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A Narrative Analysis of Desegregation at Spencer High School In Columbus, GA

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A Narrative Analysis of Desegregation at Spencer High School In Columbus, GA

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Dedication

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Philippians 4:8 (KJV)

I would like to dedicate this experience to my three beautiful children: Christian Louis Price (class of 2003), Anthony Dwayne Boynton, II, PhD, and Mahogany Faye Boynton (class of 2014). They are the heart, mind, and soul to my very being. Loving you beyond measure is my greatest pleasure. To my awesome father, Dr. John L. Brown, who has consistently been there for me, I thank you for instilling within me to always strive for excellence. To the man who bears all of the unmentionables of my heart, Mr. Tony Conner, I thank you for loving me and coaching me when I wanted to give up. I love you. Tony's mother, the late Mrs. Shirlene Walton-Conner, was a proud 1960 graduate.

I would like to extend my thoughts and gratitude to my loved ones who have taken flight to that magical place beyond the stars: my grandfather, Mr. Louis K. Price, Sr.; my grandmother, Mrs. Dorothy M. Smith-Price (class of 1948); my uncle, Mr. Louis K. Price, Jr.; my mother, Ms. Sandra F. Price (class of 1968), the father of my children and his parents, Mr. Anthony D. Boynton, Sr.; and his parents, Mr. Edward L. Boynton, and Mrs. Annie M. Ellis-Boynton. All of my amazing ancestors played an indelible role in helping me to complete this journey.

To my church family at South Columbus United Methodist and to my pastor, Rev. Reggie Williams—the blessing to be a part of such a loving group of people is overwhelming. The best is yet to come! To my sorority, none other than the distinguished and dynamic ladies of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Our sorority's embodiment of scholarship, sisterhood, service, and social action propelled me to continue my education. I lift up the names of Founder Winona

Cargile Alexander (I defended my work on her blessed birthday, June 21st), the late Mrs. Doris Sanders-Gayden (class of 1951 and former educator at SHS), Mrs. Vanessa K. Biggers, Mrs. Jeanella Fuller-Pendleton (class of 1968), and the late Mrs. Ola Mae Washington (former educator at SHS) in this honor. To the thousands of students that I have crossed paths with during my splendid career—you are the air beneath the sails of this venture. I have worked with some outstanding colleagues and have served under some incomparable principals, namely Mr. Joseph G. Saulsbury, the late Mr. Joseph J. Gosha, and Dr. Reginald J. Griffin. A special thank you to Ms. Stephanie Shaw (class of 1996 and SHS Alumni Association President), Dr. David Kolb, Dr. Christine Rossell, my participants in this study, Dr. Lauren Bradshaw, and to Mr. Johnnie Warner. I could not have done any of this without all of you.

To the late Dr. John W. Townsend (class of 1963), the first Black person to desegregate the former Columbus College (now Columbus State University), was inspirational in this pursuit. Dr. Townsend once stated, "Celebrate completions, not intentions." I celebrate your *Extraordinary Courage*. All of you mentioned in this dedication represent everything that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. I will forever think on these things to remind me of you through the power of God. To the late Professor William Henry Spencer, the graduates of William H. Spencer High School, and for those to come, I thank and appreciate you. As you flip through these pages, know that you are part of a great heritage. The ties that bind us are forever Kelly green and old gold. All Hail! All Hail!

Acknowledgements

Train up a child in the way she should go and when she is old, she will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6 (KJV)

I want to acknowledge all the teachers who touched my life during my entire scholastic journey. Dr. Patricia Patrick, my dissertation chairperson, has been a beacon of light during this endeavor both professionally and personally. Her willingness to keep me focused on this venture has been priceless. My dissertation committee, Dr. Mary Hendricks & Dr. Charlotte Mundy-Henderson, have been an invaluable resource. Ms. Tracey Esmann has been a Godsend. Her professionalism and courteous behavior made this experience a lot sweeter. My professors at Columbus State University, as well as my cohort class of the inaugural Dr. Frank Douglas Brown doctoral program, have been the impetus for my ability to stay the course, but I do not owe this gratitude just to Dr. Patrick, my committee, my professors, and my cohort class. I think back on my primary teachers at the former Benning Hills Elementary and Mrs. Era M. Patrick, who took the time to see my gifts and exposed me to activities that I would not have been a part of, like sorority pageants, teas, soirées, all-city youth orchestras, honors chorus competitions, and academic bowls. Mrs. Patrick and my teachers helped in raising me socially, as well as scholastically. My teachers at the former Eddy Junior High School encouraged me to go above and beyond when at times I limited myself.

My life changed when I entered the grand William Henry Spencer High School halls in the fall of 1983. My extraordinary grandmother, the late Mrs. Dorothy Price, class of 1948, told me that when I received my letter of registration, she, too, attended Spencer. She and her brother, the late MSG (POW) Jesse Christopher Smith, were graduates. My great-uncle Jesse was the valedictorian of the class of 1947 and desired to become an architectural engineer. His capture

and death in the Korean War in 1951 brought his dreams to an alarming halt. Ironically, I graduated from William Henry Spencer High School 40 years after my great-uncle Jesse in 1987. I can still hear some of the ladies who graduated with him at our reunion in 2017 that Jesse was the “Smartest Man Alive.” All of the names mentioned have been training me to reach this moment in my life and I am indeed grateful. I shall not depart from it. My family consists of five generations of Spencerian pride; my twin granddaughters, Eva Janean Price and Kayla Renee’ Price, will graduate in 2025 from the home of “The Mighty Greenwave.” I honor my rich and powerful legacy.

Abstract

My qualitative narrative inquiry described how five graduates of Spencer High School and one historically sage educator experienced the transition of desegregation in Columbus, Georgia in the United States. Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas, and Brown, II were landmark court decisions that made segregated schools unconstitutional in 1954 and 1955. Columbus did not transition to fully desegregating schools until 1971. The five graduates and one educator cite their experiences about the educational process during segregation and reflected on the transition of the desegregation of schools. My theoretical framework is the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Learning is a ubiquitous process. Learning is an unending cycle of human experiences that includes feelings, perceptions, and choices. The six interviewees' reflections on their knowledge and experiences created discoveries about life during desegregation. The study utilized conversational semi-structured interviewing techniques as I posed questions to selected participants. Using the narrative analysis process, I analyzed the data. I discovered three prominent themes and sub-themes from the participants' responses: the political theme of activism and the influence of Black teachers, the social theme of community relationships and memories, and the cultural theme of a lack of accessibility, colorism, and the power of the messages within the music in church. The extrapolation of these findings was important because they encapsulated all of the participants' anecdotal material about segregation and desegregation. The most salient finding was that on a cultural level, Blacks were more of a threat to themselves than their counterparts.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Professor William Henry Spencer pioneered furthering educational opportunities for Black students in Columbus, Georgia, United States of America (USA). Spencer was born in 1858 but was not an enslaved person. From an early age, Spencer attended school at the old Asbury Chapel and the Claflin School, where he later supervised (J. Warner, personal communication, May 12, 2022). For the 19th century in the American South, Professor Spencer, a *Negro*, lived an elitist lifestyle with several affiliations. He was a member of the Prince Hall Masons, Woodmen of the World, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and the Blue Vein Society (see Figure 1) (J. Warner, personal communication, May 12, 2022).

Figure 1

Professor Spencer's Lapel Pins and Brochure from His Affiliations

Note. Professor Spencer owned these various lapel pins representing clubs and organizations. Reprinted with permission from Johnnie Warner (see Appendix D).

This phenomenon of participating in exclusive groups is known as spatial segregation. Spatial segregation is when people within a particular ethnic or geographic location join

associations that place them in a higher social status (Stern, 2021). The practice of spatial segregation enhanced internal discriminatory behaviors within the race and the culture.

At the turn of the 20th century, Professor Spencer became the supervisor for colored students in the area. Professor Spencer's strong work ethic created a high reputation for collaborating with fellow board members and philanthropists to promote a vocational high school for Blacks. Professor Spencer passed away in 1925 (Spencer, n.d.). Before his death, he aimed to open a high school for Blacks. In 1930, the Columbus School Board voted to open the vocational high school he promoted. They named the high school Spencer High School in his honor.

William Henry Spencer High School opened on November 29, 1930. Spencer High was the first secondary vocational high school for Blacks in Columbus, Georgia. The naming of William Henry Spencer High School was a posthumous dedication in Professor Spencer's honor (Spencer, n.d.; Bradshaw, 2016; Lauzon, 2019). Finkelstein (2014) presented the wording on the historical marker of the first SHS on Tenth Avenue: "On this site, on November 29, 1930, the first local high school for colored students opened. The school was the result of a grant from the Rosenwald Foundation" (p. 66).

In Chapter I, I described the purpose of the study, introduced the research question, and provided an overview of the theoretical framework and methodology. Chapter II reviewed the literature about Professor William H. Spencer, the desegregation of schools, the landmark cases resulting from civil disobedience that resulted in the mandate, the history of Spencer High School, and race relations in Columbus, Georgia. I reviewed the rebellious acts of Muscogee County in stagnating the school system's desegregation.

Background of the Problem

The late Didion (2006), an American author and journalist, mentioned that when it comes to storytelling, people must tell their rendition of stories to survive. Telling stories or narratives is an integral part of our existence. My narrative study told the stories of five Black Spencer High School (SHS) graduates from the 1950s to 1970s who experienced the precarious transition of desegregation. My interest in making sure that these stories told of the Spencer graduates' lived experiences during desegregation is extensive because the shared content with me became a part of the nature of my being both culturally and historically. Five generations of my family graduated from Spencer High School from 1947 to the upcoming class 2025. My connection to this study runs as deep as the roots of a family tree in this endeavor. I desired to evaluate and analyze the experiential contexts that derived from the essence of the participants' memories. I studied what each graduate faced politically, socially, and culturally (Simon & Dippo, 1986). The data gathered from the conversational exchange was critical because the material provided a window into each person's social interactions and historical experiences. The participants shared their innermost thoughts about their place in society, which is their cultural capital. Cultural capital is the value of a person's traditions, language exchanges, norms, and memories (Simon & Dippo, 1986). Recognizing the value of personal cultural norms was critical information to my research. The Spencer High School graduates who participated have a reverence not only for the school but in addition for the legacy of Professor William H. Spencer.

Professor Spencer was born in 1858, 30 years after the establishment of Columbus, Georgia. Professor Spencer was not a slave. However, there is a high probability that Spencer witnessed the last Civil War battle fought in Columbus, Georgia, The Battle of Columbus, on April 16, 1865. Professor Spencer grew up in Columbus and attended the old Asbury Chapel for

school and Claflin School (Spencer, n.d.). He wanted to become an educator and earned his teaching certificate at the former Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia. He began teaching in Harris County, Georgia, approximately 40 miles north of Columbus, Georgia, in Muscogee County. Professor Spencer transferred to the former Girard, now Phenix City, Alabama. His assignment was to teach in Columbus, Georgia. Back in his hometown, his professionalism did not go unnoticed. Professor Spencer became the first Supervisor of Colored Schools (Causey, 2001). Like Booker T. Washington, George Peabody, and others of his day, he believed vocational education was the answer to preparing viable, working-class Negro citizens in Columbus, Georgia (Bradshaw, 2016). Professor Spencer's career lasted 50 years. He was a visionary who had a sense of forward-thinking in his day.

The position of being the first Jeanes Colored Supervisor of Schools afforded Professor Spencer the leverage he needed to communicate to the all-White Board Trustees of the Schools about the need for an accredited high school for Negro students in Columbus. Professor Spencer faced several challenges in his supervisory position. He faced immeasurable difficulty in balancing his leadership status as *the* Colored supervisor amid an all-White board that held heavy opposition to opening a Negro high school. Considering the need to appease the antagonistic board, Professor Spencer desired to be an advocate for the Negro community that he served (Spencer, n.d.).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. The 1954 landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education ended the constitution of segregation, mandating racially segregated schools unlawful

(Brown v. the Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas, 1954). The Supreme Court further decided in 1955 in *Brown II* that a way to desegregate would be to reformat the school district's attendance zones into a plan to send students to schools based on their community and not race (Brown v. the Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas II, 1955). Communities like Muscogee County witnessed the declining effects of Black schools that were subject to the covert techniques that delayed desegregation (Rothstein, 2017). These effects were detrimental to Black schools. For example, as Columbus began the transition period to desegregate, school officials provided the option of freedom of school choice for parents of Black students who excelled. Black students who scored above average in their studies had the choice of electing to attend White schools. Subsequently, this practice weakened Black schools scholastically (Rossell, 2024).

An aligned example of Brown II on the effect of resisting desegregation was the crippling outcome of structural segregation via redlining districts of Black neighborhoods (Egede, et al., 2023). Redlining made it difficult for Black residents to secure home loans in urban areas, increasing rental property, the morbidity rate, and the neighborhood's market value (Lukes & Cleveland, 2021). Hence, this practice destabilized the quality of Black schools. Further, redlining suppressed the social advancement of Blacks (Egede, et al., 2023). The historical effects of redlining were limited job opportunities, increased incarceration, and low access to community services, which exacerbated the issues of the doctrine of segregation (Rothstein, 2017). The following year, after the Brown II decision (1955), the court of the Federal District determined that regardless of race, schoolchildren attended the schools where they reside (Rossell et al., 2002). Even though communities have become more diverse, the alarming fact remains that communities remain segregated today (Brown, et al., 2023).

Despite the segregation of the communities, Muscogee did not comply with the landmark case's ruling until 1971. During Columbus' trial and error in implementing the desegregation process, the placement of Black students in several disadvantaged scenarios became the status quo. One disadvantage was that Black students had inexperienced White teachers who lacked the knowledge of transferring curricular pedagogy to teach. Additionally, the teachers did not possess the background in cultural experiences necessary to build a relationship with their students (Fairclough, 2004). These errors caused irreparable gaps in the learning process. The information found in further chapters sheds light on this premise. Another disadvantage was to transfer Black teachers who had advanced degrees, without question, to predominantly White schools, regardless of the leadership positions held at their home schools (Causey, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

My narrative study aimed to collect the stories of five Black residents in Columbus, GA, who attended SHS during desegregation and one historic participant to determine how their experiences as students during the transition between segregation and desegregation influenced their lives into who they have become today. The design of the narrative study was to prompt discussion about the participants' experiences and to understand the complexity of the meaning of the research topics (Atkinson, 2017). The narrative model was based on my findings on information gathered from first-hand accounts of those who lived during the transition of desegregation in Columbus and provided personal details not included in other historical data. The published data will become a part of the history of the Hammurabi Black History Institute in Columbus, Georgia, formerly the African American History Museum, founded by Mr. Johnnie Warner.

Research Questions

I used a narrative design to answer the following research questions:

1. What do the narratives of five Black residents in Columbus, GA, who attended Spencer High School (SHS) during desegregation (1954-1971) and one historical participant reveal about their lived experiences as students during the transition between segregation and desegregation at SHS?
2. How do the participants believe their experiences have informed their present lives?

Theoretical Framework

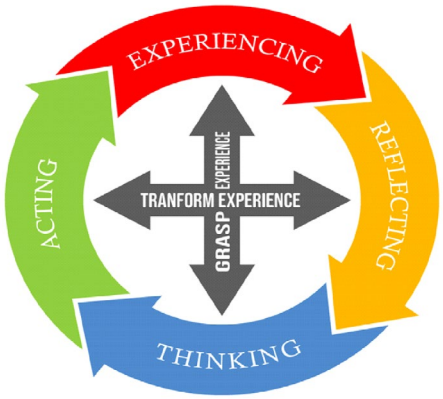
The Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) laid the groundwork for my narrative study. ELT created knowledge of where transformation occurs through experiences (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) stated that knowledge was born from the connection of an attained experience, then transformed into your understanding. Two principles of an attained experience were Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC). These two didactic concepts transformed experiences through Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE) (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). These four learning modes were a "creative tension" process during observations and reflections (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194). My study modeled these concepts of experiential learning. The interviewees reflected on memories of concrete and abstract experiences during high school and beyond and transmitted those experiences by describing social and personal knowledge.

ELT became a holistic approach in my study because the activities of human experiences happened organically and consistently (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). ELT operated in every area of society, from individuals to organizations reflecting upon past experiences. James (1904) opined that pure experiences began and ended with more experiences to come. Dewey (1933) believed

that experiences are a mixture of continuous reflection and learning interruptions and that reflective observation is the only way to break from the cycle of pure experiences. Interviewees used reflective observation in this study. The information of the participants was a stored mental catalog for nearly 70 years. Keeton and Tate (1978) remarked that ELT is when a person witnesses an experience in which they are directly involved in learning. In Figure 2, I presented the interviewees as having directly experienced the action of my study. I asked them to take their review and reflect on memories they remember from being a student at SHS during segregation and to think about their experiences. The people who were candidates for interviews participated in the transition of desegregation.

Figure 2

Experiential Learning Theory Process



Note. From "Kolb Experiential Learning Profile (KELP)," by Kolb, D. A. & Kolb, A. Y., https://learningfromexperience.com/. Copyright 2021 by Institute of Experiential Learning. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

Methodology Overview

Qualitative research measures were employed for a variety of reasons. I used the qualitative method because the subjects responded to questions about the participants' social and personal lives. The subjects interpreted the questions based on their connotations (Saldaña &

Omasta, 2018). I used a narrative qualitative study to create a picture of the research topics based on the interviewees' recollections (Atkinson, 2017). I incorporated the qualitative method over quantitative or mixed methods because of the nature of the data that I gathered, which is subjective and based on the narrative material given. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated that narrative inquiry methodology suggests a link between our stories about education and our experience—-we are our stories. Connelly and Clandinin said, "We live our lives through texts…like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us what conventions demand…they are what we must use to make new narratives" (p. 2). The interviewees are their stories. "The world is made up of stories, not of atoms" (Wade-Gayles, 2006, p. 3). As Heilbrun (1988) suggested, the conception of narratives was from a collection of our reading, chanting, murmuring, and hearing. Humans are storytelling beings and we built of our lives around storied experiences. I explained further about narrative inquiry in the pages to follow. People existed through the art of stories. I took the notes of these stories, I collected the experiences, and I documented the results of those experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The interviewees' information contained elements akin to events, settings, memories, and reflections from their past.

There was a connection between the level of excellence required to live in a segregated world and the strategies necessary to survive during desegregation. I captured the lived experiences of five SHS graduates and one historical participant by developing an inquiry via interviews. The participants' vivid conversations painted an intricate collage of desegregation that was both beneficial and detrimental. The perception of the advances by desegregating the schools remained, but even more became lost. Lost were the memories and traditions contained in the narrative renditions of the participants found within the following pages.

There are three areas common to narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place. These intertwined concepts worked interchangeably, comprehensively exploring the happenings that inform the inquirer (Hutchinson, 2015). In temporality, the experiences were fluid from the past, yet the experiences afterward shaped us into who we become (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The experiences were circular and always ended with a comma (Hutchinson, 2015). Ricoeur (1990) said that time was a temporal experience. The narratological process took the privilege of reconfiguring the temporal value based on sensory, emotional, aesthetic, and axiological values. Sociality blends personal and collective experiences based on cultural, institutional, and dialectical constructs (Hutchinson, 2015). Moen (2006) believed that the environment perpetually influenced an individual's mind through social interactions. The connection of both the mind and the world was the sociocultural theory. The place was the grounded setting where the actions happen and the common thread of how one creates the story (Hutchinson, 2015). Storytelling annihilates barriers between us and builds a sense of community and openness (Biesenbach, 2018). We were the story, and it is up to us to tell these unforgettable stories.

Participants and Setting

Five of the participants were Black males and females who graduated from William H. Spencer High School. One participant was a historical participant who was an educator in Muscogee County for 46 years. The interviewees lived in Muscogee County for a part of their lifetime and witnessed the transition of desegregating schools. The participants were from various walks of life but held one aspect in common—each had matriculated during segregation and encountered desegregation. Each interview's setting was either in the person's home or via telecommunication.

Data Collection

Interviews. I obtained consent from the interviewees for permission to conduct this study. I gave each interviewee a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study and the problem of the study, along with traditional interview questions (Vanover, et al., 2022). The problem addressed in this study was the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. The interviewees were an exclusive, intentional group of participants who experienced the happenings of desegregation.

Purposive Sampling. I used purposive sampling to select interviewees. Purposive sampling was intentional (Campbell, et al., 2020). The aim was to match the sample to the topic of research. Choosing the samples intentionally grounded the integrity of the study. The four aspects of purposive sampling were credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Campbell, et al., 2020). Purposive sampling was synthesizing an achievable amount of data (Ames, et al., 2019). This approach ensured that the pre-selected data represented the criteria necessary for answering the research question, increasing the rigor of the research (Ames, et al., 2019). The interviewees were from Columbus, Georgia, and lived through the transition of desegregation.

Types of Questions and Timeline. Writing clear, analytical questions for interviewing was important to ensure the alignment of the responses was evident to the research data. Social scientists used the process of academic interrogation based on the wealth of knowledge shared by individuals about events that happened in history (Seidman, 2013, as cited by Roberts, 2020). Qualitative interviews were a means of collecting detailed information about social phenomena. The key to exemplary qualitative interview questions was to ensure that the responses to

questions will not be vague, or include questions that would have promoted bias. The objective was to stay within the purpose of the study, focused on the perspective of the interviewee, delved deeply into the reflection of the topic, and validated the experience (Roberts, 2020).

The timeline for the data collection process was succinct and visual. My plan was to develop a graphic timeline, so I built a context of the narrative by using sight-based representations (Kolar et al., 2017). This method increased reflexivity. I engaged the interviewees and asked them to share their knowledge and interactions regarding their social relationships (Kolar et al., 2017). Appendix B included a sample of proposed questions.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research analyzes life's occurrences (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Cited quotations and directed coding of the data were the process for analysis (Vanover, et al., 2022). I coded the interviewees by highlighting words and phrases within the Word document. This process helped me to interpret the meaning of the data. Once I placed the descriptions into groups, I completed the coding of the data and interpreted the thematic analysis (Miles, et al., 2020). I carefully read and looked at the data retrospectively. I analyzed the data and identified patterns in the research for synthesis.

Limitations and Delimitations

The topics of segregation, desegregation, race relations, and cultural relevance spanned the influence of my entire career in teaching and learning. My philosophy as an educator was to ensure that all students received real-world instruction based on historical and current perspectives. Based on my lived experiences, my identity as a woman, specifically as a Black woman, regarding how I related to others carried the unfortunate weight of bias. I am a product of my experiences. However, I refrained from bias as I collected and analyzed the data. I looked

objectively at the responses by bracketing. Bracketing was a useful process for interviewing. Bracketing increased research rigor and alleviated any revealing biases (Habibullah, et al., 2023). Bracketing included values, beliefs, feelings, and ideas about the research topic in the handwritten notes to me. There were two types of biases: cognitive bias and affective bias. Faulty reasoning in making judgments without critical thinking caused bias (Habibullah, et al., 2023). Taking an introspective look at my biases and being conscious of them alleviated those overlooked blind areas and allowed for reflection. I looked at the study from an ethical and moral standpoint and was constantly aware of not categorizing or generalizing situations. The challenge was to find information that went against my preconceived notions and my memory bias, called cognitive closure (Quinn, 2012). I was cognizant of the halo effect in qualitative research, where prior knowledge of the topic conflicted with the data expressed by the participants (Creswell, 2012).

I performed a negative case analysis on the data gathered from the participants. A negative case analysis was a process where I critically examined the data to find information that refuted my expectations and my original premise (Tewari & Joshi, 2020). This increased the rigor and validity of my study. Another way to increase validity was to conduct a triangulation of the collected data by revisiting the participants, checking their responses, and having a peer debriefing and analyzing the results. I interpreted the results carefully and reflected on the material from the interviewees. This was critical to the integrity of my work.

Memories were relational and relative. Memories were not static retellings but renditions of the interpretations of the experiences of the person who told the story (Swanson, 2022). A limitation of this study was the validity of the story told by people over seventy years of age. There was a chance of having discrepancies between what would have been in the historical

artifacts and the memories that I heard in the participants' retellings. Swanson (2022) called this discrepancy *tension* in autobiographical narrative inquiry. Fivush (2022) said that elicited interwoven memories from the participants' internal thoughts into the larger world context. The lived experiences of the individuals told narratives that were entirely their own and bridged past experiences into my present study. My study created an evolving cultural experience (Fivush, 2022).

In contrast, there were stories that we chose to tell and those that remained to be silent. I heard the silent stories that elicited utterances from the masses. Memories were about perspective. A story told one way could heal, while the same story told by another could be damning (King, 2003). I heard the participants' unadulterated truth, as I only told them of their experiences. I reported what I learned and not what I believed to be accurate. Even though I was a toddler during the desegregation of the schools in Columbus, Georgia, I graduated from a Historically Black High School, which this study is about, William Henry Spencer High School. I continued my education by graduating from an institution known as the Black Ivy League of Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs), Spelman College, during my undergraduate study. Zinn (1991), a former professor at Spelman College, said, "All written history is partial in two senses. It is partial in that it is only a tiny part of what really happened…and what the researcher subconsciously omits" (p. 51). My indoctrination of Black culture, Black traditions, Black norms, Black achievements, and Black religious practices affected how I perceived the world and my work as a researcher. I used a triangulation method that increased the validity of my results, ridding any bias.

A delimitation of this study was that the focus was on Columbus, Georgia. The distinction of identifying one area delineated the research within an identified area. Included in

the criteria of participants was that they belonged to a specific group: those who graduated from SHS before desegregation. Moreover, the participants were from a particular age group, in their late seventies and beyond. I worked against the race of time to secure the thoughts and memories of those facing the winter of their years. The fulfillment of this study added voice to an overlooked group.

Definition of Terms

1. *African American, Black, Negro, Afro-American*, and *Colored*--I use these terms interchangeably to depict a person of Negroid descent.
2. *Caucasian* and *White*--the use of these terms interchangeably to depict a person from the Caucasus Mountains (Baum, 2006).
3. *Culture Cancel-cation*: denying opportunities indicative of a culture's traditions and norms, including educational practices; desegregation.
4. *Cultural Capital*--the value of a group of people's traditions, language, norms, and locations of residence (Simon & Dippo, 1986).
5. *Cultural Relevance*--the process of implementing race-based topics in the classroom in subtle or explicit ways for students to appreciate their heritage (Ortiz, et al., 2018).
6. *Desegregation*--I am utilizing this term instead of integration because of the systemic means of ending the separation of races, not a utopic blending of the schools or the people affected (Thurman, 1956).
7. *Entitlement Funding*--the federally mandated funding that helped address the needs of the least, which were the impoverished children, bilingual youth, those with disabilities, and low-performing at-risk students (Flores, 2017).

8. *Sundown Towns*--the towns that prohibited Negroes from being there after dark to promote racial cleansing (Loewen, 2018).

Significance of Study

This study was significant for anyone interested in what happened during the transition from segregation to desegregation, including local historians, community leaders, students, teachers, administrators, and professors. This study provided timeless information for future community leaders, educators, and students who had learned about this historical fact, which had remained hidden for six decades. Material not previously documented from this era was the perspective of the narratives of the six interviewees. Information within the stories that was not known emerged. For example, the coercing of Black students with scholastic prowess to attend White schools happened that was not well-known. The interviewing process shed light on this issue and more.

I coined the phrase "Culture Cancel-cation" in terms of desegregation. This term is meant to cancel out the culture of an entire group's means of educational progress. Culture Cancel-cation was a type of ethnic cleansing that was the indoctrination of a dominant culture. Culture was a group's values, traditions, interactions, and deemed norms that were a part of their way of life as social, interpretative traits (Cremaschi, et al., 2021). The word cancel means a declaration to cease action based on the value system of a dominant culture (Norris, 2021). Those who resisted the efforts of desegregation had the belief in canceling this advancement in our history. The etymology of cation came from the Greek term *kation*, meaning to go down or the act of going down (Whewell & Faraday, 1834). The doctrine of Culture Cancel-cation was to declare that erasing a group's value system and traditions needed to commence, despite the landmark decision of desegregating the schools.

There was a trend in society called cancel culture. Cancel culture is the notion of erasing the traditions of individuals' unfavorable behavior from the public eye (Greenspan, 2020). One of the earliest mentions of cancel culture was from Myles McNutt, an assistant professor from Old Dominion University about the "cancel culture" of unrenewed television series within a particular season (Greenspan, 2020). Desegregation was unacceptable and unfavorable amongst the masses in the South. Desegregation canceled the education of Black cultural relevance in the classroom (Ortiz, et al., 2018).

