passed of this type applied to passenger trains, but after the turn of the century the legislation appeared in full force. Various Southern states passed laws calling for segregation of street cars, employees and working conditions, recreation, sports, and amusement. Some cities enacted curfew laws and separate telephone booth ordinances. Other laws required that black barbers not be allowed to serve white women and children. Atlanta had Jim Crow Bibles for black witnesses in court and Jim Crow elevators in buildings. In Alabama, separation of races while fishing or boating was

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1959), 34; Sean Dennis Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 6.

<sup>6</sup>C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 25.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

required by law. A Birmingham ordinance made it “unlawful for a Negro and a white person to play together or in company with each other at dominoes or checkers.”<sup>8</sup> Jim Crow missed out on very little day-to-day life throughout the South, but probably the most damaging guise was that of the separation of education by individual states and by the courts.<sup>9</sup>

A number of cases that would shape race relations, especially in terms of education, were heard in the thirty-four years Justice John Marshall Harlan spent on the Supreme Court of the United States. Harlan joined the Court in 1877 and at times acted as a righteous defender of blacks; at other times, he would deny them the very same rights. In the years of his young manhood, Harlan had argued for the preservation of slavery, and he fought against the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Fortunately, at some point, he was transformed into the eloquent defender of blacks that is evident in his *Plessy* dissent. Many believe the change is linked to the brutalities he saw toward blacks in his native Kentucky following the Civil War.<sup>10</sup> Kentucky blacks were victims of beatings, lynchings, and many of the other notorious tactics of white supremacists in the late nineteenth century. Kentucky was a border state during the Civil War, so it never actually seceded from the union, but it was strongly divided in sentiment. Most upper-class Kentuckians were slaveholders and, like most Southerners, saw blacks as a class below even the most humble white person.

When *Plessy v. Ferguson* was brought before him in 1896, Harlan stood as the lone dissenter in favor of rights for blacks. He held that the Thirteenth Amendment, the one he had fought against, protected blacks from any “burdens or disabilities that

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.; George C. Wright, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky, Volume 2: In Pursuit of Equality, 1890-1980* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 1992); George Esters, interview with the author, Bowling Green, KY, 14 November 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 81.

constitute badges of slavery or servitude.”<sup>11</sup> He claimed that the legislation in question, separate railroad coach laws, “is inconsistent not only with that equality of rights which pertains to citizenship, National and State, but with the personal liberty enjoyed by everyone within the United States.”<sup>12</sup> Harlan’s dissent would not meet with much agreement for nearly sixty years. Until then, he had to stand alone. Virtually the only protection blacks could hope to find in those years was that from the few well-intentioned and enlightened members of the federal courts.

Those same members did not always protect black rights. The quality education of black citizens was not considered to be important to most people, even Supreme Court Justices. Some states failed to provide blacks with high schools of any kind. In *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, 1899, the Supreme Court upheld a Georgia school board’s right to turn the black high school into a grade school, leaving the black students with no high schools except private or church-affiliated schools they could not afford.<sup>13</sup> This time, there was no dissenting opinion. The opinion was written by the same man who dissented in *Plessy*—John Marshall Harlan. By the close of the nineteenth century, the Supreme Court had “nullified nearly every vestige of the federal protection that had been cast like a comforting cloak over the Negro upon his release from bondage.... Once more, the black man seemed to have no rights that the white man was bound to honor.”<sup>14</sup>

Like most other states, following the ruling in *Plessy*, Kentucky passed its share of Jim Crow laws. From the 1890s until the 1950s blacks were legally separated from

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<sup>11</sup>*Plessy v. Ferguson*, dissent.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 83.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

whites, at least to some degree, but the practice varied widely from state to state. As in most states, Kentucky did not widely adopt Jim Crow laws until the 1890s, but custom and practice had preceded the laws by many years. Many more local ordinances followed in the first decade of the twentieth century. In Kentucky, a number of the laws stayed on the record for many years. It was not until a vote in 1996 that the language requiring separate schools for whites and blacks was taken out of the Kentucky Constitution, and even then, it only passed by two-thirds of the popular vote. Immediately after the Civil War, the General Assembly passed a series of seven acts conferring rights on the newly freed blacks. The acts provided for separate schools for blacks and whites, allowed for equal punishment of crimes, and gave blacks many of the same rights that whites had with the exception of being able to sit on a jury or testify against whites in court. The Kentucky legislature voted “no” to the passage of all three of the Civil War Amendments. The Thirteenth Amendment was ratified and went into effect December 18, 1865. The Fourteenth Amendment, the one that would prove to be both the most helpful to blacks and the most controversial, was signed into action on July 28, 1868. Finally, the third of the three Civil War Amendments, which prohibited officials from denying the right to vote on the basis of race, did not go into effect until March 30, 1870. The General Assembly also voted “no” to the Civil Rights Bill of 1870. In 1872, it passed a law that allowed blacks to testify against whites. In 1891, blacks were allowed to serve in the state militia, and racial restrictions on voting were lifted, but also in that year Kentucky enacted its Jim Crow Railroad law. The law was invalidated in 1894, but the concessions were short-lived for the black citizens of Kentucky.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Greg McKinney, Cumberland Trace Legal Aid, summary of Civil Rights laws, In Folder: “African-Americans,” (Clipping File: Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky); Woodward, Strange Career; Kennedy, Jim Crow Guide; Kermit L. Hall, William M. Wiecek, Paul Finkelman, American Legal History: Cases and Materials (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 577-578.

Following the *Plessy* decision in 1896, Kentucky reenacted its law requiring segregation in transportation. At the stations, there were separate baggage rooms, waiting rooms, ticket windows, and sometimes even terminal entrances. On the trains there were separate cars and restrooms and even segregated dinner cars and sleeping cars.<sup>16</sup> In 1904, the state legislature ruled on segregation in higher education. In that year it passed the Day Law, which stated that it is “unlawful for any person, corporation, or association to maintain or operate a college, school, or institution where both white and Negro are received as pupils.”<sup>17</sup> This law was directed primarily at Berea College, which had welcomed black pupils for over thirty years. It provided for a one-thousand-dollar fine to any school that violated the law. Any teacher who taught at a mixed school could be fined one hundred dollars, while any student who attended a mixed school was subject to a fifty-dollar fine. The ratio for public expenditures on white colleges to black colleges was forty-two to one in Kentucky in the early 1900s.<sup>18</sup>

Higher education was not the sole concern. Black children were also not allowed to attend grade school or high school with white children. According to a 1911 court decision, “any child with one-sixteenth or more Negro blood” was considered to be black “for the purposes of school segregation.”<sup>19</sup> Often, those children would be almost completely white in appearance and even culture, but considered black in the eyes of the law. Kentucky, like most states, was very good at keeping up the separate part of the “separate but equal” deal, but it fell short of the equal end of the bargain. Funding for teachers and physical plants were nearly always separate, but hardly ever equal. Virtually none of the black facilities was equal to the white facilities.

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<sup>16</sup>Wright, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*; Woodward, *Strange Career*.

<sup>17</sup>*Kentucky Statutes* (1922), 2159.

<sup>18</sup>Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 73.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

Education was not the only facet of life in which blacks and whites received unequal treatment. Enforcement of the law was also often much harsher for blacks. Sometimes it was not only the enforcement that was unequal--Kentucky had a law that explicitly punished blacks unequally for committing rape.<sup>20</sup> In some cases in Kentucky, black men were put to death at the mere accusation of the rape of a white woman, while white men were sentenced to a year or two in prison, if that, for the rape of a black woman. To rape a black woman was almost considered a non-crime in the state. The men who committed those crimes were often simply charged with assault or other lesser crimes.<sup>21</sup>

Residential zoning on a racial basis was widely adopted throughout Kentucky beginning in 1910, but those laws were overruled by the Supreme Court in 1917 in *Buchanan v. Warley*.<sup>22</sup> In 1916, another law was passed requiring segregation in "houses of reform."<sup>23</sup> In the 1922 Kentucky Statute book there is record of the law prohibiting marriages "between a white and a Negro or mulatto". Around 1924, laws were passed in various cities to force segregation of public parks. By 1928, the races were required to be separated in hospitals and sanitariums.<sup>24</sup> What blacks of all classes dealt with was a cradle-to-grave system of racial control. Whether they were at work, at school, at play, in jail, or in the hospital, blacks were almost always separated from whites. At every stage of life and in every type of setting, Jim Crow ran wild in the state of Kentucky.

For the most part, whites saw blacks as an inferior race, so it was both natural and proper in their minds to keep them separate, except in the case of household service. According to one historian, "practically every white family that could afford the cost employed blacks in some capacity, from nursing their children, to doing their laundry, to

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<sup>20</sup>Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 629.

