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The Roosevelt School: a Tiger's Place in the History of Public-School Integration

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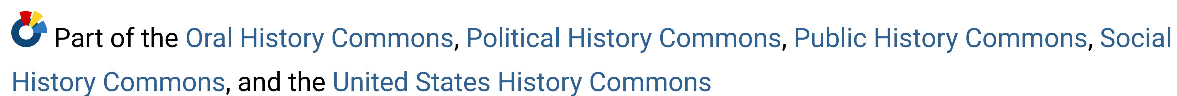

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May, 2021

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

We are submitting a thesis written by Kenya L. Lane entitled "The Roosevelt School: A Tiger's Place in the History of Public-School Integration". We recommend acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.

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THE ROOSEVELT SCHOOL: A TIGER'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL INTEGRATION

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

Of the

College of Arts and Sciences

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the

Requirements for the Degree

Of

Master of Arts

In History

Winthrop University

May 2021

By

Kenya L. Lane

Abstract

South Carolina, like many southern states, spent fifteen years avoiding complete compliance with the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka ruling to desegregate schools. Despite the statewide attempts to keep schools segregated, some South Carolina school districts slowly made strides to integrate with little resistance. By the mid 1960s, the Clover School District, even with trepidation, began to integrate its schools. These efforts to give African American students equal access often came at a cost. The process of integration often involved diminishing the value and very presence of traditionally all-black public schools.

The Roosevelt School, Clover's only all-black K-12 School, prior to Brown v. Board, was among the local institutions that suffered obliteration due to integration. Today, all that remains of this pillar of Clover's Black community is a historical marker that has been erected where the school once stood. The school's history is mainly carried on in the minds and memories of those who walked its halls and in the surrounding community, now known as the Roosevelt community. In recent years, the Clover School District has worked with the local community to revitalize and maintain the legacy of this iconic school that was much more than just a place to learn. This thesis will examine the history of the Roosevelt School as a window into the shift from segregated education to integration in the South. Examining local school integration from the perspective of the African American community expands the Brown v. Board narrative to include its devastating impact on local schools and the surrounding communities. It also provides an opportunity to explore the aftermath

of Brown by giving voice to those who now hold the memories of those experiences that are too precious to be forgotten and deserve a proper place in the historical narrative.

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First and foremost, I want to thank the professors who served on my thesis committee. Dr. Dixon-McKnight, you have been simply awesome. Thank you for all of your encouragement, wisdom, and for believing in me, even when I did not. Dr. Lee, thank you for encouraging me to complete this thesis. You planted the idea in my head from the beginning, and cheered me all the way to the end. And, Dr. Bell, you have taught me more about writing, good writing, than I ever thought possible. Thank you for never letting anything slip! You all are wonderful mentors, and great friends.

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I would be remised if I left out the ones that made this work possible. Amarintha Whitener, Dianna Currence, Liz Johnson, Willie Green Phillips, Jackie Tate, Rod Ruth, Josh Marr, and Brian Lane; I am forever indebted to you. Thank you for sharing your memories, your knowledge, and your love and passions for Roosevelt, Clover High, and this wonderful Clover Community.

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INTRODUCTION

“The decision of the court has undone all that men of good will in both races had accomplished…Thoughtful people of both races know that an order of a court cannot change over-night the minds and hearts of people, and they fear the future.”

~ James F. Byrnes[1]

Editorial cartoon by Herbert Block, titled, “You one of those extremists who thinks it’s time for desegregation?” The drawing shows President Richard Nixon holding a sign saying "All Deliberate Delay" while obstructing the path of an African American schoolgirl who is carrying a briefcase marked "15 Years Since the Supreme Court Decision" and attempting to enter the "James Crow School."

[1] James F. Byrnes, “Byrnes Speech on School Integration Crisis.” *The State.* Columbia, SC, September 27, 1957. Accessed November 4, 2020, https://hdl.handle.net/11030/69792 .

In 1868, Alexander G. Clark won the fight for his daughter to attend an all-white Iowa grammar school through the *Clark v. Board of Directors* court decision.[2] His actions were bold and courageous, considering that it was just a few years after slavery had been abolished and the education of African Americans had not yet become a widespread endeavor. It highlights the fact that education was indeed among the aims of the black community and they were willing to go to great lengths to obtain access to fair and equal education. It would take eighty-six years for the rest of the United States to catch up with Iowa's bold move to desegregate its public schools. As important as education was and is, prior to the mid-twentieth century, educating African Americans had not been a major priority in American society, particularly throughout the South. Despite this general disregard, it has been an ongoing struggle within the black community, dating back to slavery, even when the penalty for learning to read could mean death. Even if the process was "…more like the Hundred Years' War" than the "with all deliberate speed" that the Supreme Court would order in 1954.[3] The declaration that "all the youths are equal before the law", made by the Iowa Supreme Court in that 1868 ruling, was a valorous statement and set the stage for a nationwide campaign for African Americans to secure access to and equality within the American educational system.

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[2] Earl Martin, and Russell E. Lovell, "Clark v. Board of School Directors: Reflections after 150 Years." *Drake L. Rev., Vol* 67, *HeinOnline* (2019), 169.

[3] Ophelia De Laine Gona, *Dawn of Desegregation: JA De Laine and Briggs V. Elliott.* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 191.

It took the United States government more than six decades to follow Iowa's example with the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling on May 17, 1954 - the United States Supreme Court decision to end segregation in schools. Another eleven years passes for the small South Carolina town of Clover; very much like many other southern cities and towns delaying compliance to the integration process. W.E.B. DuBois pointed out just what this battle was up against and gave an indication that it would not be a quick shift but would be a long process:

> "One hundred years before Chief Justice Warren declared that racial segregation in public schools '"is a denial of the equal protection of the law",' another chief justice declared that Negroes had no rights which a white man must respect. Thus, in a century, this nation has taken mighty steps along Freedom Road and raised the hopes of mankind, black, yellow, and white… But we must go further and insist that great as is this victory, many and long steps along Freedom Road lie ahead."[4]

This battle was not just a matter of educational equality, it was much deeper and went beyond school buildings into the very souls of the American people. Former South Carolina Governor and Supreme Court Judge, James F. Byrnes, though he disagreed with the court's decision to integrate schools, he challenged the notion that education was the foundation of the problem, and argued that it involved matters of the heart.

The Roosevelt School, where black Americans were educated in Clover, South Carolina during segregation, has a rich history that dates back to the early

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[4] David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina and the fate of Black schools in the South* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994), xiii.

1900's when it was the Clover Colored School and then transitioned to the McKnight School before it became known as the Roosevelt School. Because full integration did not take place in Clover until 1970, the all-black school's history spans over forty-eight years enabling it to become a focal point for the black community there and an integral part of black identity in this small community in a southern state. The purpose of this paper is to look at how the Roosevelt community came to be and what their identity was in order to determine how that firm sense of self and communal pride weathered desegregation. Also, how the community maintained their self-worth and character in the face of change and furthermore influenced and helped to create a new desegregated community from the inside. It seems that while outside national laws and regional white assumptions about the black community certainly had an impact on the formation of the Clover School District in the 1960s, local members of the Roosevelt community - teachers, athletes, and students - were confident in who they were and what they could contribute to the larger community. They refused to let the newly desegregated school district belittle or gloss over the accomplishments of the Roosevelt community and in so doing ensured that black identity and culture would contribute to and help create a new desegregated Clover community.

At the foundation of the research done for this thesis are oral interviews with alumni of the all-black Roosevelt School and some individuals who attended Clover High School after it was integrated as well as those who came to work at Clover high long after integration. Documenting oral histories is a new trend in the field of history, and this is especially true in the African American community, where

memories of the black experience often die with the people who lived through key events and movements in United States History. Dr. Dixon-McKnight, the chair of my committee, has experience in documenting oral histories, and the History Department at Winthrop University is in the process of developing a studio where oral history interviews can be recorded according to the standards of each field of study. Living in York county and working as an administrative assistant in the Clover School District, I had the good fortune of knowing several local people who were in school during desegregation. Interviews with these individuals form the core of this thesis.

Chapter One: **THE WAY OF THE SOUTH**

> *"In the whole history of the Supreme Court of the United States, no single decision has had an immediate impact more profound than this one, or created more controversy over a wider area, or fostered more bitter resentments." ~ James J. Kilpatrick*[5]

Black and white communities across the country, but especially in the south, experienced desegregation in very different ways. Both communities had unique identities before integration occurred, and both had a very different experience when the two communities came together. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the approach that both of these communities took in the nationwide policy of desegregation, and then to explore what their experiences were like as schools integrated. On the one hand, it seems that white communities carried longstanding racial biases with them and resisted desegregation, but they did not have to give up their own cultural identity in the process. On the other hand, prior to desegregation, all-black schools had established identities, rituals, and norms that had to be abandoned as black students moved into this new, foreign integrated world.

While many white Southerners offered little opposition to African American children being educated, they vehemently opposed having students of different races learning in the same facilities. When America's Southern states refused to comply with the 1954 ruling to eliminate segregation in their public schools, it became clear

[5] James Jackson Kilpatrick, "School Integration, Four Years After the South vs. the High Court's 1954 Ruling", https://egrove.olemiss.edu/citizens_clip/108/ .

that it was an issue of race. Byrnes, the former South Carolina Governor (1951-55), captured these concerns in a speech against the ruling and in defense of racial segregation in schools as he declared:

> However, I predict that if this occurs, then with great regret, many states will reluctantly discontinue public schools…Private schools will be preferred to integrated schools. Of one thing I am confident, should the Supreme Court cause the closing of public schools, leaders of the white race in the South will see to it that the innocent Negro children receive an education. They will not be permitted to suffer because of the well-intentioned but misguided efforts of overzealous do-gooders.[6]

The ruling left the power in the hands of the local school boards to implement the desegregation process, which meant that school systems had the leeway to drag their feet, spend mounds of money to upgrade all-black schools in an effort to keep them "separate but equal", implement freedom of choice plans and resort to violence as a means of intimidation to keep African American students from attending what had historically been white schools.

Byrnes' speech gave a window into the minds of white Southerners and the rationale behind many of their actions when it came to desegregation. The response was seemingly one-sided. At this time, the White Citizens Council (WCC), an organization formed in the South to carry out forms of intimidation, was formed. Influential southern white men created the WCC and comprised its membership. They considered themselves too dignified to join the Ku Klux Klan, but had the same mindset and hatred for the black race. This group included prominent businessmen,

[6] Byrnes, "Speech on School Integration Crisis."

grocery store owners, farmers, bankers, doctors, lawyers, mayors, judges, government officials, and even policemen. The variety of community representation increased the possibility and opportunity for retaliation and intimidation against any person, black or white, that supported public school desegregation. The inclusion of members of local law enforcement and local judicial systems among members of the WCC, reveals the influence and power of the organization in the South. Members of the organization vehemently opposed integration and aimed their animosity toward those who supported it through violence and terror.