In regards to Black culture, the term Black means a person with dark-pigmented skin (Quander & Froneberger, 2020). However, over the years, people used other terminologies to determine the identity of increased melanin in the skin: African, *Colored*, *Negro*, Afro-American, Black, and African American. The use of *nigger* and *nigra* is in textual context to display the disparaging and insulting mannerisms toward Blacks. The derivative of nigger is from the Latin word *niger*, meaning the color black (Kennedy, 2001). Certain Southerners used the derogatory term *nigra* as a plural form of *nigger*. Pryor (2016) stated that the use of *nigger* repressed Black mobility in America after slavery. The use of *nigger* and *nigra* (meaning to blackwash) was only from a historical context, as with the terms *Colored* and *Negro*. I employed the identifying term *Black* because the distinction of the identity of my race of people has evolved (Quander & Froneberger, 2020).

Educational research of this nature is of interest to students and alumni of William H. Spencer High School. Local and Southern historians read first-hand accounts of the civil rights leaders of Columbus, Georgia. The Hammurabi Black History Institute in Columbus, Georgia, owned and operated by Mr. Johnnie Warner, housed a copy of this research for its archives. For

these reasons, the narrative inquiry of looking through the lens of desegregation from those who lived it was essential to the historical construct of Columbus, Georgia.

Summary

Professor William Henry Spencer pioneered furthering the educational opportunities for Black students in Columbus. At the turn of the 20th century, Professor Spencer became the Supervisor for Colored Students in the area. Professor Spencer's strong work ethic, integrity, and assimilated paternalism created a high reputation for collaborating with fellow board members and philanthropists to promote a vocational high school for Blacks. Professor Spencer passed away in 1925. The quest to open a high school for Blacks remained alive. A vocational high school opened and named William H. Spencer High School posthumously in Professor Spencer's honor.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Understanding the plight of Blacks in the South involved writing from a historical context. Citing the beginnings of Columbus, Georgia, and what led to the lack of opportunities for Blacks sets the stage for how Professor Spencer experienced resistance from the school board in opening SHS. Particularly, this background information showed the reader what the participants experienced from a historical lens. To understand where you are, know where you have been. Peterson (2022) conferred that understanding the capitalism of race in settler colonialism was essential to analyzing historical narratives. The hegemony of the inequities of race was the basis of ethnic cleansing or culture cancel-cation.

The Establishment of Columbus: The Aftermath of the Civil War

The establishment of Columbus, Georgia was in 1828 and is located along the Chattahoochee River (Columbus Consolidated Government, 2022). The town's location on the river's fall line provided hydropower that increased the wealth and growth of the mills of Columbus (Lupold, 2004). Judge Ulysses Lewis was Columbus' first elected mayor by popular vote, with the title of *intendant* (Columbus Daily Enquirer, 1916). "An intendant held the reins of government of a community in the same way as did the mayor of larger municipalities in those days" (Columbus Daily Enquirer, 1916, p. 4).

Cotton was king during Columbus' infancy and the rise of the textile mills brought wealth to Columbus. The Creek Indians lived to the west of the town until the 1836 Creek War. The aftermath of the Creek War brought with it the Trail of Tears, where Columbus settlers exiled the Creek Indians to live on reserved land. The 1850s brought the development of railroads to Columbus, which created a way for a larger commercial market to send goods more efficiently. By 1860, Columbus' population was approximately 10,000. Approximately one

thousand residents were textile workers living in substandard tenement housing. The tenement houses were next to the mansions lining the riverfront known as the "golden row," indicative of the upcoming Gilded Age of the large gap between the wealthy and the poor (Lupold, 2004).

Columbus entered the Civil War and sent 1,200 men who fought in the Confederate army (Lupold, 2004). During the war, Columbus was a powerhouse in Confederate military manufacturing (Cox, 2015). Columbus' prosperity declined in 1865 when the last battle of the Civil War, or as Southerners would call this conflict, The War Between the States, occurred in Columbus, Georgia (Cox, 2015). Columbus was a tycoon in the textile industry, yet the town suffered in the aftermath of the Civil War. Additionally, the emancipation of slaves in Columbus occurred on April 16, 1865, which was Columbus' Juneteenth, if you will.

The aftermath of the Last Battle in Columbus of the Civil War became a loss of the major workforce of slavery. This event left the lingering smoke of Jim Crow and the consuming fire of segregation. Columbus, Georgia, was in shambles (Columbus (GA) High History Class, 1912). The government went through a reformation and removed three political groups. Those groups were the White Southern Democrats, the political elite of the Old South, and the newly-elected freed Blacks (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2014). Columbus residents were without defined political distinctions.

One such Columbus resident who lived a politically nebulous life, balancing between the social strata of the old and new South, was Randolph L. Mott. Mott was a business magnate and a Unionist who heavily influenced the Republicans and other citizens during Reconstruction (Lupold, 2004). Despite Mott being a Unionist, he was slave owner. The day after the last battle in Columbus, Mott invited Major General James Wilson into his home. The invitation sent by Mott was to inform Wilson that he was a Unionist and to show how he flew the American flag at

his home (Bellware, 2006). Mott's home was a glorious part of the "golden row" of mansions against the Chattahoochee River. During Major General Wilson's visit, he ordered his troops to burn of all of the warehouse mills, except for Mott's. The Mott House, formerly known as the Calhoun-Griffin-Mott House, was the last surviving structure of the Civil War (Thompson, 2014). Mott became Mayor Pro-Tem of Columbus and a trustee of the Freedmen's Bureau. Mott died in a train accident in 1881. Mott is in an unmarked grave in the historic Linwood Cemetery due to his faithfulness to the Union or his known frugality (Bellware, 2006). Just like General Wilson's troops burned the mills while visiting Mott, Mott's house was coincidentally destroyed by fire September 2014. Mott's legacy of governmental influence laid the groundwork for the birth of the Republican party in Georgia, the rise of Industrialization in Columbus, and promoted racial harmony, not equality, in order to rebuild the city (Lupold, 2004).

North and South: The Carpetbaggers and Scalawags

The aftermath of Reconstruction brought about two groups nicknamed the *carpetbaggers* (those from the North who desired to profit from the South) and the *scalawags* (those who were Southern-born radicals), whose mission was to revitalize the South for political and economic gain. Following the formation of these groups was the election of *Negroes* to offices in Georgia (Columbus (GA) High History Class, 1912). Carpetbaggers and scalawags had their opposition to the Reconstruction Era because the scalawags wanted to maintain the antebellum ways of the South, and the carpetbaggers migrated to the South to seize an opportunity to acquire land based on greed (Tunnell, 2011). Eventually, the carpetbaggers and the scalawags were out of office, as well as the *Negroes*. The Ku Klux Klan was a prime force in marginalizing the *Negroes* during the Reconstruction Era (Columbus (GA) High History Class, 1912).

The Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan, from the Greek word "kyklos," meaning to encircle, was pivotal in validating segregation, lynching, and oppression throughout the South (Wormser, 2004). William Simmons, a former Methodist minister, founded a sector of the Ku Klux Klan in Stone Mountain, Georgia in 1915. That same year, D. W. Griffith's silent film entitled *Birth of a Nation* premiered to glorify the Ku Klux Klan and to disparage Blacks. This fictional account details the stereotype of Black men (White men in blackface) who desire to have a voice in politics and to rape White women. In one of the scenes, a White woman leaps off a cliff to her death when faced by a Black man attempting to rape her (Corliss, 2015). The film was in response to the Atlanta race riot of 1906 to protect White women, to recruit members interested in the Ku Klux Klan, and to justify the rising hatred against Blacks (Wormser, 2004). The Atlanta race riot was a three-day Jim Crow massacre of violence against Blacks based on the fear of social intermingling and the increase of the Black working class (Kuhn & Mixon, 2022). The film, like the Ku Klux Klan, perpetuated the obliteration of any harmonious interaction between Blacks and Whites, which led to more instability in Georgia.

Government and Education in Georgia: An Introduction

As a response to the instability in Georgia, President Andrew Johnson devised a Presidential Plan of Restoration and appointed James Johnson as a provisional governor of Georgia in 1865 (Hollingworth, 1935; Lupold, 2004). James Johnson presented the Thirteenth Amendment to the legislature. Five days later, he ratified the amendment that ended the institution of slavery (Hollingsworth, 1935). Some of the Georgians did not favor Johnson's platform because African slaves were the primary workforce. In response to the settlers' disdain, the citizens elected Charles Jenkins as governor. Governor Jenkins' main platform was building

an educational system for the state. During his inaugural speech, he proclaimed that providing formative educational opportunities was the responsibility of its citizens. At this meeting, the governor created a plan to devise a common school concept. The creation of the committee called Public Education and Free Schools' planning efforts were underway across the state (Hollingsworth, 1935). In 1866, Columbus formed the standard school concept plan known as the public school system (Muscogee County School District, 2008).

Education in Columbus and Georgia: The Early Years

Columbus was one of the first areas in Georgia to formulate a public school system. In addition to the public school system, Columbus formulated a school for kindergarten-aged children (Columbus (GA) High School History Class, 1912). Governor Jenkins signed the bill called *An Act to Provide for Education and to Establish a General System of Georgia Schools* in 1866. The act outlined the common schools' provisions (Hollingsworth, 1935). The issue with this proposed bill is that it did not go into effect until 1868. This gave the state time to recover from the war (Hollingsworth, 1935). In the interim, towards the end of 1866, the common schools and pauper schools did not have any revenue to function and became defunct (Jones, 1889). The only citizens considered to attend school were Whites and not the newly freed Blacks. Despite not being able to attend school, the White Southerners were fearful about how the *Negroes* took advantage of their new freedom. At the 1867 State of the Union address, President Andrew Jackson posited that the *Negroes* were incapable of holding governmental roles and that there would be no success for the country if left in their hands. Essentially, *Negroes*, if left on their own, will revert to being barbarians (Wagner, 2015).

Culture Cancel-cation: Separate, but Equal?

Etched in the minds of those who encountered the doctrine of segregation was when Columbus was separate, but equal. The city of Columbus had historical reminders of its antebellum past. Since 1866, the Ladies Memorial Association of Columbus celebrated its Confederate heritage on April 26 at the historic Linwood Cemetery of interred Confederate soldiers, known as Memorial Day (Fabery, 2020). Geggel (2016), as quoted by Dr. Richard Gardiner, a former history professor at Columbus State University, commented that the national commemoration of Memorial Day started in Columbus, Georgia. Dr. Gardiner, along with Daniel Bellware (2014), wrote *The Genesis of the Memorial Day Holiday*, a text that historically supported the activities of those who memorialized Civil War patriots and dispelled the myths of several other cities that have claimed to have started Memorial Day. Memorial Day became a national holiday in 1868 (Geggel, 2016).

Southerners referred to the Civil War as the "Lost Cause," which was a euphemism to take away the sting of the Confederate defeat (Paradis, 2020). A cause in Columbus that was not a lost cause was the establishment of the Muscogee County School District (Muscogee County School District, 2008). The Reconstruction Era came with the uncertainty of how to fund the city and the county schools. Before consolidating the district in 1950, Columbus had divisive lines between Muscogee County and Columbus City schools. The city schools thrived, while the county schools suffered (Hyatt, 2016). The industrialization in the city grew exponentially (Lupold, 2004).

A State of Redemption: Black Codes, Lynching, and the Rise of Paternalism

Georgia was the first state to approve a criminal code in this country. Long before the rise of the Civil War, The Georgia Code of 1816 references Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries*

on the Laws of England (Surrency, 1979). These statutes were proportionate to the crimes committed, which for Blacks was not the same. The way to keep Blacks in their place by instituting separatist Black Codes birthed the acts of segregationist laws of Jim Crow in 1865 (Haley, 2016). The enacted Black Codes ensured that the South had the option of free labor, that the facilities remained separate, and to forbid interracial marriages. When Blacks refused to obey the law, oppressive acts were upon them, and in most cases, they paid with their lives (Meredith, 1940). Due to having dealt with these so-called "barbarians," some of the White Southerners requested a proclamation of a state of Redemption in 1873. This was a process of going back to the Southern ways of White supremacy, instead of complying with the laws of Reconstruction (National Endowment of the Humanities, 2014). This proposal secured a renewed position of control for Whites. The perception of the newly freed Blacks, especially the men, was a threat to society due to the fear of raping the South's most prized possession—White women (Haley, 2016).

Bestowed with the burden of forced labor codes and other cruel acts, Blacks were second-class citizens. The preconceived notion of Blacks was that they were untrustworthy and behaved like children (Meredith, 1940). John T. Brown was the principal keeper of the Georgia Penitentiary, who wrote to the Georgia governor that there was only one difference between a *Colored* convict and a Colored person: the convict would finally pay for the crimes committed. Brown goes on to say that the entire race was defunct of character (Brown, 1876, as stated by Streeter, 2004).

As John T. Brown (1876) exclaimed, the entire race of *Colored* people was guilty, whether a crime was committed or not. The feelings of some of the Southern Whites about Blacks were that they were dastardly, lawless, and needed structure. Hence, the theory of

paternalism came into existence. According to female scholar and historian Guion G. Johnson (1957), paternalism was the doctrine where the White race had an obligation to teach the Black inferior race the tenets of being an American citizen. Blacks showed their appreciation by displaying hard work, maintaining loyalty, and obedience (Johnson, 1957). The idea of paternalism is significant to note because the doctrine taught that segregation was in place for the protection of *Negroes* (Johnson, 1957). Unfortunately, these embedded findings of instructional indoctrination of Blacks were within the present-day legal system, the social structure, and the educational system. The higher the level one reached on the social strata due to race or caste, the better the opportunity was for attaining the best education. *Negroes* wanted to have the opportunity of full citizenship. The only acquired right was through attending school.

Alfred Owen Blackmar, II: The Father of the High School in Columbus

School Board Trustee and lauded financier Alfred Owen Blackmar II was known in Columbus as the "father of the high school." In 1890, he presented a resolution to the school board to open Columbus High School. Blackmar served in several leadership capacities in Columbus, including on the city council, as Mayor Pro-Tem, as the city treasurer, a bank administrator, and a steamboat captain who helped bring materials to Columbus by way of the river during the War Between the States (Schley, 2018). Columbus had the kindergarten program and elementary education for Black children, however, there was no consideration for secondary education for Blacks at the turn of the 20th century. Forty years passed, the symbolic number of fulfillment and completion, before there was an established high school for Black students. Professor William H. Spencer was a contemporary of Blackmar, a catalyst who attempted to persuade the school trustees, and was at the helm of wanting a secondary vocational education for Black students.

The Rise of Industrialization in Columbus: The Lowell of the South

As Columbus grew, industrialization increased, and business owners began to rebuild (Lupold, 2004). The textile factories grew to the point where Columbus earned the motto, "The Lowell of the South," as the namesake of a city in Massachusetts known for its textile enterprise (Martin, 1874). The aftermath of the war found some business leaders who desired racial civility but not equality (Lupold, 2004). Columbus officials resisted the need for equality and witnessed the desegregation transition in the form of an outcry between the community leaders and the former Fort Benning's military minority families. Finding a middle ground was a daunting task for both sides.

The History of Separate, but Equal: Plessy v. Ferguson

The history of the "separate but equal" doctrine was the decision made in the landmark case of Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 (Bernstein, 1962). The case centered around Homer Plessy, a known activist, who did not get up from his seat on a segregated train. Plessy violated the law based on the 1890 *Separate Car Act* in Louisiana that mandated separate traveling areas for Blacks and Whites (Plessy & Ferguson Foundation, 2022). This act of defiance led to the landmark case, which exposed the blatant racial injustice in Louisiana. Convicted by a New Orleans court of violating the 1890 law, Plessy filed a petition against the presiding judge, Honorable John H. Ferguson, where Plessy claimed that the law violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Equal Protection Clause explains the deprivation of life and liberty as a citizen without due process (Spring, 2005).

Plessy was a member of the Citizens Committee, and its mission was to change the enforced segregation laws across the South. The Citizens Committee resided in the historic Faubourg Tremé community in New Orleans. Faubourg Tremé was the hub of jazz and the home

of one of the most diverse neighborhoods in America (Johnson & Plaisance, 2012). Tremé was an area concentrated with free people of color, Creoles and Mulattoes, who fought against marginalization and protested for social justice (Gourdet, 2005). Homer Adolph Plessy, who agreed to be the plaintiff in the case aimed at evaluating the law's constitutionality, was of mixed race; he described himself as an octoroon, which was seven-eighths Caucasian and one-eighth African blood (Spring, 2005). Being not purely African American led Plessy to believe that the jury would find him more acceptable, representing an "interracial democracy" (Elliot, 2001, p. 287). The Willie Lynch syndrome mentally persuaded Plessy. The basis of the Willie Lynch syndrome doctrine was from The Willie Lynch letter. The Willie Lynch letter of 1712 was composed as a "how-to" on keeping slaves separated by psychologically programming the slaves by skin color. For example, slaves worked in the field to work who possessed darker complexions while those who had lighter skin tones worked in the plantation house. This practice is the story behind the house *nigger* and the field *nigger* (X, 1963). This philosophy developed a hierarchical measure of the lighter the skin, the more appealing you were on the plantation (Lynch, 1999).

The challenge of the appeal was the equal protection clause from a constitutional standpoint on the issue of segregated transportation (Bernstein, 1962). The Citizens Committee planned each part of the process in the appeal of Homer Plessy, but the process was to no avail. The Supreme Court concluded that the states upheld their segregationist practices, but in the case of Plessy, the court did not find a suitable precedent to support the ruling (Bernstein, 1962). Essentially, the court did not consider Plessy's case or his color. Bernstein (1962) observed that in the Plessy v. Ferguson case, the nation reneged on its promise of equity for all Americans. The decision left Blacks with an intensified feeling of inferiority (Bernstein, 1962).

The Louisiana Board of Pardons absolved Homer Adolph Plessy in 2021, 125 years after the case that ruled the Jim Crow laws plausible (Plessy & Ferguson Foundation, 2022). The Plessy *and* Ferguson Foundation is a partnership of direct descendants of the two opposing sides of that monumental case. These descendants now work together to create activities that uphold unity and understanding (Plessy & Ferguson Foundation, 2022).

Columbus, Georgia in 1896: The Plight of Lynching

The climate in Columbus, Georgia in 1896 was more horrific based on the Jim Crow laws and the furtherance of White supremacy. On the first of June, a vicious mob of White Southerners attacked two Black men, Jesse Slayton and Will Miles. White supremacists mutilated their bodies by lynching on Broad Street. Slayton allegedly assaulted a White woman. From the onset of the court hearing, some of the White citizens in Columbus took the law into their own hands (Gardiner & Clio Administration, 2018). The White mob that ensued shot Slayton inside of the courtroom, tied a noose around his neck, and proceeded to drag his body through the Columbus streets.

Still not feeling vindicated, the mob entered the jail and accosted Miles, who had been in jail for years for the same crime, but ended in a mistrial. The desecrated bodies of Slayton and Miles' hung from a large tree on Broad Street. Handwritten warnings hung from the necks of the bludgeoned men to other Black citizens that this same horrific tragedy could happen to them. The White locals of Columbus were silent on this issue, even though it happened during broad daylight in the middle of the busiest street downtown (Gardiner & Clio Administration, 2018).

The next morning, the Columbus Enquirer-Sun's first-page headline stated, "Justice! Slaton and Miles, the Rapist Hung to Same Tree, Slaton Taken from the Court Room, and then the Break Made for the Jail. Both Bodies Riddled" (Harris, 1896, p. 1). The newspaper article

further informed the readers of the horrific details of Miles and Slayton's bodies, which hung on Broad Street (Harris, 1896).

Buried in unmarked graves at the Porterdale Cemetery are Slayton and Miles. Porterdale Cemetery, formerly known as the *Colored* Cemetery, is a historically Black cemetery of the interments of several notable Columbus residents, such as "Mother of the Blues" singer Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, longtime educator Professor Samuel Charleston, and prominent mortician and barber Mr. Edward "Big" Sherald (Gardiner & Clio Administration, 2018). Each year, Mr. Johnnie Warner, proprietor and founder of the Hammurabi Black History Institute, plans a memorial for Slayton and Miles. Johnnie Warner said, as cited by Lambertsen (2015), "We should take this situation and demand respect. Take this situation and demand apologies, and demand atonement so we can come together as a people: black people, and white people" (WRBL, para. 3). Mr. Warner's efforts kept the memory of this tragic event alive. The city officials planned to erect a historical marker at the location of the Slayton and Miles lynching. Norman Hardman, Jr., chairperson of the Muscogee County Community Remembrance Project, in partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative, will place a marker in remembrance of this horrific act. The Muscogee County Community Remembrance Project's mission is to honor those who have died through the acts of lynching and to bring the community together by telling the truth in hopes that the community can move forward in racial harmony and justice (Chattahoochee Valley Episcopal Ministry, 2022). This occurrence played a significant role in the separatism in Columbus and the marginalization of the efforts of internalizing fear in Blacks. These feeling infiltrated through every aspect of living in the South, including the educational system. Lynching was a torturous practice in victimizing Black citizens across the South.

The Cancel Culture-cation of Jim Crow

Not only did the torment of Black citizens beyond measure happen through the acts of lynching, but the damnation of segregationist practices of Jim Crow made life even worse for Blacks (Cottrol, et al., 2003). Segregation crept into Southern communities like a thief in the middle of the night, stealing away the limited hopes that the Emancipation Proclamation provided. American journalist and educator Melba Patillo-Beals is no stranger to segregation. She was one of the "Little Rock Nine" students who integrated Little Rock, Arkansas' Central High School. Patillo-Beals (2011) said that Blacks were not born expecting to be separate and unequal. The acts of segregation stole small amounts of a person's self-esteem every day.

The creation of the Jim Crow laws was an Americanized version of apartheid. Jim Crow was a minstrel show character depicting blackface, a demeaning caricature in American history (Pittman, 2000). Jim Crow laws enacted the separation of every publicly accessible facility. Displayed emblazoned labels above the restrooms and water fountains were "White" and "*Colored*" on each. *Negroes* sat in the balcony area of the movie theaters. When *Negroes* took the oath in court, their hands could not touch the same Holy Bible as Whites. In regards to transportation, buses and railways had separate seating. If a White patron entered a bus or railway that was at total capacity with seated *Negroes*, a *Negro* had to get up out of his or her seat to accommodate the White patron (Pittman, 2000).

Moreover, Whites and *Negroes* did not attend the same schools. From elementary schools to graduate schools, *Negro* students could not attend schools with White children. Segregation was the law of the land and the order of the day. The essence of Jim Crow became a lasting figure in the South for years to come (Cottrol, et al., 2003). The laws of Jim Crow subjected Black citizens in Columbus, Georgia to oppressive acts. The Black students in Columbus,

Georgia were not able to attend Blackmar's Columbus High School because of their race and based on the laws of segregation. This information led to the problem of my study. The problem addressed in this study was to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. Further, how did the participants believe their experiences have informed their present lives? The participants had firsthand accounts of attending separate schools. Unfortunately, the participants remembered one of the most disparaging parts of the Jim Crow era, that being the act of lynching.

Canceling the Culture through Lynching: 1899

The last year of the 19th century brought with it additional instances where the brutalized measures of lynching happened to Blacks in Georgia. White Southerners did not allow those who represented the law to prevail for allegations of crimes of Blacks against Whites. Angered by the overwhelming lynching practices in Georgia, Abolitionist, suffragist, and journalist Ida B. Wells and Chicago Detective Le Vin (1899) documented a book entitled, *Lynch Law in Georgia*. The text delved into the actions behind the lynching of twelve Blacks over six weeks. Wells painted a picture for the Atlanta Constitution of the deplorable reality of lynching in Georgia in raw, candid details (Wells & Le Vin, 1899). Wells (1899) cited Le Vin, a Chicago detective who witnessed a lynching firsthand. Le Vin went to Georgia at the request of a group of Colored citizens in Chicago. What Le Vin found was indescribable. Le Vin spoke to a White man who mentioned that a *nigger* had killed a White man. The White man further says that the lynching happened because *niggers* did not know their place and received too much education. The White man told Le Vin that the influence of Southern *niggers* who became too arrogant was by the Northern *niggers*. Le Vin reported that to the White Southerners, all *Negroes* represented those

that needed to die, concluding that the livelihood of the *Negro* was insignificant in Georgia (Barnett-Wells & Le Vin, 1899).

The atmosphere was tyrannous in Georgia. The social disposition of Blacks getting too much education was a major conundrum for the South. If Blacks received an education, the learned material would be dangerous for Whites in the South. Educational opportunities were a way for Blacks to have navigated the ills of being second-class citizens who had the rights governed to them as Americans based on the Fourteenth Amendment. Wells & Le Vin (1899) published the account of the lynching in Georgia in June. By November of the same year, the question concerning the right to vote was an issue because voting translated into the power that promoted change. Representative Hardwick from Georgia wanted to end Black suffrage (Dittmer, 1980).

The Hardwick Bill

Georgia State Representative Thomas Hardwick proposed a bill to keep Blacks from having the right to vote through the ever-popular grandfather clause. Black educational leaders such as Henry Hugh Proctor, W. E. B. DuBois, and John Hope Franklin lobbied against the bill, as well as a coalition of white laborers and ministers (Dittmer, 1980). The Black leaders, led by W. E. B. DuBois (1899), penned a rebuttal to the legislature entitled *A Memorial to the Legislature of Georgia on the Hardwick Bill*. DuBois (1899) claimed that for Georgia to have been a prosperous state, there must have been an impartial government of the law. There should have been nothing fraudulent getting in the way of justice. The qualifications of voters should have been an education, the right to own property, or both. The bill was unnecessary and defeated. The Democrats did not support the bill because they needed the *Negro* vote against the

White primary (Dittmer, 1980). Twenty-four *Negro* leaders and White Southern pacifists ended the Hardwick Bill of 1899.

Booker T. Washington's Philosophy on Southern Life

When thinking about educational leadership for Blacks in the South, Booker T. Washington comes to mind. In 1900, the Atlanta Constitution interviewed Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington on the Hardwick Bill. His response was in the complete Washingtonian fashion. Booker T. Washington was an accommodationist who remained neutral on racial matters. He did not discuss the Hardwick Bill. He focused on providing agricultural and industrial opportunities for Blacks. Washington (1900) spoke frankly about race relations in the South. He said that he wanted what was best for both the Whites and Blacks. Washington eased the minds of Whites by stating that Blacks wanted to progress in their world. He believed that Whites treated Blacks fairly. Blacks should have aligned themselves with Southern White men by "casting his lot more closely to them" to stop the racial confusion (p. 2).

Booker T. Washington's philosophy of "casting his lot more closely" with the Southern White man mirrored his message five years prior at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. Lauded as one of the most prolific speeches in American history, Washington's (1895) Atlanta Compromise Speech, as cited by Harlan (1974), encouraged Whites to cast down their bucket among Blacks. Blacks complied with this philosophy by running the factories and cropping the land, thereby being unresentful and law-abiding. Washington (1895) used the metaphor of the hand in segregation that we could be as separate as the fingers that belonged to one hand in progress.

There was not a Black man in Washington's time like him, whose influence garnered the respect of President Theodore Roosevelt, Southern governors, White millionaires, and nobility

alike. Booker T. Washington was a member of the *Negro* elite. In the obliged spirit of Washington, he stood on his philosophy of Blacks who worked with their hands, stayed in their place, and remained in their world of segregation. Washington spoke on his beliefs on segregation like a true Southern gentleman. Washington built successful relationships with his counterparts. The county of his residence's voting registrar gave him a lifetime voting registration that he hung proudly at his estate (Harlan, 1971). However, the right to vote became difficult for Blacks across the South.

The Influence of W.E.B. DuBois

Dr. William Edward Burghardt DuBois initially applauded Booker T. Washington's stance on Black elites who took advantage of economic prosperity (Holt, 2008). However, as DuBois worked toward economic enterprise, he began to witness how Washington had persuaded the opinions of Blacks through his influence as the founder of Tuskegee (Holt, 2008). DuBois' philosophy was in direct opposition to the accommodating approach of Dr. Booker T. Washington.

Unlike Booker T. Washington's life under the suppression of slavery, W.E.B. DuBois was born free in Massachusetts (Holt, 2008). DuBois received a classical, college preparatory education as the high school's first Black graduate in 1884 and his post-secondary education at Harvard University, the first Black to earn his Ph.D. there in 1895 (Holt, 2008). The racism of the South presented itself to W.E.B. DuBois when he enrolled at Nashville's Fisk University for his post-doctoral studies. He wrote his manifesto entitled, *The Study of the Negro Problems* (1898), where he spoke on *Negro* social issues of that time. The answer to the alleviation the *Negro* problems and to advance the *Negro* community was to endeavor in higher education (Wendling, 2018).

DuBois founded the Niagara Movement, as well as the National Association for the Advancement of *Colored* People (NAACP). Dr. DuBois published two Black magazines, *The Crisis* and *Phylon*, and received many other accolades and recognitions (Holt, 2008). In 1896, Northern Whites began to see the excellence of Blacks and coined the *Talented Tenth*. In 1903, DuBois adopted that term and authored an essay on how college-educated *Negroes* improved the condition of the race (Battle & Wright, 2002). DuBois (1903) wrote *The Souls of Black Folk*, which examined the problem of race in America and the phenomenon of double consciousness (Holt, 2008). Double consciousness is the philosophy that Blacks lived in two separate worlds, a spiritual, inner one, and an outside world of being a *Negro* (Pittman, 2016).