<sup>21</sup>Wright, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, 88.

<sup>22</sup>Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 109.

<sup>23</sup>McKinney, Cumberland Trace Legal Aid.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

completely running their homes....Black servants not only performed household chores but were a status symbol, one of the trappings of the ruling race.”<sup>25</sup> It must be conceded, however, that Kentucky whites were not of one mind regarding how blacks were to be treated. Some prominent white Kentuckians spoke out in one way or another for at least equality in treatment for blacks. Few, if any, were enlightened enough to advocate an end to segregation, but many were sympathetic to the black citizen.

At least two newspapers stood as exceptions to the overt racism of the time. The Louisville *Commercial* called for fair--“which in the context of the late nineteenth century meant separate but equal--treatment for blacks and denounced lynchings and other forms of lawlessness.”<sup>26</sup> Both W.C.P. and Desha Breckinridge, consecutive editors of the Lexington *Herald*, were also sympathetic to Kentucky blacks. W.C.P. made many friendly statements regarding blacks during his time as editor. Years later when a white man raped two young black girls, Desha Breckinridge wrote an editorial calling for equal and firm justice, “for handing down the same death sentence to a white man that blacks received from all-white juries for raping white women.”<sup>27</sup> Also during his time as editor, Desha Breckinridge rebuked President Woodrow Wilson for being rude to black visitors in the White House, saying that “as we conceive the purpose of this government it is to treat every individual as equal before the eyes of the law--black or white, red or yellow...--whatever the breed matters not, at least should matter not to the public official charged with the duty of serving all the people.”<sup>28</sup> Although sometimes viewed as such, the concepts these men advocated were not radical. They simply espoused equality under the law. Of the cities in Kentucky, some were more open to black citizens than others. In some cases, blacks were forced to live in fear most of their lives, but in others they

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<sup>25</sup>Wright, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky*, 6.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 50.

were allowed to live in relative peace. One such place was Bowling Green in the early twentieth century.

Immediately following the Civil War, Bowling Green began to rebuild. At the turn of the century, it became a picturesque little town of 8,226 citizens.<sup>29</sup> An electric trolley system appeared, a state-supported school began operating, and business expanded rapidly. Activities around town flourished with increased leisure time. Citizens played Kitty League baseball in the summers and enjoyed the Potter Opera House. After the First World War, many changes occurred. More automobiles meant more and better streets. Bowling Green also became a boom town after World War I. Oil men filled the hotels and even tents in vacant lots. The Depression of the 1930s brought numerous building projects to Bowling Green, such as Cherry Hall and the Kentucky Building at what is now Western Kentucky University. Main Street between Kentucky Street and Center Street was the heart of the business district, but business flourished all around the downtown area. Bowling Green held parades, concerts, festivals, and an annual fair for its citizens. The community took pride in the college and other features of the city. Bowling Green was an active and growing city in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup>

According to H.W. Jones, a former pastor of the predominantly black State Street Baptist Church in Bowling Green, it was a “very sedentary, laid-back town.”<sup>31</sup> There was rigid segregation in Bowling Green in the early half of the century, according to

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<sup>29</sup> “Land Use Plan for Warren County,” (Warren County, Kentucky: City-County Planning Commission, March 1969), 12.

<sup>30</sup> Nancy Disher Baird, Carol Crowe-Carraco, and Michael L. Morse, Bowling Green, A Pictorial History (Norfolk: Donning Company, 1983).

<sup>31</sup> H.W. Jones, interview with the author, telephone interview, Cincinnati, Ohio, September 1996.



some blacks, but others recall a certain amount of freedom they possessed in Bowling Green that blacks in other parts of the state were not afforded. Mr. Frank Moxley grew up in Bowling Green. He recalled being allowed to sit anywhere, regardless of race, on the streetcar in town. This is not to imply, however, that segregation was not the norm in Bowling Green as it was in most places.

In 1928, the National Urban League conducted a study entitled "Bowling Green, Kentucky: A Summary of Industrial Conditions, Organized Labor and Negro Labor." According to the Urban League, Bowling Green was a country town of about 15,000 people. Industry in Bowling Green consisted mainly of "agriculture, stone, rock asphalt, and oil."<sup>32</sup> The quarrying industry was still in the developing stages, and timber was plentiful in Warren County. The study also recorded the existence of three flour mills in town. In addition, "Roemer Bros. and the Claypool Lumber Co. employed a goodly number of workers in their lumber plants." As for the plight of blacks in Bowling Green in 1928, it seems that approximately three thousand lived in the city, constituting about twenty percent of the population. Just over one thousand of them were reported to have been "gainfully employed in industry and domestic service." Eight hundred fifty blacks worked in places such as hotels and restaurants or as chauffeurs and nurses. About one hundred fifty worked for the railroad, one hundred forty for the lumber mills and yards, and seventy-five in flour mills. A few blacks worked in quarries, laundries and tobacco factories.<sup>33</sup> According to the report, "there were several colored letter carriers, but none have been appointed since the last one was retired. Wilson's administration seems to have put a ban on Negro letter carriers throughout the South, and Negroes apparently are not qualifying for government jobs in a number of southern cities." The same study

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<sup>32</sup>Thomas L. Dabney, "Bowling Green, Kentucky, a Summary of Industrial Conditions, Organized Labor, and Negro Labor," June 5, 1928, National Urban League Papers (Manuscript Division; Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

indicated that there were very few “Negro brickmasons or plasterers.... The scarcity of work no doubt accounts for this.”<sup>34</sup>

Along with that study there was a copy of a questionnaire for labor unions given to the Bricklayer’s and Plasterer’s Union # 8. The union said that they admitted blacks to full membership, but only three blacks were recorded as members out of a total of forty. The group also said that they had not recently made any effort to get black members because their last drive had been unsuccessful. In response to the question of whether or not they regarded blacks as essential to the success of the labor movements, the members said yes. Ironically, they said that they did not make any effort to elicit cooperation from them in the programming of the organization, and had made little effort to encourage their participation. The unions held that “both groups [whites and blacks] get along well together. There was never no [sic] friction between white and colored members.”<sup>35</sup> Overall the town was reported to have five hundred organized workers, of whom about ten were black.<sup>36</sup>

Despite obvious obstacles, in the years before the Great Depression, Bowling Green was home to a thriving black community. A number of black sections existed in areas such as Rockfield, Magnolia, Smallhouse Road, Delafield, Kentucky Street, Second Street, Smiths Grove, Memphis Junction, and Jonesville. A large majority of these blacks worked in service-oriented positions throughout the city, while others made their income from strawberries and stone.<sup>37</sup> A substantial number of black citizens stand out as having made valuable contributions to their communities. As was typical of much of the South, the black citizens who tried to make real changes in society and to help improve life for

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Thomas L. Dabney, “Questionnaire for Labor Unions: Bowling Green, Kentucky,” June 5, 1928, National Urban League Papers (Manuscript Division: Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.)

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Frank O. Moxley, Ed.D., interview with Reverend George Esters, videocassette in possession of George Esters, Bowling Green, Kentucky, February 1994.

blacks were mostly members of the black bourgeoisie. They were the teachers, ministers, and other individuals who had access to the public and who could wield some influence.

Fortunately, some of those black citizens are still living in Bowling Green. Frank Moxley was born in Bowling Green in 1908. He was the son of a lawyer and small-scale banker. Moxley taught and coached in Bowling Green for thirty-three years at State Street School, High Street School, and Bowling Green High School after integration. Frank Moxley also became the first black person to graduate from Western Kentucky University.<sup>38</sup> Another man, Reverend James Carpenter, also grew up in Bowling Green and became a pastor and businessman for over forty-five years. He owned and operated a barber shop in Bowling Green after receiving his education out of state. They both recall Bowling Green as being a very nice place in which to grow up. There is little animosity on the part of either man about the prejudice shown them for so many years. Another man, George Esters, and his wife, Bettie, are prominent black citizens. Bettie moved to Bowling Green to teach at High Street after it opened, but George has lived in the city since he was in the third grade. They are both educators and active community members. George Esters has pastored a number of churches in the surrounding area. These people have been valuable resources in piecing together the recent history of blacks in Bowling Green.