Given this context, when the superintendent of education in South Carolina's Clarendon County, L. B. McCord, joined the local WCC, it was clear to those who supported desegregation that more had to be done.[7] Even though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would give the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) the power to withhold federal funds from school districts that were still operating on a segregated basis, it wasn't enough. A well-known civil rights activist, lawyer and former editor of the Southern Courier, Michael Lottman, conducted a study to show the necessity of a complete take over the Federal courts needed to implement. In his study he clearly laid out the most prevalent issues of why just having laws, mandates, and guidelines to follow would not be sufficient to effect change in the South. When up against an emotional resentment that was fueled by a generationally and embedded racially-motivated hate, guidelines just amounted to a set of words that would not

[7] Gona, *Dawn of Desegregation*, 168.

change issues that were streaming from deeply rooted ideals and beliefs around issues of race. When those guidelines fell prey to the personal political agendas of those who had joined groups like the WCC and, of course, the KKK, the guidelines were rendered weak, inconsistent, and non-effective. The underlying issue was racial bias, and without local support, all legitimacy would be mocked.

With federal guidelines being ignored and members of the WCC, like McCord, having positions of power locally in South Carolina, it became evident that the federal courts would have to step in and implement changes. In 1970, Michael Lottman wrote how the federal courts had to enforce guidelines and "become the main vehicle for integrating Southern schools." Lottman concluded that only the judiciary would be able to eliminate segregation in the South. It could no longer be left up to the school boards and local governments to develop and initiate a desegregation plan. Federal judges were also in a position to do something. Federal judges were appointed for life and made the final decision about implementing desegregation. They would be less likely to fall prey to political pressure, which is what was happening when local communities and school districts were put in charge of the process. Even though there was no doubt that there were many federal judges who were in favor of segregation, within the judicial process it was much harder to be guided by personal feelings. Having the federal government carry out the desegregation process also gave school boards a way to save face by telling those who had an issue with their process that they were forced. They had no choice but to comply with federal orders. The idea that federal courts should help implement

desegregation did not come out of a vacuum. Fueling Lottman's argument were the freedom of choice plan that many school districts put in place and the idea that that school districts should implement attendance zones that were seemingly aimed to unify neighborhoods rather than segregate based on race. In theory, both seemed like fair and legitimate ideas, but places like Prince George County, Maryland, offer a window into the realities of how federal guidelines and orders would be carried out in practice.[8]

After HEW stepped in and laid out guidelines for the Prince George School District to follow and guide their desegregation process, the district did rezone their lines to look like they were cooperating. On paper, they seemed to be implementing a solid plan for desegregation. However, a closer look suggests that this was not the case. For example, two Maryland schools were clearly segregated. Glenarden Woods Elementary School ended with all-black students while operating with forty-two students below capacity while Dodge Park Elementary was sixty-two students over capacity with only 0.01% of the student body being black. This was a clear sign that locals within the Price George School District did not intend to implement federal desegregation policies. Especially since no effort was being made to relieve the over capacitated "white school" by sending the excess of students to the under capacitated "black school," which had space.[9]

[8] Michael S. Lottman, "School Desegregation – HEW Guidelines and the Courts." Ripon Forum VI, no. 10, October 1970, 13-19. https://www.riponsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/1970-10_Vol-VI_No-10.pdf .

[9] Lottman, "School Desegregation."

Desegregation would impact black communities far differently than white communities in the south. By 1965, the ball had begun to roll in the South, but the effects of integration on the black communities and school systems would not fully be evident until years later. History shows just how devasted black educational leadership and influence was as a result of integration. "Black communities repeatedly had to sacrifice their leadership traditions, school cultures, and educational heritage for the other benefits of desegregation."[10] While, on the surface, school desegregation had a number of positive attributes, for many Southern all-black schools, the consequences of integration would reverberate through communities and in the lives of African American students that held their schools near and dear to their hearts.

The implications of desegregation profoundly affected black communities in South Carolina. As the integration process began to take shape and black students were ushered into the historically all-white schools that were once off-limits to them, two key repercussions emerged. First, black students often suffered mentally, physically, and academically; they performed poorly in this new environment when compared to what they previously had proven they could do. Second, the former all-black schools were often abandoned. A shell of the old school was left, and black students were left to learn to navigate a different school while seeing their former building like a scar on the landscape. No matter how old or new the black school may have been, it was often left to be remembered as one of America's hidden past

[10] Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road*, 7.

histories. Many were torn or burned down as if that could erase a long history of a past that boasted of separatism and hate among the great racial divide. Black students had to leave behind their educational heritages. As school names, mascots, mottos, and school colors became distant memories, black students were now made to take on and incorporate themselves in their new school's traditions and wear their new school's colors and learn a new motto and alma mater. In most cases, they were not allowed to merge nor take with them any facet of what they were leaving behind.

Some black communities resisted this forced abandonment of their old school to join a new and foreign community, while others did not. For example, York County's all-black Jefferson High School students did not cooperate easily. They resisted leaving behind all that they knew and had built to enter into the all-white York High School. In a way, leaving behind all that they knew was confirming the white identity and culture while erasing all the accomplishments that had been made at Jefferson High School. Others, like students from the Roosevelt School, would move quietly and peaceably into the all-white Clover High. It seems that members of the Roosevelt community and those affiliated with the school provided little effort to hold onto their traditions, their school colors, all that they held dear and near to their hearts. Instead of being known as the Roosevelt Tigers, they quietly became Clover Blue Eagles, shedding their purple for blue.[11]

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[11] Amarintha Wright Whitener, in discussion with the author, December 3, 2019.

Either way, the transition to desegregated schools was one-sided, and the black communities lost whereas the white communities maintained their old identities. While the white students were allowed to maintain all of their traditions and what made them Clover, giving up nothing but space, former Roosevelt students left behind hand-me-down ragged and outdated school books. They traded in torn faded athletic uniforms for newer more up-to-date ones. Despite the newer material and uniforms, former Roosevelt students had lost the comfortable familiarity, love, respect, and the peace of mind they once had. They were no longer surrounded by leadership and peers that looked like them and shared the same struggles as they did. Instead, newly integrated African American students walked down foreign halls and encountered vehement opposition to their presence from students, teacher, and administrators alike.[12]

The assumption was that equal education would help bring the communities together. "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, -the balance-wheel of the social machinery."[13] But in reality the black students left behind their heritage and stepped into the unfamiliar, uninviting, and uncomfortable world of the historically all-white school buildings of the Clover School District. Equality and continuity were not their reality. But it was

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[12] Dianna Jackson Currence, in discussion with the author, January 16, 2020.

[13] Mann, Horace. *Annual reports on education*, Vol. 3. Lee and Shepard, 1872, 669.

what had to be done in order to make change happen and pave the way for a more balanced future.

Chapter Two: **BECOMING THE ROOSEVELT SCHOOL**

"I still love it, even though it is gone. I still love it because it was Roosevelt."
~Willie Green Phillips

Most, if not all, all-black schools in the US, especially in the South, started out as one room buildings, cabins, shacks or inside churches. In South Carolina in the early 1900's, there were a few one-room schools in York County, including in Clover. One in particular, the Clover Colored School, would evolve into something that reached beyond education, developing into an iconic center piece for Clover's thriving black community. Eventually, it would come to be known as the Roosevelt School. Understanding the development of all-black schools in South Carolina makes it possible to apprehend how the Roosevelt School and the town of Clover, South Carolina fit into the overall school desegregation process. It also highlights the continued importance of the cultural identity attached to an all-black school in South Carolina. The process of integration began on May 17, 1954 when the United States Supreme Court handed down the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topek* ruling, sparking a long period of transition that would completely and irreversibly change all-black schools across the South and the communities they served. The Roosevelt School and the York County, Clover School District, was no exception. Each action that the students, the community of Roosevelt and the Clover School District took during the process of desegregating schools, deserves their very own space in the narrative that explores the small-town Southern black communities that found a way to adjust and adapt to integration and the changes brought on by that process. The

evolution of the Clover Colored School was impacted by every decision the United States government, the Supreme Court, local officials, and the school district made concerning education and how it should look in America. The all-black schools were an intricate part of the black communities that surrounded them and as the schools changed, the communities changed with them.

Black communities living under Jim Crow wanted a balanced education for their children, but chances for equality were rare, especially when money was a concern. In 1912, Sears & Roebuck Company's CEO, Julius Rosenwald, partnered with Booker T. Washington to develop the Rosenwald fund. One of Washington's goals was to ensure that African Americans had access to quality educational opportunities. He developed a rural school program to provide black children with safe, purpose-built school buildings. These school buildings would have proper lighting, ventilation, heating, and sanitation to ensure a healthy and safe environment for learning. Washington partnered with Rosenwald because he knew African American communities would have difficulty building schools themselves. Rosenwald was a great candidate for two reasons. He had already invested money in the construction of African American YMCAs and he had become a new member on the board of trustees at Washington's Tuskegee Institute.[14]

The Rosenwald fund was responsible for building over 5,000 school buildings in African American communities in fifteen southern states. According to journalist

[14] Hoffschwelle, Mary S., *Preserving Rosenwald Schools*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2003, 2.

Isaac Fisher, between the years of 1912 to 1922, the Rosenwald Fund contributed $61,700 to the building of schools for black children in South Carolina. Seventy-three buildings were erected during those years at a cost of $410,467. Of that sum, black communities raised $104,013 themselves, $105,924 were gifts from whites, and $138,830 was from public funds.[15] Ironically, the need to build schools for black children in the south evolved into a community project that in many ways brought the races together. Rosenwald asserted a belief in mutual progress. "We whites of America must begin to realize that Booker T. Washington was right when he said it was impossible to hold a man in the gutter without staying there with him, because "if you get up, he will get up." We do not want to remain in the gutter. We, therefore, must help the Negro to rise."[16]

The Clover Colored School benefitted from the Rosenwald Fund, both monetarily and in community building. In the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund card file database, it shows that plans for the Clover Colored School building started in 1923-24. The building was designed to accommodate six teachers and the total cost was projected to be $8,400. The database shows that the Rosenwald Fund contributed $1500 towards that cost. Members of the African American community raised $400,

[15] Fisher, Isaac, "Multiplying Dollars for Negro Education," *The Journal of Social Forces* 1, no. 2 (1923): 149-53, Accessed September 15, 2020. doi:10.2307/3004921, 149.