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), DuBois opined on the plight of identity by saying he became invisible to the world due to the color of his skin. Dubois remarked that he felt best when he outscored his counterparts on an academic examination or in a competitive race. Double consciousness was the ability to see himself through someone else's eyes to see a different perspective. DuBois saw himself with his own eyes as well. He understood that he was "an American, a *Negro*; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (DuBois, 1909, p. 8).

DuBois cited an account of the status of Black Americans at the turn of the 20th century. From political, social, and spiritual standpoints, he questioned the freedom of being an American, while he lived a life behind the "veil" of being Black (Barnes, 2003). This was the doctrine of double consciousness. The dichotomy of the philosophies of the accommodating industrialism of Booker T. Washington and the militant intellectualism of W.E.B. DuBois affected Blacks in their quest for educational pursuits and remains influential for Blacks today.

The defeat of the Hardwick Bill helped by providing Blacks with a political voice. The ruling of the following year of the Plessy v. Ferguson case represented that Plessy's voice helped Chief Attorney Thurgood Marshall to reference the 1947 case of Mendez v. Westminister in California. The Mendez v. Westminister case sought equality in education for Mexican Americans after turning away Sylvia Mendez from school, not based on her race, but based on her language barrier. Less than a decade later, Chief Attorney Marshall defended the landmark case on segregated schools based on race in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 (Padilla, 2023).

Brown v. Board of Education: The Great Equalizer to the Culture's Cancel-cation?

More than two centuries ago, the founding fathers of the United States of America penned seminal documents that spoke of independence and freedom. The population of the enslaved in the nation was at twenty percent. The Plessy v. Ferguson case upheld segregation. These activities set the stage that led to the landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954 was the Supreme Court case in which the justices ruled that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional (Cottrol, et al., 2003).

The background of the case started with a *Negro* parent named Oliver Brown who voiced his concerns over the education of his daughter, Linda Brown. Many other *Negro* parents joined in the case and changed the course of history. Chief Attorney Thurgood Marshall represented the group of *Negro* parents and had been a long-time strategist against the unfair, racist practices of school districts in the South. Thurgood Marshall later became the first Black Supreme Court Justice. The backlash of this unprecedented decision did not change overnight (Patterson & Freehling, 2001). Marshall emphasized during this tedious transition that the process made Black students invisible to mainstream America. The practice of segregation kept Black students

isolated and deprived them of association or competition on an academic level. Black students who remained segregated never knew how intelligent or worthy they were from a global perspective (Patterson & Freehling, 2001).

The mandate of Brown v. Board of Education, (Brown I) in Topeka, Kansas in 1954 and Brown v. Board of Education, (Brown II) in 1955 received a unanimous vote that the segregation of schools was unconstitutional (U.S. Court of Appeals, 2021). The Supreme Court mandated two decisions of de jure segregation due to the outright injustice in the South (Boodie, 2020). By overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine, the Court's decision in Brown v. Board of Education used the legal precedent that overturned laws enforcing segregation in other public facilities. The mandate was the impetus that created a positive change in the future direction of race relations (Patterson & Freehling, 2001).

Despite the undoubted impact of Brown v. Board of Education, the historic verdict fell short of achieving its primary mission of integrating the nation's public schools. Areas in the South resisted the integration process. This made it difficult for Black children and Black teachers alike (Siddle-Walker, 2020). The residuals of unlawful practices of segregation are recognizable today, leaving an indelible stigma on the Black community.

The Influence of Dr. Horace Tate in Georgia, The Resistance of Governor George Wallace, and The Dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

One of the most influential educators of desegregation in Georgia was Dr. Horace Edward Tate (Siddle-Walker, 2020). A Georgia native, Dr. Tate was the first Black to earn his doctorate at the University of Kentucky. Blacks could not earn a doctorate in Georgia during his time. For this reason, Black educational leaders' title was professor out of respect. Dr. Tate was a former Georgia school teacher, principal, executive director of the Black Georgia Teachers and

Education Association (GT&EA), and a Georgia state senator. According to Dr. Tate, the most formidable agent in advocating for Black children in the aftermath of Brown v. Board was through the work behind the scenes of Black teachers (Siddle-Walker, 2020). Dr. Tate spent his life advocating for equal rights for Black children. This premise led to my research questions, which were the need for how I investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. In addition, I inquired how the participants believed their experiences have informed their present lives? The tactical reasoning of Dr. Horace Taft and others was commendable in how they made strides in the right direction for educational opportunities for Black students in education.

There were concerns from White parents who did not want their children to attend school with Black children, fearing that this mixing would have led to other social areas of blending (Patterson & Freehling, 2001). The previous law permitted Caucasian students to have access to new materials and highly qualified teachers, while African American students had second-rate instructional materials, shoddy schoolhouses, and a lack of qualified personnel (Darling-Hammond, 1998). White parents did not want to subject their children to Black schools. Brown v. Board of Education ruled that African American students could have attended schools with Caucasian students, but there was no set direction on how to make this a reality. The mandate was to equalize education, ending the legal, former establishment of "separate but equal" education.

The case came with years of resentment and resistance from Southern leadership. On January 14, 1963, the newly inaugurated Governor of Alabama, George Corley Wallace (1963), stood before his constituents and shouted that Alabama was the great dixie of the confederacy

and that the people of the state needed to stand up to tyrannical acts of desegregation. Wallace ended his speech with the famous words that segregation was, for now, tomorrow, and forever.

In August of the same year, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stood before thousands at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., and expressed his vision of America since The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 by saying that 100 years later that the Negro is still not free. King (1963) went on to say that the crippling effects of segregation and poverty had subjected Negroes to be strangers in their own land, which left them in a shameful disposition. The obligation of Negroes' freedoms and rights as citizens not realized not fulfilled by the American government. The insufficiency of separate educational facilities and other public services was the reality. The separate, but equal doctrine was not, in fact, equal at all (Darling-Hammond, 1998). The problem of equality addressed in this study was the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. In addition, how do the participants believed their experiences had informed their present lives?

Governor Lester Maddox's Reign of Segregation by Pick-Rick: The Impetus of Culture Cancel-cation

Lester Maddox was the governor of Georgia during the latter half of the Civil Rights Movement and an ardent segregationist. The initial national encounter of his stance on civil rights was in 1964 as the owner of Pick-Rick, a local restaurant in Atlanta. Maddox refused to serve Black guests. He threw out three Black seminary students at gunpoint for attempting to dine at his establishment (Short, 1999). The following was what he yelled at the students in question, "You no good dirty devils! You dirty Communists!" He then pulled out his pistol and pointed it at them, telling them "Get the hell out of here or I'll kill you" (Short, 1999, p. 62).

Instead of his restaurant to have served Black patrons, Maddox defied the order and shut the restaurant down. Lester later sold his restaurant.

The media coverage that Maddox received from these actions led him to run for governor on a segregationist platform. The Ku Klux Klan endorsed him. His four-year term consisted of an agenda beleaguered with opposition to the desegregation of Georgia's schools. Maddox used his power and denied Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s body of lying in the capital in repose after King's assassination. Maddox was quoted, "Why should interracial societies and newspapers give so much publicity to lawlessness in the South since the Supreme Court desegregation ruling of 1954? If all this happened since 1954, could it be that said ruling had indirectly brought about the law determined by the US Constitution or by the members of the US Supreme Court?" (Maddox, 1971, as cited by Short, 1999, p. 41).

Governor Maddox's quote on discrimination mirrored the feelings of some of the residents of the South concerning desegregation. Southern Whites took the law into their own hands when Blacks allegedly committed crimes against Whites by lynching them in the streets. An illustration on the history of the racist corruption against Blacks before the turn of the 20th century found in Ida B. Wells and Le Vin written reports on lynching in Georgia found in horrified detail. The upholding of segregation reflected by Horace Plessy taking a seat in a passenger car and did not relinquish the seat to a White passenger. The courts denied his appeal in 1896 due to the laws that bound Plessy based on separate but equal. Professor Spencer had the foresight to see a better world for Black high school students, despite the Plessy v. Ferguson case of segregation. Spencer desired equality for all students before Governor Wallace exclaimed defiance of the federal law during his inaugural speech in 1963 (Carter, 1996). Spencer's mission was to create equity amongst students of color to attend high school in Columbus, Georgia.

Unfortunately, the inequality of student access still existed even after the founding of the high school. In light of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s (1963) proclamations for justice, and restaurateur-turned-Governor Lester Maddox's debauchery of overt racism, these melees did not thwart Professor Spencer's mission or legacy. During his lifetime, Professor Spencer created a precarious balance between his leadership in the school system and his desire to promote vocational education for African Americans. Spencer dedicated himself to appeasing the school board while furthering the change in his community (Spencer, n.d.). Spencer's actions led me to the problem addressed in this study, which was the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. How did the participants believe their experiences have informed their present lives?

Professor William H. Spencer

Professor William H. Spencer was a native son of Columbus, Georgia. Professor Spencer was born on September 17, 1858, seven years before the last battle of the Civil War. Henry Spencer, his father, was a blacksmith, but there were no records of his existence. In addition, there was no mention or record of his mother (J. Warner, personal communication, May 12, 2022). Spencer's siblings were Mary, Dora, Hattie, Ella, Leila, and Lidia; and a brother, Samuel. Figure 3 (below) was the official portrait of Professor Spencer during the height of his professional career.

Figure 3

The Official Portrait of Professor William Henry Spencer

Note. From "Early African American Education in Columbus and William H. Spencer," by Mahan, K. & Woodall, W. C., https://www.historiccolumbus.com/post/early-african-american-education-in-columbus-and-william-h-spencer. Copyright 2017 by Historic Columbus Foundation. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix C).

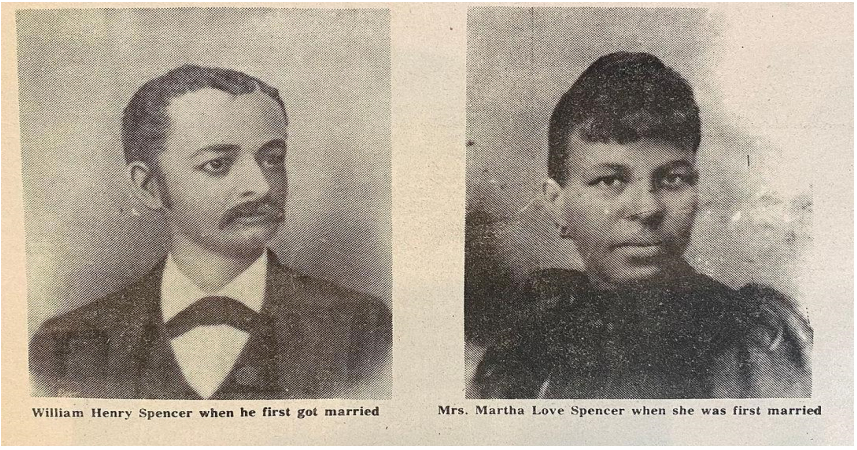
An elicited backdrop on this time in history began with the year before Spencer's birth, in 1857 when the Supreme Court ruled on the Dred Scott v. Sandford decision. Dred Scott, a Missouri slave, was seeking his freedom from his master, Sandford. Sandford had taken him into free territory (Brooks, 1913). After the court ruled against Scott, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney spoke his opinion in favor of the master. Chief Justice Taney said that Dred Scott was property, regardless of his travel, and that Blacks were part of an "inferior order" (Huebner, 2010, p. 17). This decision catapulted the institution of slavery in the South for the next half of a century (Brooks, 1913). This landmark decision was the backdrop of Spencer's environment in the South. Despite not being a slave, he was still a part of the *inferior order*. To rise above being a second-class citizen, Spencer endeavored to become an educator.

William H. Spencer's Time as an Educator

Even though slavery was an institution during William H. Spencer's life, enslavement was never a part of Spencer's trajectory. He had a desire to become a teacher. Spencer's desire became a reality in the Harris County School System, just north of Muscogee County. In 1879, Spencer transferred from Harris County and found a new position as a teacher at Claflin School, the first formerly enslaved Black people's school in Columbus. When the initial principal died, Spencer received a promotion to principal of Claflin School and Lowe School (formerly Fifth Avenue School) in Columbus (Spencer, n.d.). With this promotion, he attended school at the former Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia. As Professor Spencer furthered his education, the numbers grew at Claflin School to the point of being beyond capacity. In 1879, Spencer married the former Martha Love (see Figure 4) and together they had five children, Ethel, Annie, Alma, Pearl, and William Henry, Jr. (J. Warner, personal communication, May 12, 2022).

Figure 4

A Young William H. Spencer with the Former Martha Love



Note. From "Early African American Education in Columbus and William H. Spencer by Mahan, K. & Woodall, W. C., https://www.historiccolumbus.com/post/early-african-american-education-in-columbus-and-william-h-spencer. Copyright 2017 by Historic Columbus Foundation. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix C).

His high work ethic, coupled with his character, which was above reproach, prompted the school board to take notice of his professional drive for excellence. In 1896, famed historian and author Henry Davenport Northrop published a self-help text for *Colored* people that featured Professor Spencer (see Figure 5) among the greats in history. The textbook is a collection of people who have stood out in the race as an inspiration to others. The self-improvement portion of the text reviewed business practices, social decorum, and religious education (Northrop, et al., 1896).

Figure 5

Professor William H. Spencer Pictured as an Illustration of Progress

1. Prof. L. S. Clarke, Athens, Ga.
2. Prin. F. G. Smith, M.D., Nashville, Tenn. 3. Prof. A. W. McKinney, A.M., Huntsville, Ala.
4. Prof. P. G. Snelson, A.B., Athens, Ga.
5. Dr. R. F. Boyd, A.M., M.D., Nashville, Tenn. 6. Prof. W. B. Mathews, Cartersville, Ga.
7. Rev. Prof. J. A. Jones, Shelbyville, Tenn.
8. Prof. A. Tolliver, Marrietta, Ga. 9. Prof. W. H. Spencer, Columbus, Ga.

Professor Spencer made his mark as a man of character and purpose for his work in educational pursuits. Pictured (see Figure 5) among the educational emancipators before the turn of the 20th century, Professor Spencer proved himself as a beacon of success (Northrop, 1896). However, everyone did not see Spencer in such high regard. Mr. Alfonso Biggs, a local historian, said that Spencer embraced an "Uncle Tom" behavior. Spencer was too accommodating towards Whites and was an elitist. There was a perception that Spencer was not very amiable to Blacks not of his status (A. Biggs, personal communication, February 26, 1995).

The "Uncle Tom" trope came from Harriet Beecher Stowe's pre-Civil War novel Uncle Tom's Cabin (Stowe, 1852). A revolutionary in her right, Stowe's writing changed the nation.

When Stowe visited the White House in 1862, President Lincoln told her she was the little lady who started this great war (Lincoln, 1862, as cited by Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, 2024). Uncle Tom was a slave whose persona was docile, happy, faithful, and obedient to his master, depictions that were not favorable to Blacks who saw this as assimilationist practices (Pilgrim, 2000). The school board members and other contemporaries viewed Professor Spencer as a credit to his race, which is known as racial microaggression. Racial microaggressions were communications that some have adopted as adages that were inflammatory, derogatory, and insulting. The underlying message of someone being a credit to his or her race was that it was unlikely for someone of a particular racial background to be intelligent or extraordinary (Sue, et al., 2007). Professor Spencer was an assimilationist who knew how to navigate with his counterparts. Professor Spencer received lauded attention and became the first Supervisor of *Colored* Schools in Columbus, Georgia, in addition to maintaining his position as principal of Claflin School (Telfair, 1927; Bradshaw, 2016; Lauzon, 2019).

Nancy Telfair, the pen name for Mary Louise Jones Dubose (1927) reported that in 1880, the Claflin School became a part of Columbus Public Schools under the agreement that the school would forever be an edifice for the education of Blacks. Nancy Telfair was the first female writer for the Columbus Enquirer-Sun. Julia and Julian Harris said that she *tells the news fairly* and that Telfair sounded like a good Georgia name (Telfair, 1975). The Harrises were revolutionary. They used their editorial pages in the Columbus Enquirer-Sun and pushed for the betterment of Blacks in the South. The Harrises spoke out against the lynching of Blacks, that Blacks made livable wages, and for the provisions that Blacks had equal housing and educational opportunities. The writings earned the Harrises a Pulitzer Prize in 1925 for courageously speaking out against the status quo of the South (Shankman, 1974).

Blacks in Columbus witnessed the transforming voice of their local newspaper, and it offered a sense of hope for a new day. With this newfound growth, Black residents in Columbus wanted more educational opportunities for their children. In 1882, the school board voted on extending Claflin School to the ninth grade (Spencer, n.d.; Bradshaw, 2016). Professor Spencer did not want to add additional grades to Claflin due to the delay of *not* building a high school for Blacks (Spencer, n.d.). Professor Spencer did not want to settle for a minimal, gradual change. Spencer wanted a fully equipped secondary school for vocational training for Black students. The experiences of the graduates of SHS have been living proof that the work that Professor Spencer did on behalf of furthering the educational opportunities for Blacks was not in vain.

The Spencer House

In 1912, Professor Spencer built a neoclassical-style home located on the former Fourth Avenue (now Veterans Parkway, see Figure 6). The home is known as the Spencer House. At the turn of the century, the Spencer House contended with the other affluent-level homes in the Downtown area. When Black teachers came to Columbus and could not secure housing, Spencer opened his home to new *Negro* teachers who did not have a place to stay (J. Warner, personal communication, May 12, 2022). Spencer resided in his home until he died in 1925. He left his home to his daughters. In the late 1970s, Spencer's two remaining children, Ethel and Pearl, left the home for the school district. The Golden Owlettes, a SHS alumni group of distinguished ladies, purchased the home from the school district in 1978. The Golden Owlettes started in the living room of Ethel Spencer, Professor Spencer's daughter and former teacher of SHS. Ethel Spencer and the other selected ladies who graduated from Spencer wanted to give back to the school and Columbus. The founding members were Charlotte Frazier, Maretta Taylor, Bertha Manns, Elizabeth Scott, and Emma Cooksey (Historic Columbus, 2021). The Golden Owls were

the men's group with the same distinction. The unfavorable view of both groups by several alumni at SHS was due to the elitist, exclusive nature of the groups that had specific qualifications for entrance, much like a sorority or fraternity.

One of the founders of the Golden Owlettes and historic preservationist, Charlotte Frazier, along with former State Representative Calvin Smyre, and Janice Biggers, the Executive Director of the Historic Columbus Foundation, took the charge and executed plans to revitalize the home in 1981 (Historic Columbus, 2021). After the renovation, the home claimed witness to several parties and nuptials. Currently, the house does not have a designated purpose. Many of the Golden Owls and Owlettes are now deceased. The Golden Owlettes, presided by Ann Davis, host a Spencer House Renovation luncheon annually to keep up the necessities of the home. Despite The Golden Owlettes' efforts, the Spencer House continues to lie in ruin. The house has to have a consistent purpose that is in line with the legacy of Professor William H. Spencer. The home would be a perfect location for the African American Museum, emphasizing Black education in Columbus in honor of Professor William H. Spencer, Sr. Oh, to be of use!

Figure 6

The Spencer House as it Stands Today

Note. From "Early African American Education in Columbus and William H. Spencer," by Mahan, K. & Woodall, W. C., https://www.historiccolumbus.com/post/early-african-american-education-in-columbus-and-william-h-spencer. Copyright 2017 by Historic Columbus Foundation. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix C).

Furthering the Vision: The Power of Industrial Education

Professor Spencer's plan for building a vocational high school for Black students came from his work with Booker T. Washington, founder of the former Tuskegee Institute, George Gunby Jordan, former Confederate soldier and a business tycoon in the manufacturing industry in Columbus, and George Foster Peabody, a native of Columbus and philanthropist. These men believed that the power of industrial education helped citizens to rise above the ashes of poverty. Booker T. Washington saw the benefit of having students who had earned a high school diploma 40 miles east of his campus in Tuskegee. George Gunby Jordan believed in vocational education for the poor Whites who worked in his mills, but he did not see the same benefit for Black children (Bradshaw, 2016). George Foster Peabody, a native of Columbus, saw education for Blacks as a means of the advancement of commerce and community (Woolf, 1931).

The Progress of George Foster Peabody

George Foster Peabody (1931) had a different vision, where he believed that educating *Negroes* benefited all people. Peabody viewed the education of *Negroes* as a progression for the entire South, and that education was the *Negroes'* right to attain knowledge. Peabody felt that men produced segregation, ending his thoughts with the profound comment, "Oh if the people of the world would only learn to think" (Peabody, as cited by Woolf, p. 11). With his progressive mindset, George Foster Peabody, along with philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, encouraged George Gunby Jordan and Roland Daniel, who was the current school board chairman at the time, to have the insight to agree in building a high school for Black children.

George Gunby Jordan, a former Confederate soldier who did not think Black children needed an education, eventually had a change of heart. With Peabody's persuasion, Jordan found a sense of humanity and benevolence and helped to make William H. Spencer High School a reality (Bradshaw, 2016). These acts opened the doors for the SHS graduates to tell their stories about the history of segregation. The problem addressed in this study was the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. William H. Spencer High School opened in 1930, however, before the 20th century, education for Blacks in Columbus started during the Reconstruction Era by the Freedmen's Bureau (Grant, 1999).

The Empire State of the South

On the pages of the Columbus Enquirer-Sun, the daily newspaper, on June 25, 1887, were the closing exercises in detail of the *Colored* Schools. St. James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church hosted the well-attended exercises by friends, patrons, trustees, and the city council. The guests at the closing exercises visited the classrooms and saw what the students

were studying. The report from the attendees was that the teachers were qualified for their work. Professor Spencer's room was the last room visited and was highly complimented by the guests. Rev. R. H. Hall gave the graduation address to the classes. Rev. Hall extoled that the education that the Negro students were receiving made Georgia the *Empire State of the South*. Rev. Hall remarked that 198,000 Negro students had received their education in Georgia and that Negroes paid over $10,000,000 in property taxes, which made his race more progressive, educated, and enlightened (Harris, 1887).

Two years later, the Columbus Enquirer-Sun (Harris, 1889) documented Professor Spencer as the Principal of Sixth Avenue Public School, where it mentioned that "Prof. W. H. Spencer, principal, and his efficient corps of teachers were indefatigable in their exertions for the comfort and convenience of the visitors" (p. 3). The column included honor roll and honorably mentioned students, detailing the account of the graduation exercise (Harris, 1889). The article continued to commend the devotion of Professor Spencer and his teachers, claiming them as a credit to their race. In Figure 7 (below), Professor Spencer (standing, far left) and the school staff were in front of the historic St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church. Note the backdrop of the beautifully carved doors done by the enslaved behind the staff. The church functioned as a school during the week and had the support of the community to educate young scholars (Harris, 1889).

Figure 7

Faculty of Colored School with Professor Spencer, 1905

Note. From The Columbus Museum Archives by Gift of a Friend of the Museum, https://columbusmuseum.pastperfectonline.com/Webobject/0036B1EF-39CF-49AD-883A-677502741151. Copyright 2022 by The Columbus Museum. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix E).

There was an extreme measure of attention displayed upon the cultivation of the *Negro* race in an attempt to indoctrinate them into mainstream society. There was an innuendo mentioned in the newspaper of having the support of the residents in the *Negro* community who were honest and upright, as if it said that these moral precepts were not common to people of color (Harris, 1889). The population of attendance of *Negroes* in school continued to thrive, despite having to operate from community donations and student fees. There were five schools for Black children: Claflin, Sixth Avenue, Fourth Street, Mercer Street, and Twenty-eighth Street Private School in 1895 (Blanchard-Worsley, 1951).

Industrial Education for Blacks

In 1908, the faculty at Fifth Avenue School, the former Lowe School, expanded the curricula and provided industrial studies to Black students. There were two different study paths to choose from either as blacksmiths or working in the leather shop. By the next school year, those two curricular pathways of the industrial school were fully operational (Historic Columbus, 2021). In 1914, the erection of Wynnton High was a new high school for Whites, but in 1929, the building became Radcliff Elementary School. The school added grades in 1944, and the new Radcliff High School was the second senior high school for Blacks in Columbus. The first graduating class was in 1946, with three classes that followed. Radcliff High School's legacy was short-lived due to its destruction by fire in 1971 (Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2022).

The Claflin School became a part of the Muscogee County School District in 1921 with a full brick masonry building, by the 1940s, Claflin became a brick equalization school (The Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, 2022). Building equalization schools for Blacks in the mid-20th century prevented integration in the South (Dembling, 2015). Once the free schools opened, Whites prepared themselves by building a school system for their children (Lupold, 2004). The free Blacks who received an education encountered harassment and other oppressive acts from their counterparts. Currently, the refurbished Claflin School is affordable housing for veterans. The diligent work of the completed renovation was by the Friends of Claflin (Friends of Historic Claflin, 2022). Oh, to be of use!

The Citizens' Council: The Work of Culture Cancel-cation

White supremacists in the South developed groups called the Citizens' Council which redlined Blacks from receiving housing and kept them from being able to buy necessities from

White-owned stores. Further, redlining helped loan officers who refused to loan Blacks any money, creating economic terrorism (Dembling, 2015). However, Blacks in Columbus did not capitulate and created a community just for them known as “Sixth (Avenue) and Eighth (Street)” (Lupold, 2004). From a commercial standpoint, Blacks had an area affectionately called “Kinfolks’ Corner,” an intimate cooperative where local business owners, mill workers, and farmers could transact their goods and enjoy various forms of entertainment (Causey, 2019).

Kinfolks’ Corner: Black Folks’ Business

Kinfolks’ Corner held fond memories in the minds of those who experienced the interactions of the people and “traded " with the local businesses. Blacks traveled for miles around and congregated with their friends and relatives, hence the name of the area (Columbus Black History Museum & Archives, 2020). The irony of Kinfolks’ Corner was that the area was known as a slave auction block (Causey, 2019). Around the 1850s, there were two major slave-trading posts on Broad Street downtown, Harrison & Pitts, and Hatcher & McGehee. Broad Street, later renamed Broadway, was the hub of commerce in Columbus, and the slave trade was profitable. After World War II, the downtown businesspeople desired an area with a mixed design of shopping and dining. However, the creation of the shopping mall (Columbus Square Mall) caused the downtown district to decline, and by the 1970s, the area died. Downtown witnessed a metamorphosis, changing its name to Uptown. Columbus State University expanded their campus to Uptown, which created exponential growth (Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, 2022).

The renaissance of the artistically diverse Uptown was the canvas that failed to cover up the harsh reality of the segregated past of Downtown Columbus. In the earlier days of Downtown, Blacks endured having to enter the back doors of department stores to purchase

goods, the damning truth that Blacks could not try on any clothing before buying, or the insidious fact that lunch counters in stores like Woolworth's and H.L. Green prohibited Blacks to sit and dine (Traylor, 2016; R. C. Allen, personal communication April 18, 2022). These harsh realities were examples of Blacks who were not able to access retail amenities as their counterparts. These expressed inequities remained heavily in my study. The problem addressed in this study was the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia, and to examine how the participants believed their experiences had informed their present lives. One of the only ways Blacks combatted the problem of segregation was to seek educational opportunities. As Blacks attained more options to earn advanced degrees in states farther North, the mindset from W.E.B DuBois' philosophy and culture of the Talented Tenth became more evident as the upper middle class began to grow in Columbus (DuBois, 1903).

The Lunsfords' Legacy: The Culture of The Talented Tenth

At the turn of the 20th century, a prominent family that was the epitome of success in business and within the eyes of the residents was the Lunsford family. Mr. and Mrs. Watson T. Lunsford owned and operated a grocery store in "The Bottom," a *Negro* community on the lower end of an affluent area named Wynn's Hill. The Bottom was near the former Brookhaven Boulevard, now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (Historic Columbus, 2021). I wanted to collect additional research on "The Bottom" and I contacted the W. C. Bradley Memorial Library and inquired. The reference librarian interrupted my request and stated that "The Bottom" was considered a "slum area" and no historical records existed in their catalog.

I beg to differ, speaking from the perspective of my late grandmother, Mrs. Dorothy M. Price, who grew up in a two-story home with a wrap-around veranda on beautiful East Seventh

Street. Another fact not mentioned was the location of two lovely, crisply painted white homes with manicured yards each belonging to two sisters on former Glade Road that belonged to the late Mrs. Thelma Colquitt Sterling and the late Mrs. Ersa Colquitt Leonard (W. C. Bradley Memorial Library Reference Librarian, personal communication, October 3, 2001). "The Bottom" was a *Negro* community that had a mixture of residents who were working-class manual laborers and those who had professional careers in education, mortuary science. and ministry. According to Midtown, Inc. (2022), and organization that works to fortify the neighborhoods and businesses in midtown Columbus, The Bottom was located on land that lay low beneath Weracoba Creek at the bottom of Wynn's Hill. The literature from Midtown, Inc. described The Bottom area as a place of jumbled shanties. The improvement of this slum area was through federal and local funding that built the Warren Williams Housing Projects (Midtown, Inc., 2022). The late Mr. Robert Anderson, prominent financier and a member of the class of 1960, stated that he lived in 100-D in Warren Williams. Mr. Anderson described Warren Williams as a penthouse compared to other housing because he had running water and heat (R. Anderson, personal communication, February 15, 1998). Regardless of the amenities of the homes, the closeness of the communities gave the residents a sense of pride and an everlasting memory to behold.