In the early decades of this century, the black community seemed to flourish within the limits of the customs and practices of the city. Bowling Green provided black children with grade schools at or before the turn of the century. State Street School was the center of education for blacks. It was originally built as just a grade school, but later the school board built on a third floor to house the secondary program. They constructed a gymnasium for the school in 1929. Before the city provided public high schools for

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<sup>38</sup> "Former Coach honored at Rec Center," Park City Daily News, 5 September 1996, n.p.; "Black Activists Remember Turbulent '60s," Park City Daily News, 11 February 1994, n.p.

blacks, church-sponsored or other private academies had formed to further develop black minds.<sup>39</sup> In 1904 the Bowling Green Academy was established on State Street in Bowling Green, and Reverend William Wolfe and his wife moved to town to run the academy for black boys and girls. They were wealthy by the standards of the community, as seen in the fact that they were known to have “cooks and servants just like a white family.”<sup>40</sup> The Academy was fostered by the Kentucky Synod of the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church. An advertisement in the Bowling Green City Directory of 1914-15 stated that the Academy would provide room, board, and tuition for seven dollars a month.<sup>41</sup> State Street School, founded in 1883, was operated by the Bowling Green City School System. Frank Moxley recalls that during his time there Mr. E.T. Reed was the principal, followed by Dr. E.T. Buford. He says that State Street was fun when he was a child. The kids played baseball and basketball year round. The school did not have a cafeteria until 1952, so students either had to bring their lunches or leave and get them when the lunch bell sounded. Rev. Carpenter remembers Miss Compton, who sold sandwiches to the children everyday. Kids also flocked to Steven’s Grocery and Pete’s Cafe to get their lunches.<sup>42</sup>

Reverend Carpenter emphasizes a work ethic taught to children of his generation. Each child was given certain responsibilities. He remembers being in charge of chopping firewood for the winter and going to the coal yards for coal. Once he saved up to buy a bicycle and a basket so that he could make money by getting ice for people. At one point during school, he bought some chickens and sold the eggs. He remembers having a

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<sup>39</sup>Esters interview, 14 November 1996.

<sup>40</sup>Reverend James Carpenter, interview with Reverend George Esters, videocassette in possession of George Esters, Bowling Green, Kentucky, February 1994.

<sup>41</sup>Bowling Green City Directory, 1914-15. In Folder: “African-Americans--Education,” (Clipping File: Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky).

<sup>42</sup>Moxley interview, February 1994; Carpenter interview, February 1994.

thriving operation until someone stole all his workers--the chickens. Rev. Carpenter was an entrepreneur at a very young age, but he was not the only one in town.<sup>43</sup>

The center of black business before the depression was focused in large part in the Jonesville community. Jonesville was located on the property that is now part of Western Kentucky University, where Diddle Arena, Smith Stadium, and Denes Field now stand. In the early 1900s, Jonesville was a predominantly rural area, but it practically developed its own business section. Customers came mostly from the sixty-five or so homes in the neighborhood. Businesses first included a grocery store, beauty shop, a restaurant, and a filling station. Jonesville had its own churches as well<sup>44</sup>. A number of black businesses also began operating on the square downtown in the twenties and continued into the 1940s.

A man named Eliza Loving was both a barber and a foot doctor serving white and black patients on the corner of Main and College. Tom Harris owned a whole block, including his very popular cafe, a pool room, dance hall, cab stand, and barber shop below Kentucky and Adams Streets. He operated a restaurant on Main Street from the 1920s through the 1940s.<sup>45</sup> Mattie Porter ran a shoe shop on the square for years. Dr. Cabell was a black pharmacist in town who ran a drugstore on Main Street, and his wife was a teacher. Frank Hardin owned and operated a roadhouse in Jonesville, where Western Kentucky University has a parking lot now on Russellville Road. His business catered to white people. After having their cars valet parked, they would enjoy barbecue and beer.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Carpenter interview.

<sup>44</sup>"Moments In History, Jonesville, a Black Community, Disappeared in the 1960s when Western Became a University," and "Old Neighborhood Brings Back Memories," College Heights Herald, 25 February 1997.

<sup>45</sup>Park City Daily News, 28 January 1996, In Folder: "African-Americans," (Clipping File: Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky).

<sup>46</sup>Carpenter interview, February 1994.

At least three black-owned grocery stores existed in Bowling Green. One, operated by a Mrs. Butler, was housed on the corner of Center and Third Streets. One was on the lower end of Chestnut, and the other was on Brown Street. Another Mr. Loving owned a rock business for over fifty years. Many blacks were employed in the concrete and masonry businesses, according to Carpenter. Elsie Potter's blacksmith shop operated on Kentucky Street between Sixth and Seventh. Two dry-cleaning businesses were operated by blacks. Owen Brown's was situated on the corner of Third and Chestnut Streets, while Mrs. Burney Proyer worked out of the Helm Hotel in downtown Bowling Green. The head cook at the Helm Hotel and later an assistant to the Western Kentucky University basketball coach E.A. Diddle was a man named Roland Bland. Mr. Bland has been remembered with a local park named in his honor. A cab company operated for twenty-five cents each way. J.E. Kuykendall was a mortician and black activist in Bowling Green until his death in 1960. Richard Able was another black mortician around the same time. Mrs. Mattie Covington operated the Southern Queen, a well-known black hotel on Second and State. A nationally recognized hotel, the Southern Queen was listed in the black travel guide of hotels.<sup>47</sup> A boarding house was also run on Third and Chestnut by Sarah Brown.<sup>48</sup>

Veigle Kuykendall was one of the first black mail carriers, while Annie Willis--who also worked as a beautician--became the first black woman hired at the Post Office.<sup>49</sup> Joseph Lilliard is remembered for a number of things in Bowling Green. For one, he is said to have been the first antique dealer in the area. He operated out of Jonesville, catering to both black and white clientele. According to the Daily News, when he died in 1950 in Chicago, the native of Bowling Green had also been the

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<sup>47</sup>Herbert O. Oldham, "Minority Business Interests," Speech given at State Street Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 15 September 1996.

<sup>48</sup>"Depression, Western's Expansion Affected Town's Black Community," Park City Daily News, 29 September 1988, n.p.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

proprietor of the only upholstery shop in the city. In that same article "Uncle Joe" is said to have been the son of two Bowling Green slaves. He was reportedly kidnapped by two Union soldiers and forced to serve as a waterboy before escaping. He returned to Bowling Green and to his work on the "plantation," which was the farm of R.C.P. Thomas on Nashville Road. Cecelia Memorial Presbyterian Church is named for Lilliard's mother.<sup>50</sup>

Several black medical professionals competently served the black community. Mrs. Ora Porter became the first Registered Nurse in Bowling Green in 1916. She received her degree from the Tuskegee School of Nursing, and she received special training at Lincoln Hospital in New York.<sup>51</sup> She worked for Dr. J.N. McCormack, a white physician, who was known as the father of the Kentucky State Board of Health. Dr. McCormack became nationally known for his service in the yellow fever epidemic in 1878. He died in 1922.<sup>52</sup> Mrs. Porter was employed in the private Saint Joseph Hospital started by Dr. McCormack.<sup>53</sup> Two black dentists, Yarborough and Young, practiced in Bowling Green as well.

The most popular and respected black doctor in town was Dr. Z.K. Jones. He lived until 1977 and performed a number of valuable services in the community aside from his medical practice. Dr. Jones graduated from Kentucky State University in Frankfort and was valedictorian of his class at Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>54</sup> He practiced medicine in Bowling Green for sixty-five years and delivered over 2500 babies.<sup>55</sup> A former mayor of Bowling Green, a Mr. Underwood, had lived in a

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<sup>50</sup>Park City Daily News, 23 June 1950.

<sup>51</sup>Frank O. Moxley, Ed.D., "Black History Month, 1996," (Pamphlet, Taylor's Chapel AME Church Sunday School, Bowling Green, Kentucky), 1996.

<sup>52</sup>Park City Daily News, 3 October 1938; Louisville Times, 5 May 1922.

<sup>53</sup>Park City Daily News, 14 January 1968.

<sup>54</sup>Park City Daily News, 17 November 1977.

<sup>55</sup>"Obsequies for Z.K. Jones," State Street Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 20 November 1977.

beautiful home on State Street in a predominantly white neighborhood. Always admiring the home, Dr. Jones finally bought it and lived there for many years. It is now recognized by the Kentucky Heritage Council. Two other doctors, Beckett and Bruton, practiced sometime before the Depression in Jonesville. Otha D. Porter (1869-1936) was another early medical pioneer in Bowling Green. The O.D Porter Building occupied a portion of property near the Federal Building. Several buildings on Main Street which were rented by white business interests belonged to Dr. Porter. His private residence at 439 State Street is "a standing fossil of true black heritage."<sup>56</sup> It is important to realize that black citizens of Bowling Green, despite Jim Crow laws and attitudes, made substantial and valuable contributions to the black community and to the community as a whole.