[16] McCormick, J. Scott, "The Julius Rosenwald Fund," *The Journal of Negro Education* 3, no. 4 (1934): 605-26. Accessed June 15, 2020, doi:10.2307/2292184, 605.

and the rest, $6500, came from public funds.[17] Raising $400 in the mid-1920's was a significant feat, especially for blacks in a small South Carolina community. The fact that they were able to raise that much money (which would have been around $5,198 in today's terms) is a testament to their dedication to provide education for their community. The Clover Colored School was not unique. There was a total of twenty Rosenwald schools constructed in York County and four hundred and eighty-one black schools in the state of South Carolina. In addition to school buildings, the fund also helped to build eight teacher homes and eleven shops in the state.[18]

Prior to 1926, the Roosevelt School was the Clover Colored School and it was located on Jackson Terrace beside the Flat Rock Baptist Church in Clover, South Carolina. At that time, there was a noticeable tension between the black and white communities who lived separately from each other. According to one of Roosevelt's former students and longtime champion and herald for the Roosevelt community, Willie Green Phillips, black children had to walk through the white neighborhood to get to the Clover Colored School in the early 1920's. Phillips remembers hearing the story of how the white children would throw rocks at the black children as they walked to school each day. One day the families of the black children decided to hide out and retaliate in order to protect their children. Because of the actions taken by the

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[17] Columbia, South Carolina, "Rosenwald Schools," South Carolina Department of Archives and History, *National Register Files* (1776). https://scdah.sc.gov/historic-preservation/resources/African-american-heritage/Rosenwald-schools , accessed April 12,2020.

[18] Hoffschwelle, Mary S., *Preserving Rosenwald Schools*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2003.

black parents, the town decided it was best to move both the Flat Rock Baptist Church and the school to the center of the black community, just a mile or so down the road. There was tension when the two communities crossed paths, so this way the black and white children would not have to cross paths.[19]

This story, which highlights the process of segregation in action, was the beginning of what would come to be known as the Roosevelt School. Mr. Elliott Caldwell served as principal of the Clover Colored School the year the school was moved; he served as principal for only one year, 1926-27. Mr. H.T. McKnight was hired in 1928 and severed as principal until 1937. In 1936, the name of the Clover Colored School was changed to the McKnight School in honor of principal McKnight. By the time Willie Phillips stared school in 1958, the name of the Clover Colored School had gone through its third and final name change and became the Roosevelt School as a reflection of the community it served.[20]

As the community grew, the school had to grow with it. It was under the administration of the school's eighth and longest running principal, Mr. A. C. Hightower from Gaffney, SC, that the bigger two-story Roosevelt School was constructed. Hightower was principal of Roosevelt from 1952 until his retirement in 1957, and a picture of the newer structure, which is what most members of the current community recognize as the school, is now located in the glass case in the gym lobby

[19] Willie Green Phillips (Roosevelt alumni, Clover, SC) in discussion with the author, September 7, 2020.

[20] The sources provide little information regarding the exact date of the name change but based on those sources it happened sometime between 1943 and 1951, when A. J. Johnson from Catawba, South Carolina was principal.

at Clover High School. The Clover Colored School, built with Rosenwald money, was torn down to make way for the much-needed bigger Roosevelt School (built in 1954/55). There is a house that remains from the period in which the Rosenwald funds were used. This is the little yellow house where Willie Phillips grew up, although it is not clear if Rosenwald Funds were used to build the house.[21]

There is one York County Rosenwald School that was able to stand the test of time and was still in use in more recent years. It is the Carroll School in Rock Hill, York School District Three. It was constructed according to a Three-Teacher Rosenwald design and was built in 1929 for a total cost of $4,520. Blacks in the community raised $1,745, the Rosenwald Fund contributed $700, and $2,075 came from public contributions. There is no reported record of whites contributing. The Carroll School was located in the Zion Hill Church Community in Rock Hill. While the original building burned in 1941, it was rebuilt in 1943 and closed around 1954 after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. The school has been used by the Rock Hill School District since the early 2000's as a resource center for District Three's fifth graders to teach them about the Great Depression from the African American perspective and teach them about African American rural life during that time period.[22]

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[21] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

[22] Columbia, South Carolina. "Rosenwald Schools."

Under A.C. Hightower's leadership, the Roosevelt School began to expand its extracurricular activities by developing both a baseball and football team. There was also a school band, which had been organized in the 1951-52 academic year during Principal A. D. Moore's administration. This was the beginning of something special, as many of the alumni describe it. This school was more than just a place where black children were educated. It represented their community and there was pride in what the students could accomplish. Roosevelt was special to them then and is still special to them today.[23]

The experiences of the aforementioned Mr. Willie Green Phillips provide insight into what life was like for a black man living during the time of school desegregation. Phillips has lived his entire sixty-eight years in Clover, growing up in the Roosevelt community. He attended The Roosevelt School and graduated from Clover High. In addition to personal experiences, Phillips "listen[ed] to older people and listened to the stories that they told about what happened in this town."[24] His attentiveness led to a wealth of knowledge about the community. He is a part of the legacy of segregated education.

Both of his parents are from the Clover area. His mother attended Old St. James School in York and his father attended Highland High School in Gastonia, North Carolina, just across the state line from Clover. Both schools were one-room cabins with the potbelly stove in the center that was customary of almost all Southern

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[23] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

[24] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

all-black school buildings of that time. He remembers his mother talking about how she and her siblings would have to walk, about two to three miles, to school no matter the weather, carrying their lunch in a paper sack that their mother would fixed for them each morning. Phillips said that his father talked about how he rode his bike to his school.[25]

According to Phillips, his experience, was progress compared to his parents. He did not have the burden of riding a bike or walking miles to get to school. He just had to walk a few feet in order to get to the Roosevelt School and could come home for lunch anytime. His school building was also much nicer, bigger and better equipped than those of his parents.[26]

Phillips's second-hand knowledge of segregated education from his parents coupled with his experiences in segregated and then integrated schools offers an up-close and personal perspective of the impact of *Brown v. Board* as it unfolded in communities across the South. He and his older sister lived with their parents in the little yellow house that still sits in the same place on Mobley Street and was once part of the school building when the school first moved to the center of the black community in the mid 1920's. His sister is one year older than he is and had the privilege to graduate from Roosevelt in 1969, right before mandatory integration.[27]

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[25] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

[26] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

[27] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

Phillips has a story of what life was like in the year that schools were integrated. He had to repeat his ninth-grade year, and he recalled how his ninth-grade class moved to the all-white Clover High at that time. He had been held back because of stolen answers to a test. His teacher had given the class a test and then left the room for just a moment. After she left the classroom, some of the male students decided to steal the answers to the test that were left on her desk. When she returned to the classroom some of the other kids told on the boys and included Phillips amongst the names they reported. He protested, but the teacher did not believe him, "I said no ma'am I didn't get that test paper, but who was she going to believe. So, I just said yes ma'am I got it, even though I know I didn't do it and with that she flunked me." That very next year, 1968, the school board passed down the decision to move Roosevelt's ninth grade class over to Clover High in order to increase the number of black students. Willie Phillips, in ninth grade for the second time, found himself surrounded by new teachers and new classmates in an unfamiliar building.[28]

Former Roosevelt students like Phillips wanted more to be done to save and preserve the Roosevelt School, but he also realized that would have taken a great deal of money. Money that the community nor the town had. But, Phillips and the Roosevelt community did manage to keep part of the structure in use for a short while after it was no longer used as a school. When mandatory integration took place in 1970, the school became a junior high until 1990. It was only after a new middle school was built that they closed Roosevelt. The building remained empty until

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[28] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

Phillips and other members of the community organized and requested permission from the school district's superintendent to repair the cafeteria so that it could be used for community events. The school district agreed and after countless hours of cleaning and fixing broken windows, they were able to have community events for the elderly and a program where the community children could come in, be feed and watch movies. Unfortunately, the presence of asbestos became a major problem in the two-story building and would cost too much to safely remove. The structure was torn down in 1995.[29]

The original school represented such an important part of the black community in Clover that after the demolition of the school, the community came together and developed the Roosevelt Park and the non-profit Roosevelt Community Watch. The Roosevelt Community Watch recently sponsored its 26th annual back-to-school bash where each year they give out free school supplies for the children in the community. They also host other community projects like, taking the elderly out on outings and to doctor's appointments and also provide them with counseling. They also provide a scholarship each year for high school seniors attending Clover High.[30]

Another organization that holds a place at the park is the Stellie J. Jackson Enrichment Center, named for Stellie J. Jackson, who was the first black school board member, elected to the Clover School District Board of Trustees in the 1980's. He

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[29] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

[30] Phillips, September 7, 2020.

served on the board for over sixteen years and now serves on the board at the Enrichment Center. The Stellie J. Jackson Enrichment Center steamed from the non-profit Roosevelt Watch. The center is a faith-based initiative started by a recent school board member and Roosevelt alumni, Mrs. Elizabeth “Liz” Johnson and is focused on academic assistance. The Center holds an after-school program for the community’s children. From the beginning they were able to work with the local YMCA to send volunteers and with the school district to identify the students that could benefit from extra help. Today, children are welcomed there after school to get tutoring, receive help with homework and/or participate in cultural, social and faith-based activities.[31]

Mrs. Johnson has also started a music program there that gives Christmas performances annually. She was also excited that she had the opportunity to start a community choir in 2019. They had performed four times, twice in Rock Hill and twice in Clover after being invited by organizations, but unfortunately COVID-19 hit and along with most things, these performances came to a halt. But the community’s efforts from the beginning have shown that they have every intention to stay relevant and involved.[32]

The Roosevelt community and the Clover School District has worked extremely hard over the last few years to sure that the Roosevelt School is not

[31] Elizabeth “Liz” Stowe Johnson, in discussion with the author, August 20, 2020.

[32] Johnson, August 20, 2020.

forgotten and that the influence and impact the school and community had on the town is continually acknowledged and remembered. The Enrichment Center plays a huge role in making sure that connection is kept strong. Half a century after public school desegregation, the current principal (Mr. Ruth) at Clover High has taken great strides in preserving some of the memorabilia and archives from the school. There is a massive case in the lobby of the Clover High School gym that is housing many of the memorabilia that was in storage from the Roosevelt School. The showcase is seen by hundreds of students, parents, and community attendees coming to all the events the school hosts in the gym throughout each year. Mr. Ruth and the Roosevelt community, including many Roosevelt alumni, continue to make strides to ensure the students and the community that the pre-integration black community and the contributions they made continues to make Clover what it is today. The Roosevelt School no longer stands, but forever remains in the hearts and minds of those who walked its halls, like Willie Green Phillips and Liz Johnson, and will always be remembered by the community that holds its name.[33]

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[33] Rod Ruth (principal, Clover High School), in discussion with the author, September 23, 2020.

Chapter Three: **ROOSEVELT: THE QUINTESSENTIAL**

More Than Just a Rundown All-Black School

The unequal treatment African American students experienced in America's schools pre and post *Brown v. Board of Education* highlights the complexities of the black experience in regards to education. When the notion of school integration began to circulate across the South, an intriguing discourse emerged. On the one hand, white citizens feared and vehemently resisted the idea of having interracial educational environments. On the other, many criticized all-black schools for being inadequate and ill-equipped while asserting a need for black students to integrate into all-white schools so that they could achieve a "better" education. While it is a fact that most, if not all, all-black schools were in desperate need of repair, especially before many states in the South began the process of upholding the "equal" part of *separate but equal*, their tattered buildings were always equipped with well-trained administrators and teachers that provided so much more than just an education. Most all-black schools, especially in the rural South, subsisted with inadequate facilities, hand-me-down books, few, if any, supplies, old classroom materials and equipment that was out dated, over used, and sometimes didn't work at all.