Jerome Brooks (1994) interviewed Chinua Achebe, a critically acclaimed Nigerian writer. Achebe, as cited by Brooks (1994) dialogued in the interview with a rendition of a Nigerian Proverb, which said that until the lions had their own historians, the history of the hunt always glorified the hunter. Hence, why I chose to expound upon my own history. The rendering of an authentic story was from the lion's mouth. The Bottom was where Mr. and Mrs. Lunsford operated their grocery store in that beloved area, where customers bargained for their victual

necessities and there was an extension of credit. The Lunsford's often gave some of their customers the opportunity of selling their garden vegetables in their store for money to purchase their groceries (Historic Columbus, 2021).

Mrs. Elizabeth "Lizzie Mae" (née Pierce) and Mr. Watson T. Lunsford were members of what W.E.B. DuBois (1903) would call the *Talented Tenth*. The "Talented Tenth" was the group of exceptional, distinguished, college-educated Negroes who pushed the rest of the race forward (DuBois, 1903). This was DuBois' philosophy of the "Talented Tenth." DuBois (1903) stated that the Talented Tenth elevated anyone worthy of progress to a higher hierarchy. Two errors deterred this progress. One was the mistake that no one else could be a part of this talented pool. The other was that those below the line of success pushed those who were talented down to their level (DuBois, 1903).

The Lunsford philosophy, like W.E.B. DuBois', focused on social and economic progress and furthered the advancement of others. Mrs. Lunsford and her brother, Mr. Richard Pierce, constructed a three-story commercial building named the Pierce Building on the corner of Ninth Street and Fifth Avenue, referred to as "Magic Corner," due to the myriad of goods that were available for purchase, such as a restaurant, a clothing store, as well as professional office spaces and an auditorium for entertainment (Historic Columbus, 2021). Much like waving a fairylike wand, the Magic Corner had the necessary goods and services for leisure and lifestyle. The Magic Corner became a Black consumers' refuge, much like the Lunsford House (Historic Columbus, 2021).

The Lunsford House: A Refuge from Jim Crow

By 1941, Mr. and Mrs. Lunsford built a two-story Georgian Colonial Revival home on an entire city block on Lawyers Lane in the historic Wynnton. Much like the Spencer House, the

Lunsford House was akin to the homes in White affluent neighborhoods. Unfortunately, Mr. Lunsford passed away before the completion of the home. The use of the home was a place for upper-class and well-known *Negroes* to sleep who could not stay in White hotels. The Lunsford house was a meeting place during the Jim Crow era for the upper echelon by invitation-only organizations such as The Links, Inc., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Jack & Jill of America Inc., and the Junior Matrons (Historic Columbus, 2021).

The charter of the Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. became a reality in Mrs. Lunsford's home on Valentine's Day in 1948, formerly named Gamma Rho Sigma Chapter #188. The home was the epicenter of social and political advancement for Blacks. The Jim Crow laws prohibited Blacks from hotel accommodations. Mrs. Lunsford alleviated this prohibition as she graciously opened her home. She hosted many notable guests, such as pioneer educator Mary McLeod Bethune, jazz musician Louis Armstrong, local civil rights activist and physician Dr. Thomas Brewer, the President Emeritus of Morehouse College Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, and baseball greats Jackie Robinson and Roy Campanella (Historic Columbus, 2021). The Lunsford home still stands today as a beacon of prosperity for Blacks in Columbus (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8

The Historic Lunsford House in Columbus, Georgia

Note. From *Elizabeth Mae "Lizzie Mae" Lunsford: A Quiet Force* by Historic Columbus Foundation, https://www.historiccolumbus.com/post/elizabeth-mae-lizzie-mae-lunsford-a-quiet-force. Copyright 2017 by Historic Columbus Foundation. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix C).

The legacy of entrepreneurship saturated the Lunsford family lineage. Walter Lunsford, Mr. and Mrs. Lunsford's son, was a 1933 honor graduate from William H. Spencer High School. Walter Lunsford delivered the traditional Ivy Oration at graduation as the class treasurer (Lunsford, 2007). The adoption of the Ivy Oration for colleges and universities dates to the 1860s for Ivy League schools (Princeton University, 2010). The ivy plant is symbolic of spring and infinity (Bruno, 2009). A member of the class would plant an ivy plant against the chapel wall. During their senior class day activities, a selected member of the class gave a light-hearted speech with a touch of humor about their experiences in school (Carlton, 2021). The presentation of the Ivy Oration is no longer a part of the tradition at SHS. What has not changed is the expectation of students from the faculty and staff of SHS of excellence, much like the Ivy League tradition.

Walter Lunsford owned the Fox Deluxe Wholesale Beer Distributing Company, the Annex Restaurant, the Pierce Amusement Company, and Columbus' first Black taxi company (Historic Columbus, 2021). His business operations spanned over sixty years. Later in life, he owned a Shell Gas Station and The Sixth and Eighth Auto Service, a precursor to the present-day gas station and convenience store (Lunsford, 2007). Walter's life was a testament to the same pioneering spirit of his mother until his passing in 2006.

Mrs. Lizzie Lunsford spent her life fulfilling her quest for equality for Blacks in Columbus. Mrs. Lunsford assisted Primus King, who was a community activist, minister, and barber, and secured the right to vote in an all-White primary (Lunsford, 2007). The Columbus police arrested Primus King as he attempted to exercise his right to vote. Mrs. Lunsford was there each day in Macon for the proceedings of the lawsuit. Mrs. Lunsford helped to fund the release of Mr. King from jail, as well as for his legal defense. She supported Rev. Primus King throughout his legal proceedings. As a fear tactic, the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses in her yard and threatened to put an end to the lawsuit. The spouses of liberal White leaders in Columbus, like Mrs. Walter Alan Richards, ensured protection for Mrs. Lunsford and her family against any other attacks. Mr. Walter Alan Richards was an executive businessperson and civic leader. He became the president of Columbus' legendary Tom Huston's Peanut Company in 1932. Later in life, he served as Columbus' city manager, the mayor, and as Muscogee County School District's board chairperson (Blanchard-Worsley, 1951; Historic Columbus, 2021).

Mrs. Lunsford had influential ties to her community which helped her to navigate in circles that were atypical for Blacks during her time. Her economic prowess was extensive. She donated $15,000 to build the world's first Department of Defense Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and United Service Organization (USO) for African Americans on Fifth

Avenue. Mrs. Lizzie Lunsford's legacy of service above self continues to live in her granddaughter, Mrs. Lula Lunsford-Huff, the Tax Commissioner for Columbus, Georgia. She was an honors graduate from SHS in 1967. Lula Lunsford-Huff responded that she is very blessed to be a part of such a rich history. She is proud of who she is as a Lunsford and that the essence of her background is irreplaceable (Historic Columbus, 2021). Lula Lunsford-Huff's legacy has an enriching history of commerce and entrepreneurship, despite the degradation of segregation.

Even though race divided Columbus between the Whites and the *Colored* economically, socially, and politically, those barriers did not stop Mrs. Lizzie Lunsford from the American dream in her day (Traylor, 2016). Mrs. Lizzie Lunsford used her economic strength to support the Black community. She offered her residence for social events and her time for the furtherance of political equality until her passing in 1966 (Columbus Black History Museum and Archives, 2018; Historic Columbus 2021). Despite the philanthropic activities that Mrs. Lizzie Lunsford afforded to Columbus, the Culture Cancel-cation continued to thrive in the city, even when Mrs. Lunsford traveled out of town. Segregationist practices dictated that she planned her excursions based on when and where she could receive accommodations. This aspect led me to the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia.

Green Book: Traveling While Black

Regardless of prominence, the affluent, middle-class Blacks like the Lunsfords were no different on the highways. *Negroes* found it difficult as they traveled beyond day trips, especially in the South. Victor Green, a businessperson, and postal worker, created *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, which outlined all of the amenities of travel where *Negroes* could dine, secure a

room, or purchase gas. The publishing of the book was from 1936 until the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Victor Green, along with his wife Alma, researched and vetted establishments that accepted *Negro* business, both nationally and internationally. Travelers secured safety from the threatening dangers of Jim Crow and the terror of Southern areas that were known as *sundown towns* (Hall, 2021). Sundown towns prohibited *Negroes* from being there after dark and endorsed racial cleansing (Loewen, 2018). Not as overt as in the past, the practice of sundown towns exists in the present day (Loewen, 2018). The Green Book was a nostalgic reminder of the ways Blacks had to circumvent the brutality of segregationist practices.

Columbus, Georgia was not a sundown town, however, the town followed the Jim Crow laws. Columbus found other ways to increase the public's interest. Columbus adopted several slogans over the years to market the presence of the area. For example, Columbus, Georgia: The Place with the Power and the Push (1912) was a pamphlet of historical data highlighting the strength of the Chattahoochee River and the accomplishments of its citizens. Columbus had begun to adopt future maxims. During the mid-20th century, Columbus was known as the "Queen City of the Chattahoochee" because of the growth the city was experiencing both politically and socially (Blanchard-Worsley, 1951). One of the first mottoes in Columbus for the 21st century was "What Progress has Preserved," a mixture of an antebellum past and a diverse future (Fox-DeMeza, et al., 2006). Much like the phoenix in Greek mythology, Columbus rose above the ashes of its yesteryears (Hamilton, 2011).

Despite the city's dark past, Columbus officials formed a strong alliance with the commanding officers at the former Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), Georgia, and thus created a new grammatically incorrect mantra of "We're Talking Proud" (Ingram, 2018). At the same time as this infamous slogan, Muscogee County School District was facing discrimination lawsuits.

Maintenance and grounds workers filed a lawsuit against the school district for not receiving retirement benefits under the Teachers' Retirement System (Brantley v. Muscogee County School District, 2012). Maintenance workers in the past had received retirement benefits under the retirement system for educators. Shortly thereafter, paraprofessionals and custodians who worked overtime without compensation filed a lawsuit against the human resources department of the school board (Hill v Muscogee County School District, 2005). Due to these injustices, there was the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia.

Is Columbus Amazing?

The current slogan for Columbus is "We do Amazing!" This motto encompassed Columbus's growing diversity (Columbus Consolidated Government, 2022). However, what is not so amazing is that the Muscogee County School District continues to face discriminatory civil cases that involve students not receiving proper accommodations based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (GJ v Muscogee County School District, 2010). In 2017, an elementary school teacher in Muscogee County used a racial slur as a *method of comfort* when a White student said how proud she was of being White and not Black to a Black student. The teacher said to the Black girl that it was okay, and at least the student did not call you a dumb, Black, *nigger* (Parker, 2017).

Even though examples like the disparaging *faux pas* exist in our present day, amazing acts of civil resistance and fortitude of those who attended segregated schools, who sought out a purpose, and who promoted change through the time of desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. The research rendered included those lived, yet silent, experiences. As I heard the footprints of a time filled with despotism and oppression, I thought of my own experiences as well, both as a

student and a teacher, at SHS. I was a product of the aftermath of desegregation. However, the acts of racial injustice, though covert, were still prevalent. Evaluating civil rights practices from different eras yielded a comparative analysis of what happened in Columbus' educational history. The educational history addressed in this study was the need to investigate the individual experiences of Blacks who attended SHS and lived through the transition between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia, and how the participants believed their experiences had informed their present lives.

History of Education in the South

The educational system, in its infancy, provided several diverse types of social indoctrination, as well as strengthened the common good of its citizens (Kober, et al., 2020). There were church-supported schools, parent-sponsored schools, dame schools in private homes for girls, and work apprenticeship schools for boys (Kober & Rentner, 2020). In Georgia, the earliest form of indoctrination was to educate the Native Americans near Savannah, Georgia by Rev. George Whitefield, and Hon. James Habersham in the town of Bethesda called the Orphan House in 1740 (Jones, 1889). James Habersham was an entrepreneur and a pioneer merchant who was the first to create trade between Savannah, Georgia, and London, England. He was both an Englishman and a Georgian (Ellefson, 1960). Rev. George Whitefield was a charismatic evangelist and a forerunner in The Great Awakening, a period of spiritual and religious revival (Tyerman, 2013). Rev. Charles Wesley, a founder of Methodism, assisted Rev. George Whitefield by organizing the Orphan House. The plan was for selfish reasons. Rev. Wesley wanted to supply his plantation with orphan students. Rev. Whitefield considered the children as a family, as he remarked about the orphans' progress (Jones, 1889).

Rev. Whitefield had raised enough money to purchase over 600 acres of land where he placed several Negroes on it to work. The proceeds from the land benefited Bethesda's Orphan Asylum. The school continued to grow to the point of expansion. The school changed into an academy of higher learning and religious uplift. Rev. Whitefield worked tirelessly for the Orphan School until his health failed him. His efforts opened the doors to several other academies across the state, as well as schools for elementary school children (Jones, 1889). Coulter (1925) mentioned how dreadful the quality of elementary education was for Georgia and said that the process was a farce for the masses who remained ignorant. Teachers drifted around the state with little qualifications and sold their wards to hold jobs. He proclaimed that a Columbus clergyman said that the teachers were incompetent to give the basic rudiments of education.

Before the Civil War, education for the intellectual advancement of students in the South was an amenity of those who afforded the luxury of learning through tuition-based schools and parent-supported institutions (Kober & Rentner, 2020). This practice created a clear distinction between the wealthy and the poor. However, the readiness of the teachers became an issue to the point of humiliation (Coulter, 1925). A governance system was necessary that would align the availability of education to all children, regardless of economic status (Kober & Rentner, 2020).

The founding fathers saw education as a means of the indoctrination of civic order and moral stability, ideals that were essential to citizenship. As the impending conflict of the Civil War drew closer, there were laws in the South that prohibited literacy for Black citizens. Once the South found the democracy of the Union, there was a need to provide educational opportunities to all citizens. The men who founded our democratic society recognized that education needed to have a structure in place for the masses to be able to access its benefits, hence the birth of land grants in 1785 and 1787. The land grants gave those states who had

agreed to bond with the union acreage to create their local government and to set aside land to form public schools (Kober & Rentner, 2020).

Quality Basic Education

In the mid-19th century, public education became free and accessible (Kober, 2020). The beginnings of quality basic education were due to the efforts of education reformer Thomas Mann. Mann argued that funding schools through state-based taxes held states accountable, which created the common school concept (Flores, 2017). Historically, the common school, funded through the Morrill Land Act of 1862, gave rise to building sites for public education. Coulter (1925) observed that there were not enough funds from states that supported common schools and Georgia had no intention of creating the common school. Moreover, there was not any accountability that assisted in funding the poor schools because the census was not accurate on the number of poor households. The laws had begun accounting for poor families in 1854, but the laws did not factor in the families that were too destitute to own land (Coulter, 1925).

Land deemed as territory did not become a full-fledged state until it provided education for all. This mandate by the legislatures in Congress was known as the establishment of the frontier school (Flores, 2017). Education for all became the essence of school choice, or so the choice seemed for a selected group of the American population, namely those who were prosperous (Kober & Rentner, 2020). The citizens met the proposal with great resistance because the citizens did not want to pay to educate children that did not belong to them, much to the chagrin of the thoughts of some in the present day.

After the Civil War, white supremacists in the South passed the Jim Crow laws which created separate facilities and schools for Whites and Blacks (Kober & Rentner, 2020). These repressive actions lasted for decades, as some people of color paid the ultimate sacrifice based

only on the melanin in their skin. However, in 1954, Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka mandated a decision that education could not be separate and equal simultaneously (Flores, 2017).

Entitlement Acts of Federal Funding

Beginning in the 1960s, the federal government mandated entitlement acts that helped address the needs of the least, which were impoverished children, bilingual youth, those with disabilities, and low-performing at-risk students (Flores, 2017). The passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 placed a contingency to receive Title I funds (Cascio, Gordon, & Reber, 2013). School districts in the South had to prove that they were moving towards desegregation to receive the endowment, and some were desegregating just enough to secure entitlement funding (Cascio, et al., 2013).

The Title I Act was the largest funding resource that supplemented public schools for children with extreme poverty rates. Inequality of resources still existed for schools with a high concentration of Black students. The election of President Nixon in 1969 stopped the enforcement of desegregation by receiving entitlement funds, which caused the federal government to step in and hold states accountable (Cascio, et al., 2013). The South became more cognizant of maintaining segregated schools due to this measure. Even though the entitlement acts added funds to under-resourced schools, Fairclough (2004) noted that there was an additional, tremendous cost to the Black community in desegregating schools, as the participants communicated in this study.

The Cost of Desegregation and the Culture of Cancel-cation

The Jim Crow South created a world that was debilitating for Blacks, but in Black schools, Black teachers instilled pride, inspiration, and motivation within their students

(Fairclough, 2004). Fenwick (2022) posited that the Brown case held the position that Black schools were not up to par because of the lack of investment by the county and/or the citizens. The case outlined the support of Black schools not being efficient because of the condition of the buildings, the shorter time in school versus Whites, and the lack of transportation, to name a few. This premise was not entirely true. One cannot review a single premise or idea of funding allocation to measure school success.

There was empirical evidence that Black schools were schools of excellence. As early as 1916, there were nine states where Black high schools taught from classical, liberal arts curricula, instead of a vocationally based education (Fenwick, 2022). Noted Black schools had a high sense of discipline, teachers who garnered respect, and parents who supported the school socially and financially (Fairclough, 2004). The most significant lost part during the transition of desegregation was the environmental intimacy of the sense of place (Wells, 2014).

Sense of place was an approach where “the substance of place, the formation of the genetic order of place and its interrelations, which forms the urban context, the origin of the place’s existence, and a dialectic link in between the place and its inhabitants" (Rifaioglu & Sahin Güçan, 2008, p. 2). Wells (2020) purported that there were unique attributes that a place holds for people who had inhabited it, regardless of the years that had passed. Sense of Place carried dimensions of meaning that provided emotional attachment. The Columbus (GA) High School History Class (1912) defined that old buildings took on the persona of their inhabitants, which formulated a character and a personality. William H. Spencer High School has had four different locations in her lifetime: Tenth Avenue, Shepherd Drive, Victory Drive, and currently Fort Benning Road (Spencer High Alumni Association, 1991; Spencer High School History, 2022). The plan of where the school moved was intentional to ensure to dilute and weaken the

school's traditions. However, the plan did not stop the charismatic sense of place, or what Norberg-Shultz (1979) called the deity-driven concept of *genius loci*, that supernatural ambiance that alumni felt when they entered a building or walked the grounds of where the school formerly hailed. There is an undeniable reverence felt at SHS, but in contrast, with every move of the high school, there are socio-cultural costs of losing this authenticity. The sense of the place has feelings of noted detrimental effects that remain today, as told by the rendered stories of the participants.

Many acts changed the face of American education throughout history, such as the paternalism doctrine, Brown v. Board of Education, and acts of civil disobedience, like sit-ins and marches, to attain equality. The movement that changed the face of education was the Civil Rights Movement, a time when the purpose was to abolish the "separate but equal" doctrine in public facilities (Stevenson, 2021).

The Civil Rights Movement. The key objective of the Civil Rights Movement was to eradicate segregation and to endorse change for Blacks who witnessed disenfranchisement socially, politically, and economically from 1954 to 1968 (Stevenson, 2021). Brown v. Board of Education mandated the promotion of desegregating schools, yet the resistance of the South was evident. The outcome of change, both the positive and the negative, was riveting to witness. Changes made problem-solving difficult for the oppressed (Freire, 2005). For the milieu of the oppressed, the only recourse in promoting change was to have some form of intervention such as military enforcement or economic supplements (Freire, 2005). As time has shown, even those interventions were not enough. For example, the response to Brown v. Board of Education by Southern senators and representatives who were former Confederate states was the Declaration

of Constitutional Principles known as *The Southern Manifesto*. *The Southern Manifesto* defied the desegregation of public facilities (Driver, 2016).

The Southern Manifesto: The Culture of Cancel-cation Personified. Two years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, Senator Strom Thurmond and Senator Harry Byrd collaborated on a document that represented the voice of the South against desegregation (Thurmond, 1956). The argument was that the Constitution did not mention education. A formed committee led by Georgia Senator Richard Russell reversed the court order via this political declaration, stating that desegregation had created chaos in the South. The acts of desegregation destroyed the friendly alliances between the Whites and Blacks. Desegregation had imparted hatred and suspicion in the minds of the good people of the South (The Declaration of Constitutional Principles, 1956).

The Southern Manifesto's purpose was to inform the rest of the country how the South opposed desegregation and how the Brown court decision promoted racial tension (Driver, 2016). The Southern Manifesto did not reverse Brown v. Board of Education, but the manifesto was powerful enough to heighten the contention of desegregation by stating the claim that the court order created policies that did not pay attention to race (Driver, 2016). Some states interpreted this as a means of voluntarily making changes to desegregate, thereby delaying the action altogether (Driver, 2016).

Four decades before the Brown cases and the Southern Manifesto, Professor Spencer had a solution to address the educational needs of disenfranchised high school students of color. Professor Spencer exclaimed that vocational education was the answer to preparing viable, working-class African American citizens in Columbus, Georgia (Bradshaw, 2016). Professor Spencer was a visionary who had a sense of forward-thinking in his day.

The Problem with Desegregation: The Culture Cancel-cation. The problem was that there was sparse documentation of the history of desegregation during the transition period in Columbus, Georgia. Therefore, the problem addressed in this study was the need to investigate and develop research on the individual experiences of local African American SHS graduates and one educator who transitioned between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia. SHS was the first high school for Black students, established in 1930. Facts were not easily accessible about the life and times of the high school's namesake, Professor William Henry Spencer, Sr. (Bradshaw, 2016; Lauzon, 2019).

Professor William Henry Spencer was a Negro educator in the city of Columbus, Georgia who became the first Supervisor of *Colored* Schools and a pioneer in education in his own right (Causey, 2001). Specifically, Professor Spencer earned the responsibility of being the first Jeanes Supervisor in the area. In 1907, the General Education Board was slated to oversee funds through the Southern educational initiative that managed philanthropic donations (Malczewski, 2013). The Jeanes Foundation was due to Booker T. Washington, who had requested funds from Anna Jeanes to build a cafeteria at the Tuskegee Institute (Clarke, 2018). After hearing from Booker T. Washington, Anna Jeanes knew that she could do more to improve *Negro* education.

The creation of the Jeanes Foundation came from generous donations from Philadelphia Quaker and Philanthropist Anna Jeanes and with the support of the John D. Rockefeller Foundation. Both foundations developed trust funding that hired and appointed supervising *Negro* teachers to rural areas that assisted teachers and governed the vocational education of *Negro* students (Malczewski, 2013). The Jeanes Supervisors had the same duties and responsibilities as present-day school superintendents. Anna Jeanes appointed Booker T.

Washington as Board Chairman of Trustees. Having a *Negro* chairman in charge of hundreds of thousands of dollars at the time was a progressive move (Clarke, 2018).

That same year, Booker T. Washington (1907) attended the grand opening of the first *Colored* Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Columbus, Georgia. Washington had an encouraging visit to Columbus, Georgia at the dedication of the *Negro* YMCA. Washington mentioned how elaborate the building was due partly to the generosity of *our* friend, Mr. George Foster Peabody. He went on to say that other White and *Negroes* donated to the building and that there was a feeling of friendliness between the races in Columbus. Washington spoke at the dedication, and so did the school board superintendent, Superintendent Carlton Gibson, who remarked that a *Colored* School would model the YMCA building. Washington was particularly fond of the offering of increased industrial training at the new public school, which brought hope to the city of Columbus for *Negroes* (Washington, 1907, as cited by Harlan and Smock, 1980, pp. 374-375).

Booker T. Washington was impressed with the state of education for Black students in Columbus. He expressed his admiration for the amicable race relations during his visit. With Washington's accommodationist doctrine, he perceived the positive in this event. Professor Spencer concurred with Washington's commendations of *Colored* schools. As the first Jeanes *Colored* Supervisor of Schools, the position gave Professor Spencer the leverage he needed to communicate to the Board of Trustees of the Schools about the need for secondary education for Black students in Columbus (Spencer, n.d.). Professor Spencer equally faced a conundrum in this leadership position in keeping a balance between his status as a supervisor and an advocate for the community he served.

The Genesis of William Henry Spencer High School & Paternalism

There was no high school for Blacks to earn a diploma in Columbus, Georgia. After Reconstruction, the South had very few choices for Blacks to gain a secondary education. Some Whites in the South did not see the benefit of Blacks going beyond primary school and what Black people needed most in education was to become civilized through a paternalistic education (Rucker & Jubilee, 2007). The objectives of a paternalistic doctrine were to teach obedience, how to be docile, and how to be an inferior race. The teaching of these concepts pervaded Black schools within the South (Anderson, 1988; Rucker & Jubilee, 2007). In a paternalistic system, the goal was about keeping order, not academic advancement.

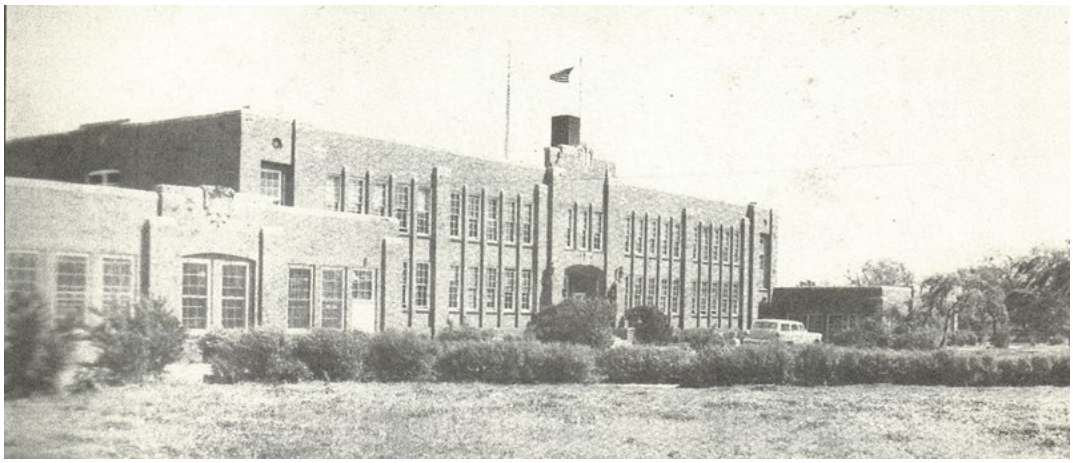
Black children had to travel to neighboring cities, such as Atlanta or Savannah, to receive a secondary education (Bradshaw & Bohan, 2013; Bradshaw, 2016; Lauzon, 2019). The school board and the Columbus community did not see the need to open a high school for Black students. Professor Spencer continued to debate with the school board and his community during his professional life about the need for secondary education for Black students. Professor Spencer sought the guidance of well-known educator Booker T. Washington to develop vocational opportunities for students in secondary education. Awarded an honorary doctorate by Dartmouth College, Dr. Washington was the founder of the former Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama (Tuskegee University, 2022). Gardner (1975) cited that Washington learned the precepts of education from Hampton's president, General Samuel C. Armstrong. At Tuskegee, Washington offered his students industrial pathways that gave them opportunities to work with their hands. The idea of an industrial high school for Blacks aligned with Washington's philosophy. Washington was not a person who discussed the racial divide, but he thought that segregation would eventually come to a resolution in the South.

Professor Spencer emulated the philosophy and social concerns of Dr. Washington. The postulate is that Professor Spencer and Booker T. Washington bonded through their work through the Jeanes Foundation. Washington became a leading advocate for industrial education, and he knew that Southern Whites disagreed with *Negroes* receiving traditional education. In Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901), he mentioned that the mission of industrial education was to be in cooperation with White people, which garnered the most profit for the Black man. The manual labor training united the two races together.

Professor Spencer collaborated with Dr. Washington and worked on the furtherance of secondary education for Black students until Dr. Washington's death in 1915 (Gardner, 1975). Unfortunately, Professor Spencer passed a decade later in 1925 (Columbus Enquirer, 1925). The Muscogee County School Board finally acquiesced and with the help of the Rosenwald Foundation, named for Jewish philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, established the first high school for African American students on November 29, 1930 (Causey, 2001; Bradshaw, 2016). Blanchard-Worsley (1951) wrote that the Rosenwald Foundation donated $22,000 for the building of SHS, and Mr. George Foster Peabody contributed $5,000. Judge T. Hicks Fort bestowed a substantial amount to the erection of SHS as well. The donation of land by the city was on the Southeastern side of town, located near the Black neighborhoods and the bus line (Blanchard-Worsley, 1951). The school was properly located on Tenth Avenue and Eighth Street (see Figure 9), appropriately facing the Historic Liberty Theater, Kinfolks Corner, and The Spencer House, now known as the Liberty District (Columbus Visitors Bureau, 2022).