As early as 1886, Reverend H.D. Carpenter (no relation to the later James Carpenter) was called as pastor of Bethel Church on west Tenth Street. He served there until 1927. At that time, the west side of Bowling Green suffered from much crime: stabbings and brawls were not uncommon. Never afraid to confront people, Carpenter would put men out of his church for drunkenness. Contemporary observers reported that crime settled down tremendously because people respected him. At that time, State Street School was in operation, but there was no black school in the county system. Reverend Carpenter opened the H.D. Carpenter School in the 1890s. He taught during the week and preached on Sunday. Later, his daughter Clara became principal of the Carpenter School (later Delafield), the only black school in the county for a number of years. His other daughter, Lillian, became the first black music teacher in Warren County.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Oldham, "Minority Business Interests."

<sup>57</sup>Reverend Jackson, interview by Mike Korn, about Reverend H.D. Carpenter, donated to the Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University, August 1981; Park City Daily News, 29 September 1988, n.p.



Typical of the black communities throughout the South, churches were in essence the center of black life in Bowling Green. Pastors of the various churches were the leaders of the community as well as their congregations. The minister was often seen as the embodiment of the church. However, “such an interpretation fails to capture the collective character of the black church. Focusing on the church as a social space of... interaction, on the other hand, illuminates the process by which the church came to wield broad influence in the black community, for it offers clearer insight into how church-founded institutions, particularly schools, were established and supported.”<sup>58</sup> One of the most basic and important contributions of the black church was its adherence to middle-class values. These values tended to reinforce the idea of racial self-help and its promise of improvement.<sup>59</sup> “The allegiance to middle-class values... was no less evidence of their commitment to transcend oppression.”<sup>60</sup> The church influenced normative values and dictated respectable behavior for all classes of blacks. “Although white society perceived blacks as an undifferentiated mass and confined them together in segregated neighborhoods, blacks... relied upon values and behavior in distinguishing class and status differences among themselves... They focused on adherence to bourgeois standards of respectability and morality in designating social status.”<sup>61</sup> The black community in Bowling Green was no different from those found elsewhere in the South. The church, the entire congregation including the minister, dictated most aspects of life, both moral and social. Jonesville, in its prime, had at least three churches. Forty to fifty children attended Sunday School on a regular basis.<sup>62</sup> A good number of black churches

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<sup>58</sup>Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 49-50.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 96.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 204-205.

<sup>62</sup>Park City Daily News, 29 September 1988.

have been formed in the last century in Bowling Green. Probably the largest and most influential is State Street Baptist Church.

State Street Baptist is a daughter church of the Bowling Green Baptist Church, now known as the First Baptist Church. In 1838, slave worshippers of the church received permission to organize and establish their own place of worship. After first meeting in the Bowling Green Baptist Church on Sunday afternoons, they moved into their first building in 1845. In 1873, they moved to their present site. Before the turn of the century a number of daughter churches were formed, including Mount Zion, New Bethel, and Eleventh Street. In 1898 a fire completely gutted the original State Street church building. By 1901, the church was already in a completely new building on the same site. This is the present structure at 340 State Street. Records show that several prominent members of the church and community, such as Dr. Z.K. Jones, J.E. Kuykendall, and Dr. O.D. Porter were willing to stand surety for debts of the church. The congregation was very devoted to its church and church family.<sup>63</sup>

Although probably the largest, State Street was not the only black church. As already mentioned, a number of daughter churches were formed by that congregation. The New Bethel Baptist Church, called "New" after it moved to Church Street, was pastored by H.D. Carpenter, and the church oversaw the running of the Carpenter School. It was originally started as a mission by the First Baptist Church to try to alleviate some of the dangers in the west side of town.<sup>64</sup> Cecelia Memorial Presbyterian Church is located on College Street. That congregation was formed in 1868 but did not purchase the building until 1879 from the Christian Church.<sup>65</sup> The other very influential church in

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<sup>63</sup>John Long, "Some Highlights of the History of State Street Baptist Church: The Next Eighty-one Years (1913-1994)," Pamphlet for State Street Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky, June 1994.

<sup>64</sup>"African-American Sites in the Kentucky Heritage Council Database," In Folder: "African-Americans," (Clipping File: Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University).

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

the black community is Taylor's Chapel A.M.E., built in 1872. That church, home to Mr. Frank Moxley, is located on Seventh Street.

The common belief was that ministers set the example for the community in both Bowling Green and in other black communities throughout the South. Reverends Wolfe, Carpenter, and Abel did precisely that. In addition to the influence of the ministers, almost all of the people interviewed believe that the keys to success for blacks in those years before integration were hope and a common work ethic. The black community members helped one another. They looked out for all of the children. The American Legion served a huge Thanksgiving dinner for all the underprivileged children in town. State Street Baptist also held a number of dinners for the kids.<sup>66</sup> Entertainment was always a major priority to keep them off the streets. James Carpenter recalls the Knights of Columbus providing entertainment for black youth. The black church also served as the black school in most cases, and it provided the majority of the social activities. The church kept hope strong and produced good leaders. Dances and other social activities were also held at the K.P. Hall on Second and Chestnut. Many women formed clubs, such as the Joymakers, for purposes of relaxation and social support. The Silas Greene Show, a black minstrel, came to town every year. They would eventually perform on State Street next to the school, after performing in an open field on Main Street for many years. Those events never failed to draw huge crowds.<sup>67</sup> Carnivals and circuses were also tremendous crowd-getters, usually setting up near Delafield School. Reverend Carpenter recalls football and baseball games in front of the school as being another major social event. Each separate black section of town had its own ball teams, and they would play against one another. Pride was not lacking in the black citizens, even in the midst of Jim Crow Bowling Green.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Carpenter interview, February 1994.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.; George Esters interview, 14 November 1996.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.; Moxley interview, February 1994; Carpenter interview, February 1994.

The decade of the 1940s brought a slightly different story for black citizens of Bowling Green. Fountain Square was the center of the business community. J.L. Durbin's, Sam Pushin's, J.C. Penney's and Norman's were the four anchor stores on the square.<sup>69</sup> Black women were usually allowed to shop, but most often the saleswomen would not wait on them. They were never allowed to try on clothes.<sup>70</sup> Sears had its white and colored drinking fountains. F. W. Woolworth's was also on the square. It had both a "No Colored" drinking fountain and food service counter, so blacks were not allowed to enjoy those facilities.<sup>71</sup>

The segregation, though, was not as rigid in Bowling Green as it was in some places, a practice which at times made life even harder. A black person could have a meal in a restaurant one day without any problem, but the next day he or she could be asked to leave the same restaurant because someone was offended by his presence. This inconsistency had the potential of being much more humiliating than just being forced to stay away.<sup>72</sup> Reverend Esters recalls that "blacks just kind of knew where they could go. It was like a survival condition--processed within their minds."<sup>73</sup> They could receive care at the hospital, unlike in many towns in Kentucky, but they were not allowed in the library. Blacks were simply unwelcome in many places.

As in the years before the Depression, where blacks lived in high concentration a number of service-related businesses ran close by. In most of the black sections there were restaurants, beauty parlors, coal yards, funeral homes, grocery stores, and vendors. The difference was these were now almost completely black-supported but white-owned. Hardin's Roadhouse in Jonesville was the only business at that time owned by a black

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<sup>69</sup>Oldham, "Minority Business Interest."

<sup>70</sup>Esters interview, 14 November 1996.

<sup>71</sup>Oldham, "Minority Business Interests."

<sup>72</sup>Esters interview, 14 November 1996.

<sup>73</sup>Reverend George Esters, interview with the author, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 6 January 1997.

man. Mr. Bill Hardin served a huge white clientele, and “in keeping with segregation, blacks had to seek service in the back room, entering through a side entrance.”<sup>74</sup> Sadly, this was the only service-related business still located in Jonesville. Tom Harris still operated his restaurant and pool hall on the square. Upstairs there were rooms for rent and his private quarters.

After O.D. Porter’s death, his building came under the management of another black citizen, Jesse Hutcherson--a barber by profession. Mr. Hutcherson managed and owned a restaurant, barber shop, and the Diamond Taxi Cab Company. The other black-owned taxi service was the Veterans Cab Company, owned by Benton Boards and Daniel Wallace. Mr. Wallace also owned a restaurant and service station. The Mustang Inn was first owned and operated by Charles Whitney and then later by “Pap” Hobson and Tom Alexander. It was a popular restaurant and lounge on Third Street between State and Chestnut. Many black citizens would gather there to enjoy dinner or a drink with some music.<sup>75</sup>

In 1945, the local extension service of the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture and Home Economics announced its agricultural program, directed by John Finch, to aid rural black citizens. The program was reportedly supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The object of the program was to raise the standard of living for the families of farmers and thereby stabilize the farm population. The program cited a number of goals for the black farmers. It recommended an acre per person for home gardening. Farmers were encouraged to raise poultry--both for home use and for commercial use. Strawberries and tobacco were still cited as the two major cash crops recommended for the area. Warren County blacks were also successful in the production of dairy products.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Oldham, “Minority Business Interests.”