The all-black Roosevelt School in Clover was no different in that regard. Twenty-five percent of the classrooms were overloaded and teachers were forced to educate with minimal resources, but Roosevelt students always had a solid support

system and got a great education in spite of all the limitations.[34] Generally, black students would soon find themselves missing out on that particular type of student-centered education that the all-black schools provided pre-integration. The insights and recollections of former Roosevelt School students adds to the broader narrative of school integration in the post-*Brown* era while offering a window into the history of one of South Carolina's most important educational institutions.

It is important to explore the rich history and critical influence of Sothern all-black schools that existed prior to *Brown v. Board*. Vanessa Siddle Walker, whose research reveals a great deal of similarity between rural Caswell County, North Carolina and the small rural town of Clover in York County, South Carolina, insists that "to only remember or bring forth the poor resources of the all-Black schools presents a historically incomplete picture."[35] She points out an early account by Thomas Sowell to help the reader understand why, with everything against them, all-black schools still managed to produce some of the finest students that lead in industry, education, medicine, politics and the list goes on, not only in America but throughout the world. According to Sowell, the atmosphere of the all-black school, the support, encouragement and rigid standards, all enhanced the student's self-worth and increased their aspirations to achieve. Sowell examined six black schools and recounted how the student's remembered their teachers and principals as individuals "who would not let them go wrong", and described their teachers as "well-trained,

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[34] School Board minutes, Clover School District, (January 17, 1966).

[35] Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their highest potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3.

dedicated and demanding and who took a personal interest in them."[36] Every black student who experienced the transition from all-black schools, regardless of whether their integration was mandated or a choice, has an individual story to tell. For this thesis, a number of individuals associated with the Roosevelt community were interviewed in an effort to understand what the integration process was like from the perspective of those who experienced it. Walker and Sowell identified a number of factors that helped frame the integration experience for black Americans, and three individuals who were interviewed for this thesis, namely Dianna Jackson Currence, Elizabeth Stowe Johnson and Jackie Tate, would express their own understanding as they recalled their former teachers and administrators and their time at the Roosevelt School. Expanding on what Mr. Willie Green Phillips said about personally living through integration, this chapter will look at the experiences of these three alumni of the Roosevelt School in order to explore what life was like for students, both at Roosevelt and in the south in general.

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[36] Walker, *Their highest potential, 3;* Thomas Sowell is an Economist and Social Theorist. The ninety-year-old Sowell is a retired U.C.L.A Economic Professor, writer and is currently a Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution.

Mrs. Dianna Jackson Currence

Dianna Jackson Currence was one of Clover's first black students to choose to leave the all-black Roosevelt School and integrate into the all-white Clover High School, which at that time was seventh through twelfth grade. Currence, whose maiden name was Jackson, did this at the beginning of her eighth-grade year in 1965. She was born and raised in Clover, just like both of her parents and her husband. She was part of the first graduating class of Clover High School, after mandatory integration, finishing in 1971 with recognition for being a member of the National Honor Society, served as Chief Marshal and was voted "most intellectual" in her class.[37]

Currence is the oldest of three children, all of whom chose to integrate into Clover's all-white schools. Her younger brother, James, who is two years younger than her and younger sister, Sherry, who is one year younger, chose not to integrate with her in 1965 and waited until the next year. Currence and her siblings were not the only members of their family to make bold moves and leave their mark on Clover's history. Their father, the aforementioned, Stellie J. Jackson became the first African America to be elected to the Clover School District's Board of Trustees in the 1980's and served for four terms, sixteen years. At the time his children were in school, Mr. Jackson was a postal worker in Charlotte, NC. All three of the Jackson children attended college. Education was always top priority in the Jackson home. Dianna attended Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina, her sister

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[37] Currence, January 16, 2020.

attended South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, South Carolina and her brother attended Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina.[38]

In a conversation in early 2020, Currence made sure to point out that she carefully chose to attend Clover at such an early date. While she felt that her education at Roosevelt offered a lot, she felt that at Clover she would have the opportunity to advance her education beyond the limitations she felt would present themselves by being in an all-black school. That said, she did *not* feel that Clover necessarily provide a "better" education. Even as a child, Currence understood that that students at Roosevelt were getting second hand educational materials. She knew that Roosevelt did not have everything that the white schools in the district had. Currence was clear that she had been well educated at Roosevelt, but also believed that she would continue to be well educated once she integrated into Clover.[39]

While the availability of materials and quality of education were important factors, Currence was also aware that she would be leaving a comfortable academic environment that offered support and acceptance. She would be giving up a great deal when she left Roosevelt. In fact, Currence wrestled with the fact that moving to Clover schools meant that she would leave behind peers, teachers and staff that were more like family and understood that she would be removing herself from a more wholistic educational experience at Roosevelt. In other words, she stepped outside of her community, outside of her comfort zone, to bravely face an unwelcoming new

[38] Currence, January 16, 2020.

[39] Currence, January 16, 2020.

world. According to her, she made the decision to integrate together with her family and realized that, "it was hard to be in a place where you know you're not wanted, but you want to be there because it is your right and I should have this opportunity."[40]

The South had been truly segregated up until this time, and Currence was left to establish relationships with people she knew next to nothing about. When Currence chose to take advantage of the recently approved Freedom of Choice plan laid out by the Clover School District Superintendent, Mr. T. G. Kinard, she was not fully aware of just how much of a life changing decision it would become. She embarked on a journey in an atmosphere that was completely unlike what she experienced at Roosevelt. She stepped into unfamiliar territory, as she had little interaction with Clover's white citizens prior to matriculating at the school. The most interaction she remembered having outside of her community would be when the family dropped off and picked up her mother from work. At the time, her mother did domestic work for a white family in the community. She remembers the extent of her interaction with white children being those moments when she would see them stopping by after school to visit her mother's employer's disabled son. Beyond that, Currence did not have any interaction with other white children until she entered Clover High School. Prior to integration, everything that she needed, her community and her school provided.[41]

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[40] Currence, January 16, 2020.

[41] Currence, January 16, 2020.

At that time, Currence joined thousands of black students across the American South who began the journey of leaving behind the similar and familiar faces within the schools that nurtured them, and the safety of the communities that played such an intricate part in their maturation. As black students transitioned into the former all-white schools, fear, intimidation, and anxiety set in.

One area of adjustment was that black students had to learn how to work in a foreign environment using different equipment. Currence had a personal experience with this, as she had not realized that she needed glasses until she was at Clover. It was the first time she had seen a projector and her teacher called on her to read a passage she had placed on it. Currence realized that she was struggling, not because she did not know the words, she had trouble seeing them. In another instance, her teacher brought out a tape recorder for a class project. As this was another piece of equipment her classes at Roosevelt did not have, it marked, the first time she ever heard her own voice. The use of the new equipment turned out to be one of those life changing events for her because she heard how she mispronounced words for the first time and she cringed at the sound of her own voice. From that moment on, she became determined to work on her diction and properly pronounce words.[42]

Despite the joy she found in these new experiences, Currence was quickly reminded that some old biases remained during integration and she had a number of experiences that underscored that some of her teachers were not comfortable with black students succeeding in this newly mixed environment. One year, Currence was

[42] Currence, January 16, 2020.

the winner of the Clover High School spelling bee, which meant she would go on to participate in the region finals. However, her teacher kept giving her the run-a-around about the date. Finally, after the date for the region finals had passed, Currence was told that she had missed the event. There was another incident that she gained knowledge of many years after she graduated. She had the opportunity to apply for a scholarship, one that she did not expect to win. It came as no surprise when she did not. However, she later found out that the chance for her to win was completely thwarted by her teacher. Apparently, the teacher never turned in the essay that Currence wrote to be considered for the scholarship. Years later, after the new school was built and they were cleaning out the old school, a school employee actually found the essay. The employee gave the essay to Currence's father to return it to her.[43]

Currence's recollections of her first year of integration revel the loneliness that black students experienced when entering these spaces where they were often unwanted and outnumbered. The Freedom of Choice process was slow and most African American families did not choose to integrate the small town all-white schools, and as a result, Currence and the few others that integrated throughout all the grade levels in 1965, lost a since of belonging and left behind valuable friendships, regardless of grade level. Currence remembered how going into the cafeteria for lunch became too much for her to bear once she entered the ninth grade and moved to be with the higher-grade levels at Clover High. In the lower grades, students ate lunch as a class, but once she moved up to ninth grade, lunch was at a certain time, and

[43] Currence, January 16, 2020.

included all ninth through twelfth grade students. In this new environment, the loneliness and harassment were much more intense. More white children also participated in the harassment. She stated that "going into the cafeteria was just setting yourself up for a lot of negativity." So, along with the few other black students, she would spend her lunches in the halls eating a package of crackers. Currence's experience was reminiscent of stories told by other African American students who wrestled with the loneliness and isolation that often operated at the core of their integration experience. [44]

Of course, black students faced trauma outside of the cafeteria as well. Currence recalled many incidents when students would call her names or spit chewed up paper at her. Her parents attempted to prepare her for all of this before she entered the all-white school. For example, her father told her that she could not fight every battle. Currence remembered she thought of his words as spit wads were thrown at her. She understood that there was no use reporting it. In those early years of integration, teachers at Clover actually encouraged this type of behavior and that was one battle she did not feel was worth fighting.[45]

Although these experiences were typical for all the children in this early integrated environment, Currence does not recall thinking of what other black students were going through. Her central focus was her path and figuring out what she had gotten herself into. Her sentiments are reminiscent of words from Zora Neal

[44] Currence, January 16, 2020.

[45] Currence, January 16, 2020.

Hurston, “No, I do not weep at the world – I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.”[46] Despite the difficulties, Currence asserted that she has no regrets and would do it all over again, without hesitation. Even though she felt she lost out on some close friendships that she would have made if she had stayed at Roosevelt, she does not regret making that decision to move forward to do what she and her family thought was best for her.[47]

Her experience at Clover also helped Currence realize that she had something even greater at Roosevelt. The teachers made the difference and a lasting impact. They, the teachers, did all they could with what they had and they did it well. They used the materials and knowledge they had and they gave their students a great education, despite only having second-hand, outdated textbooks. Currence believes that her foundation at Roosevelt helped her learn to except people for who they are and as she experienced the integration process, it also helped her to understand that all people were not the same. Even though she chose not to continue and graduate from Roosevelt, the school and the community played and continues to play a huge role in who she is today.[48]

[46] Zora Neale Hurston, *How It Feels To Be Colored Me*, 1009.

[47] Currence, January 16, 2020.

[48] Currence, January 16, 2020.