Figure 9

The First William Henry Spencer Industrial High School in Columbus, Georgia



Note. From "Lost Columbus (Pt. I): The City Market, John Fontaine's house, Spencer High, and Villa Reich," by Historic Columbus Foundation, https://www.historiccolumbus.com/lost-columbus. Copyright 2017 by Historic Columbus Foundation. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix C).

Professor Spencer was posthumously honored by naming the school (see Figure 9) William Henry Spencer High School. The design of the school was by Columbus architects E. Oren Smith and J. W. Biggers, Sr. (Historic Columbus, 2021). Dr. Roland Daniel was the superintendent of the school system at the time (Blanchard-Worsley, 1951). The founding of the school started the legacy of the experiences of the participants and how those experiences shaped who they are today.

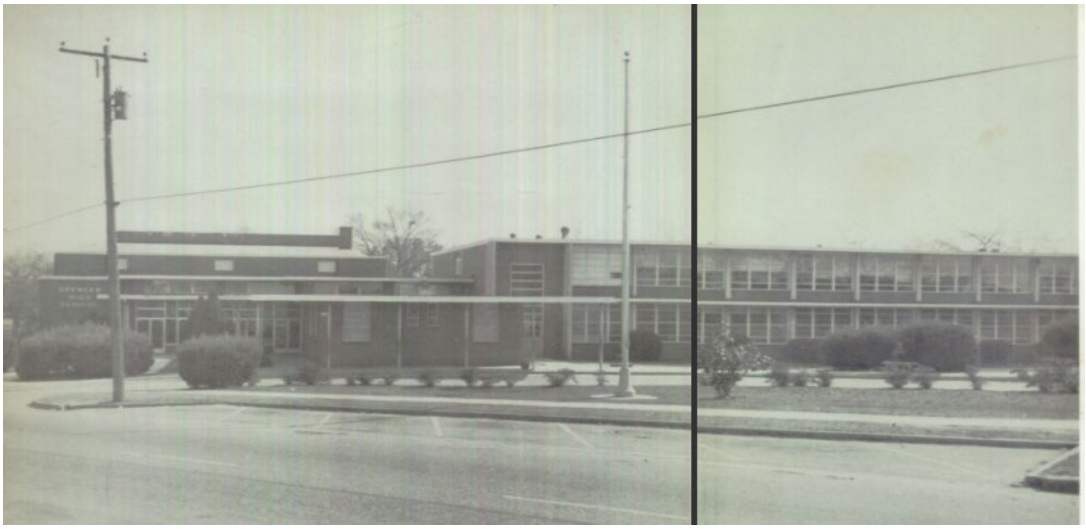
Another benefactor worthy of recognition who assisted in the development of SHS was Dr. Richard H. Cobb. Dr. Cobb was the first *Negro* dentist in Columbus and hails as the town's wealthiest citizen of color at that time. The election of Cobb as the Grand National President of the International Benevolent Society afforded him more influential power in 1906. The fraternal organization operated under the auspices of the International Undertaking Company. During his

leadership, Dr. Cobb purchased the former Veranda Hotel on the corner of First Avenue and Tenth Street as the headquarters of the International Benevolent Society (Columbus Black History Museum & Archives, 2020). He was a top-ranking Prince Hall Mason. Due to his associations and resources, he donated funds to the building of SHS. His civic and business affiliations were numerous, and he was highly respected by Whites and *Colored* citizens alike.

The excitement of the students and teachers to have a secondary school was overwhelming. Mr. Roscoe Chester, Class of 1939, exclaimed in the Columbus Times newspaper (1979) that the opening of the first SHS was like the entire neighborhood preparing for a parade, calling it a "great gittin' up morning!" (p. 8). Mr. Roscoe C. Chester was a native of Columbus and graduated from SHS I on Tenth Avenue and Eighth Street (Chester, 1979). That edifice stood until 1952 when fire destroyed the building. In 1953, the school moved to Shepherd Drive (see Figure 10), lovingly called "on the hill." The students at this location witnessed the desegregation of the school district in 1971. As the city prepared to desegregate, there was a remarkable difference in the materials allotted to SHS. The school board managed to upgrade to the SHS facility, thus making it more appealing to the new White students who were entering in the fall (Causey, 2001). SHS remained there until 1978. This was when the legacy of the Mighty Greenwave of SHS was about to end.

Figure 10

The Second Location of William H. Spencer High School on Shepherd Drive



Note. From the 1968 Spencerian Yearbook. Reprinted by permission (yearbook).

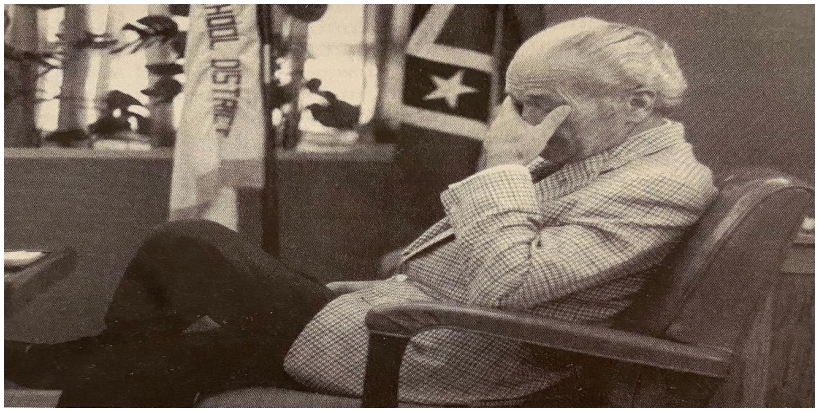
A Motion to Close William H. Spencer High School: A Close Call of the Cancel-cation of the Culture

The Muscogee County School District proposed to close SHS under the leadership of Dr. William Henry Shaw, renaming it Southside School. The board planned for the school to be a junior high school and serve as a special education facility (Causey, 2001). The colors had changed to blue and white, as indicated by the heavy, blue velvet curtains flanking the auditorium stage and the blue tint that glazed the auditorium walls (W. Flewellen, personal communication, September 5, 1993). Causey (2001) noted the reaction of the Black community in protest, which left Dr. Shaw in a precarious position (see Figure 11). SHS was Columbus' first Black high school and had a host of influential alumni. One graduate mentioned that the objective was to extinguish any reference to greatness from the Black community. A Black teacher retorted that the entire city was getting ready to riot. A school board meeting was in March of that year. The Golden Owls, a distinctive group of male Spencer graduates, were vocal

about not closing the school. By the end of the meeting, the vote was unanimous that the school and the culture of SHS would remain as an open, historically Black secondary school (Causey, 2001).

Figure 11

The Frustration of Dr. William Henry Shaw, Superintendent, 1973



Note. From Back to School – One Last Time! The Completion of the Series on Columbus' Educational History by Historic Columbus Foundation, https://www.historiccolumbus.com/post/back-to-school-one-last-time-the-completion-of-the-series-on-columbus-educational-history. Copyright 2017 by Historic Columbus Foundation. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix C).

The Black community stood up in protest and witnessed the new SHS open in 1979 at 4340 Victory Drive (see Figure 12). Mr. Roscoe Chester (1979) opined the following in his reflection about the 1930 opening of SHS I, in celebration of the third location on Victory Drive (SHS III). Before the first SHS opened in 1930, there was no option for any Black student to attend school beyond the ninth grade. After the eighth grade, Blacks performed manual (boys) or domestic (girls) labor. Before 1930, the school system did not see any benefit of Blacks earning a high school diploma.

Figure 12

The Third Location of William H. Spencer High School on Victory Drive

Note. William H. Spencer High School's third location was at 4340 Victory Drive. Reprinted by permission (yearbook).

However, in 1930, the collective dreams of the late Professor William H. Spencer, Dr. Richard H. Cobb, Dr. Edwin J. Turner, Rev. R.K. Paschel, Businessman M.D. Davis, and several other concerned citizens came to fruition (Chester, 1979). Mr. Chester spoke with great admiration about the initial opening of Spencer High School. Chester (1979) called it a moment of jubilee, where the entire *Negro* community was in great expectation of a chance at a better quality of life. Those who had the opportunity to attend normal teachers' training or traditional college education at Tuskegee, Atlanta, or Hampton had a chance to secure a teaching position. The location of the first Spencer is currently known as the Liberty District, but Chester (1979) said that the school's locale dictated the clientele at Spencer. Spencer was between Tom Huston's Peanut Company, the noisy combustion of Lummus Steel Factory, and faced Sixth

Avenue and Eighth Street, a former red-light district. Chester (1979) noted parallelism in that closing the first Spencer High School due to an unfavorable environment was the same reason for the third location, to keep Black students in their neighborhood. Building another Spencer High forty years later (Spencer IV) with the same premise on Fort Benning Road was history repeating itself. However, the soul of the place always outlives the bricks used to designate the location.

A pivotal force in persuading the school board to open SHS was board member Mrs. J. Nunnally Johnson (see Figure 13) (Chester, 1979). When opening a high school for Blacks came up in board meetings, she often stood alone in her endorsement of SHS. Mrs. Johnson guaranteed that the idea of opening the high school did not become overlooked. She ensured that the school received new materials within the building. She even went as far as to make sure the athletes had distinctive letters and sweaters (Chester, 1979)!

Figure 13

Mrs. J. Nunnally Johnson, The Second Board Member of MCSD

Note. From "From Teacher Resignations to Desegregation: History of Columbus Public Schools (1920 - 1970)," by Historic Columbus Foundation, https://www.historiccolumbus.com/post/from-teacher-resignations-to-desegregation-history-of-columbus-public-schools-1920-1970. Copyright 2017 by Historic Columbus Foundation. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix C).

Mrs. Johnson (Figure 13) is the mother of famous screenwriter Nunnally Johnson. She founded the Parents and Teachers' Association (PTA) in 1905 and the Parents and Teachers' Council. The election of Mrs. Johnnie Pearl Johnson to the school board was in 1922. Her advocacy was for the common welfare of children. She made sure that the board met the needs of Black children (Historic Columbus, 2021). After she died in 1946, the school board named Johnson Elementary School in her honor (Blanchard-Worsley, 1951).

Mrs. Johnson requested that SHS receive new materials, but the reality was that SHS only secured purged materials from other schools. Mr. Chester (1979) was transparent in his analysis of the school's genesis. He cited that the first school brought in teachers who were unprepared and young. There were 16 teachers and only five had B.S. degrees. The dedication that the young teachers possessed supplemented their deficiencies. The teachers desired to accomplish the

mission of preparing young people for the world that awaited them. The part that remained a debilitating factor was the dilapidated books that had been beyond repair and passed down to use. Even the packages of writing chalk SHS acquired contained bits and pieces from other schools. The outstanding teachers were Francis E. Callier, Frank Johnson, R.P. Smith, Samuel P. Charleston (who later became the principal of SHS), and Ethel T. Spencer (Professor Spencer's daughter) (Chester, 1979).

Mrs. Johnson ensured that SHS had its distinctive colors and sweaters (see Figure 14). The selected colors were a bright Kelly green and old gold.

Figure 14

Spencer High School Letterman's Sweater, 1935

Note. From "Gift of the Estate of Allen N. Jackson and his daughter, Moonyene Jackson-Amis, Esq.," by *The Columbus Museum Archives*, https://columbusmuseum.pastperfectonline.com/webobject/6A4429AC-5CCA-46AD-8AC5-419876162301. Copyright 2022 by The Columbus Museum. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix E).

Allen Nathaniel Jackson, valedictorian of the Class of 1935, owned the sweater pictured in Figure 14. The title of his valedictory speech was "The Economic Status of the Negro."

Jackson received a football scholarship to Morehouse College and was an educator for 40 years (Columbus Museum Online Archives Database, 2022).

Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve

The birth of William Henry Spencer High School was a new nation of people previously overlooked for far too long. The first motto of the school was "Enter to Learn, Depart to Serve," which imbued the indelible passion of the teachers for excellence, often teaching concepts beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. Superintendent Dr. Roland Daniel said, "It is my opinion that we should give little attention at this time to the preparation of pupils for college. Only a small percentage will attend" (Daniel, 1929, as cited by Chitwood, 2015, para. 21). However, in 1934, 37 students graduated from SHS. Sixteen graduates furthered their academic endeavors by earning an undergraduate degree. Eight graduates of the Class of 1934 earned advanced degrees, among those who attended Harvard, Kent State, and New York University (Historic Columbus, 2021). The 1933 Spencer High School football team was the state's champion. The class excelled academically and athletically (Chester, 1979).

Much of the success of the students who graduated from William H. Spencer High was due to the dedication of the teachers. Teachers taught students culturally relevant material, and information beyond the legal "de jure" means of segregation. Teachers complemented the cultural "de facto" measures of the day. The teachers promoted activism by teaching about civil rights. For example, in 1975 the SHS Marching Band performed down Broad Street in downtown Columbus honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday by carrying placards with his famous quotes about discrimination and injustice, years before his birthday became a federal holiday (Chattahoochee Valley Libraries, 2022). Teachers took on the challenge of preparing students to compete in a world beyond the hallways of Spencer High School during segregation.

Segregation in Columbus felt like a game of tug of war. Some communities wanted to desegregate, however, the school board resisted desegregating the public school system in the town lovingly known as the "Fountain City."

History of Desegregating Education in Columbus, Georgia

"The "Fountain City" is the nickname of Columbus, Georgia due to the architectural fountains in the historic district (Fox DeMeza, et al., 2006). The "Fountain City" resisted desegregating schools. Causey (2001) wrote that members of the Muscogee County School District (MCSD) Board of Education received a strong message from the federal government to desegregate the schools. The federal government required the school board to produce a plan to alleviate school desegregation or face dire consequences, which included responding to the former Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), one of the largest military installations in the world, and Columbus' neighbor in Chattahoochee County (Causey, 2001).

Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), named after Confederate Brigadier General Henry Lewis Benning, was an illustrious patriot and former lawyer. The military personnel at Fort Benning (now Fort Moore) were influential in furthering the desegregation of the schools in Columbus (Wright, 1968). Assistant Secretary James Quigley sent a letter in 1963 to the Muscogee County School District from the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, informing them that segregated schools were unacceptable to the children on base (Causey, 2001).

The military families who represented Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), namely the Lockett family, who, in 1964 under the direction of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), filed a landmarked lawsuit against the Muscogee County School District for providing a quality education to Columbus' White citizens only (US

Courts of Appeals, 1997). Columbus struggled with creating unitary status, that being, getting rid of two separate school systems (Rossell, 2024). School Board Superintendent Dr. William Henry Shaw claimed, "segregation is a long and universal custom...desegregation should be gradual to avoid chaos" (Causey, 2001, p. 401). Muscogee County District Court Judge J. Robert Elliott, a staunch segregationist, and Dixiecrat ruled against this case, stating "it was a slap in the face to the South...it is not the function of the Board of Education in the advancement of social revolution" (Causey, 2001, p. 401). Muscogee County School District started court proceedings in 1993 and declared unitary, or one solid system, in 1997 with a 41% level of diversity (Rossell, 2024).

Judge J. Robert Elliot: The Force behind Cancel Culture-cation

Judge J. Robert Elliot graduated from the prestigious Emory University in Georgia in 1930. President Kennedy appointed him as a federal judge in 1962. Elliott held two stints of private practice in Columbus, Georgia from 1930 to 1943 and 1946 to 1962 (Hays, 1939; Federal Judicial Center, 2022). Elliott was a friend of former Senator Herman Talmadge and gained his endorsement (de la Cruz & Klibanoff, 2022). Judge Elliott attracted national attention to the laws of segregation. Elliott did what he could to decrease the furtherance of equal rights for Blacks. Elliott was the worst federal judge by ranking information in a 1983 article by The American Lawyer, in Georgia, Alabama, or Florida, from which he thought that he has never been a darling of the liberal democrats (de la Cruz & Klibanoff, 2022).

After two denials by Judge J. Robert Elliott of the proceedings of desegregating the schools in 1965 and 1968 respectively, in 1971 the district court ordered the MCSD Board of Education to submit an amended plan on its agenda to desegregate the school district (US Court of Appeals, 1971). Seventeen years after the famed Brown v. Board of Education in Topeka,

Kansas, the MCSD derived that each school would have 70% White students of those that lived nearby and assigned 30% of Black students who live near their school to attend said school (US Court of Appeals, 1971). The superintendent and his staff made decisions on school assignments based on priority (US Court of Appeals, 1971).

Conversely, others did not perceive the conflict of the desegregation process. William Herman Dollar (1923-2007) was the principal of Columbus High School from 1963 to 1976 (Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, 2007). Dollar remembered that the city achieved integration with little confusion. The athletic departments integrated the schools before the school board implemented a plan of action. Professor DuVaul, the principal at Spencer, and Odis Spencer, the legendary head football coach at Spencer, spearheaded this effort under the direction of Superintendent Dr. William Henry Shaw. Former Columbus High athletic coach William Herman Dollar's reflection on those years was very satisfying for him. His elation came when hearing about Columbus area graduates going on to play professional sports. That, to him, was the highlight of his educational career (Dollar, as cited by Hyatt, 2016). However, a SHS alumnus mentioned that the White high schools would send their soiled athletic uniforms over to Spencer for the female students enrolled in domestics (former Home Economics, now Consumer Science) to launder them for their games (S. Shaw, personal communication, May 30, 2022).

Athletics became the great negotiator in desegregating the school district. The school board extended invitations to Black students who were outstanding athletes to enroll in White schools (J. Hud, personal communication, May 10, 2022). This practice weakened the former level of athleticism of the Black schools. The longest-serving principal at SHS was Professor Charles DuVaul. Professor DuVaul was principal at Athens High and Industrial School in Athens, Georgia for eight years prior to his tenure at SHS (Thurmond, 2001). Professor DuVaul

promoted programs and scholarships at his alma mater, the former Savannah State College, thus creating the connection between Savannah State and SHS. Professor DuVaul helped several of the graduates at SHS attend Savannah State, including Dr. Eddie T. Lindsey, Sr. Dr. Lindsey was the only person who was a SHS student (Class of 1948), a SHS teacher of English, and a SHS principal. Dr. Lindsey's stellar career led him to become the first Black district-level administrator for the school district. Coach Odis Spencer (no relation to Professor Spencer) had an outstanding career in athletics, earning two-time Hall of Fame in Sports awards in 1999 and 2015 posthumously. The new SHS has a city-wide sports complex named in Coach Spencer's honor (Muscogee County School District, 2020).

Summary

Professor William Henry Spencer was a pioneer in furthering the educational opportunities for Black students in Columbus. At the turn of the 20th century, Professor Spencer became the supervisor for colored students in the area. Professor Spencer's strong work ethic and integrity created a high reputation for collaborating with fellow board members and philanthropists to promote a vocational high school for Blacks. Professor Spencer passed away in 1925. His vision for a high school remained alive through the hearts and minds of the Black residents of Columbus, Georgia. A Black vocational high school opened and named properly William H. Spencer High School posthumously in Professor Spencer's honor.

The days of Jim Crow and segregation remained strong. The 1954 landmark decision of Brown v. Board of Education mandated segregated schools unlawful. Following the mandate with a lack of fidelity of Brown v. Board of Education was in the Southern region, namely Muscogee County in Georgia. During the trial and error of desegregation, subjecting Black students to inexperienced White teachers' lack of pedagogy and a lack of cultural exchange in

the experiences of those students caused irreparable gaps in the learning process. The trend was to transfer Black teachers who had advanced degrees without question to White schools, regardless of the positions held at their home schools. The aftermath of desegregation placed students and teachers alike in a precarious selection to stay and fight or to give up and leave. In most cases, the choice was to stay and fight, as evidenced by the interviewing of the graduates of SHS based on the problem of this study.

The practices of segregation and the resistance to desegregation were the true essences of Culture Cancel-cation. The issues that Blacks in Columbus faced throughout history were a map that led to disenfranchisement and oppression. Plessy v. Ferguson mandated separate but equal facilities and services between the races. Brown v. Board of Education I and II were landmark cases proposed to end the segregation of schools. However, the aftermath of the Civil War and slavery, the lack of suffrage rights, and the institution of Jim Crow exacerbated the issue of a separate but equal society. Measures that intensified separatist activities, like The Southern Manifesto and The Hardwick Bill, further added more annihilation from White citizens. The disparaging life of Blacks plagued with lynching, paternalism, redlining, and a limited means of education prohibited their access to progress.

Educators like Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and Dr. John Hope Franklin opposed Black students receiving a classical, liberal arts education. Professor Spencer and Dr. Booker T. Washington believed in an education where Black students could benefit from the rise of industrialization in the South. Professor Spencer and Dr. Washington were pivotal in the educational progress of Blacks in Columbus. Working collaboratively with the Muscogee County School Board under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Roland Daniel, Financier George Gunby Jordan, Financier George Peabody, and Philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, SHS became a reality that still stands

today. Chapter III consists of the narrative inquiry methodology and the theoretical framework of the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). I encapsulated the patterns of stories of the six interviewees into commonalities and themes for understanding.

Chapter III: Methodology

I employed storytelling as an avenue for learning about the happenings of desegregation from an individual perspective. Narratives are a driving force that keeps the values and traditions of culture alive. People use storytelling in a social context to espouse their identity and go against the status quo's misconceptions (Hammack, 2010). The art of telling stories is the act of the method of narratology, which is an integral part of our existence. Storytelling is the crux of narrative inquiry methodology. I selected the narrative inquiry and analysis method to reveal the narratives of the Black residents in Columbus, Georgia, who attended Spencer High School (SHS) during desegregation (1954-1971). I wanted to examine their experiences as students transitioning between segregation and desegregation at SHS and how they believed their experiences informed their lives.

Narrative Inquiry

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state that narrative inquiry methodology suggests that our stories about educational practices parallel our experiences--we are our stories. As Heilbrun (1988) discourses, the conception of narratives comes from our reading, chanting, murmuring, and hearing. Humans are storytelling beings that scaffold storied experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Chase (2005) postulates that in narrative inquiry, the recorded experiences of the individuals are in archival documents. People exist through the art of stories, and it is up to the researcher to take note of those stories, collect their expressed data, and document the results from those experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Narrative inquiry has Three common areas: temporality, sociality, and place. The intertwined areas work together as a comprehensive exploration (Hutchinson, 2015). In temporality, our experiences are fluid, where the past grounds us, yet the experiences that come

afterward shape us into whom we become; thereby, our lives always end with a comma (Hutchinson, 2015). Ricoeur (1990) says that time is a temporal experience. The narrative is how one takes the privilege of reconfiguring the temporal value based on sensory, emotional, aesthetic, and axiological values (Ricoeur, 1990). Sociality is blending personal and social experiences based on cultural, institutional, and dialectical constructs (Hutchinson, 2015). Moen (2006) predicts that the environment has a perpetual influence on an individual's mind through social interactions. The connection of both the mind and the world is the sociocultural theory. The place is the grounded setting where the actions happen and the common thread of how one creates the story (Hutchinson, 2015).

Storytelling can annihilate barriers between us and build a sense of community and openness among people (Biesenbach, 2018). Creating a narrative is highly participatory, where the researcher listens critically to the participant's lived experiences to create places where the stories make a theoretical difference (Clandinin, 2016). We are the story, and it is up to us to tell our unforgettable stories, which leads to my study.

The Lived Experience of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry gives our lives meaning (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Out of those lived experiences, we explore and understand the nature of human experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). There is a debate about whether or not a narrative inquiry is the theoretical study of experience (Clandinin, 2007). On one side, narrative inquiry is the life of the written word in context (Denzin, 1995, as cited by Clandinin, 2007). However, on the other side, Elbaz-Luwisch (2005) conversed that narrative inquiry is the study of experiential data of phenomena of one's rendition of the living. In most narrative inquiries, the concepts of translating the

information are from autobiographies, interviews, and dialogues about the life of the research participants (Clandinin, 2007).

Other concepts that connect to narrative inquiry are narrative resonance, narrative authority, and knowledge communities (Craig, 2011). Developed by Conle (1996), narrative resonance embodies several interpretations of the same connections in narrative inquiry. Once a story is born, the various ways others nurture those words become entirely different versions of their own. Olson (1995) coined narrative authority, where the belief is that narrative inquiry is more potent through forming relationships with others. Knowledge-based experience is the strength of narrative authority. Knowledge communities (Craig, 1995a & 1995b; Huber & Whelan, 1995) are places of refuge and safety where participants give transparent accounts without judgment. The renditions of history become more valuable based on the common threads the participants share collectively.

Narrative inquiry makes sense of the interactions of human beings through story structures (Bell, 2002). There are several elements that one must consider in narrative inquiry. Each subject tells a series of events based on their understanding of the discipline. Bell (2002) posits that one must inquire beneath the rhetoric of telling the story and codify the insights through the story's analysis. Stories are fluid understandings that depend on new happenings and external influences, such as personal events and changes within the community (Bell, 2002).

The cultural nuances of language based on interpersonal exchanges are Bakhtin's dialogic polyphony (Hall et al., 2004). Bakhtin (1984) notes that truth is born based on dialogue with others, called linguistic consciousness. Bakhtin (1986) posits the nature of discourse by stating that a word connects with a person in three ways: neutral, others, and mine. Neutral words do not belong to anyone in particular. Other people's words connect to another person's

utterance. My words belong to me and are based on my expressions (Bakhtin, 1986). People constantly construct stories that support their interpretations, experiences, and assumptions. The story gives the researcher a window into the participants' lives (Bell, 2002). Elbaz-Luwisch (2010) states that a foundational factor in narrative inquiry is *wakefulness*, a three-dimensional space that contains time, interaction, and place. Wakefulness is another way to express reflexivity and how researchers assess the field. The inquirer uses critical reflection to address their thoughts about the field of study while protecting the integrity of the participants on a social and political level (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010).

Loseke (2018) examines that in academia, the most critical areas of narrative inquiry are social and political. Researchers are responsible for narrating those instances in our history laced with inequality, rapid changes, and morality (Loseke, 2018). There is a provocative inquiry in Loseke's (2018) work about how we motivate someone to act toward a social problem when there is no agreement about the injustice displayed. Narrative inquiry appeals to the heart of social injustice, and it gets participants thinking about the problem and ways to solve it. "The story is the promise that the boundaries between social classes are permeable, that mobility is prevalent, and that all Americans, regardless of race or economic origins, have equal opportunities to succeed" (Loseke, 2018, p. 3).

The complexity of language is multifaceted with semantic meanings (White, 1991). The expressions conveyed by each individual will mean something different to each person who receives it. Within the dialogue of the narrative, the conversation is in the context of the speaker's experiences. The spoken words live in the "syntactical world" of the conveyer, and all meanings are different (White, 1991, p. 68). White (1991) postulates that the quest for meaning never dies, and it is up to the speaker and listener to interact with the ideas of language so that

the meanings never die. Cultural and social systems do not remain stagnant, and each communication channel continuously transforms. There is rhetorical power in the narrative inquiry because explored meanings never cease (Sillince, 2002).

Binding the Study

Baxter and Jack (2008) have extensive research on binding a study. Once I explored the meanings of my work, I determined what boundaries to place in my study. The process added validity and rigor to my research. Segregation in the South included many facets that spanned over a century (Houston et al., 2004). The boundaries of this qualitative study focused on five participants' experiences who attended Spencer High School during segregation, as well as one historic participant for contextual purposes. I included a historic participant who lived through segregation and desegregation as a teacher and administrator in Columbus. Included was the aftermath of desegregation in Columbus.

My study is bound by place, Spencer High School and the Muscogee County School District in Columbus, Georgia, and time, which is from 1954 to 1971. Stating background from my dissertation chair, Dr. Patrick (20223), my research investigated social and cultural learning and how those aspects intertwined based on the role of dialogue called sociocultural dialogic patterns. The growth and development of the political, social, and cultural entities occurred as I interacted with the participants in an informal setting (Patrick, 2023). The three themes relating to political, social, and cultural objectives were ever-present in my conversations with the participants. I created boundaries of what to include and exclude, which ensured a laser focus on the research questions examined and generated meaning from my narrative theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Narrative theory is thinking about one's cultural capital and experiences, making meaning from them (Dhungana, 2021). A person can process his/her life's story in various ways by organizing and articulating experiences that mirror life continuously. The foundation of narrative inquiry is dialogic patterning by Todorov (1971) and the linguistic background that Bakhtin (1971) explains. Todorov (1971) speaks of the nature of storytelling as descriptive in sequential time, and the narrative process has episodes that connect people based on the intertwining of space and time. The narrative is beneficial because language carries referential use of analysis.