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.; George Esters, Interview with author, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 20 March 1997.

<sup>76</sup>Park City Daily News, 27 November 1945, n.p.

It seems obvious that the economy of Bowling Green was not booming at the time, and there was room for concern. James Carpenter left Bowling Green to go to barber school in Indianapolis in the early forties. He remembers getting out in 1948 and wanting to come back to Bowling Green despite better offers elsewhere. Carpenter says he could make \$1.50 per head in Indianapolis, while he could only make \$.40 per head in Bowling Green. Slightly ashamed to admit it, one week Carpenter only made \$9.00. Needless to say, after that he was quite discouraged.<sup>77</sup>

In the same year Reverend Carpenter came back to Bowling Green, the State Street Baptist Church called the Reverend John E. Jones to serve as its pastor.<sup>78</sup> He worked at State Street for nineteen years, and he was an integral part of the community as well. In January of 1949, the formation of the Bowling Green Negro Chamber of Commerce was announced. J.E. Jones was elected to serve as its president. Working hand-in-hand with the all-white Bowling Green-Warren County Chamber, its purpose was to make the city a better place for blacks to live and work.<sup>79</sup> Then, in February, at a meeting of the Interracial Commission of local citizens and school officials, co-chaired by Rev. Hugh McKee and Dr. E.T. Buford, a committee was appointed to investigate facilities extended to blacks in Bowling Green. Committees on Negro Recreation and Negro Employment were also formed.<sup>80</sup> In September of 1950, supervisory control of the black playground on State Street was granted to the Negro Chamber of Commerce. J.E. Jones encouraged the black community to raise money for a lighting system.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to his pastorship of State Street Baptist, Reverend J.E. Jones was very active in the community. He served as the co-principal at High Street School, and beginning in 1967, Jones served as a sociology professor at Western Kentucky

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<sup>77</sup>Carpenter interview, February 1994.

<sup>78</sup>Long, "Some Highlights."

<sup>79</sup>Park City Daily News, 16 January 1949, n.p.

<sup>80</sup>Park City Daily News, 27 February 1949, n.p.

<sup>81</sup>Park City Daily News, 6 September 1950, n.p.

University. He was very concerned about improving the lives of blacks in Bowling Green. He said that as of 1956, no Negro had ever been elected to public office in Warren County. Some had served in political roles, but none was elected. Mr. Kuykendall was the state chairman for the Negro Republicans, and he served as a delegate-at-large to the Republican National Convention in 1949. J.E. Hill was the leading black politician in the fifties. He said in an interview with Reverend Jones in 1956 that "due to the cordial relationship existing between the two groups, Negroes and Whites, the same condition has come about here just as it does everywhere else. In any given situation, it is the tendency of the minority to follow the majority." He also said "the real reason for Negroes not holding public office is due to lethargy of Negroes themselves," because many whites had even encouraged blacks to seek elective offices.<sup>82</sup> It is also possible that since most of the blacks in Bowling Green were Republican and it was a Democratic town, they were never given the opportunity to run for an office. Bowling Green was the only community in Warren County with the status of a city. With a black population of about 3,150, employment opportunities for blacks were very poor. For example, several factories operated in Bowling Green employing over two thousand people, but only two blacks were employed in the industrial system in 1956.<sup>83</sup> In such an atmosphere, it could have been beneficial to the black population if someone had sought public office, yet no one did. Blacks in Bowling Green seem to have been content, if not apathetic, about their status, even while blacks in other places were far from silent.

The cry by African-Americans all over the country for equality--especially for their children--began to gather real strength in the 1940s and continually built up momentum into the 1960s. The NAACP's Legal Defense Fund, led primarily by Charles

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<sup>82</sup>J.E. Jones, "The Political Status of Negroes in Warren County," 1957, unpublished report in folder: "African-Americans," (Clipping File: Kentucky Library, Western Kentucky University).

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

Houston and then Thurgood Marshall, took the battle for the integration of the school systems on as a very personal one. It became part of who they were and the people with whom they worked. Bowling Green was never the site of any sit-ins, walk-outs, or bus boycotts, but there were people in this town who wanted their children to go to school in the best schools in the district and often the ones closest to their homes. They wanted their children to be able to attend a school without being assigned to one based on the color of their skin. The landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* was handed down in 1954. It was almost ten years after that before black students in Bowling Green were allowed to attend white schools. It was a long, hard process.<sup>84</sup>

From its beginning, the State Street School curriculum was not the same as the curriculum at the white schools. The school board placed a greater emphasis on the domestic science department for girls and the industrial arts department for boys at State Street. It wasn't until November 1946 that the board gave State Street a lot to use as a football field. That was the year the football team won the National Negro Championship game in Raleigh, North Carolina. In compliance with Kentucky Statute 156.070, on May 14, 1948, the city school board agreed to add one unit of agriculture as an elective to the ninth-grade course of study to better provide for filling graduation requirements in science. In June of that same year, a delegation of black citizens called on the school board to request the building of a new senior and junior high school and to request improvements in the State Street building.<sup>85</sup>

In March 1949, the Daily News printed a report on the State Street School Plant that was completed by an interracial committee, that was related to the Interracial

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<sup>84</sup>Kluger, Simple Justice; Mark V. Tushnet, Making Civil Rights Law: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court, 1936-1961 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>85</sup>“Bowling Green Independent Board of Education General Record Book, 1945-1958,” 11 June 1948, City Board of Education Offices, Bowling Green, Kentucky.



Commission appointed in February. Not surprisingly, J.E. Jones and Ora Porter also served on this committee along with four other concerned citizens. Over fifty years old, the school was considered to be “too crowded for comfort, efficiency, and safety.”<sup>86</sup> As the delegation had requested, the report recommended a new building, including a large auditorium, for the junior and senior high. It also lacked a regulation-size basketball court in the gym, shower facilities, instructional space, and office space. The report ordered better lighting, lockers on all three floors, more drinking fountains, improved stairways and fire escapes, and improvement of the “antiquated” plumbing. The physical plant was not the only thing found with room for improvement. A severe shortage of necessary equipment also existed. The chemistry and physics labs were both found to be inadequate, as was the library—in terms of books and shelving. Good equipment was found in the home economics department, but it too was not enough. The school had very little industrial arts equipment, no band instruments, and no uniforms. Hoping to prepare the students for secretarial and college work, the committee also found that typewriters were badly needed. Of major concern to the group was the lack of a cafeteria. Because many of the children purchased lunch at beer joints and the like, the committee felt it was detrimental both to their health and well-being. They made certain to report, however, that the principal and teachers were making good use of the present equipment and space.<sup>87</sup>

Based on the school records, it appears that no action was taken after the report was filed. In January of 1950, the State Street PTA requested that they get a cafeteria, a band, and a commercial course. In June, the school board finally purchased fifteen typewriters and some tables and chairs for the commercial course. A year later they finally painted the school building.<sup>88</sup> The PTA came again to the school board in June

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<sup>86</sup>Park City Daily News, March 1949.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>“Bowling Green Independent Board of Education General Record Book, 1945-1958,” 8

1952 to request “improved athletic facilities, a two-year commercial course, a band, a cafeteria, an improved library, and an improved industrial arts course.”<sup>89</sup> Finally, in September of that year L.C. Curry, the superintendent, told the board to purchase the supplies and equipment necessary for the opening and operation of a cafeteria at State Street, and he told them to employ teachers necessary for the additional classes and the band. Three and a half years after the report was made, only some of the recommendations were actually fulfilled.<sup>90</sup>

Plans to construct a new high school and grade school for blacks were finally announced in June 1953 after Reverend Jones, the PTA president, made several suggestions for its location. The school board spent \$52,000 on the construction of the new school with a modern cafeteria, library, auditorium, gymnasium, industrial arts facilities, and plenty of classroom space. The city’s most modern educational plant--High Street School--opened its doors to students on February 7, 1955.<sup>91</sup> Ironically, as Bowling Green was building a new segregated school, the Supreme Court was ruling in the *Brown* case that “separate but equal” was no longer good enough.

In 1951, Oliver Brown tried to enroll his daughter Linda in an all-white school in Topeka, Kansas. School authorities turned her away on the basis of the “separate but equal” doctrine from *Plessy*. This case was joined by four other cases lumped under one name, and they were argued before the Supreme Court of the United States in 1953. The attack by the NAACP was led by its chief legal counsel, Thurgood Marshall. The Supreme Court had already chipped away at *Plessy* in its decisions in *Sweatt*, *McLaurin*, and *Henderson*.<sup>92</sup> The cases that were heard with the Topeka case originated in South

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June 1951.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*, 13 June 1952.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 12 September 1952.