Chapter Four: **AFRICAN AMERICAN TEACHERS AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE**

Among so many challenges black students faced as they integrated into the all-white schools, a major issue was the loss of having black administrators and teachers. Dianna Jackson Currence could not recall having one black teacher during her time at Clover High. This meant that she no longer had teachers that she could relate to, who personally understood the challenges she faced, and who would offer not only educational support, but also emotional and mental stability at a time when she would need it the most. Often, Currence found she had teachers who were the complete opposite. She recalled a teacher at Clover High who walked down the halls doing everything in her power to avoid touching black students. She has memories of being ignored as she raised her hand in the class room or being dismissed when she got a chance to speak and articulate a correct answer. At Roosevelt, if Currence reported an issue, it would be handled; but at Clover, this was likely not the case.[49] The purpose of this chapter is to look at the role of teachers, both at all-black schools and within newly integrated schools after desegregation, and then to consider how this would affect the black students, not to mention the teachers themselves, at those schools.

While Dianna Currence had to deal with the reality of teachers not wanting to touch her and not wanting her to succeed, the situation that teachers faced during

[49] Currence, January 16, 2020.

integration was more complex than this one example suggests. While Currence did not recall having a black teacher, Clover did send some African American educators to teach at integrated schools. One such black educator named Amarintha Wright Whitener, who was interviewed for this thesis, is one example. Further, some white teachers taught at all-black schools including the Roosevelt School starting in 1965. Two graduates of the Roosevelt School who can attest to this, were also interviewed for this thesis. Elizabeth "Liz" Stowe Johnson graduated from Roosevelt in 1964. Jackie Tate graduated from Roosevelt in 1970, the school's last graduating class. Unlike Currence, Johnson and Tate finished their education at an all-black school. But there was a bit of a twist. That twist being, having white teachers in their all-black school. While Johnson and Tate still had black teachers, their experience was in fact the opposite when it came to dealing with teachers of a different race. Indeed, Tate was encouraged by the white teachers that came to Roosevelt. The white teachers that he encountered wanted to make a difference at Roosevelt.[50]

Currence had braved a new, integrated environment, but Tate and Johnson were able to stay within a nurturing community and so did not have to experience the same woes. Johnson would be elected Miss. Roosevelt High and Tate would know the joy of being one of the captains on the last 1A all-black state championship team. Although their stories are different, all three were able to share an overwhelming love and passion for their Roosevelt School.

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[50] Jackie Tate, in discussion with the author, August 18, 2020.

African American Teachers

Teaching in an all-black school involved more than just teaching the three R's, history and science. Black teachers in all-black segregated schools across the South served as motivator, counselor, surrogate parent figure, disciplinarian, academic advocate, moral anchor, and a role model and support system for all things social, cultural, and emotional. Their job went above and beyond academics. As Dr. John Hope put it, "We as teacher must realize that we have the power."[51] And within the black communities that held these teachers in high regard, they truly did have the power. Their job was multi-layered and profound. They had to inspire and motivate generations of black students who had been beaten down and discouraged at every turn while building up and nourish a pride in who they were that the world had repeatedly tried to deny them. Because teachers played such an integral part in the lives of black students, they were on the frontlines fighting for adequate and equal education for generations. But as the process of desegregation began to unfold, the reality set in that the role of black teachers would begin to change and the black educator's position would shift.

Black teachers, especially in the South, were a critical part of the entire civil rights struggle. They were essential in gaining access to resources exclusively limited to white schools and securing equal funding for segregated black schools. Black teachers dealt with issues of improving the working conditions of teachers in

[51] Dr. John Hope – Civil Rights leader and president of Morehouse College – at the All black Alabama State Teachers Association on April 12, 1930.

segregated schools, created culturally relevant curriculum, made demands for higher salaries and protected the due process of embattled teachers. Black educators inextricably linked their professional labor with the need to protect and then expand upon the right to an education for everyone, but especially black communities who had been ignored or even kept purposefully behind for so long. The 1871 testimony of Henry B. Whitfield, a white Lowndes County school board member in Mississippi, highlights the fact that white and black schools along with their teachers were treated differently. These two groups were intentionally kept unequal. "We got teachers of colored schools for one-half or even one-third of what we paid teachers of white school…." Besides, the houses used for the colored schools were very inexpensive…We did not buy a dollar's worth of furniture for the colored school in our county."[52] In other words, black teachers were trailblazers who went above and beyond to make education for black youth top of the line in spite of so many limitations. Desegregation was a process that mortally wounded the south's system of white supremacy and simultaneously helped to spark the Civil Rights Movement where teachers were front and center. Teachers, like, Clover's Amarintha Wright Whitener, who was one among the thousands of southern black teachers that had inspired and motivated generations of black children within the framework of an all-black school. They had the enormous task of instilling values and knowledge that promoted racial pride while at the same time created a desire for equality even if that

[52] Adam Fairclough, *A class of their own: Black teachers in the segregated South* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009), 128.

meant desegregation. Teachers like Whitener helped to make that transition into the all-white schools a little smoother and relieve some anxiety in the minds of the students, black and white.

Whitener grew up in Clover and attended the Roosevelt School and graduated from there in 1955. She went on to continue her education at South Carolina State University and finished at Benedict College. She received her Master's in Education from South Carolina State. She went on to teach in two all-black schools. The first, in Fairfield County at Garden Elementary, and then she taught at Florence Chapel in Spartanburg County before coming back home to teach at Roosevelt. Around the same time that she got the job at Florence Chapel, she got married to a graduate of Allen University who worked for the Post Office. But once they moved back to Clover in the late 1970s, her husband attended Winthrop University and earned his teaching degree. He taught at Clover Middle until he retired. The Whiteners had one son, Michael, and one daughter, Millicent. Michael is the oldest and started school at Roosevelt and attended there until mandatory integration. Their daughter started school at the integrated Kinard Elementary where Amarintha Wright Whitener would eventually retire. Millicent also taught in the Clover school system and is now the Director over Elementary Education.[53]

When the Clover School Board voted to approve the Freedom of Choice plan recommended by the superintendent in Clover in 1965, Whitener was the only black

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[53] Whitener, December 3, 2019.

certified classroom teacher who was asked to teach at the all-white Kinard Elementary school. In 1965, Clover had three elementary schools, namely Kinard, Bethany, and Bethel and one middle school, one high school, and one all-black school, which was Roosevelt. Roosevelt housed grades one through twelve. Whitener was asked to teach fourth grade at Kinard Elementary. During that time, elementary school teachers were all female, even at Roosevelt. The only black males were at the high school level and most were coaches.[54]

Whitener was regarded as a teacher that took her job as a teacher seriously, which explained the request for her to consider moving to the all-white Kinard Elementary. The small town of Clover was made up of about twenty percent black and eight percent white, much like it is today. According to Whitener, about ninety-nine percent of the white teachers and administrators received her well. However, she faced resistance from white parents for being a black teacher in a classroom full of white students, as they did not like having a black teacher in-charge of their children and being in total control of her own classroom. While Whitener understood the prevalent mindset of the Jim Crow South, she stood her ground and let the children know that this was her classroom and she made the rules there.[55]

Whitener felt that her history and that of African Americans gave her the power she needed to teach in this new environment. She understood that she, along with all black Americans, possessed an inner strength that was demonstrated during

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[54] Whitener, December 3, 2020.

[55] Whitener, December 3, 2019.

slavery. When the slaves were free, they came out to nothing, and built everything from there. In Whitener's mind, this was tied to the idea that their freedom was more than something that could be handed to them. With that realization, Whitener felt that she and the black community in general could and would fight though the white racism that tried and continues to try to undermine black identity and freedom. But it is impossible to steal nor dampen black rights and equality as those qualities are rooted within.[56]

Growing up in a black school during segregation had provided Whitener with a concept of black solidarity and underscored the importance of black leadership that was a part of the tradition in her community at that time. As such, she commanded respect and control in her classroom. The impact of being taught by a black teacher and then herself having taken on the role of the black teacher in a segregated school gave her the voice she needed to carry her through integration.

There was a great deal of concern among black teachers that they and the black community in general would lose their voice during the desegregation process. What would happen to the black community if they were forced to give up their schools, which were tied to their identity, only to accept the cultural identity of the white schools? Wouldn't this be another erasure of identity? In a look at how *Brown v. Board* effected black teachers, students and communities, scholars Richard Milner and Tyrone Howard spoke with three individuals that have studied the case and the implications the case has left behind. One of the interviewees, after being in

[56] Whitener, December 3, 2020.

education for more than twenty years reflected on the loss of the "voice" of the Black teacher. According to her, "It's not just loss of presence. I think there's a lot of loss in voice…. Black teachers really lost voice in desegregation because nobody assumed that they were capable of really being good teachers."[57]

Black teachers not only had to look forward to an uncertain future, but also had to confront the idea that children in their communities would lose their mentors - the very people who taught them. They were losing someone who knew and understood them because they had come from the same place and community. The students weren't just losing a teacher, they were losing a black teacher.

Whitener's move to the all-white Kinard Grammar School, signified much more than just complying with the 1965 ruling to integrate schools. Her presence and her ability to stand her ground, meant that the black student's in her classroom weren't alone. At the very least, during their fourth-grade year, they had that advocate, that role model, that motivator, and that counselor that could relate to them and continue to support racial pride. And for Whitener's white students, they saw a strong black woman, unafraid, unashamed, and more than capable of giving them a great well-rounded education. The very fact that a black woman was in charge, which her integrated fourth-grade classrooms would come to see as the assumed norm, reshaped the view of what they had been taught about the black race.

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[57] H. Richard Milner, and Tyrone C. Howard, "Black Teachers, Black Students, Black Communities, and Brown: Perspectives and Insights from Experts," *The Journal of Negro Education* 73, no. 3 (2004): 285-97, 290.

Elizabeth "Liz" Stowe Johnson

Elizabeth "Liz" Stowe Johnson, who grew up in Clover on her father's eighty-eight-acre farm in the Bethany area and still lives in that area today, went to the Roosevelt School, and her experience offers insight into what life was for students who finished their education at an all-black school. As the youngest of six, she remembers being spoiled by her parents but also feeling very protected. That protection kept her from knowing the white neighbors that surrounded their farm, until she became an adult. She certainly understood why her father felt the need to protect his children but she is thankful that she took the initiative to get to know some of her white neighbors once she grew up. One of those neighbors even became her best friend. She has learned that, "we can't look at the white race and say everybody was prejudice, you find out that there were some good-hearted ones, but they just went along with the flow knowing it was wrong."[58] This was just one of the dilemmas of the time; starting a dialogue with someone different from you. Unfortunately, that dilemma is still an issue today.

Johnson remembers moving into the new Roosevelt school building, which was completed in 1955, when she was in fourth grade. By the time she graduated in 1964, it was one of the biggest graduating classes in the school's history with forty-six graduates. In her interview, she could not think of one bad thing to say about Roosevelt or the teachers that taught there. "Our teachers were super, they were

[58] Johnson, August 20, 2020.

outstanding and they went above and beyond the call of duty."[59] The students were well prepared educationally and also prepared to be upstanding citizens because they were taught character, responsibility, morals and respect for themselves and others.