Narratives are three-dimensional and have chronological and appropriate features, giving me more clarity in developing meanings. Bakhtin's (1971) research on linguistics in narrative speaks on the different meanings of language from the experiences of the ones in dialogue. Bakhtin describes language as a living phenomenon that consistently changes. Holquist (1981) suggests that the many facets of experiences that two people share in conversation construct a new pattern of consciousness. People respond to linguistic expressions that are personally engaging (Dhungana, 2021). Bakhtin (1971) states that the researcher and the research participants empower the discourse. The dialogic story binds me to a discourse of socio-cultural place and time. Bell (2002) elaborated on stories making meaning and making sense through the lenses that evolve socio-culturally and psychologically. The relational factor of storytelling from each individual was what made narrative research compelling (Dhungana, 2021).

To encourage participants to tell their stories, I collected data using qualitative interviews. The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to investigate the experiential learning gleaned from the resonant interpretations. Interactions are vital to this dialectical venture because the lived experiences are perpetual. These experiences led to analyzing the participants' social

interactions to understand their reality (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Flick, 2018; Döringer, 2020). The advantages of the interview process are that the participants cited historical information related to the place and topic.

Qualitative interviews allow participants to share their feelings, attitudes, opinions, and prejudices about a selected topic. Qualitative interviewing allows me to fully engage in phenomena that will emerge from the participants (Dunwoodie et al., 2022). As I interview the participants, I gain an understanding of interpretations about the topics in question and speak on their experiences (Dunwoodie et al., 2022). The interviews will reveal how the participants generated meanings based on their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This is the core of narrative analysis, where I am collecting the qualitative interviews via inquiry and examining those interviews for deeper meanings and outcomes (Schuttler, 2021).

Study Location

The study location was Columbus, Georgia and the Muscogee County School District. The establishment of Columbus, Georgia was in 1828, however, the area's former inhabitants were the Creek Indian Nation. The town is the last frontier town of the original 13 colonies of North America. Columbus borders the state on the west of the state of Georgia next to the Chattahoochee River. The river became a catalyst of wealth for the town to import and export goods. In 1866, the establishment of Muscogee County School District created two different areas: the city schools and the county schools. Columbus was the home of the first kindergarten, a common school, and a Freedmen's Bureau school (Columbus Consolidated Government, 2022). The town was a harsh recipient of Jim Crow practices and segregated laws.

The city had an influx in population from 1890-1940, which was the height of Jim Crow and segregationist practices. Whites and Blacks lived in separate neighborhoods, worshipped in

their own churches, and attended their own schools even after Brown v. Board. Today, Columbus has over 250,000 residents with a median household income of $55k. Demographically, the city is 45.8 % Black, 38.4% White, 8% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 2% Multiracial (United States Census Bureau, 2022). Blacks and Whites did not intermingle. The problem addressed in this study was the need to investigate and develop research on the individual experiences of local African American SHS graduates and one educator who transitioned between segregation and desegregation in Columbus, Georgia.

Participants

Participant Selection

The process of participant selection began with letters sent out to the principal and graduates of William H. Spencer High School, Black businesses, and Black churches. The next point of communication was with the William H. Spencer Alumni Association. The founding of William H. Spencer Alumni Association, Inc. came about during a 1989 class reunion of members from the class of 1969. Mr. William Flewellen, a member of the class of 1969, was a chief organizer in leading the efforts to bring the SHS alumni together. Mr. Flewellen said that everything that he had become he owed to Spencer High School (W. Flewellen, personal communication, August 25, 2003). Sadly, Mr. Flewellen became a part of the ancestors five years later in 2008. The organization continues to work for the betterment of the school's students and staff. I contacted the current president of the alumni association. After having a detailed conversation with her about what I wanted to accomplish, she invited me to their scheduled meeting. She assured me that the attendance of the meeting would be great because they were planning for the All-Class Reunion. I received feedback from prospective participants via telephone calls and mail. Based on the selection criteria, I had nine potential participants and

ended with five selected interviewees. The five participants could remember vivid details of their time at SHS. A sent self-addressed stamped envelope to all five participants with an Informed Consent Form explaining the process of the interview. The signed forms were prior to the interview. The named sixth participant was a historic participant (HP). She did not graduate from SHS, but she remembered vividly the acts of segregation and desegregation in Columbus. Her sage wisdom was necessary to further validate the happenings in Columbus.

The completed interviews were in the homes of the participants. One of the participants lives in Washington, D.C. He and I had the interview via telecommunication. Each participant had a pseudonym to protect their identity and to adhere to the Columbus State University's Institutional Review Board. All of the participants received the same questions. I interviewed with each participant alone so that if he/she wished to share confidential information, he/she was free to do so. I desired to record each interview and it made it easier in transcribing the data. However, some of the participants requestions that I not record some of the responses. I reported the findings by using a chronological order based on life stages (Bekele & Ago, 2022). The goal was not to let my own interpretations, social connections, or cultural interactions get in the way of collecting the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This process assisted in preparing, collecting, and analyzing the data for my research.

I interviewed participants by probing them about their experiences and, in turn, allowed those participants to convey their memories back to me based on the task of qualitative interviewing (Holley & Colyar, 2009). Interviewing the participants brought together the past and the present ideas about desegregation in the South, namely Columbus, Georgia. This qualitative experience empowered me to dive deeply into the hearts and minds of the participants as I unpeeled their thoughts as they happened over time and identified thematic patterns in their

conversations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The participants were graduates of William H. Spencer High School and experienced the transition of desegregation in Columbus, Georgia.

Participant Demographics

The participants were between the ages of 74 to 93, three females and 3 males. Five of the participants were graduates from Spencer, and one participant was the historical participant. All of the participants were African-American. Five of the participants reside in Columbus, Georgia. One participant resides in Washington, D.C. After the five participants graduated from Spencer High School, each enrolled in college. Each one has retired from his or her initial careers in education, theology, and technical engineering. Even though all of them have retired, all of them remain active in various community activities. One of the participants continues to play the piano for her church. Another one finds time to present sermons as a visiting pastor. The third participant still embraces the fire of his community activism from the 1960s. The fourth participant speaks at community events on the history of the bi-city area. The fifth participant is a community activist who is refurbishing the historical Claflin School. Claflin was the first school designated for Blacks in Columbus. The participant had secured a grant to refurbish the building into affordable housing for veterans. The historical participant worked in the school district for 46 years and created the guidance department for Muscogee County. All of the participants have had spouses, however, all but one is a widow or widower.

To know the first participant (P1) is to connect to all of the arts and sciences that life has to offer. She is an alumnus of the former Fort Valley State. She is the epitome of a "gracious lady." The first participant is a retired school teacher and an accomplished pianist. She speaks eloquently and has many memories to share with me of her life as a student at William H. Spencer and as an educator in Columbus, Georgia. She is a proud graduate of the Class of 1953.

The second participant (P2) is an incomparable pastor who has lived a life that has promoted a change in race relations in Columbus, Georgia. He is the Pastor Emeritus and Founder of Revelation Missionary Baptist Church, and he helped to found The Columbus Urban League. The second participant is a graduate of William H. Spencer High School in 1954, the same year as the ruling of the Brown v. Board of Education Act. During the summer of 1961, he became the impetus for integrating buses in Columbus, Georgia.

If you mention the title Civil Rights Icon, the third participant (P3) comes to mind. His activism started early in Columbus, Georgia. On July 9, 1963, he walked into the W. C. Bradley Library as a fifteen-year-old freshman at Spencer High School and escorted out in handcuffs (Howard, 2019). He always had a love for books and learning. The protest at the Bradley Library was a "read-in" (Howard, 2019). After graduating from Spencer in 1965, he attended Howard University in Washington, D. C., where his fight for civil rights continued. Currently, he is a nonprofit executive director as a Community Economic Development Consultant. On August 2, 1963, the Muscogee County school board voted to desegregate the Bradley Library (Howard, 2019).

The fourth participant (P4) is a proud graduate of Spencer High School as a member of the class of 1967. After graduating from Spencer, she graduated from Tuskegee University. The participant is a retired professor of African and African-American studies. With her broad range of historical studies, her background is extensive regarding the Jim Crow era and the desegregation of public schools in Columbus. The fourth participant has taken several pilgrimages to the African continent. She has brought back from "the motherland" several artifacts that have been the purview of her research. The fourth participant enjoys public

speaking at churches and other local venues on apartheid in South Africa. From her research in South Africa, she has identified distinct parallelisms to segregation in the South.

The fifth participant (P5) is a native of Columbus and a 1969 graduate of William H. Spencer High School. He currently serves as the Georgia State Conference for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) District Coordinator where he works tirelessly in fifteen counties. He is also the Director of the Columbus Urban Debate League where he mentors middle and high school students in areas related to public policy. The fifth participant is committed to the uplift of the community as he works diligently through the restoration of the historic Claflin School.

The historic participant (HP) spent 46 years in education in Columbus. She is 92 years old and has information about the school district that the graduates of SHS may not know. She graduated from Reynolds High School in Reynolds, Georgia, in 1948 and from Albany State University. During her tenure as an educator in Muscogee County, she worked as a teacher, a guidance counselor, and a district-level mentor guidance counselor. She created the guidance department for Muscogee County. She is still active in several civic organizations and is a member of the school board's historical society.

Data Collection Tool

I collected field-based data using four incorporated phases described below (Yin, 2016). The first was conversational dialogue (see Figure 15). I prompted the participants with open-ended questions that focused on answering the research questions on personal, professional, and socio-cultural levels. I replicated McAdams' (1995) Life Story Protocol, in which the participants told me about his/her educational and personal experiences. I listened to the participants about his/her childhood educational experiences, and I took memos of their

responses (see Figure 15) as I transferred information about his/her experiences while in high school and his/her endeavors because of living through desegregation (Murray, 2018). Desegregation was a disruption in the daily lives of those affected. Within my interview protocol, I transcribed the responses to the open-ended scripted questions (see Figure 15) and generated meanings of emergent research (see Figure 15). I completed the interviews in four phases. I described those below.

Phase I: Conversational Dialogue. The conversations began with the mental framework of an interpersonal tone to increase comfort. Seidman (2006) discerns that this was an interview via relationship. The key objective was to say enough to maintain discourse while I gave the interviewees the openness to speak, leading towards grand tour questioning of broad topics to rid bias. If there were conflicting views, the interview negotiated text for a desirable outcome. When I exited the interview, I raised the question about anything I did not ask that the interviewee would like to add. I completed a verbal preliminary member check to see if there was information within the conversation that emerged that the field participant may not want information divulged.

Phase II: Creating Memos of Responses. I observed and wrote memos on how the participants responded to their surroundings; I heard their expressions and overall comfort level (Yin, 2016). Feelings represented overt data about the environment and how others perceived how they related to others. I cited covert responses clued in on actions that took place. Additionally, how I felt played a vital role in how the field participants related to the topic, hence the reflections on the research and attention questions to the prospective field participants.

The selection of the participants was based on the criteria of the addressed topic. The requirement of the participants was their enrollment at William H. Spencer High School during

the acts of segregation and desegregation. The high school only had Black students during that time, so the participants were of that race. The study looked compellingly at experiencing the transition of desegregation as a high school student at SHS. Consequently, the participants' qualifiers were prescriptive.

Phase III: Transcribing. I transcribed the verbal interactions of the prospective participants (Jenks, 2018). Each gave detailed information based on his/her social interaction at that time. Transcribing allows the researcher to transform a fluid experience into a record of textual and social representations that evolved based on the interpretations of social interactions. This textualization of an ephemeral occurrence created a static concept of represented phenomena (Jenks, 2018).

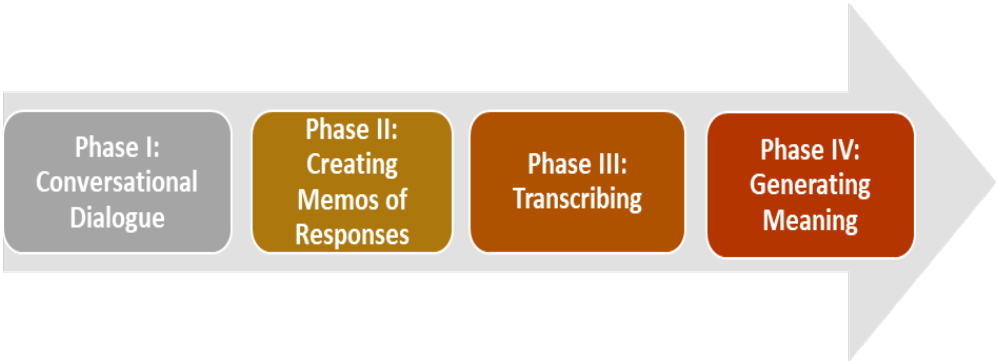
Observations were initial reports based on recorded sensory data that was face-to-face. Physical proximity is important because I gathered data in response to how the subjects reacted with non-verbal sound mechanisms (Wästerfors, 2018). By observing those sounds, I was able to uncover clues to how empirical research communicates with theory. I observed what the proposed field participants did and said in detail, capturing what took place in a particular order, and I could articulate without words the tone and mood of the participant (Wästerfors, 2018).

Phase IV: Generating Meanings. I examined the interview data for its referential content that generated meanings—the inner consciousness of the participant's interactions and other co-constructed elocutionary events were into meanings (Roulston, et al., 2018). I posed two separate interviews with the same questions. I presented my collected findings to the participants for feedback and validation. The latter part of the collection and examination process was for an impartial peer-assisted debrief of the data. The peer explored the tension between the questions

asked and the experiences that the participants yielded in their responses (Roulston, et al., 2018). This practice established additional credibility.

Figure 15

Data Collection Diagram



Trustworthiness of the Data

Trustworthiness includes the quality assurance necessary for validity in qualitative methodology (Guba, 1981; Archer & Hsiao, 2023). In light of trustworthiness, the data must have validity internally and externally or credibility and transferability, respectively. The data should also be reliable, dependable, and objective, which is confirmability (Archer & Hsiao, 2023). I garnered a peer reviewer of the data to ensure transferability and credibility. This cohort cross-checked the material within my data and reviewed my themes and subthemes. I reviewed the themes and subthemes with each interviewee during the second interview. I was able to get rid of the "multiple themes" category because it made the data too nebulous, utilizing the member-checking technique. I wanted to ensure the results could be adapted to other contexts, which is transferability (Forero, et al., 2018). I wanted to ensure confirmability by checking to see if the analysis matched the experiences of each participant (Archer & Hsiao, 2023). I drilled down the participants' comments until I reached data saturation with my peer reviewer.

Narrative Data Analysis

Before commencing the study, I secured the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval at Columbus State University (see Appendix G). Once I obtained approval, the five graduate and one historic participant received a letter of informed consent that contained permission to participate in the study. The exclusion of the names of the participants was to secure their real identity. Once I received their signed paperwork, I called each participant to see when I could come to his/her home for an interview. The five local interviews were at each member's home, and one was telephonic because the participant was out of town. After having each interview, I sent a thank you note to each participant for his/her interview. I kept all my paperwork in a locked filing cabinet in my home for security. I had password-protected security on my iPad for the interviews recorded. I transcribed the interviews before deleting them from my iPad. I ensured there was no identifiable information to protect the rights of the participants. All coded information was by letter (c for cultural, p for political, and s for social) and number based on the participant's number assigned (P1 through P5). The code for the historical participant was HP. All participants will receive a handwritten letter from me to inform each of the eliminated material after this study.

The data extrapolation process consisted of analyzing the data by reading, discovering the themes within the reading, and citing the study results. The observed human interactions and recorded experiences yielded the analysis process (Miles, et. al, 2020). The triangulation of this study was by initially asking the interview questions, going back to the participants for quality assurance by asking the questions for a second time, and using peer review and member checking to identify other perceptions (Roulston, 2014). The triangulation method ensured the trustworthiness of the results and a comprehensive understanding of the data collected (Carter, et

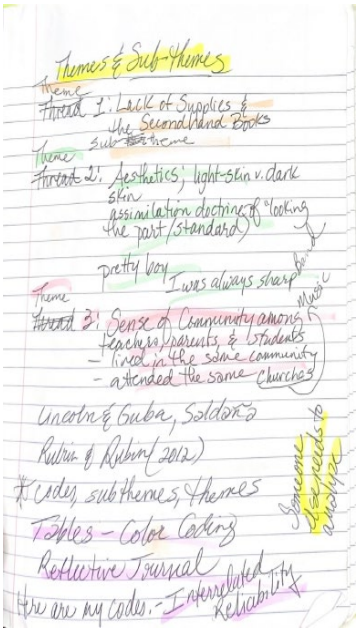
al., 2014). Triangulation expanded the chance of data saturation by using more than one qualitative tool (Mwita, 2022).

Categorizing

Once I prepared the coding and re-coding analysis, I combined my results into synthesized categories (Saldaña, 2015). Unlike quantitative data, where there were absolute derived results, qualitative data was based on symbolic meanings. I categorized the coded phenomena based on interpreted themes (see Figure 16). This process made my discussion points into meaning-making theories (Saldaña, 2015).

Figure 16

Coding and Categorizing Data into Themes



As I codified the information I received, several responsibilities were adhered to in this process. I handled quantities of data in this process. The organization was critical to the analysis. The act of perseverance was essential to reach my goal of completion. Narrative analysis is rigorous work. Working with symbols and various meanings in the data required a sense of

clarifying material that was vague. Coding and categorizing the conversations via the interviews took flexibility and tenacity. The ability to be creative and widen the scope of understanding has always attracted me to the qualitative research process. A distinct priority for me was maintaining ethical behavior. Treating the interviewees with respect and analyzing the data with high integrity as a scholar was of prime importance (Saldaña, 2015).

Coding

Inductive coding analysis is a prime characteristic of qualitative research because I identified codes and themes as the data emerged (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The questions that I posed to the participants were open-ended. The participants' cited material became transcribed data, and the identified codes revealed themselves. I utilized the process of open coding, where essential patterns and themes emerge from the data (Birch, 2023). New comparisons came from the data as new codes emerged from the material. Hence, categories and groupings became three significant themes, as shown in Table 1 (political, social, and cultural), and consequently, the interpreted themes became the findings (Birch, 2023). As shown in the table (see Table 1), the participants spoke on cultural, social, and political themes in my qualitative interviews. I color-coded each topic as red for cultural, blue for political, green for social, and magenta for multiple themes (see Table 2). Through my analysis process, my peer reviewer and I decided to delete the magenta category. The attempt to explain phenomena with multiple nuances would convolute the results. I interpreted three significant themes with two subthemes for each theme. As shown in Table 2, there are 25 different elicited topics (46%) based on the cultural theme from the lens of the inaccessibility of materials, the despair of colorism, the power of the church, and the messages of freedom found in music. The second-ranking area of 16 different topics (30%) was from the political theme, where the participants spoke on the different types of civil rights

activism displayed in response to segregation and the profound influence of Black teachers on themselves and the community. The last area mentioned 13 different topics (24%) from the participants from the social theme, as they spoke on the relationships within the community and the overall memories they had as students during segregation and desegregation. In Table 3, I cited an example of each theme as I generated meaning based on the participants. I will explain the themes with supporting quotes in Chapter III.

Table 1

Phases I & II: Study Questions & Participant Data by Themes & Aligned Categories

RQ1: (*knowledge of content*) What do the narratives of 5 Black residents in Columbus, GA, who attended Spencer High School (SHS) during desegregation (1950-1970) reveal about their experiences as students during the transition between segregation and desegregation at SHS?	Theme Meaning	Aligned Categories
RQ2: *(knowledge of self)* How do the participants believe their experiences have impacted their present lives?		
Theme 1: Political Lens: Activism and the Influence of Black Teachers Then and Now	Each participant could cite examples of direct and indirect involvement in fighting against Jim Crow and segregation. Every participant could name his/her favorite teacher and had fond memories of each one. Comments made about the educational process today by the participants.	✓ Drinking from a White fountain of water ✓ Throwing popcorn at White theater patrons ✓ Integrating the bus lines in Columbus ✓ Getting Arrested for Entering the Bradley Library ✓ Blacks were Fearful of Retaliation ✓ Death of Dr. Brewer

		✓ Renovating the Claflin School ✓ Participants were members of a "Greater Generation." ✓ Did Not Realize the Danger Involved in Attempting to Integrate ✓ Excellent Teachers Who were Limited by Systemic Racial Inequality ✓ Several teachers took an Interest in Education ✓ Someone had to "put you in" to teach. ✓ Critic Teacher ✓ School Teachers were Extended Family Members ✓ School was its Own Community ✓ Miss Hill-Manly Taylor ✓ Miss Lanier-Manly Taylor ✓ Miss Lovett-Chorus at Manly Taylor ✓ Miss Gallop-Chorus at Spencer ✓ Mrs. Rosa Childs was an "English-ologist." ✓ Mrs. Eunice Dent ✓ Mrs. Hudson ✓ Mrs. Fowlkes ✓ Mr. S. Leon Brown ✓ Professor DuVaul ✓ Professor Samuel Charleston ➢ More Black Teachers in the Classroom ➢ Dr. Burns was good for the School District

		➢ Columbus has a long way to go. ➢ Impact of the Zoning Issue
Theme 2: Social Lens: Community Relationships and Memories	Participants reminisced vividly about their neighborhoods/communities and their memories at Spencer High School.	✓ Black Neighborhoods Tightly Knit ✓ Every Adult was Your Parent ✓ Teachers were the Pillars of the Community ✓ Teachers Sought Partnership with the Parents ✓ Old Columbus College building given to MCSD for Talbotton Road Junior High for Black Students ✓ The Creation of the First Credit Union for Black Teachers ✓ The Creation of the First Guidance Department for Black Students ➢ Mr. S. Leon Brown (bandmaster) would use his baton to hit the heads of students who did not play the right notes. ➢ Being in the Band ➢ Being in Jazz Combo ➢ Speaking at Spencer High School's Graduation
Theme 3: Cultural Lens: Inaccessibility, Colorism, Music & The Church	The participants could give examples of what types of books and materials they had in school and where those materials came from in the district.	✓ The Facilities were Fair, with No Frills ✓ The Gym and Auditorium were in the Same Room ✓ Metal Chairs ✓ The Books were from Columbus High or

	The participants could cite examples of how colorism and their aesthetic appearance affected how their perceptions or treatments were historically and in the present.	Jordan High (White Schools) ✓ Discarded Books ✓ Very Little Lab Equipment ✓ We Made Do with what We Had ✓ The Little School was Small. ✓ "Hole in the Wall" ✓ Schools and Libraries were Separate, Not Equal ✓ The Library for Blacks was a Reading Room ✓ Parents Purchased Encyclopedias for Children to Study ✓ Difference in White Payroll and Black Payroll in the School District ✓ Ability-Grouping ✓ "Flip-Flop" Method of Integration for Teachers ✓ White teachers calling Black students nigra. ✓ Resistance of the Black Community to Integrate ✓ There was No Integration ✓ Glad Not to Attend a White School ✓ "Snoop-ervisors" ✓ The Resistance of Integration ➢ Colorism and the Caste System ➢ Not Being Accepted into a Black School Due to skin tone ➢ My Daughter and the Very Dark Girl

		➢ The First Dark Miss Greenwave (Homecoming Queen) ➢ Light-Skinned Students Appearing in Yearbook ➢ Dark, Intelligent Graduate of SHS, a Retired Colonel ➢ Residents in the Bottom ➢ Church was the Center of the Movement ➢ Church Buildings were the Headquarters of the Movement ➢ Churches Failed During Desegregation ➢ Music Got Us Over During the Movement ➢ We Shall Overcome from Someday to Today ➢ We were Prepped for Greatness through the Church ➢ Easter Speeches came from Harlem Renaissance Writers ➢ Music was Essential and My Lifeline ➢ Integration Starts with the Churches

As I engaged with each participant, I utilized conventional content analysis approach. I defined the codes as they appeared in the data and linked each to a theme once discovered (see Table 1). I extracted the categories, themes, and codes from the data from each interview. Memo writing played a pivotal role in this process, allowing the tracking of my thoughts and for themes to emerge, thereby enhancing the credibility and accountability of the research (Birch, 2023).

The 3 major themes found in the study, aligned with two sub-themes that support each theme, were at the core of each participant's experiences, rooted in educational memories infused with cultural, social, and political implications. In these narrative experiences, the participants demonstrated remarkable courage, speaking truth to power in the face of adversity!

Table 2

Phase III: Transcribing by Creating a Codified Disaggregation of Data by Theme

Table 3

Phase IV: The Discovery of Themes

Coded Themes	Topics Addressed (Partial)	Participant's Comment
Social Theme	Every Adult was Your Parent Teachers were the Pillars of the Community Teachers Sought Partnership with the Parents	"The teachers lived where we lived. They walked to school with us. They were at church. We all lived in "The Bottom," but did not feel that way. School was our way of life."
Political Theme	Integrating the bus lines in Columbus Getting Arrested for Entering the Bradley Library Blacks were Fearful of Retaliation, Death of Dr. Brewer	"We were going to be on those buses. We got on, and the arrests began, except for my crew. A police officer, a detective dressed in plain clothes, walked up to me and said, "You are responsible for this mess."
Cultural Theme	The Books were from Columbus High or Jordan High (White Schools) Discarded Books Very Little Lab Equipment We Made Do with what We Had	"I applied to Spelman College. Spelman was a gated elitist school that kept those who were unfavorable out. I was in the top 10% of my class. I did well in school. Spelman requested that I send a picture of when I applied with my application. Spelman did not accept me. It had nothing to do with my scholarship. It had everything to do with my skin tone."

Role of the Qualitative Researcher

My role as the researcher was to be a theory extractor. I focused on the *a priori* questions and the literature review (Saldaña, 2015). I was an analyst of human experience. My role was to ascertain the developing trends from the dialogues produced using the inductive process. The collected research findings designed to align the objectives with the data's dominant themes, concepts, and understandings (Thomas, 2006). I understood that the conversation about the themes of oppression, culture, and racial relations were topics that were not easy to address, primarily based on the background of the participants. The participants have seen occurrences that have not been pleasing in the South in American history. As the researcher, I was responsible for explaining the lived experiences of each participant and his/her understanding of those experiences, known as Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984).

Investigating the participant experiences through narrative inquiry allowed me to go through my metamorphosis in this study (Goodson & Gill, 2014). My ontological and epistemological stances opened opportunities for improvement and enlightenment in the research practice (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). Participating in dialectical exchanges allowed a deeper understanding of educational practices during segregation and desegregation. The narratives increased my professional practice as I led discussions on the transition of desegregation in Columbus.

Summary

Desegregation was a controversial topic worthy of narrative inquiry. The 6 participants experienced the desegregation process in Columbus, Georgia. Five were graduates of SHS, and 1 was a historical participant. I collected the data using conventional content analysis. The content that I gathered from the participants' responses cited an understanding of the experiences found

during desegregation. Participating in dialectical exchanges prompted me to understand educational practices during segregation and desegregation better. In Chapter IV, I described my findings based on the bevy of information gleaned from those who desired to participate.

Chapter IV: Findings

Narrative inquiry interrogates life through storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). There are stories around us that are worthy of interrogation and hence, documentation. Documenting through an exploratory lens helps unveil the experiences of those interested in extending the backgrounds of topics worthy of investigation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The purpose of my narrative study was to collect the stories of five Black residents in Columbus, GA, who attended SHS during desegregation to determine how their experiences as students during the transition between segregation and desegregation at SHS influenced their lives into who they have become today.

Like several Southern towns, Columbus, Georgia did not take immediate action regarding Brown v Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas desegregation mandate in 1954. Columbus did not fully desegregate the student body until a 1971 court-mandated order (Causey, 2001). Before desegregation, the stories surrounding Professor William H. Spencer's desire to have a high school for Black students in the face of segregation are worthy of remembrance. Reconstructing the happenings of events of the past can assist in developing further inquiry on the civil right of desegregation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Professor Spencer did not live to see his dream become a reality. However, Professor Spencer's legacy lives on in the students who were able to attend the first Black high school of his namesake in Columbus, Georgia. The interviewed graduates of Spencer High School possess within them the pride and knowledge that have shaped their lives today. I investigated their lived experiences during the transition of desegregation based on The Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984).

Theme 1 Political Lens: Activism & the Influence of Black Teachers Then and Now

Three of the five participants were involved in some form of activism within the community of Columbus. Svirsky (2010) defines activism as a created continuum of ideas that were structures that broke away from the status quo. The status quo referenced here was segregation in the South. The examples of communicated activism by the participants range from simple acts of resistance to overt, complex measures of fighting against inequality. Participant 1 shared the following simplistic form of activism.

> P1: After high school, I majored in Music in Fort Valley State. When I was at Fort Valley (college), the city had separate bathrooms and water fountains. I always drank from the "White" water fountain. The theater had separate seating. We solved that problem by throwing popcorn down at the White patrons. Eventually, there were changes to the seating.