<sup>91</sup> “City’s Most Modern Educational Plant, High Street School For Negroes, Opens Tomorrow,” Park City *Daily News*, 6 February 1955.

<sup>92</sup>In *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), the Supreme Court held that segregation in graduate and professional schools was unconstitutional. In *McLaurin v. Oklahoma Board of Regents* (1950),

Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. Each of the cases had been assigned to one or two of the NAACP's best attorneys. The NAACP attorneys attacked the idea of *separate* as innately *unequal*. The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Earl Warren, issued its ruling on May 17, 1954. In the unanimous opinion, they held that the separate-but-equal doctrine was inherently unequal. The opinion held that segregation was in fact unconstitutional and that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated were being deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. With the overturning of *Plessy*, "the Court had restored to the American people a measure of the humanity that had been drained away in their climb to worldwide supremacy. The Court said, without using the words, that when you stepped on a black man, he hurt. The time had come to stop."<sup>93</sup> In May 1955, the Court issued a second ruling known as *Brown II*, which attempted to address some of the practical concerns about the desegregation order. The Court reasserted that the states must make a prompt start toward full compliance with the 1954 ruling. Warren told the country to move "with all deliberate speed" in integrating its schools.<sup>94</sup>

Following the *Brown* decisions, as early as June 1955 the superintendents of both city and county school districts were awaiting word from their boards on whether to begin integration that fall.<sup>95</sup> The answer was "no." The Bowling Green District Court case of *Willas v. Walker* went before the bench in November 1955. On the basis of *Brown*, the judge ruled that the schools should not be segregated and that blacks should be admitted to Bowling Green and Warren County schools.<sup>96</sup> It seems that ruling had no bite and the court did not enforce it, because there is no mention of it in the school-board

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the Court ruled similarly that restrictions placed on black students in white institutions were unconstitutional. In *Henderson v. United States*(1950), they threw out discriminatory dining-car regulations. Decided on the same day, all three cases questioned *Plessy*, but did not uproot it.

<sup>93</sup>Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 710.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 700-708; Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law*, 150-195.

<sup>95</sup>Park City *Daily News*, 17 June 1955, n.p.

<sup>96</sup>McKinney, Cumberland Trace Legal Aid.

minutes from that year or any thereafter. Appointed in late 1955, a committee including prominent blacks such as J.E. Jones, J.E. Kuykendall, and R.C. Abel, made recommendations in February 1956 to the Bowling Green City Board of Education to abolish segregation in the schools by the 1956-57 school year.<sup>97</sup> The Superintendent of the Warren County Schools called a meeting to discuss the possible integration of the county schools at that time.<sup>98</sup>

The first break came May 25, 1956, when Western Kentucky State College President E. Kelly Thompson issued a statement saying the college “would permit the enrollment of Negro students beginning with the opening of the summer term June 7.”<sup>99</sup> Two High Street teachers, both coaches, were expected to enroll. F.O. Moxley and J.S. Ownby became the first blacks to attend Western. When asked, Superintendent L.C. Curry reported that the city board had not yet reached a decision on integrating, but “he imagined it would be ‘right away.’”<sup>100</sup>

“Right away” did not come for several more years in Bowling Green. At some point in 1962, rumors began spreading that several blacks planned to file suits demanding immediate desegregation. Both school systems denied any knowledge of blacks even wanting to attend different schools in September 1962.<sup>101</sup> Whether either school system knew it was coming or not, a suit was filed on January 9, 1963, in the U.S. District Court in Bowling Green on behalf of thirty-one children by nineteen parents. At the top of the list was Willie Larry Lawrence and his father W.G. Lawrence. As is the practice, the case would soon be referred to *Willie Larry Lawrence, et al v. Bowling Green, Kentucky Board of Education, et al.*

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<sup>97</sup>Park City Daily News, 14 February 1956, n.p.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 10 February 1956, n.p.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 25 May 1956, n.p.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., 25 September 1962, n.p.

The complaint filed in the case listed all nineteen plaintiffs and then listed as defendants each member of the board for the city schools and the superintendent. The plaintiffs' attorney was James Crumlin of Louisville. He was listed as a counselor for the NAACP Legal, Defense, and Education Fund.<sup>102</sup> Jack Greenberg and James M. Nabrit, III, two very well-known national attorneys for the NAACP, were also listed as counsel for the plaintiffs. Jack Greenberg was a white graduate of Columbia Law School. He joined the NAACP legal staff in 1949 under Thurgood Marshall. Greenberg, along with Robert Carter, had acted as the legal team sent by the NAACP to argue *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1951 in Topeka, Kansas. Greenberg eventually became the chief legal counsel for the NAACP in 1961.<sup>103</sup> James M. Nabrit, III is the son of one of the NAACP attorneys during the *Brown* decision. He was hired by the Legal Defense Fund in 1959. Jim Nabrit and Jack Greenberg were co-workers and friends for nearly thirty years. Nabrit retired in 1989, but Greenberg stayed a few years longer until 1993.<sup>104</sup>

The suit was brought to “redress the deprivation under color of law...secured by the Constitution and the Fourteenth Amendment...providing for equal rights of citizens and of all other persons within the jurisdiction of the United States.”<sup>105</sup> The plaintiffs asked for a permanent injunction “enjoining the Bowling Green Board of Education from maintaining a racially segregated ‘school system’ of grades one through twelve.”<sup>106</sup> The children involved in the cases were anywhere from first to eighth-grade students, but they represented all students “similarly situated.” The complaint also explained that all the

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 10 January 1963, n.p.

<sup>103</sup>Kluger, *Simple Justice*; Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law*.

<sup>104</sup>Jack Greenberg, *Crusaders in the Courts: How a Dedicated Band of Lawyers Fought for the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

<sup>105</sup>Complaint for Plaintiff, Willie Larry Lawrence, etc., et al v. Bowling Green Kentucky Board of Education, etc., et al (1963), US District Court Civil Number 919, (National Archives: Southeast Region, East Point, Georgia), at 3.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 4.

black students were forced to attend High Street, even if other schools were better located for them. Similarly, many white children lived close to High Street, but they were assigned elsewhere, because it was exclusively for black students.<sup>107</sup> The complaint also argued that the educational program at High Street School was inferior to the program at the white schools, because most of the white schools offered health programs and “spacious and adequate cafeteria services.”<sup>108</sup> The plaintiffs requested the defendants to “cease operating the Public School System of Bowling Green on a compulsory racially segregated basis and to comply with the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the School Segregation Cases.”<sup>109</sup>

Crumlin also held in the complaint that the “injury which the plaintiffs and members of their class suffer as a result of the operation of a compulsory bi-racial school system in Bowling Green is irreparable and shall continue to irreparably injure the plaintiffs and their class until enjoined by this court.”<sup>110</sup> The plaintiffs prayed that the court would advance the case on the docket for a speedy hearing. Requesting that the court take specific actions upon hearing the case, they asked for several things. First, the court should enter a decree enjoining the school system from operating a bi-racial school system. Second, it should prohibit the defendants from assigning pupils on the basis of race. Finally, they asked to court to enjoin the defendants from assigning teachers and principals on the basis of the race of themselves or the race of the students at the school. As an alternative, the plaintiffs asked that the Court at least “direct the defendants to present a complete plan...for the reorganization of the entire school system of Bowling Green, Kentucky, into a unitary non-racial system.”<sup>111</sup> According to the Daily News, Crumlin was reportedly in the process of preparing a suit against the county school

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 12.

system as well. Black high school students in the county also attended High Street with tuition paid by the Warren County Board, because the county had no high school for blacks, although it operated four black elementary schools.<sup>112</sup>

Bowling Green attorney Marshall Funk, the counsel for the defendants, entered the Motions and Answers on January 31, 1963. He first moved to strike from the complaint paragraph IX, which stated that the board assigns teachers, principals and personnel on the basis of race. The defendants denied the complaint, as worded, but they admitted that “they and their predecessors in office at all times since the commencement of the City School System in the City of Bowling Green, Kentucky, have in fact operated separate schools of equal facilities and equal quality of instruction for white and colored citizens.”<sup>113</sup> The defendants asked first that the complaint be dismissed because it “failed to state a claim against the defendants or any of them upon which relief can be granted.” They further requested that, if the complaint is not dismissed, a reasonable amount of time be given to present a written plan to the Court. The plaintiffs filed questions to be answered by the defendants on February 8. The trial date was set for April 8, 1963, to be heard by Judge Mac Swinford.