Teachers at the Roosevelt School were "exceptional" and qualified, according to Johnson. She told discussed her favorite teacher; an English teacher named Mr. Davis. By the time Johnson was ready to go off to college. Instead of taking the English classes her freshman and sophomore years, she tutored the students in those classes. While tutoring, she found that what they were learning would have just been a review for her because she had already learned it in Mr. Davis' class at Roosevelt High.[60]

Johnson attended Friendship Junior College in Rock Hill after graduating from Roosevelt. She was a chorus major and once she got her degree she went to teach school in Rock Hill, SC. Johnson entered the teaching field during the first year of integration. She remembers feeling so awkward and out of place. She said that teachers themselves seemed so divided. There were black teachers coming in to the schools where the white teachers were already established. The fact that she was a first-year teacher made it even worst. Exacerbating the situation, the school where she worked discovered she did not have all the credentials she needed to teach. So, Johnson entered Winthrop College, Rock Hill, SC, to get the certification she needed. Once she completed Winthrop she went back to York County to teach chorus to

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[59] Johnson, August 20, 2020.

[60] Johnson, August 20, 2020.

elementary and middle schoolers for the next thirty years in York, School District One.[61]

Johnson has always been interested in the advancement of children, which is part of the reason she decided to join the Clover School District Board of Trustees. She wanted to make sure that the children in Clover had every opportunity to succeed. Johnson was elected and has served on the Board for the past nine years. As mentioned, in this capacity she also started the Stellie J. Jackson Enrichment Center in the Roosevelt community.[62]

Johnson's passion to help her community is quite personal for her. In fact, it started with a dream she had three nights in row in which she felt that it was the Lord telling her that she needed to get involved in the community. At that time, she joined the Roosevelt Community Watch, which had been started by Willie Green Phillips. As stated, she also became a member of the Board of Trustees for the Clover School District and started the Enrichment Center. Johnson is very pleased with what the center has been able to accomplish and that it plays a part in making Clover one of the top school districts in the state.

Johnson felt that integration had some positive effects on the black community. She said it was a relief. "It felt like a relief to know that you are no longer pushed away because of the color of your skin." She said that the black students in the all-black schools knew that they were deprived of certain things. When

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[61] Johnson, August 20, 2020.

[62] Johnson, August 20, 2020.

making comparisons between their school and the all-white Clover, black students always felt as if they were missing something and it wasn't right.[63]

Johnson was clear that integration was not all positive for the black community. For example, she felt that integration weakened it. With sadness in her voice she talked about how the students and faculty of Roosevelt was a family. "Roosevelt was very much like a family…I think that was one thing that was weaken once we integrated because it broke up that family life that we had at the school."[64]

Johnson's feelings are shared by others interviewed for this thesis, but, although they lost a since of family, many who had the experience of going through desegregated schools maintained a different perspective. In an article written in the *Equity & Excellence in Education*, which is the official Journal from the College of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, three scholars, Jennifer Holme, Amy Wells and Anita Revilla, interviewed two hundred and forty-two graduates from desegregated schools. They found that among almost of all of the students interviewed that the experience in the desegregated high schools, "left them more prepared for life in a racially diverse society… their high school experiences left then with a deeper understanding of people of other backgrounds and an increased sense of comfort in interracial settings."[65] In this line of thinking, while

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[63] Johnson, August 20,2020.

[64] Johnson, August 20,2020.

[65] Jennifer Jellison Holm, Amy Stuart Wells, and Anita Tijerina Revilla, "Learning Through Experience: What Graduates Gained by Attending Desegregated High School," *Equity and Excellence in Education,* Volume 38, Issue 1 (2002): 1.

attending an all-black school may have been more like family, it also mirrored how Thurgood Marshall felt prior to the *Brown v. Broad* court decision. Marshall said that, "segregation was as damaging as inequality – perhaps even more so. It shunted black students from the mainstream, isolating them and depriving them from association or competition with whites. A people set apart, blacks in the South could not be sure how bright, how competent, how worthy they might be."[66]

Mr. Jackie Tate

Anther alumnus of Roosevelt, Jackie Tate would echo Johnson's feelings about the community and the school. He said Roosevelt was like a "big happy family." Tate lived with his adopted mother, Mrs. Daisy White, and adopted father, right down the street from the school on Mobley Street. According to Tate, school and the community were one. The school was in the center; family, friends and all the black owned businesses surrounded the school. It was like an anchor for the whole community, and it was the center of communal identity at that time. He remembers how the community just loved one another. Many of the teachers that taught at Roosevelt lived in other towns, so they would stay with the people in the community during the week. Everyone truly was like family. [67]

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[66] James T. Petterson and William W. Freehling, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), xvii.

[67] Tate, August 18, 2020.

Tate was on the basketball team, and he felt that people at Roosevelt regularly supported one another. He remembers how the cafeteria ladies would give the athletes, like him, extra food and how students would go and lend a helping hand to the ladies when they needed it. Tate said, “our school….it was the number one place in the community…it was the focal point of the community.” There were thirty-seven seniors in Tate’s graduating class and he was senior class president, a member of the Glee Club, the Boy Scouts and Co-Captain of the basketball team. He has found memories of the senior class trip to Daytona Beach, a trip that was started by their principal Mr. McDonald, who came in after Mr. Hightower retired in 1967. Tate said that going to school was exciting and going to Roosevelt couldn’t have been a better experience for him, “I can’t think of one bad thing to say about my old school.”[68]

Of course, Tate realized that Roosevelt didn’t have the best of things and up until his junior year, his team, the Roosevelt Tigers, had to wear hand-me-down uniforms from the all-white Clover High Blue Eagles. None of that diminished the love he had for his school. “We had the best of times in the worst of times! We didn’t go around every day thinking about what we didn’t have, we were just using what we had.”[69] His statement is a reflection of that time period. Even as Southern state governments poured funds into all-black schools in an attempt to make them equal to all-white schools, most of their efforts still fell far behind the efficiencies of the all-white schools.

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[68] Tate, August 18, 2020.

[69] Tate, August 18, 2020.

Tate's experience underscores the pride that Roosevelt students had for their school and their community. This was a unique identity, and Tate and his friends were aware that they might lose that sense of self through integration. Tate recalls that at the end of his junior year he and a few of his teammates were asked by the Clover basketball coach to go ahead and integrate for their senior year. They were to join the basketball team at Clover. But they refused because they knew that they would not get much playing time. Tate told the coach, "if I ain't playing, I ain't staying." He felt sorry for the junior class behind him, because they didn't have a choice. [70] They had to pack up and go to Clover High, and, as he put it, leave behind eleven years of being a Roosevelt Tiger to spend their senior year in unfamiliar territory.

Tate, who now works at Clover High School, loves the fact that he can talk with the students everyday about Roosevelt and how it was. He has the opportunity to walk by the glass case in the gym, which contains news article with his and his co-captains' picture on the front, the massive 1A State Championship trophy, and a picture of the school along with a few artifacts from that time. As he sat back in his chair at the end of the interview, he smiled with a glitter in his eyes, and reminisced about his old Alma Mater. He mentioned the supportive teachers that cared about student's grades but also cared about the student's themselves. He spoke of traveling on old busses to away games, and he thought about his classmates who chose to integrate early under the Freedom of Choice Plan. He said, "you know, Freedom of

[70] Tate, August 18, 2020.

Choice was good, because Clover High got some crown jewels from Roosevelt."[71] There is always two ways to look at every situation and Tate, now, can see both sides as he walks the halls of Clover High School each day.

[71] Tate, August 18, 2020.

Chapter Five: **UNITY = COMMUNITY**

"The past is of value only as it aids in understanding the present; and an understanding of the facts of the problem – a magnanimous understanding by both races - - is the first step toward its solution." ~ Chicago Commission on Race Relations, The Negro in Chicago A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot, 1922

A Challenging Year, All-around!

"I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes." Job 3:26

This year, 2020, has put leadership to an ultimate test and presented the word with unfamiliar fears, leaving us all wonderstruck. In this paper, which has looked at the experiences of the black community in Clover, South Carolina, as the country was integrated, it might be telling to look at the experiences of the black community today as it weathers the crises that plagued the world over the past year. How much of the old Roosevelt community identity remains, and how do black leaders today in the Clover School District respond to trying times? Do the problems of past decades still linger? For the purpose of this thesis, three dynamic leaders in the Clover School District were interviewed to see how 2020 has impacted them, how they have combatted the challenges that 2020 has presented them as members of the Clover School District and how they intend to move forward. Rod Ruth, principal of Clover High, Brian Lane, head football coach of Clover High, and Josh Marr, senior, athlete, and senior class president at Clover High afforded me the opportunity to see Clover in 2020 through their eyes. Not only did they shed light on how they and the district has maneuvered the Covid-19 pandemic but they also shared newly formed personal

realizations, age-old frustrations, and their ingenuity in creating an atmosphere of unity, community, and racial harmony.

The twentieth year of the twenty-first century is a leap year consisting of three-hundred and sixty-six days, one day more than the norm! That is only fitting for a year that has turned out to be anything but normal. The year 2020 might even be compared to the life of Job in the Old Testament. So much in this one year has happened that it is a little hard to keep track of. From natural disasters reaching from both sides of the earth, including one of the worst bush fires Australia has ever seen which that started in 2019 and continued into the new year, to the west coast wildfires, and then onto an early record-breaking hurricane season. Not to mention the almost seemingly endless count of celebrity deaths including the tragic deaths of legendary former L.A. Lakers basketball standout Kobe Bryant at the age of forty-one, his thirteen-year-old daughter and seven others in a helicopter crash in January to start the year off. There was the surprise death of Black Panther star Chadwick Boseman at the age of forty-three and the deaths of two towering leaders who will forever be remembered in American history and also throughout the world, namely, John Robert Lewis and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Highlighting the issues of race that continue to make headlines, this year also brought a shock to England's Royal Family as Prince Harry and new wife, Megan, who is of African American descent, announced that they were stepping down from their duties as royals and moving to the United States.

One of the biggest events of 2020 was the worldwide virus that killed thousands and literally brought the world to a halt. In early March, the Covid-19 virus forced nearly all school building to close across the United States. States themselves had to enforce shut down and stay-at-home mandates. Many countries closed their boarders, and international travel significantly slowed. The pandemic also highlighted continued problems with race in America. There has been a countless number of memes about this year, but one, in particular really sums it up; *"The year 2020 has been the 1918 Spanish Flu, the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s all rolled into one." ~ Internet meme, June 2020.*[72] That meme gives an overall glimpse of what the world is currently dealing with and, looking at the Clover School District in this context, it is easy to understand how they, as a school district with a history of racial tensions, given their history, might respond. Just as was the case in the 1970s, though there may be tension, the community that surrounds the Clover School District has come together in the face of issues of race during this global Covid-19 pandemic.