The consideration of throwing popcorn arguably could be child-like behavior; however, the act promoted the change necessary to integrate the seating at the theater. Participant 1 had a warrior spirit of activism by drinking out of the designated White fountain. The Jim Crow of the South was the law of the land. Participant 2 understands how deeply ingrained Jim Crow was in Columbus and became intricately involved in the desegregation of buses:

> P2: The year was 1961 and we were ready to get some things started. We started with the buses. Our process was to recruit and gather college students first. The idea around using college students and school-aged children across the South was that if there were any arrests, it was no financial burden on the family, you understand? If anyone went to jail, we knew about it. Rev. Bryson from Holsey Chapel chaired the Ministerial Alliance. He went before the Columbus Council to ask them to desegregate the buses. They refused.

> We were not backing down that easily, so we sent him back. We were going to be on those buses. We got on, and the arrests began, except for my crew. A police officer, who was a detective dressed in plain clothes, walked up to me and said, "You are responsible for this mess." To keep us off of the buses, they would put them out of service on the bus and park them downtown…eventually, changes happened because we refused to back down.

Participant 2 sparked his activism on the seating of the city's busing system. Buses played a unique role in desegregation. Columbus, like other Southern cities, used the busing of Black children to White schools to desegregate schools. White mothers with school-aged children banded together to fight against the busing plan (Garcia, 2023). Buses with Black children had bricks, bottles, and rocks thrown at them. Crowds of Whites hurled racial slurs at the Black students. The experience made the students very uncomfortable (Garcia, 2023). White parents did not mind the integration based on busing, as long as their children were not involved (Rossell, 2024). The city buses were no different. Black patrons sat in the back section of the buses. When the buses filled, Blacks had to give up their seats to White patrons (Mcghee, 2015).

Participant 3 remembers riding the segregated city and school buses. However, Participant 3's memory of not being able to enter the Bradley Library was the most vivid. Black residents could only use the library on the former 4th Avenue in the Liberty District. The problem with the 4th Avenue Library was that the book collections included no reference material. Participant 3 shares the memory of how activism took center stage:

> P3: Desegregation took place slowly in Columbus. City officials did just enough to attempt to pacify the federal government and Fort Benning…The librarian questioned us as soon as we entered. The reference lady said we knew we were not supposed to be

there. All we wanted to do was to read the reference materials to study…We only wanted to study. The police officers handcuffed us. Arrested at fifteen—imagine that! We sat in the county jail until our parents came to get us. That is something I will never forget. The stand that we took paid off. The integration of the libraries helped Black students and me have access to the best research materials. The libraries integrated only days after the protest. The schools remained segregated when I left in 1965.

One act of activism from 4 young teenagers changed the course of history in Columbus. Participant 3 returned to Columbus to celebrate his high school reunion from SHS. Every class at SHS comes back every ten years for its reunion. One of the activities is to take a tour around the Columbus area to note the changes and to see the previous school sites of SHS. During one of the tours of Columbus, the bus stopped at the Bradley Museum. Participant 3 asked about any memorabilia related to civil rights activities in Columbus. The receptionist replied that Columbus did not have any issues during that time. Participant 3 looked at her and said, "Are you kidding?" Police officers arrested me as a 15-year-old right down that hill at the library.

One of the curators listened to the exchange. From that comment of activism, bloomed yet another moment of change. The Columbus Museum hosted a civil rights exhibition entitled "Journey Toward Justice" in 2022, a panel discussion with Participant 3 as a guest, and a book by the same title edited by Columbus State University's own Dr. Gary Sprayberry. The participants encountered their journeys toward justice.

Black teachers played an exceptional role in assisting students in their journeys toward justice. Black teachers taught holistically during segregation, and the topics were based on culturally relevant material (James-Gallaway & Harris, 2021). Black teachers broadened how students saw the world, as mentioned by Participant 4.

P4: Several teachers took me under their wing and raised me as if I were their own. None of the teachers I am about to name had any children of their own. Miss Hill was my teacher in the third grade at Manly Taylor, who would visit the former Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. She would take me along with her. That experience taught me a lot. I was able to walk the campus and go into classrooms. Those experiences paved the way for me to attend Tuskegee. Miss Lanier taught me cursive writing. Miss Lovett was my chorus teacher. When I got to Spencer with Miss Gallop (chorus teacher), I read music, sang solos, and presented publicly. If I had to name a favorite educator, it would have to be Mrs. Bussey. Mrs. Bussey is why I got an award without the district knowing about it (Mrs. Bussey was a Jeanes Supervisor). Mr. Ashe, the wood shop teacher, made me a plaque (see Figure 16) for making straight A's that year. In 1966, Mrs. Bussey secretly turned in the paperwork for a senior who received the distinction as a National Merit Scholar. Dr. Shaw said that he could not believe a *Negro* scored higher than anyone else in Muscogee County. Dr. Shaw's comment propelled me to go into higher education. We were mentally stimulated to learn at Spencer. The teachers lived where we lived. They walked to school with us. They were at church. We all lived in "The Bottom" but did not feel that way. School was our way of life.

Figure 17

Wood Shop Plaque: Made Straight A's

Note. "Wood Plaque Award Done in Wood Shop by Mr. Ashe, 1962" from Participant 4. I blocked the name to protect the participant's identity. Reprinted with permission by the participant.

Students at SHS made intricate designs with wood and other materials. For example, in figure 18 below there is a magazine rack made by Jerome Robinson, a 10th grader in 1934 under the tutelage of Mr. Slater. With the skills that Robinson learned at Spencer, he created several wooden pieces for his family and friends.

Figure 18

Intricate Magazine Rack Created by Spencer High School Student

Note. From "Gift of Wesley B. Jones" by *The Columbus Museum Archives*. Copyright 2019, https://columbusmuseum.catalogaccess.com/objects/20251 Reprinted by permission from The Columbus Museum (see Appendix E).

Schools during segregation were the bedrock for the Black community. Teachers taught lifelong skills and were an integral part of the same communities as their students during segregation. The historic participant remembers when she was still in her student teaching phase.

> HP: In 1952, I transferred into a new student teaching group in Muscogee County (for Black teachers). In those days, you had to have someone "put you in." My "critic teacher" (now formally called mentor teacher) had a severe illness and needed surgery. Professor Samuel Charleston, the principal of Claflin and former principal of the first Spencer High, wanted to know if I could handle teaching the class alone. I finished the year out by myself with my class. Not only did I teach my class, but I also became the girls' basketball coach. I played basketball at Albany State. I could also sew. The performers wore costumes that I created. The school was its community. The school served as a meeting place socially and politically. I became deeply involved in the

school's work. Professor Charleston gave me my first contract while I was still a student at Albany State, so my job awaited me!

As the historic participant mentioned, the school encapsulated the community and was a haven for students. Participant 1 remembers when she taught at the all-Black elementary school, Manly Taylor Elementary School, named in honor of a prominent *Negro* physician and choral musician. Dr. Taylor's memorial in the newspaper printed that "he did much for the advancement of his race…a section of the church will be reserved for Dr. Taylor's White friends" (Columbus Georgia Ledger Newspaper, 1938, p. 8). The aforementioned cites a sense of the climate of that day. Regardless of the climate, Black teachers like Participant 1 had to use their means of passive disobedience in ways to secure supplies for their children during segregation.

P1: I moved here and taught at Manly Taylor Elementary in 1959. Segregation remained at Manly Taylor. We did not have adequate supplies. We received old, dusty, and antiquated things from the White schools. My principal told me that I would get new books next year. I was so excited that I threw away all of those old books!

When the new books came, he gave them to Mrs. Hill, the other third-grade teacher. The principal had to find me additional books from the White schools. He was angry about it, but he found me some more books. Looking back on it, I was young and arrogant. I knew I would not get any new books, but I indirectly forced him to get me those new books. I felt like a third-grade teacher, just like the other teacher. I was going to make him keep his promise.

Participant 1's activism, though indirect, made a direct impact on her students. As is commonplace, administrators gave young teachers older materials from which to work. This

practice happened in the early 1990s when I entered SHS as a teacher. However, Participant 1 did not settle for less and received new books. Another journey toward justice comes from Participant 5, who remembers learning from second-hand books from Claflin Elementary School. Claflin was the first school for Blacks in Columbus. Muscogee County School District used the building for professional development for years. The school district closed Claflin's doors after building the new district office. Participant 5 saw a dilapidated historic building and, through his activism efforts, decided to renovate the first school for Blacks in Columbus and make Claflin an area of affordable housing for veterans and low-income families.

> P5: My entire public education was in segregated schools. I attended Claflin Elementary School, Marshall Junior High School, and William H. Spencer High School. The atmosphere at the schools I attended was peaceful, and nothing changed. I mentioned Marshall Junior High and William H. Spencer High Schools. Those were schools named for Professor Shadrack R. Marshall and Professor William H. Spencer. Both of those men were former principals of Claflin School. The school district shut Claflin's doors in 2005. In 2014, I decided to do something about the school. I developed the "Friends of Claflin" group to help raise money for the restoration project. I connected with the news media to gain the support of others who attended Claflin. We received funding from the Historic Preservation Society. We all put in "sweat equity" to make the Claflin Apartments a reality. The "Friends of Claflin" are very proud of this accomplishment.

Reaching back to the importance of place by renovating Claflin Elementary was an extraordinary measure of activism. As I drove around the new complex, I felt a heightened sense of joy knowing that local veterans who were once homeless were now under the shelter of a facility that opened in 1868 for Black children to learn. Classroom pedagogy and the process of

learning remain points of concern. Participant 1 talks about the influence of Black teachers today.

> P1: Some White teachers were incapable of teaching our children. That is something that bothers me now. The Black students need a representation of who they are. All they see is a group of White teachers making decisions for them. Getting suspended and going home does not help the situation…I would like to see more Black teachers in the classrooms. The teaching staff should mirror the student body. The majority should not be running a minority school. We need more Black representation on the executive level. We did not need to go to Florida to secure a superintendent. I hope that one day, Muscogee County will have a Black superintendent because we have much talent here. Let the citizens vote for the superintendent. The superintendent who had done so much was Dr. Burns. He would come by St. Mary's Road Elementary, and I requested some computers. He promised me we would have the computers, and he made it happen. Unfortunately, someone killed Dr. Burns in his own home. Dr. Burns was good for Muscogee County.

These historical activism ventures did not come easily. There were times when lives were on the line, and dangers ensued on behalf of desegregation. Participant 1 had several forecasts that she would like to see for the future because there is a lot of talent here in Columbus. However, acts of courage must commence to set changes in motion. Participant 4 spoke on the lack of activism in Columbus.

> P4: Nothing happened here because of fear. Those who fought against the system would have lost their jobs, a heavy price to pay, so they went along with the status quo. Black doctors could not even practice in White hospitals. Black officers could not arrest White citizens. After Dr. Thomas Brewer's death, many of the professionals left Columbus. Dr.

> John Henrik Clarke, a renowned scholar of African and African American history, attended Spencer and left here in search of his aspirations. He passed away in 1997 and interred at Green Acres Cemetery. Marilyn McCoo, a star-studded performer of the 5th Dimension, was also from Columbus and attended Spencer. McCoo is the daughter of two physicians, Drs. McCoo left Columbus, moving to Los Angeles shortly after Dr. Brewer's demise due to fear. There was a great exodus of professionals searching for peace.

Participant 4 spoke vividly about how some Columbus residents, in particular those who had professional positions, chose not to participate in any protests due to intimidation and fear. Dr. Thomas Hency "Chief" Brewer was a physician and an activist here during the 1920s until his murder on February 18, 1956, on the steps of his office by a White store owner (Grant, 1999). Dr. Brewer organized the Columbus *Colored* Medical Association, the local National Association for the Advancement of *Colored* People, and the Manly Taylor Recreational Center, to name a few. Dr. Brewer was deeply involved in registering Blacks to vote, opening the Lyons Club to Black patrons, and assisting Primus King in appealing for his right to vote. Many Blacks left Columbus after Dr. Brewer's death due to fear of retaliation (Grant, 1999). Dr. Brewer's death drew national attention, and his final resting place is Green Acres Cemetery in Columbus, Georgia. Participant 2 remembers the work of Dr. Brewer in Columbus and the anxiety that his death imposed upon the local Black citizens. Participant 2 reflects on where Columbus is today and the danger he encountered in the fight for civil rights.

> P2: Columbus has come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. We are not concerned about our destiny. When King was doing his thing, I felt like things were in motion. We were eradicating evil. We put our lives on the line during that time (of

desegregation). I did not realize how dangerous it was out there. We were in Nashville and someone threw a pipe in my direction. When we sat at the lunch counter, White kids threw bricks at us. When we sat at Krystal's in Nashville, they closed it down. The employees who were cleaning up threw mop water at us. One night, 50 White boys approached us with knives. I was glad to go to jail that night! I did not realize the danger I was in at the time. God was with us!

Theme 2: Social Lens: Community Relationships & Memories

Viewing a construct from a social lens pertains to people's behaviors and how those behaviors affect others (Schmitt, 1998). The review of how Black communities cooperated and the involvement that the parents and teachers had with the participants were of high importance. People within Black communities took care of their own, as the historic participant reminisced.

HP: Columbus College was located on Talbotton Road in Columbus. When Columbus College moved to Cody Road (now University Avenue), Columbus College gave the building on Talbotton Road to the school board. The school board created Talbotton Road Junior High for Black students, and Mr. John Washington (a former principal of SHS) became the school's principal. (Side Note: During that time, she and her husband helped to establish the first credit union for Black educators in Columbus.)

Mr. Washington asked if I wanted to be his guidance director. Even though I had not been a school counselor, he said he needed me there and knew what I could do. I built Talbotton Road's guidance department from the ground up. I created weekly visits to the classroom and consistently met with the children. I stayed at Talbotton Road until we integrated Daniel Jr. High School.

The historic participant cited credible information about how guidance for Black students started in Columbus. She also mentioned that she and her husband founded the first credit union for Black educators. The credit union was the Muscogee *Colored* Teachers Education Association (MCTEA). The MCTEA did not merge with the former Muscogee Educators Association (MEA) until 2006. Black teachers took care of each other during segregation due to the climate of Jim Crow. Within the Black community, all adults ensured the children focused on maintaining good behavior. Participant 5 reminisced the following:

> P5: We were fortunate to be children of the "Greater Generation." The entire community was involved in all aspects of our lives and expected the best for us and from us. We had excellent teachers limited by systemic racial inequality. Teachers were like second parents who knew our natural parents. There was a level of respect that we see little of today.

Participant 5 spoke on being a member of the "Greater Generation," or the generation between the greatest generation (1925-1945) and the baby boomer generation (1946-1964). Twenge (2023) defines generations from a social perspective, meaning those born around the same time and experienced similar things happening within a culture. As a member of the Greater Generation, Participant 5 mentions how much pride and reverence students had for Black teachers in school. Participant 2 spoke fondly of his favorite teacher, Mrs. Rosa Childs:

> P2: The teachers taught us everything they knew. My favorite teacher was Miss Rosa Childs. I called her an "English-ologist." She taught with much passion. We remained friends until she passed. The interaction between the teachers, students, and parents was powerful. The teachers lived where we lived. They attended the same churches. Because

we were in the same community, every teacher was our teacher, and every parent was our parent.

The mixed communities where Blacks resided contained textile mill workers, railroad workers, domestics, teachers, and preachers. The tightly knit communities were where every adult, even those without a relation, could chastise children in the neighborhood. Teachers were the pillars of the community. They lived in the same neighborhoods as their students and worshiped in the same churches. Participants 1 and 3 remember a few of the teachers and subjects at SHS.

P1: My fondest memory was being in the band. I played all five years (high school started in the 8th grade). I played the clarinet. When I was in the band, I enjoyed all of the experiences, except when S. Leon Brown (band master) would pop me on the head with his baton. I told him to stop that. Mr. Brown sent me to Professor Charles DuVaul's (the principal's) office, and I answered the phone. Anytime the band director popped me on the head, I went to Professor DuVaul's office. He and my dad were good friends.

My favorite teacher was Mrs. Dent. Mrs. Eunice Dent taught me English and grammar. She was a rigorous teacher, and I learned a lot from her. Mrs. Childs loved me even though I did not have her. She knew my mother. I liked Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. Fowlkes, who worked in the vocational department.

P3: My fondest memory is speaking at graduation. We had about 275 students in my senior class, but only 3 of us spoke at graduation. It was a dignified, moving experience as we marched into the auditorium with a capacity of about 5,000 people. Spencer prepared me for who I am today by instilling a thirst for excellence. The staff taught us

that the playing field was not level. The expectations were to be successful despite segregation and other obstacles.

I was in the college prep section for four years at Spencer. I did not realize it then, but there was ability grouping, and I was in the most advanced classes for all four years. The teachers were always trying to make the curriculum more relevant to prepare us for college and careers. I particularly enjoyed social studies and history with Mrs. Ethelyn Coleman. I learned that the seminal documents that our founding fathers wrote did not consider me. I know that is what prompted my drive for activism. The teachers recognized that the playing field was not level, and their job was to prepare us for success despite segregation. Teachers sought partnerships with parents.

Extended family members were the schoolteachers. Levels of discipline to students for various reasons deemed necessary and rightfully given by the teachers. Parents knew the teachers only wanted the best from students, so no one questioned teachers. Participant 3 mentioned the phrase "ability grouping." The Department of Education recommended that grouping students based on their ability would be beneficial in raising standards. The grouping factor increased as students moved further in school (Hallam, et al., 2010). The Historic Participant remembers the concept of ability grouping well.

HP: Daniel Junior High had a difficult time as well with integration. On paper, we had integrated, but segregation remained in the classes. We had to do something. I will never forget the number "751." That number is the cumulative folders I took home to review for each student enrolled. I created my integration system and tracked all the children according to their grades. I had four groups for each grade level: As, Bs, Cs, and Ds. I made every student a particular schedule according to their earned grades. No one

thought it would work. We did a "dry run" for a week. I needed to make some adjustments and sought out the wives of those executives who lived in Green Island Hills who had children at Daniel. With the help of 10 of those ladies, we finished the rest of the work in a day!

The day was November 7th. We had visitors come to Daniel Junior High, three White men, one Black man, and one White woman. They checked everything out—the committee called the roll and spoke with a few children. They had an exit conference that Friday at the district office with the principal, the assistant principal, Dr. Braxton Nail (school superintendent), Dr. Robert Bushong (assistant superintendent), Dr. Eddie Lindsey (the first Black superintendent of student services), Dr. Jim Buntin (assistant superintendent), Mr. Tucker (director of personnel), and the committee were singing my praises for how I created the schedule model. The visiting committee wanted to know if they could use my model. Dr. Nail agreed.

The memories of SHS teachers and the communities where both teachers and students lived were a part of the intricate Black culture of Columbus. Participants 5 and 2 encapsulate the memories of SHS:

P5: I was a band boy. I was a part of a great combo. It prepared me to serve in the Drum and Bugle Corps in the Air Force Band. I learned enough to be outstanding wherever I went.

P2: My fondest memory? The girls. (Laughs) I am just kidding. I thought I was a pretty boy. I was in the jazz band. We were good. I played the clarinet. We competed state-wide and won. This influenced how I lived. I always said that I got a good education. Teachers were concerned about higher education for us. Teachers had a great rapport with the

parents. Under the circumstances, I felt like I had a good education. Ninety percent of my class went to college. I enjoyed Spencer High School.

Theme 3 Cultural Lens: Lack of Accessibility, Colorism, The Power of Music, and the Church

Black culture holds many nuances of complexity. Cole (1970) states that Black culture is a set of learned values and beliefs based on the soul and style of life's experiences. The participants had a multitude of experiences to share regarding the passed-down materials from White schools during segregation. Participants 2 and 3 cited the remembrances of the lack of accessibility of materials at SHS:

> P2: The facilities were fair. It was a regular building, with no frills. The gym and the auditorium were in the same room. I do remember those metal chairs. My books came from either Columbus High or Jordan High. We used discarded books. We had a few new books at 5th Avenue. There was very little lab equipment. I do not remember any equipment in the science lab. In chemistry, we had one or two microscopes or beakers. We made do with what we had.
>
> P1: Our little school was small. We had six grades. The rooms were large, but it was a small wooden school behind Cusseta Road. The building is still there. If I were to classify it now, I would say it was a "hole in the wall." It had 12 rooms, a girls' and boys' bathrooms. We had a basketball goal for recess, but the community placed it there, not the school system.
>
> P3: It was a known fact that books and other materials came to us after the white students used them. Everyone knew that the schools and libraries were separate but not equal.

P4: Our library was more like a reading room than a reference-based library. My parents purchased the World Book Encyclopedias, and Dr. Tommy Leonard's parents purchased the Encyclopedia Britannica so that we could study at home.

The allotted materials to SHS came from the predominately White schools in Columbus. Not only were the student materials of a different caliber, but the payroll checks were also different. Black teachers received different checks than their White counterparts, as evidenced by Participant 1:

P1: Let me tell you about this revelation! When we were in the lounge during a payday, to my surprise, the White teachers had pink checks, and we (the Blacks) had green checks. The White teachers were making much more than we were making, with the same degrees. We made a big stink about it. The school board changed it that year. That was one of the distinctions that I noticed about segregation. We received meager wages, about $500 a month as take-home pay. We made it stretch.

The payroll checks were different in two ways. The checks did not look the same and the checks were not of the same amount, even with teachers with the same degrees. The Black teachers spoke out against it, promoting the activism of change. The Historical Participant remembers when the school district started integrating teachers in Columbus.

HP: When the school board decided to integrate us, they "Flip-Flopped" (crossed over) Talbotton Junior High and Daniel Junior High schools. This was the first White principal I ever had. He was nice to me, and I was to him. I have always been very personable. Even though he was friendly toward me, I sensed something within him. He refused to allow his wife to flip-flop to a Black school. I did not encounter any problems with the switch, but some of the older teachers were upset to leave their familiar surroundings.

They did not have the same seniority they had at our schools, even with advanced degrees.

The aforementioned aspects were blatant examples of the separatism of the community during segregation. The integrated process of the "flip-flop" method was when the Caucasian teachers would cross over to Black schools and vice versa. The historic participant thought that moving several Black teachers who lost their prestige of teaching upper-level classes was not good for morale. Caucasian teachers were resistant to moving to Black schools. The historic participant remarked that there was a lack of understanding of "our" children. The chosen Black teachers who had advanced degrees were the first to transfer to White schools. Black teachers who transferred schools had to start as novice teachers. Needless to say, starting over at a new school did not go over well with the teachers. However, the transferred Black teachers who moved to White schools quickly assimilated to the culture.

P1: When the Black teachers taught in those White schools, they acted as if they did not want the Black students there. I wanted my students to succeed. The teachers did not have the same compassion during desegregation. The Black students did not have a lot of opportunities to be successful. The parents had to advocate for their children.

The Black students did not have a refuge in White schools during the desegregation process. The climate was not better in the community as the city desegregated. Some of the participants noted an insidious sense of resistance when it came to Blacks taking a stand against segregation.

P2: The climate of Columbus was one in which there was no integration. We continued to live in our world. It was a typical chain of events for me. We did what we were supposed

to do. We followed the system. I thought about integration at Spencer, but it was not a reality then. There was no way to do anything racially, but I thought about it.

There was no integration. I left here and went to seminary in January of 1960 in Illinois. I worked closely with Representative John Lewis. I wasn't familiar with anything going on here. I got word about the Dr. Brewer killing. I also remember Primus King fighting for the right to vote in the Democratic Primary. There wasn't anything that the Black community was doing toward desegregation of the schools, the neighborhoods, or the facilities here. That was why I returned home.

P5: Let's correct the term. We desegregated and we never really integrated. Desegregation was difficult because of the mindset and attitudes of citizens. The public school system did not properly prepare the citizens of Columbus for the change. The military was a great support in desegregating the schools.

I was glad that the White school did not select me to attend. I stayed at Spencer High School until I graduated. Desegregation was necessary and needed to happen, but the planning and management of it were ineffective. It wasn't long before too many schools became segregated again. We are witnessing a resegregation.

P1: Later, let me see. About 1967 or 1968, they started "pretending" to integrate. During the years before desegregation, the district office sent "Snoop-ervisors" into the Black schools to see who was doing a good job in their classes. The "Snoop-ervisors" would send the names of exemplary teachers to the White principals to recruit them to their schools.

The implementation of desegregation started with the teachers. Black teachers who could manage their classrooms, were professional, and had advanced degrees were the first to transfer

to White schools. The *invited* Black students who could attend White schools had the highest averages. Wey (1966) called this token desegregation, where a small number of Black students would be hand-picked to attend previously all-White schools, calling this free-choice. There were no initiatives created to move White students. Integration is inclusive and balanced, both racially and in resources. Desegregation is a forced process of shifting desirable *Negroes* to White schools and lower economic Whites to *Negro* schools (Wey, 1966). Participant 1 had this to say about the integration of students:

> P1: I know that the Whites didn't comply with integration. The children who did go to the schools with the Blacks were either lower-class Whites or Hispanics. The upper-level Whites were going to private schools to keep from integrating with what White teachers called *nigra* children. I kept pointing to my knee in those days, saying that the word was *Negro*. I do not think there were any fights or melees. Most of the Whites in Columbus, well those who were wealthy or prestigious, attended Brookstone or Pacelli (two prominent private schools in Columbus). Some chose to home-school their children. They were afraid that their children would lose their honor. I don't think we ever had any uproars. Blacks complained that there was no progress, but they didn't worry about fixing it. I don't think the Blacks cared. Blacks wanted to maintain our schools and remain segregated. Our people still excelled. My parents were educators who became principals. It was about exposure. Our children would have been better off if we had stayed as we were.

Blacks complained about the lack of progress yet did not want to change the system. The city officials of Columbus resisted the transition of integration. The transition turned into a class system. Students whose families were well off could attend a private school to escape

integration. Blacks had their measures of classism. A major trend that was prevalent throughout this experience was the stigma of colorism in Black American culture. Colorism was the caste system created by desegregation and a philosophy of the Old South. Fuller (2011) delves into the precarious notion of the South creating a caste system racially, and each race divided itself based on class. The South has its social organizations based on factions of modern-day Northern carpetbaggers and Southern scalawags. The class sectors were less important among the Whites, but the caste system was of higher importance (Fuller, 2011). Classes were more flexible, and mixing among the classes was more acceptable than by caste. Blacks were inferior, regardless of their class (Fuller, 2011). Participant 4 speaks on her application process for colleges after high school.

> P4: I applied to Spelman College. Spelman was a gated elitist school that kept those who were unfavorable out. I was in the top 10% of my class. I did well in school. Spelman requested to send a picture when I applied with my application. Spelman did not accept me. It had nothing to do with my scholarship. It had everything to do with my skin tone.

Colorism is still alive and well at present. When I applied to attend Spelman, I had to send a picture of myself with the application. Should aesthetics matter when it comes to college acceptance? Of course not. Perez (2019) mentioned that even though she attended school within the Atlanta University Center (a cluster of Historically Black Colleges in Downtown Atlanta), she became mistakenly identified as being a Spelmanite (a lady who attends Spelman College). When she asked why someone would think she attended Spelman, she responded that she *looked like* she belonged there (Perez, 2019).

Caste influenced classism by the preconceived notions that Blacks who were lower class were of a darker skin tone and that upper-class Blacks embodied lighter skin due to their

supposed heritage of having White fathers or grandfathers (Fuller, 2011). The Blacks of lighter complexion were a part of the Blue Vein Society. This considered society to be of another race, and their caste system differed (Fuller, 2011). Participant 1 has lighter-toned skin, and Participant 4 has brown skin. Here are their comments:

> P1: My daughter had a good friend at Columbus High who was a *very dark* girl. Her homeroom teacher had told Gayle and her friend to stop talking. They started laughing. The teacher asked if they thought he was funny. Gayle said no. The teacher wrote them up for disrespect and wanted to suspend them for three days. I went up there to speak with him. I wanted to know what my daughter said to him. He said that she said no. I said she was not going home for that. There was no way I was agreeing to that.
>
> P4: The first dark-skinned Miss Greenwave (SHS's Homecoming Queen) was in my class. She was the niece of one of our teachers, which may have been the reason for her selection versus election. One of my highly popular fair-skinned classmates received recognition by having an entire page in the yearbook. Most of our light-skinned majorettes were very thin. One of my classmates transferred to Carver High to be a majorette because her body shape was too mature. I had classmates in my yearbook that no one knew who looked like White persons; one of them did not even graduate with us, but they are in the yearbook. I also had classmates who were jet Black and super intelligent. One was a female pioneer in nursing research who retired as a U.S. Army colonel. Churches and organizations never requested for her to do a speaking engagement here in Columbus. I was a brown-skinned girl from "The Bottom" off Cusseta Road. I had done well for myself.