On April 8, Marshall Funk again filed a motion to strike and a motion to dismiss. The motion to strike attempted to remove the paragraph about the employees, because “no teacher, principal or other professional personnel is a party to this suit; thus such allegations are wholly immaterial to the issues herein.” He also asked again for a dismissal on the grounds that the “complaint does not contain the essential allegation that the defendants were acting under color of state law at the times referred to in the complaint.” On that same day, the defense submitted a three-part plan for the integration of the school system:

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<sup>112</sup>Park City Daily News, 10 January 1963, n.p.

<sup>113</sup>Motion and Answers, *Lawrence v. Bowling Green Board of Education* (1963).

- I. Every student shall be permitted to attend the school designated for the zone in which he or she resides without regard to race.
- II. Transfers from one school to another may be made on the request of the parents or those standing in the position of parents, upon the approval of the school superintendent without regard to race.
- III. This plan for desegregation shall take effect as to grades 9 through 12, September, 1963; as to grades 5 through 8, September, 1964; and as to grades 1 through 4, September, 1965.<sup>114</sup>

During the trial, Judge Swinford first overruled both motions filed by the defense. After hearing oral arguments from both sides, he rendered an opinion from the bench that the judgment be entered directing the “complete integration of all pupils in the Bowling Green school district without regard to race or color and that the school board arrange to make this complete integration effective beginning with the school year in the late summer or early fall of 1963. It further ordered that the assignment of faculty members should be made without regard to race or color.”<sup>115</sup>

After citing *Brown and Willas v. Walker*, Judge Swinford flatly rejected the school board’s plan for gradual integration. He said, “Your High Street High School is not an answer. It may be the finest school in Warren County, but that is not the question. Now, I don’t care if they have got a Negro school here in a palace and a white school in a tent.... They are separating them, segregating them because of their color and their race, and that is contrary to American justice.”<sup>116</sup> The judge also told the defendants that “this business of opposing the idea of equal citizenship of Negroes has gone out of style. It’s the law of the land, it’s the right thing to do.”<sup>117</sup> After sharply criticizing school officials, Swinford noted that “if the heartbreak of little children doesn’t stir emotions, I

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<sup>114</sup>Bowling Green, Kentucky Plan, *Lawrence v. Bowling Green Board* (1963).

<sup>115</sup>Order, *Lawrence v. Bowling Green* (1963).

<sup>116</sup>Transcript of Court’s Oral Opinion, *Lawrence v. Bowling Green* (1963), at 19.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.



don't know what would."<sup>118</sup> To school officials worried that complete integration would cause incidents and trouble, the judge responded: "It may be... they will have to bring the troops, as you say, in here to enforce the orders of this court, to protect these Negro children. That is a matter over which I have no control. If the people of this very fine city take that attitude, it may take that, but I don't believe they will."<sup>119</sup> Swinford was confident that his decision was the right one and that the citizens would act in a positive manner. "I have more faith in this community than you have and than some of these witnesses have...let's quit temporizing with this thing. Let's act sensibly...and let us white people do it a little apologetically....Let's do it in the right spirit....I think people will accept it in the right spirit."<sup>120</sup>

The city school system had about 3,200 white pupils and 835 black pupils. High Street School housed all twelve grades and was the only black school in the city system. Bowling Green High School was for white students in grades nine through twelve. The system also operated several white elementary schools. Judge Swinford ordered the schools to be integrated on the basis of the nine-year-old *Brown* decision and on the basis of his ruling in *Willas v. Walker* in 1955. That ruling was the first local decision actually directing a school board to integrate in the United States.<sup>121</sup> He felt that Bowling Green had ample time to integrate its schools, and if they had not been sued, they would never have planned to integrate. According to Frank Moxley, Bowling Green was one of only five school systems in the whole state that was actually sued in order to achieve integration.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Louisville *Courier Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, 9 April 1963.

<sup>119</sup>Oral Opinion, *Lawrence v. Bowling Green Board of Education*, at 25.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup>Frank Moxley, Ed.D., interview with the author, Bowling Green, Kentucky, 10 October 1996.

On May 17, 1963, the Bowling Green School Board voted unanimously to adopt as school board policy the judgment by Judge Swinford in the case. The school system was permanently enjoined from assigning pupils and employees on the basis of race, and they were instructed to completely comply with the terms of the judgment by the beginning of the 1963-64 school year.

On June 11, 1963, the Warren County Board of Education voted four to one to integrate their schools that fall. Raleigh Phelps, a representative from Richardsville, which had no school-age blacks registered in the district, cast that only vote against integration.<sup>123</sup> The county schools had an estimated 4,655 pupils, 344 of whom were black. The county transferred territory to the city with about one thousand students to attempt to eliminate double sessions at Warren County High School. The following figures are for the 1963-64 school year of the Warren County Schools:

School	white	negro
Alvaton	606	20
Bristow	492	17
North Warren	434	94
Richardsville	585	0
Warren County High	821	30
Delafield	336	58
Oakland	184	55
Richpond	361	47
Rockfield	317	20
Hadley	105	0
Boyce	48	0
Rocky Springs	22	3

Source: Park City *Daily News*, June 11, 1963.

In June, the city board announced the adoption of the integration judgment. "We must all act responsibly, accepting this change, realizing it is the law of the land... We are proud of our schools and our community. Bowling Green is a great cultural center. Let

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<sup>123</sup>Park City *Daily News*, 11 June 1963, n.p.

us all do out part in seeing that there is no interruption to the fine progress we have experienced.”<sup>124</sup> The Daily News reported on September 29, 1963, that the city schools integrated quietly and smoothly. No incidents were reported.

School	white	black
Parker-Bennett	390	118
McNeill	610	23
Eleventh Street	243	16
T.C. Cherry	631	4
Bowling Green High	1134	3
L.C. Curry	652	3
Potter-Gray	550	0
High Street	0	538

Source: Park City *Daily News*, September 29, 1963.

As both charts show, the school systems were slightly integrated, but by no means in equal proportions. In May 1964, the State School Board announced that it was considering cutting off aid to segregated schools, and that it would no longer tolerate any more slowness or pretend integration. Throughout the state that teacher integration was only about four percent and student integration was around ten percent. All members of the state board agreed that a decade after *Brown* was enough time in which to comply.

On November 9, 1964, Reverend J.E. Jones was appointed as principal of High Street School, replacing Dr. E.T. Buford.<sup>125</sup> On February 27, 1965, the board voted on proposed changes to be in compliance with the court order. They decided that High School High School would close and all pupils in the district in grades nine through twelve would attend Bowling Green High beginning with the 1965-66 school year. The teachers at High Street would be absorbed into the staffs of the other schools. The board also announced that the High Street elementary school would be integrated that fall. As

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 14 June 1963, n.p.

<sup>125</sup>“Bowling Green Independent Board of Education General Record Book, 1964-68,” 9 November 1964.

vacancies occurred, positions would be filled without regard to race, creed, or national origin.<sup>126</sup> The board finally made integration a real goal after federal officials withheld forty to fifty thousand dollars in aid since the first of that school year because of the system's unacceptable "voluntary choice" plan.<sup>127</sup>

Officials believed that an all-black school such as High Street showed that the system was not fully integrated. Integration was ordered and done on paper in 1963, but it did not begin to really happen until 1965. Integration forced the elimination of an important symbol of the black community and of a sense of unity behind a common goal. High Street High School had been a source of pride for Bowling Green's black citizens, and the fight to end segregation had provided a common bond. With the elimination of segregation came increased uncertainty about the future of the black community.

Ricardo Sisney was hired to teach at High Street in 1962. In 1971, he was hired as an intern principal at Bowling Green High. He remembers a lot of covert prejudice and bigotry in Bowling Green. When asked why he thought no major violence or protest ever took place in Bowling Green, his response was the same as the earlier-mentioned Reverend H.W. Jones's had been. Bowling Green was and is, in his opinion, a very laid-back town.<sup>128</sup> H.W. Jones was the pastor of State Street Baptist from 1967-1971. He was not the most popular person among leaders, black and white, because he was outspoken. He reports, "many whites saw me as a maverick because I always spoke my mind."<sup>129</sup> He felt that whatever measures were taken to integrate the society came as a result of what happened elsewhere. Unlike most fights for integration in the United

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 27 February 1965.

<sup>127</sup>Louisville Courier Journal, 28 February 1965, n.p.

<sup>128</sup>Ricardo Sisney, interview with the author, Bowling Green, KY, 31 October 1996.

<sup>129</sup>H.W. Jones interview, September 1996.