[72] Terri Guillemets, "The Quote Garden" last modified 3 April 2021, www.quotegarden.com/year-2020.html .

A Chronic Disease

The Covid-19 global pandemic has taught the world many lessons and changed the way we think, react, and see things. It has transformed our "normal" into an ever advancing "new normal". While this disease has proven hard to control, and, as everyone retreated to their homes, left unable to pursue normal activities, issues of race have come to the forefront. This is the other pandemic that has poisoned our country for centuries. Carl Bell, M.D. from the University of Illinois at Chicago and member of the Community Mental Health Council in Chicago has grappled with this issue but acknowledges that most psychiatrists agree that racism "is mainly a product of learned behavior." He states that research has proven that the majority of explicitly racist people are not mentally ill. At any rate, racism does not come naturally to us, it is imposed. Covid-19, which has especially affected African American communities across the country, has highlighted how systemic racism can be.[73]

> *"What if racism is so perfect, it made you believe the boy coting and peaceful protest of the Civil Rights Movement actually changed policies, but in actuality polices were gonna change anyway – Hell, let them sit wherever they want to on the bus. Just don't set with them. Let them into our schools, the teachers will still teach from a Eurocentric curriculum anyway. Let them eat with us, they'll need the energy and strength to build our homes. – Racism is a perfect system with an impenetrable barrier." – Darrnell Lamont Walker*

[73] Carl Bell, "Racism: A mental illness?" *Psychiatric Services* 55, no. 12 (2004): 1343-1343.

Over the years since school integration, the Roosevelt community and the Clover School District have come together and made strides to overcome that racist mindset. These communities have worked to foster an atmosphere of unity. Recent scholarship has looked at Julius Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington and those concerned with the Rosenwald Fund as they planned to build better schools for blacks in the early 1900's. "One hundred years ago, they were concerned with issues of race and opportunity, the appropriate use of wealth, the hunger for education, and the sustaining role of community."[74] Those concerns continue to be very much alive in the year 2020. The Roosevelt community and the Clover School District recognize that truth as they continue to make strides towards unity so many years after integration brought them together. Unity may not be accomplished by a court mandate, but can happen over time when the whole community works together and accepts each other's differences, attempts to learn from one another, and begin to see themselves as one community.

The community in Clover began with racial divisions, but has since come to accept the contributions and identity of both the black and white communities. The race tensions of 2020 continue to highlight racial tensions across the United States, and similarly Covid-19 has tested the entire Clover community, stretching their ideology of unity as it has the entire nation. Just as the court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* contested American's color-lines, Covid-19 has brought the

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[74] Stephanie Deutsch, *You need a schoolhouse: Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald, and the building of schools for the segregated south*. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011) Introduction, xi.

racial injustices that continue to exist to the surface. Those racial injustices have forced leaders like Coach Lane and Principal Ruth to re-examine their beliefs, re-measure their level of empathy, and elevate their voice and influence to make change happen.

Empathy Tested

> *"You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many was as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity." ~ James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time*[75]

Other events in 2020 put a spotlight on racism and hatred that still can be found in the United States. Clover and the world watched as the story came out of Minneapolis that George Floyd had died at the hands of a white police officer An officer held Floyd down with a knee on the back of his neck until there was no more life left in his body. Floyd had begged and pleaded for his life and made it known to the officer that he could not breathe; four other officers just stood by and watched as Mr. Floyd's life was taken away. Floyd's alleged murder did not happen in a vacuum. A white officer shot seventeen-year-old Alvin Cole to death in Milwaukee on February 2, 2020. Three white men pursued and murdered a black man named Ahumad Aubery, who was out for a jog, in Georgia on February 23, 2020. Three white police officers entered Breonna Taylor's Louisville home and shot her on

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[75] James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage Publishing, 2013), 7.

March 13, 2020. Now everyone sits, confined in their homes due to Covid-19, watching to see how the justice system will deal with these murders.

Ironically, during desegregation, both black and white families were forced to leave their comfort zones and the safety of their separate communities, and they began to learn to live together. As the Black Lives Movement today emerges stronger in the midst of all of this social unrest and forces an examination of personal empathy, Covid-19 has kept everyone apart and on the sidelines. In the 1960s and '70s, they did not sit and wish it away. They started a dialogue, interacted with one another, and began to understand each other's differences and except them. That is where empathy starts and that is where change happens.

Clover High: Creating a Culture of Unity

The Clover School District is no stranger to the task of dealing with racial unity. As Brian Lane, Head Football Coach at Clover High School, puts it, "together we are stronger … our community is stronger."[76] During school integration in the mid-1960s to full integration in 1970 and beyond, they had to find a way to deal with and incorporate the two races, white and black, into one community. The black community made the Roosevelt School relevant as it transitioned to the Clover Middle School and was no longer known as the "black school." Despite the black students being subsumed into the traditional white educational environment at Clover,

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[76] Coach Brian Lane (head football coach, Clover High School), in discussion with the author, November 7, 2020.

the Roosevelt community maintained their identity. Eventually, this black identity became as much a part of Clover's history as the white traditions, as evidenced by the display case that contains memories of the accomplishments of the Roosevelt School.

As with most Southern towns dealing with the same issues, it has been a long road and the remnants of school integration still linger. With Clover, there are two facets that remain, one from each side. The Roosevelt community continues to fight to keep the history of the Roosevelt School alive and known and Clover continues to be known as one Blue Eagle Nation. But as protest and marches emerged throughout the nation after the death of George Floyd, a community and a town, unfamiliar to protest, came together as one Blue Eagle Nation. They planned their own march for unity and made a stand for justice, humanity, and community. As three hundred plus individuals, black and white, gathered on June 6, 2020 in the center of the Roosevelt community to pray together, sing together, and march together through the middle of town, unity was the call.

This is interesting because even at the height of desegregation, Clover did not have a history of demonstrations. In fact, as the beloved former all-black Roosevelt School's doors were closed and then torn down, no one put up a fuss. But, on June 6, 2020, the four sections that make up Clover, came together as one Blue Eagle Nation—the school remained the center of communal identity—and made a stand against injustice in an effort to join the nation-wide protest against racial inequality. This included the Bethany community, which is rural and on the outskirts of town, the Roosevelt community, the town of Clover, and the more upper-class Lake Wylie. The

Clover School District Superintendent Sheila Quinn, Clover High School's Principal Rod Ruth, and Head Football Coach Brian Lane were just a few of the school district's staff who were in attendance.

Principle Ruth felt that this was part of what he and others from the Roosevelt community had been working towards all along; unity as one big "Blue Eagle Nation." He spoke of steps they had taken even before 2020. The men from the Roosevelt community, many of whom had come together to form the Roosevelt Watch in 1997, held cookouts on the high school campus for the students. In the new gym, the massive showcase houses Roosevelt memorabilia and the trophy from Roosevelt's last basketball team who won the last all-black state championship. Ruth even named one of the roads on campus Roosevelt Avenue. Working towards unity has been on his mind and Ruth has consistently worked toward this since he became principal at Clover High in 2016.[77]

One of the most eye-opening things that Ruth realized in his interview was that as a white male, he could not relate to or completely understand the struggles his African American students were going through.[78] He could not personally relate to the feelings they had during these trying times, which was in fact, many of the same feelings that they experience everyday as a person of color in America. The events of 2020 have intensely shifted his focus on unity. He now better understands and realizes that he could never fully understand the impact that the racially motivated

[77] Ruth, September 23, 2020.

events of 2020 had on his students of color because he has never had to walk in their shoes. That realization brought him to the certitude that he cannot fix the problem, but he can be part of a solution. That solution is, in part, helping to maintain a community that has come to be unified over the years. That is also why he felt that the unity march on June 6 was necessary; marching to the middle of town, together with his students, Principle Ruth's actions helped remind the larger community what they had already learned decades ago.[79]

Ruth expressed that at the beginning of the summer, before the march, his biggest concerns were for his students and he worried how all of this social unrest was affecting them. He recognized that it was important for him as principal to create a safe platform at his high school to assure every student that they could express their feelings without judgment and in so doing empowered them. He expressed empathy and he went to work to start a dialogue, not only for the students to be open with him as their principal, but for the students from all races and all walks of life to start a dialogue with each other. He took an idea that his student 2020-21 body president, Josh Marr, ran his campaign on. Ruth created a safe space for his students to come together in small groups and literally pour out their hearts. He has been overwhelmed with the stories of these young adults of color.[80]

Principle Ruth mentioned that, first and foremost, he is happy that his students feel comfortable enough to talk and express their feeling in small group meetings.

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[79] Ruth, September 23, 2020.

[80] Ruth, September 23, 2020.

Second, hearing his students' experiences, he better understands the hardships that confront them. For example, he mentioned the fear that one of his female African American students has for her father. Most nights she worries that her father will not return home, as he could be killed just for being a black man in America. Principle Ruth never worried that his father would not return from work, or that he would get pulled over or chased down and his life may be taken away for no other reason than the color of his skin. Seeing the sincerity of his student's emotional reaction to these fears, Ruth realized that the race problem would not be solved overnight, nor would it be solved by just one individual.[81]

Principle Ruth is convinced that the only way to move forward is to listen to one another and then to work together as a team. Leadership is important, and Ruth is very pleased with the student leadership he sees in Marr and also that of his staff leadership at the high school. His administrators, teachers, and his entire faculty are all onboard with cultivating an atmosphere of unity and understanding.[82]

Clover Today: Joshua Marr and Head Football Coach Brian Lane

Just as Dianne Jackson Currence and Jackie Tate provided insight into the life of high school students during integration, looking at the experiences of a senior at Clover High School during Covid-19 offers a unique perspective on how a southern community continues to maintain stability a few decades after desegregation. Joshua

[81] Ruth, September 23, 2020.

[82] Ruth, September 23, 2020.

Marr has lived in Clover and attended school in Clover his entire life. He has an older sister who graduated from Clover a few years ago and now attends Clemson University. His parents are both natives of the Clover area, attended Clover schools and his mom is currently on the Clover School Board of Trustees. Marr feels that his parents have had a huge impact on his life because they have instilled in him to respect everyone, regardless of cultural back ground, skin color, or nationality. Marr also speaks well of his grandfather, who is part Native American. Marr notes that his grandfather always reminded him that it was a privilege to attend school, as his grandfather did not have that opportunity because of the color of his skin and who he was. Family valued education, and Marr is aware that the actions of past generations mean that he can now freely attend school and play sports without any prejudices preventing him.[83]

In fact, Marr loves sports and he has competed his entire life. He has played sports since youth leagues and is currently on the football and lacrosse teams at Clover High School. Sports are a huge part of his life, and he appreciates the lessons about teamwork, sportsmanship and respect for all others that sports have instilled in him.[84]

Together with his principal and his football coach, Marr is a vital part of the legacy that his football coach, Coach Brian Lane, talks about often. One method used to incorporate local all students, regardless of race, into the school and larger Clover

[83] Joshua Marr, in discussion with the author, November 13, 2020.

[84] Marr, November 13, 2020.

community is the Adopt-a-Player program, which Coach Lane and I brought to Clover. Marr has been a part of that program since his sophomore year.[85] The program brings the community together, building personal relationships among football players and people who live in Clover. Outside of Clover, community only knows players as a statistic, sometimes solely by their jersey number. The Adopt-a-Player program matches a player with a member of the community and a mentorship begins. Marr, reaps the benefit of the program from a player's stand point, but his parents are also part of the program as one of the community mentors. Therefore, Marr knows other members of the Clover community well, and his family supports students besides Marr himself.

Marr's family and his experiences involving sports are a huge part of what has shaped him as a person and framed his personal desire to promote Clover's unity campaign. He truly hopes that the legacy his class leaves behind is one that creates a safe space for students to know that they can freely express themselves and always feel comfortable with letting their feelings be known.[86] While the unity campaign is a modern response to a current situation, it is also a continuation of older lessons learned from the time of integration. Participants include families that learned to live and work together with respect, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and their children continue this tradition. They have insured that each person who felt that their

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[85] The Adopt-a-Player program was birthed by Coach Lane and I in 2007 when Coach Lane accepted his first head football coaching position at South Florence High School in Florence, SC.

[86] Marr, November 13, 2020.

voice has been stifled because of how they look, can now feel confident that their voice is important and will be heard.

Head Football Coach Brian Lane grew up in the upstate of South Carolina and acts as a bridge between the period of integration and today. Lane was hired as Clover High School's first African American Head Football Coach in 2017. In fact, Lane has been the first head African American football coach at three out of the four schools he has coached at. He has played sports since he was five years old, a common trend that he and Marr share. Lane grew up in a house with an African American father and two brothers, so he fully understands what it means for a black male to grow up in America, especially in the South. He knows first-hand many of the struggles his African American students and players face. Lane also has two sons of his own, so when events like the killings of Floyd and Aubery happen, it hits close to home for him. Lane makes it a part of his mission to make sure that his sons and all of his students and players understand that they matter and their voice is important.[87] His mission is much like the mission of the black teachers pre-desegregation. The family structure Johnson and Tate commented on came from the teachers and administrators, who let students in all-black schools know that they matter regardless of what they saw outside of the confines of their safe community.

Even though desegregation occurred some fifty years ago, Coach Lane's experience as the first African American head football coach at three high schools in

[87] Lane, November 7, 2020.

South Carolina underscores that while progress has been made, the issue of racial equality continues to be a part of the larger conversation in the South. Lane was the first African American head football coach at South Florence High School in Florence, SC, where he was hired in 2007, and then in 2013 he returned home to his alma mater, James F. Byrnes, as their first African American head football coach. Lane arrived at Clover in 2017. It may seem a little strange to talk about someone being the *first* African American to be a head football coach at three 5A high schools in South Carolina in the 21st century, but that is just one of many examples that racial equality continues to be an issue in America today.[88]

Having experienced growing up as a black man in the upstate of South Carolina, Coach Lane talks a great deal about legacy. He hopes to leave a legacy of normalcy and strength—that it becomes ordinary to see African American head coaches at southern schools, not just in Clover, but at all of the schools where he has had the privileged to coach. He hopes that he has left an impression and represented his race well enough that the color of the next coach's skin will not be an issue.

In an interview, Coach Lane talked about some of the discussions he has had with his team about race in America. One of the things that he shared is that his team felt that if the world could be more like a football locker room, it would be so much better. On a team, everyone is working toward the same goal and skin color does not

[88] Lane, November 7, 2020.

matter. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, or where you are from, you are "battling together."[89]

The Adopt-a-Player mentoring program is a big part of Coach Lane's legacy and one that he is extremely proud of. He appreciates that it has had an impact on more than just the football team. In March of 2020, when all schools had to close their doors, seniors faced an unfamiliar venture. Instead of being able to have their senior prom, a senior class trip, a traditional graduation, or just be able to enjoy their last semester of high school, they were stuck at home. Not able to hang out with their friends and classmates, unable to participate in or be a spectator at any spring sporting events, they were left to wonder if they would have a senior year at all. The idea of community that the Adopt-a-Player program spreads gave one junior the idea to start an Adopt-a-Senior project. She and her mom took to social media, Facebook, to ask the community to adopt a senior and make their devastating senior year a little brighter. This idea works so well at Clover, in part, because the school and the community have consistently been unified. It is no surprise that the community came together and rallied around each senior, loaded them with gifts, love and some much-needed attention. That is an excellent example of the type of culture Principal Ruth, Marr and Coach Lane continue to work on in Clover and the legacy they are leaving behind.

The year 2020 has brought challenges. As our newly elected Vice-President, Kamala Harris stated, "I think that there are these moments of a crisis that give us the

[89] Lane, November 7, 2020.

courage and encouragement to try something that actually may be better than how we were doing it before."[90] In Clover, South Carolina, the community continues to fight for unity and equality; even though sometimes it looks as though the social and racial injustices will never cease. Covid-19 cases are still on the rise in the United States, race is still an issue, but to know that places like Clover High School, the Clover School District and the Roosevelt community have come together in unity gives hope for a better tomorrow. Principal Ruth said that each year he chooses a word for his school and the word for the 2019-20 school year happened to be the word "overcome." He could not have imagined all of the connotations that word would have for a year such as this. He hopes that his faculty and students will consider "overcome" and work to change; "that which has existed for years and years and years, maybe we [Clover] can be a place where we overcome some of this stuff and can just be a light in the world...even through a pandemic."[91]

[90] Jamil Smith, "Kamala Harris Plan to Save the Election: The California senator's comprehensive new bill could both make it safe to vote during the coronavirus pandemic and inspire states to take their own action," *Rolling Stone*, April 16, 2020, www.rollingstone.com/politics/political-commentary/kamala-harris-coronavirus-election-bill-984898/ .

[91] Ruth, September 23, 2020.

CONCLUSION

> *"The task for each of us, White and of color, is to identify what our own sphere of influence is (however large or small) and to consider how it might be used to interrupt the cycle of racism." ~ Beverly Daniel Tatum*[92]

The recent events of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic and the racial unrest in the country has taught us many lessons and changed the way we think, react, and see things. It has transformed our "normal" into something totally different and given the world the persona of a new normal that is ever advancing. In the wake of Covid-19, recent racial unrest has brought to light how far we have come as a country and how far we have yet to go. This thesis looked at the experiences of pioneers who live in the upstate of South Carolina, particularly Clover. These individuals, such as Amarintha Whitener, Dianna Currence, Willie Green Phillips, Jackie Tate, and Liz Johnson, all lived through desegregation and helped to usher in a new community that upheld the values and identity of the black and white communities that came together after being kept apart for so long.

During integration, the black community had to work hard to maintain its unique identity and pride in the face of a changing school environment. Whitener's audacious career move in accepting a teaching position at the formally all-white Kinard Elementary symbolized much more than just desegregation. The fact that she was a black woman in a position of authority at a school where white children had been taught not to take orders from blacks changed the course of history in Clover.

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[92] Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations About Race*, (New York: Basic Books, 2017',186.

Currence was one of the first black students in the all-white Clover schools, and she led the way in showing how this remarkable transition might be navigated without giving up her own identity in the process. Then there were the all-black Roosevelt School's basketball players, including Tate, who refused to take their talents to Clover High when it became clear that they would only sit on the bench and watch as white players took to the court. Their adamant refusal to leave behind their beloved Roosevelt led to the last 1A all-black state championship win. The pride those players exuded for their school is the same pride shared by Phillips and Johnson in their refusal to let the memory of Roosevelt die and a community fade away.

Their actions paved the way for future leaders in the Clover community like Head Football Coach Brian Lane and Principal Rod Ruth of Clover High School. Their small individual steps of action helped to create a culture in which students like Josh Marr can thrive and continue the fight in creating a healthier atmosphere of racial harmony in America. With the overwhelming challenges that the year 2020 presented, district leaders like Ruth and Lane went beyond their usual everyday dynamic repertoire with their students to ensure that racial harmony become the norm and assure that the Clover "Blue Eagle Nation" includes every facet of the community.

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith" 1 John 5:4

The Clover Colored School, from the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database

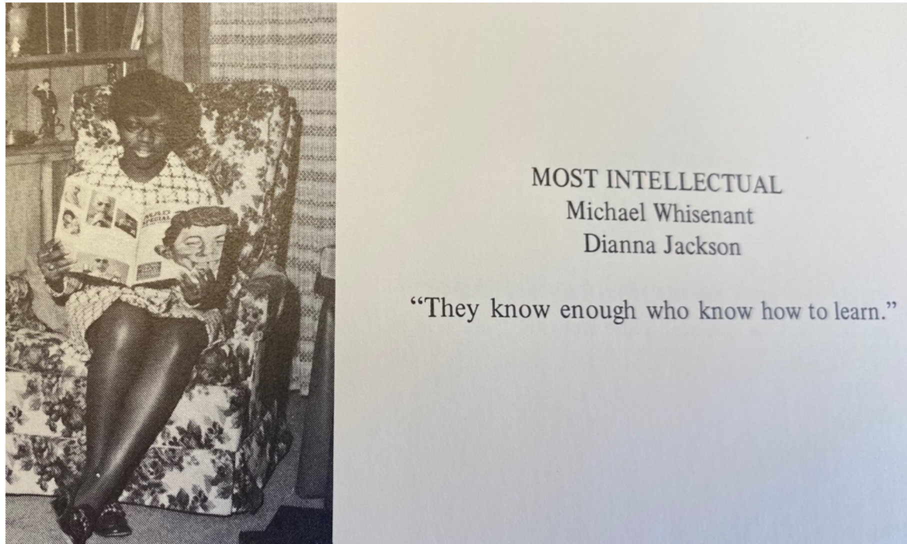
Roosevelt School courtesy of Clover High School Archives

Glass case located in the Clover High School gymnasium. Included among many of the Roosevelt memorabilia is the 1970 1A-State Championship basketball trophy.

Roosevelt Park, on the grounds where the Roosevelt School once stood. The park consists of a picnic shelter, a basketball court, and playground equipment. The is the location of the yearly back-to-school bash sponsored by the Roosevelt Community Watch. The Stellie J. Jackson Enrichment Center is also located in the park.

The Stellie J. Jackson Enrichment Center, located at Roosevelt Park. This new building was erected in 2020.

This sign also stands at Roosevelt Park as a marker and reminder that the iconic Roosevelt School once stood there.



Pictured: Dianna Jackson "Currence" in the 1965 Clover High School Year Book.

Liz Johnson as Mss. Roosevelt in 1963. Photo courtesy of the Clover High School Year Book.

Jackie Tate wearing his Roosevelt School t-shirt, standing in front of the 1970 1-A Roosevelt basketball State Championship trophy now housed in the glass case at Clover High School

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