States, in Bowling Green the church played a very small part in what took place, aside from what was preached on Sunday. This is inconsistent with the fact that most blacks saw the church as occupying a very important position in their society. It is peculiar that the church did not use its influence to make changes. No overt action was ever really taken, because black folks were satisfied and content. "No one wanted to rock the boat or create a redemptive confrontation with a system that minimized and disenfranchised the black population."<sup>130</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting result of the integration of the school system is the idea that maybe it was not really the most desirable thing to do. At the time of integration, High Street was not inferior to the white schools. Yes, the books were outdated and funding was not equal, but many people believed that the best black minds were in that school. "Black students had to be better--one hundred or two hundred percent better--to make it in the world."<sup>131</sup> When *Lawrence* was filed in 1963, it stated that the schools were inferior because the elementary schools had cafeteria services and health programs, not because the students were not learning as much. When the high school was actually integrated, the High Street students who had been juniors only needed two credits to graduate from Bowling Green High. According to Frank Moxley, they also had phenomenal English test scores.<sup>132</sup> That is a far cry from inferior education. The idea of integration and equality on paper is a wonderful thing, but in practice it never works out quite that well. No matter what the facts are or what the intentions may be, reality is often shadowed by the perceptions of those involved. Attitudes and ideas often affect the outcome as much or more than the facts do. The black community felt then and some still feel now that they lost a valuable thing when the schools were integrated; for them, that is the reality.

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

<sup>131</sup>Esters interview, 14 November 1996.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.

Black teachers had a feeling of pride in the students and the school. According to the feelings of the black community, they went out of their way to help the students. White teachers often do not connect as well, but black teachers and administrators know how to motivate black children and how to discipline them effectively. Blacks believe that they understand the culture better than a white teacher or white administrator can. In an integrated system, black students often fall through the cracks of a predominantly white system, because the mostly white teachers cannot or will not help them.

The earlier system had been built upon the institution of prejudice. The court-enforced integration had put an end to the existing system. Once that was abolished, the black community lost hope, because they lost their rallying point. Before, they had enjoyed life and loved God and put hope in being freed from oppression. They placed their hope in the church which, due to that, played such a central role in the society. Today, their society is fragmented and lacks a spiritual foundation.<sup>133</sup> The family is often split or in some cases non-existent. Many older blacks believe that children have no role models.<sup>134</sup> Both George Esters and Frank Moxley express these sentiments. They see integration as a major cause in the weakening of the black community. A fear of the unknown is the major reason for the white resistance to integration. No one tries to understand one another, and there is little or no recognition or appreciation for black contributions. Young blacks do not feel that they have anything to be proud of that is significant. A system still prevails that locks out blacks.<sup>135</sup> The black population is not active and large enough to support the success of young black professionals, so most potential leaders and role models move on. The black community has never been able to keep a black attorney in business, and there are very few doctors.

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.; Moxley interviews, February 1994 and 10 October 1996.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

If black professionals do try to stay, they find few if any other people similarly situated. They become lonely and discouraged.<sup>136</sup>

Bowling Green is not really an overtly racist city, but there is an atmosphere or an embedded resistance to true equality. George Esters says that after the schools were integrated the whole town pretty much just opened up. All Jim Crow practices disappeared without any real trouble. Public accommodations were suddenly opened to blacks. Places like theaters, parks, and the library became available. This was not due to the nobility of the white population. He says the city fathers of Bowling Green were afraid of bad publicity, so they complied with Judge Swinford's strongly reproachful court rulings and with the civil rights legislation so as not to be noticed. If Bowling Green had resisted integration, the black population would probably eventually have challenged the inequality. If that had occurred, Bowling Green might have become the site of the types of protest that were used elsewhere. As it happened, the black population was forced to fight for and win integration using slow, passive techniques. The city fathers of Bowling Green were not as opposed to integration as they were to bad publicity.

Blacks spent decades fighting for integration, but now, when so many things are still not equal, some wonder if they were better off with teachers and administrators who better understood the ideas and problems of the black youth. The concept of separatism is not a recent idea or even an idea from the era of integration. In 1920, W.E.B. DuBois wrote in *The Crisis* urging whites to make a choice. Either "let the world meet as men with men....Give utter justice to all," or "leave the black and yellow world alone....Give us our states and towns and sections and let us rule them undisturbed. Absolutely segregate the races and sections of the world."<sup>137</sup> DuBois was often viewed as a radical,

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., Voices from the Harlem Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 42.

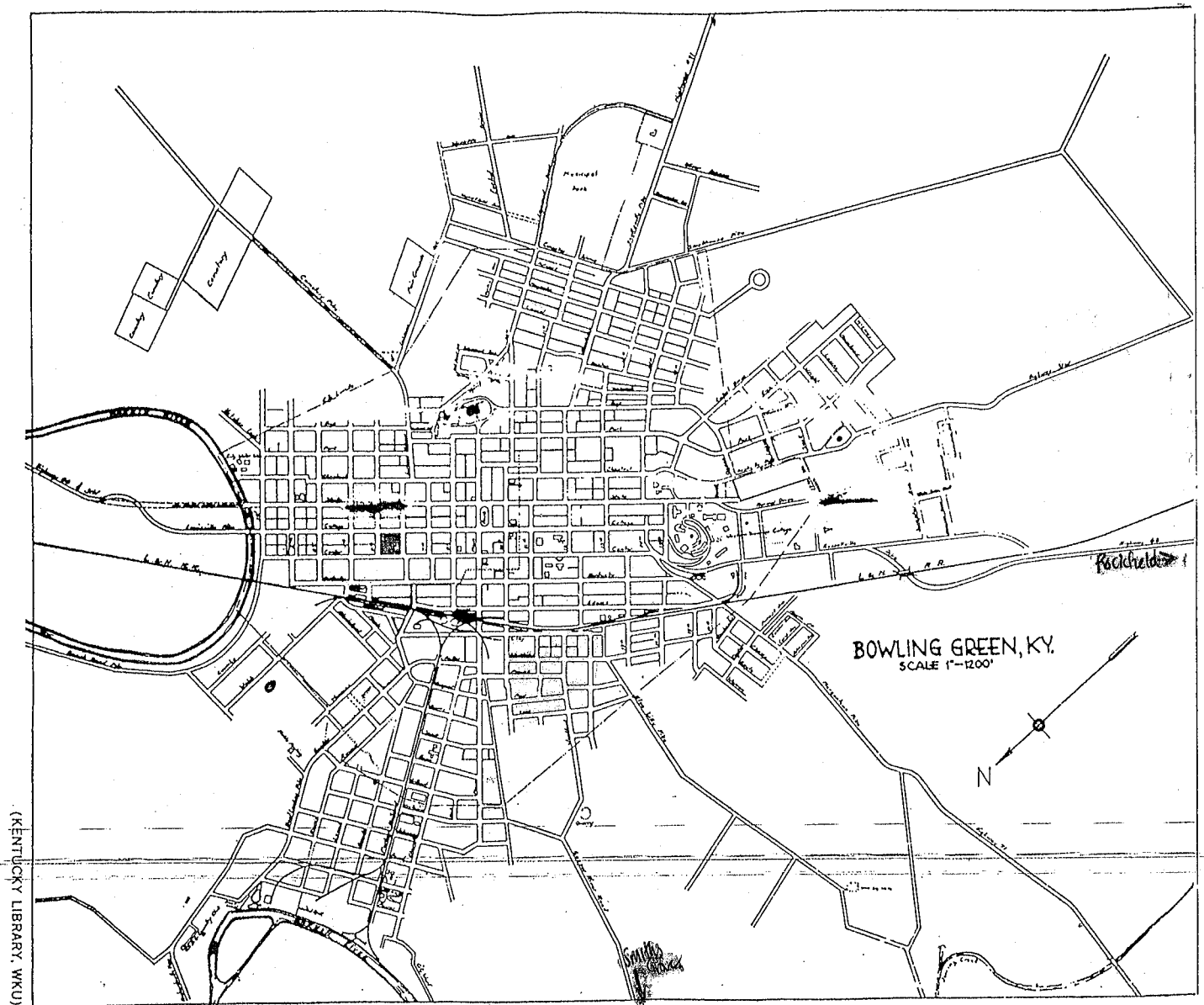
even among blacks, but he is one of the most widely read black scholars in American literature. Separatism is not a concept unique to DuBois. It is an idea that goes against everything many fair-minded Americans want to believe, both black and white, but maybe Chief Justice Warren's opinion was not right in every circumstance. Maybe when they are not separate, black students suffer as much and sometimes more. It is still hard to fault the Court, however, for finally ruling in 1954 that *separate* had never been *equal*.

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does...To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone...in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup>Brown v Board of Education.





The black sections of Bowling Green are indicated according to information from Frank Moxley. The 1949 map shows a random scattering of black sections with no apparent pattern to their formation.

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