I did not know if Participant 1 thought that her daughter got into trouble for speaking with a very dark girl in class. I did not know why SHS chose to place students in the yearbook who did not attend the school simply due to their lighter complexion, as Participant 4 remarked. Monk (2021) opines that even though Blacks belong to the same racial group, the treatment of how someone within the Black racial group is based on a person's skin color. Moreover, as the melanin in the skin increases, so does the likelihood of being a threat, stupid, unattractive, and many more detriments (Monk, 2021). The perception of Blacks' aesthetics played a powerful role on social and intellectual levels. What leveled the field for Blacks was the act of worship and the art of music.

Churches were the place where Blacks went to connect to a higher power. When their experiences of oppression became unbearable, some found fulfillment by attending worship services. Participant 2 remembered that the church's culture was the most important part of the civil rights movement.

> P2: The church was the center of the movement, and Christianity was its basis. Pastors were the movement's leaders and began most of the activities here in Columbus. Those who were not pastors were active in the movement. The church buildings were the "headquarters" of our meetings. We would meet to discuss our plans and our next moves. Our churches were in our neighborhoods and large enough to accommodate our members.

Churches were the places where Blacks congregated not only for worship on Sundays (and other days for Bible studies and such) but also to plan activities during the civil rights movement. Pastors from across the city would join as an ally, creating measures of peaceful protest. Participant 5 did not see the church as favorably as participant 2.

P5: The church failed miserably. We could not overcome the system of segregation. Many Black churches became segregationists themselves. After desegregation, we decided we did not need to be a part of the White church or anything connected to White people. Our problem is that we were chasing bad things in search of good results. Jesus is the church. Jesus is love. Segregation is an evil system based on hate, fear, and deception in order to separate people. God is the remedy to overcome segregation. When we desegregated, Black folks remained separated as an act of pride. That never works, to fight fire with fire. Sunday is the most segregated day of the week.

The paradox of the two participants shows the differences between how the church was during segregation. The church was the refuge for those who wanted to promote change in Columbus, but the church was a place of indifference. The church needs time for reconciliation. Quivik (2023) mentions that reconciliation requires that people intentionally repair the injustices imposed upon those who felt oppressed. The acknowledgment of what went wrong is the start of correcting the sins of racism of those who endorsed the wrongdoing. Quivik (2023) says that by letting go of Whiteness is the only way to resolve racism and to live in harmony with each other.

The harmony and lyrics of music are a universal language. Music was the voice of the people and contained uplifting messages that carried them through the woes of segregation. Graves and Fillingim (2004) describe Southern gospel music as music that carries the fantasy of heaven and what it will be like and welcomed into a place of wealth and prosperity. Music offers the elimination of suffering and to enter a world of entering a new home, which is a metaphor for heaven" (Graves & Filligim, 2004). Music offered other meanings as well, as expressed by the participants.

P2: What got us over was the music of the church. The music brought a sense of unity. Those freedom songs-- “Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom over me. Before I’d be a slave, I’d be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free.” That song was from our ancestors that we carried over here. Another song was “We Shall Overcome.” That song came out of the church. It was the hymn of the movement, and it rallied us to want to do something. Later, we changed the words from “We Shall Overcome Someday” to “We Shall Overcome Today.” Saying the word today, instead of someday, gave us more hope that things would change.

P4: Our preparation was for greatness through the church. I attended Mt. Tabor near SHS. Ida Mae Tinsley, one of the “Mothers of the Church,” met Carter G. Woodson (a historian who created Black History Month). Woodson was selling books. We always got our Easter speeches from her because they were from the Harlem Renaissance (a movement of Black art during the 1920s) writers. We would sing the *Negro* National Anthem at every service. We would sing all of Thomas Dorsey’s songs (Black gospel composer). Memorization of speeches and song lyrics kept us sharp.

P5: The art of music was essential then and now. There is a high value of music. All of our gifts and talents came from music and God. These newer generations have a hard act to follow. At Spencer, I was in a combo band that played for the proms, the United Service Organizations (USO), and other important events. Music helps to excel in other academics. Music gives you the creativity to process in many ways. Because I was in the music program at Spencer under Simon Leon Brown, I was able to make the Air Force Band! Music was my lifeline.

P1: If we integrate, we need to start with the churches. Once the churches integrate, you have God's love in the church. Love conquers all. When I was in Italy, I learned more about how to tolerate. That's what you do; you tolerate. I remember a missionary who wanted to start a Baptist church. One of his sons was with my daughter. This son told his father about me and asked if I would become a pianist for the church. We chartered a Baptist church there in Naples. The minister's family is from Alabama! His family loved me, and his children called me Aunt Barbara. We would play baseball together. His wife and I were very close.

When they returned to Alabama, he said he wished to invite me to his church, but you know how it is here. I wanted to tell him he could change that. He is no longer living, but the wife is in her 90s in a little town near Birmingham. She still calls me her sister, and her children call me their aunt. The segregated town where she lives remains segregated today.

Research Questions

The experiences of segregation and the transition of desegregation are the narratives of the five Black participants who graduated from SHS and one historic participant. These participants revealed how entrenched their lives were with experiences. From a political lens, each participant found indirect and direct ways to combat the injustices of segregation through activism. The influence of Black teachers channeled each participant to find ways to excel at SHS and after graduation through the ministry, music, education, the military, and giving back to the Columbus community. What kept the participants so intricately connected was through their respective neighborhoods. The residents who lived in their neighborhoods were united in raising the children who lived there. While at Spencer, the participants worked with what they had, and

they excelled in their endeavors after high school. As one participant put it, they were "prepped for greatness."

The participants describe how they communicated with their counterparts and within their communities during desegregation. Each female participant wanted to ensure that I knew that the Caucasians with supervisory-leveled positions at the school board were "nice and personable." The participants who worked with their counterparts got along well with them. Despite getting along, participant 1 had this to say about the plight of education:

> P1: I would like to see more Black teachers in the classrooms. The teaching staff should mirror the student body. Another issue is the zoning issue. Rezone the areas to make them more equitable. Our zones are not correct. If someone lives less than a mile from a school, the nearest school should be the attendance zone.
>
> P3: The curriculum must be "truth-based" and not designed to make individuals or families look good. Columbus was part of the Confederacy that fought in the Civil War to keep slavery. The curriculum should include the practice of lynching, like the ones that took place on Broadway in 1896 with Slayton and Miles. It should include the Constitution of the Confederate States of America (CSA) and the Southern Manifesto. Tell the truth about our history!

Southern cities used the concept of "rezoning" the district by redrawing the attendance zones and opening schools in new suburbs. This idea came with a ferocious kickback from the parents. In the final analysis, the school officials had no obligation or intention to redraw the attendance zones. Hence, the problem continued to exist (Rossell, 2024). The synthesis of findings for my research spoke on several quietly kept topics. I utilized the narratological function of Conversational Analysis (CA) with the participants as a qualitative method.

Conversational Analysis has historical references in sociology and ethnomethodology regarding the interactions via the interviewing process (White, 2019). Conversational Analysis breaks down linguistic interactions in discourse (Horton, 2017). Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) conceived this analytical process based on the exchange among individuals and the essence of taking turns in conversation. The interactions between the ones creating the dialogue influence the interlocutors' communicative content (Clark, 1996; Garrod, 1999; Horton 2017). The dialogic function of communication is the verbal and nonverbal interjections of participants that act interdependently on each other (Krauss & Fussell, 1996). Freire (2005) thought the following about dialogue, "what these educators call dialogical is a process that hides the true nature of dialogue as a process of learning and knowing…Understanding dialogue as a process of learning and knowing establishes a previous requirement that always involves an epistemological curiosity about the very elements of the dialogue" (p. 95).

An inquiry via interviews showed how segregation commenced as a student at SHS, as well as the impact that it plays on our present-day society. The responses that the participants rendered were in complete alignment with the research questions. The participants cited memories of their time as students at SHS in Columbus and how those memories informed their present-day lives. I am grateful that these pages contain their heard voices. The vestiges of time could have lost these once-unpublished dialogues and exchanges, a devastating thought for future generations who would not have been able to access this information.

Summary

Having dialectical conversations with the participants allowed me to live in their world during segregation and desegregation. There is one word that I will not use with three of the participants, and that is integration. Integration did not happen. Some Blacks were apathetic to

desegregating Columbus. Several ebb and flow factors played a role in the process of desegregation. Each of the participants mentioned that there was no intention on the part of the school board and the local government to move forward to desegregate. Black teachers were not accommodating to Black students who attended White schools. All the participants cited that they received textbooks and materials from White schools. The participants said directly and/or indirectly that students need to learn their history, not just the selections printed in the textbooks. Columbus, Georgia, has a rich history that remains hidden, regardless of the oppressiveness of some of the actions. The responsibility lies with the instructional leadership and master teachers to uncover the concepts about the history of Columbus. Students need to know and understand how to navigate in a larger, global society. Chapter V includes drawing my detailed conclusions about this study and notes opportunities for further research.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Professor William H. Spencer, a native son of Columbus, Georgia, was not just an educator, but a revolutionary figure in the field of education. His life was a testament to what W.E.B. DuBois called a double consciousness (DuBois, 1903). Born before the emancipation of slaves, Spencer was not an enslaved person. He grew up to become a member of several affluent organizations and had the opportunity to attain a degree from the former Clark College (Spencer, n.d.). His life's work allowed him to become the first Jeanes Supervisor in this area, and he worked closely with Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute. Even though Professor Spencer understood the need for an industrial education for the majority of the Black population in Columbus, Professor Spencer was not of the same class. Professor Spencer was a clear depiction of what a DuBoisian Talented Tenth was and a member of the prestigious Blue Vein Society. His educational career spanned 50 years. William H. Spencer High School opened on November 29, 1930, on 10th Street in Columbus, Georgia. The school still stands today, despite moving around the South Columbus area four different times.

The students at SHS, who experienced the transition of desegregation between 1954 and 1971, witnessed a significant societal change. The year 1971 was the year it took for Muscogee County to fully desegregate (see Appendix H). The mandate of Brown v. Board of Education marked a new era, and the research questions in this study aligned with the participants' experiences of desegregation in Columbus. These questions delve into the personal and educational transformations these students underwent during this period of societal change. Below, I expound on each research question and how the findings relate.

The narratives of the six participants told of their experiences in political, social, and cultural contexts in a compelling and riveting manner. The responses shared with me were acts

of fighting against inequality, the power of Black teachers both then and now, and the inequity of the materials that Black students had to use in school. Other topics were the strong community relationships, the despair of colorism within the Black community, and the power of the church in the fight against segregation.

How Spencer High School (SHS) Students Experienced Desegregation

The technical concepts of accommodating industrialism taught at SHS were beneficial to the participants of the study. The lessons taught at SHS gave the participants the fortitude necessary to propel them to successful careers and lives. Discussing the history of desegregation in Columbus gave the participants the opportunity to elaborate on how Black schools were not equitable because of the lack of investment by the county, the school board members, or the majority of the residents (see Figure 19) (Fenwick, 2022). The literature review cited the historical background of the South that identified the accounts of the efforts to annihilate the freedoms of minorities. By looking back at these historical moments, the participants shared their experiences about their lives during desegregation.

Figure 19

Collage of the Transition of Segregation to Desegregation in Columbus

Note. From "Columbus Museum Collections" by *The Columbus Museum Archives*, https://columbusmuseum.com/collections/. Copyright 2022 by The Columbus Museum. Reprinted by permission (see Appendix E).

Americans have not reached a plateau of developing a culture based on the mutual nature of respect. Racial discrimination remains to be a constant conflict in society. If Black Americans are going to combat discriminatory practices in the form of activism, having a strong sense of purpose should be the itinerary. Reflecting back on the Rosenwald schools showed the organizational effectiveness displayed by the Black teachers. That same fervor for organizational leadership in education is in need of today (Boyte, 2024). Blacks believed that the gateway to equality was through becoming literate. Since the Reconstruction era, Blacks were adamant about receiving an education because advancing in such a way would allow the leverage enough for equal citizenship (Hudson, 2024).

The strong community relationship among Blacks during segregation was evident in the interviews of the six participants. All six participants talked about how close their neighborhoods were to each other and that everything was within walking distance. Every adult in the neighborhood had parental control and could discipline any child without retaliation from the biological parents. Teachers lived in the same neighborhoods as the students, which strengthened the connections within their respective places of residence. There is no unified strength or sense of pride in the communities of today. We do not know our neighbors, and we stay to ourselves behind our property lines. There are several reasons behind this. Parents do not grant permission for other adults to discipline children who do not belong to them, and there is no set curfew for children. We live in a society where we offer passes for malevolent behavior, and the crime rate continues to increase. One of the participants pinpointed that the schools are becoming resegregated. Very few teachers live in the school zone where they teach. The neighborhood where I grew up as a student at SHS was the same place I remained when I taught at SHS. Students marveled at the fact that I resided where they lived and I shopped where they shopped. This fact made a difference to my students and remains to be a cherished recollection for me on the importance of place. Those same cherished memories held by the participants showed through their lived experiences before desegregation. What stood out the most were the memories about being at SHS.

Schools face a myriad of different challenges today in the aftermath of desegregation. Teachers face a lack of support from administrators, little parent involvement, student discipline issues, and the pressure of accommodating diverse student learning modalities. Long past are the days of lectures, note taking, rote memorizations and teacher-led classrooms. The world has become smaller in light of social media and technology-based educational resources. Freedom of

school choice, personalized engagement through magnet programs, and an emphasis on inclusivity play a large role in the quality of education offered today. The idea of promoting integration built the creation of the magnet programs. However, the magnets became clearly apparent as separatist. The type of programs was of little to no consequence behind the students attending each school, leading the schools back to a segregated system. Having an intensified infrastructure within schools and communities that center on personalized student success with consistency will enhance parental involvement, increase achievement levels, lower teen pregnancy rates, increase literacy, and raise graduation percentages. Maintaining order before any learning or progress can take place is paramount to successful outcomes. The goal is to reach a point where schools can become fully integrated and not resegregated.

How the Experiences Have Informed Their Lives

All six participants felt as if they have lived fulfilling lives, despite segregation. Each participant had outstanding careers in his or her chosen profession and remained active within the community. The five SHS graduates and one historical participant were proud to be a part of such a rich legacy of witnessing change in Columbus. What I found that was not in the literature review was that the five SHS participants felt as if Blacks were not actively promoting the desegregation of schools in Columbus. The pervasive resistance displayed by their counterparts kept Blacks from fighting for their rights based on fear, specifically after the murder of Dr. Thomas Brewer.

In addition, the caste system of colorism was, and still is, a demeaning, insulting factor in the experiences of Blacks, as the system is still an over-arching problem today. As I flipped through the SHS yearbooks of the 1950s to the 1970s, I found that most majorettes had a lighter complexion. In contrast, the cheerleaders were of a darker complexion. The cultural essence and

nature of Blacks continue to include an albatross of issues. In Brown v. Board, Chief Attorney Thurgood Marshall and others on the judicial panel used social science data, like the Clark and Clark study, to prove how Black children felt about themselves. Dr. Kenneth Clark and Dr. Mamie Clark proved that segregation had negative psychological and social outcomes on Black children by using dolls that were of different skin tones. Drs. Clark asked a series of questions to Black children on which doll was nice, pretty, mean, bad, or more like themselves (Clark & Clark, 1950). The Clarks concluded that the children selected the Black dolls as being bad and/or mean and the White dolls were nice, pretty, and looked more like them. The evidence of psychological programing of Black children to believe that they were the inferior race helped to support the Brown v. Board case (Bradley, 2024). Aesthetics is a heavy cross to bear and, unfortunately, perceivably linked to a person's progress. The darker a person is, the more likely he or she will not have the same opportunities as someone with a lighter complexion.

The measure of progress continues to take shape in a circular motion. In 1862, Lincoln told Harriet Beecher Stowe that she was responsible for the mess of the Civil War by writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 1962, a Columbus city police officer mentioned to one of the participants that he was the one who started all of this mess by desegregating the buses. Starting the mess of activism in Columbus led to the creation of equality and access to educational progress. Some Blacks held a massive resistance to change. Some Blacks wanted things to remain as they were. A participant said that in race relations, White folks were 10% of the problem to Black folks, yet Black folks created 90% of the problems among themselves. Participant 5 remarked that racism was not *the* major problem for Blacks. Ninety percent of the social, cultural, and political issues that Blacks had to face was within their own ranks. Black people, as a rule, do not work well with each other. There is an air of distrust among the race where there is a fear of someone

achieving more than the next. In response to this distrust, some of the Blacks propagated crimes against each other. A few of the fathers abandoned the home, only to create children and households in other places. Oftentimes, mothers found themselves committing inappropriate acts to support their family. At times, children faced having to help support their families, sometimes by committing crimes in order to do so. These are a few of the many ways of Black self-destruction. In light of these atrocities, Black people need to face the challenge of reclaiming their own community connections, thereby focusing on the root cause of the problems of the lack of relationship among each other. The key to resolution is to concentrate on the problems that are internal conflicts, not just the external factor of race.

Once Blacks can restore their own social order, be responsible for the health and wealth of themselves, and form reconciliatory bonds among themselves, only then can they begin the process of overcoming the ills of psychological bondage. This is a provocative point that implies what Blacks can do not only in Columbus, but across the United States. This area also accentuates the concerns of the lack of keeping the traditions of respectability, responsibility, and the reconciliation of Blacks today.

A Promise to Keep: What Happened to Decorum?

Ah, decorum. Decorum is appropriate behavior, and proper etiquette is the foundational core. Throughout the years, some of the millennial Blacks have lost a sense of decorum. McWhorter (2000) wrote that White racism is not the obstacle to Black success, but Blacks have created a cultural disorder that has thwarted their progress. With flamboyant hair bonnets that have replaced fashionable hats, bedazzled flip-flops instead of dignified pumps, and outlandish sagging pants in place of suave upright slacks, the subculture of ghetto fabulous has been the order of the day. Brown (2010) coins the subculture of ghetto fabulous as when people who live

in poverty manage to have the appearance of living a grandiose lifestyle. Beyond the ghetto fabulous lifestyle, Blacks have the desire to pursue the pinnacle of fully integrating into the economic framework (comparable pay) and the social ladder (treated with dignity). However, the actions of some Blacks within the community are the main barrier to marching toward the dream that our ancestors believed in during the 1960s. Moreover, some Whites have suppressed their thoughts by guilting themselves into agreeing to the three major ways that the Black community has failed itself: being the victim, separating from others, and seeing intellectualism as a minus rather than a plus.

White teachers who felt a sense of guilt about the plight of Black students praised the students in the classroom, despite their actual academic progress. These edicts are not a part of the entire Black community's landscape, but the media and other social outlets have often broadcasted these encouraged behaviors. The behaviors of victimhood, separatism, and deficiency have become welcomed mentalities to the Black community and have left a stagnating, self-sabotaging effect on the culture at large (McWhorter, 2000).

The Black community needs to return to the grassroots of dignity and respect. During the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, ladies wore their "Sunday best" to ensure the removal of one less stumbling block at the voter registrars' counter. Gentlemen wore suits and ties with high-polished shoes at the lunch counter sit-ins. Blacks communicated in standard English. Blacks who considered themselves as militant were well-versed and knew their rights as American citizens. The idioms of dignity and respect cover more than how one dresses, but a first impression, coupled with a strong intellectual base, means the chance of an opportunity or being the recipient of failure. Respecting one's traditions, cultural norms, and ceremonial activities were the order of the day in the 1950s and 1960s (see Figure 20). Of course, there were

outliers in this scenario, but the elimination and reversal of those exceptions happened by the strength of the church and the community. Reflecting on the Ghanaian proverb of the Sankofa bird, people must never forget to look back as the community moves forward. In other words, nothing is wrong with retrieving forgotten information (Kwarteng, 2016). In this case, forgotten were the tried-and-true traditions and customs of Black culture, much like the activities in church that uplifted community efforts and increased discipleship (see Figure 20).

Figure 20

Ladies Missionary Society at Greater Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church

Note. Ladies' Missionary Society at Greater Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church, circa 1968 Columbus, Georgia. The first lady on the back row on the right is my grandmother, the late Mrs. Dorothy Price. From "Columbus Black History Museum and Archives," by Johnnie Warner. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix D).

In contrast to self-destruction comes the fact of how some Whites in the South wanted Blacks to stay *in their place* and continue to live within the *inferior order*. As you read my Edification Manifesto in the pages to come, the historical objective in America was to break a

well-working system of the minority and rebuild a system that was desirable to the majority. Blacks were just as resistant as Whites to desegregate. The only difference is that Blacks knew that the only way to have a glimmer of hope in the plight of a hegemonic society was to desegregate. However, Blacks still find themselves buried beneath the difficulties of securing decent housing without the derogatory red line, or learning how to respond to a police officer when pulled over on the highway. In the days when necessities for travel included the Green Book, the danger of driving today is still a matter of life or death. These aspects of divisiveness and torture are clear reminders as to why the Georgia Code of 1816, the Southern Manifesto, or the Hardwick Bill even existed. These dredged mayhems are mindful so that we never repeat them. These are the reasons why this information is relevant today.

Columbus, Georgia Today

Since the establishment of Columbus, Georgia in 1828, the city has grown into an industrial powerhouse. A synoptic description of Columbus, Georgia in the United States of America would be the home of Coca-Cola, Royal Crown Cola, Tom Huston's peanuts, and the W. C. Bradley Company. This is not to mention that Columbus is home to the worldwide headquarters of AFLAC insurance and Synovus Financial company. Columbus is located along the Chattahoochee River and sits next to Fort Moore military installation. The town's location on the river's fall line provided hydropower that increased the wealth and growth of the textile mills and other industrial plants of Columbus. The establishment of Muscogee County School District in 1866 follows the first common school, the first kindergarten in the state, and the launching of the first *Negro* school in 1868. The county school district merged with the Columbus city public schools in 1950 and continues the commitment of public education today. Today, Muscogee County School District has over 30,000 students with 9 high schools, 13 middle schools, 32

elementary schools, and 18 preschools (U.S. News & World Report, 2024). The identifiers and descriptors of the town and the school district directly influenced the trajectory of the lived experiences found in my participants' responses.

Relevance to Today: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Racial relations have become ideally sophisticated but not realistic. Seventy years after Brown v. Board, America continues to wrestle with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices. Diversity is the assurance of representation that all races, genders, ages, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic levels are in all facilities. Equity ensures the respect and dignity of all people. Inclusion is to make all environments, regardless of experiential backgrounds or intellectual capabilities, more inviting and accessible (Greater Houston Partnership, 2023). The inclusive voices represented in schools and corporations do not reflect the executive decisions. DEI is the wonderchild of affirmative action. Affirmative action and DEI would be unnecessary in a perfect, utopic world. However, this is not the case. Oftentimes, school leadership does not reflect the cultural representation of the students. Moreover, parents do not feel connected to schools because of the lack of relevant material. Workplaces continue to be a reflection of the Anglo monoculture. In societal and social spaces, race matters (Rouse, 2021). DEI does not mean lowering the standards; the idea is to expand available opportunities at school or work for every person to feel represented and valued.

Dr. Erec Smith, a professor of rhetoric at York College, claimed that DEI had done more harm than good. In a conversation with ABC's John Stossel, Dr. Smith said that accomplishment does not mean privilege. The conversation of racism has become a multi-billion-dollar industry. How this informs our lives today is that racism still exists. However, Blacks should not fall victim to stretching the truth about a lack of opportunity based on White oppression. This type of

bias does more harm than good. Until we can have open, honest conversations about this topic, we will continue to live in suppression, adhering to the school of thought that demonizing one race means glorifying the other (Stossel, 2023).

Relationship to the Theoretical Framework.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) was the theoretical framework used in this study. The basis of ELT is that a transformation occurs through the work of experiences. Experiences teach us about ourselves, engage others regarding what we know, and connect us to a larger population. The participants discussed their experiences before, during, and after SHS about desegregating the schools. All six of the participants spoke about their level of comfort in being a part of the segregated community. Conversely, each of them knew that the construct of segregation included the anathemas of Jim Crow. These changes attempted to give the system clarity so that all students could access the same educational opportunities.

Looking at this study through the lens of ELT solidified the narrative approach because all the material gathered was based on experiential data. There is an old adage that states that the more things change, the more they stay the same. One of the participants mentioned that we have resegregated. The passing of Brown v. Board of Education (II) act to include desegregating based on neighborhoods was futile because of the segregation of neighborhoods. Both of the historically Black high schools in Columbus, Spencer and Carver High Schools, have state of the art facilities. This idea was a planned orchestration to appease the Black community and to keep students in their neighborhoods, *in their place*. At present, plans are proceeding to merge elementary schools in Columbus. One of the initial merges was Benning Hills and Muscogee Elementary Schools, two schools on the Southern side of town. The merged school is Dorothy Height Elementary, named for Dr. Dorothy Height, a prominent civil rights activist who formerly

presided over the National Council of *Negro* Women and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. The second phase of combining schools is St. Mary's Road and Dawson Elementary Schools. The school will be Mary Buckner Academy, named for Judge Mary Alice Buckner, the first female African American judge in Columbus. The proposed third phase of merger is Wesley Heights and Forrest Road Elementary Schools in East Columbus. Brewer Elementary School, named for Dr. Thomas Brewer, is no longer an elementary school, but a kindergarten to second grade literacy remediation program facility. Removing elementary schools from neighborhoods lowers the pride of the people and the property value of the neighborhood. The fear of social intermingling was a reason not to desegregate, and the concept is still ever-present. The questions posed about segregation of the past in Columbus directly aligned with eliciting information from the participants' experiences. Their experiences pulled me into their worlds as I encountered firsthand material on the struggles of segregation and the sacrifices rendered through becoming desegregated.

In Figure 21, I interpreted how the study's three themes (social, political, and cultural), were related to the actions displayed based on the ELT theory. The themes illustrated on this figure are the actions of the social, political, and cultural experiences of the participants; how they strategized through thinking and planning political precepts, how they reflected on the resistance of the laws that subjugated them as separate, but equal, and how they experienced segregation through inaccessibility and invisibility through the transition of desegregation. The area at the core of all three of the themes was acting. Actions displayed by the participants within the study linked to the themes, much like the premise of Kolb's (1984) ELT framework. The cyclical placement of the experiences represents the circular nature of the lifespan. The circle represents that there are stories all around us filled with the history of our experiences.

Figure 21

Findings Related to Experiential Learning Theory

Relationship to the Literature Review

The literature review provided the historical context for Columbus, Georgia's beginnings. Writing on the city's genesis and what led up to Professor Spencer's work in opening a high school for Black students sets the tone for all the topics prompted by the participants. The last battle of the Civil War fought in Columbus left the town in destruction. Columbus was one of the last cities in the Southeast to desegregate the schools. The Black Codes of Jim Crow and the rise of paternalism were thematic to the responses given by the participants. One of the participants stated that they worked with the materials given to them in school without question. The participants were *in their place*. The participants were comfortable in their world, but each of them knew that changes had to occur. The evidence of the acts of maintaining *the inferior order* by some Whites and the fear of repercussions by some Blacks to desegregate ties to double consciousness.

The double consciousness of desegregation being comfortable and uncomfortable for the Black community was ever present. There were aspects that mirrored Booker T. Washington's

doctrine of accommodating industrialism. For example, the curricula during the beginnings of SHS included woodworking, welding, domestics, sewing, and brick masonry. The industrial arts pedagogy prepared the SHS students for the areas of work that were available to them. Following the rules and going to work placed Blacks in a state of stagnating comfort. In contrast, the aspects of W.E.B. DuBois' militant intellectualism were ever-present. Courses offered pertaining to classical literature, the sciences, and advanced mathematics allowed students to prepare for collegiate studies. The Black community realized that the world was much larger than The Bottom and Kinfolks' Corner. The position of desiring equality was uncomfortable for Blacks and Whites alike because the friction of change created factions that were difficult to amend.

In the aftermath of desegregating, change felt intolerable and the issue of inequality surmounted. The confrontation of Black children having to take placement tests and sent back to lower grades was the precursor of the rise of special education. Black students met discrimination in having to navigate in a new environment filled with angst and hatred. Black principals and teachers lost their status in their schools by transferring to predominately White schools. Some of the predominately Black schools closed. Nevertheless, the rich traditions and culture cancellation are evident from a historical and present-day perspective from the participants (Greenspan, 2020). The participants remembered how their teachers took a special interest in their academic achievement, how their parents were involved in their communities, and how the students were active in school. School was the nucleus of the students' coming of age. Having a high school to call their own was because of the work of Professor William H. Spencer. Professor Spencer aligned his methodology with Booker T. Washington in that they both thought teaching vocational education was the salvation for Black people to advance themselves into becoming productive citizens.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were two-fold. The participants' silence on sensitive matters was relevant. When a questionable topic came up in the interviews, especially on colorism, I heard, “I rather not say.” After nearly 60 years had lapsed on some of the memories shared with me, there was still a piercing stronghold of hurt within the participants. Imagine wanting to participate in an activity, only to find out that you do not fit the aesthetic qualities. Think about wearing the color red to school and your teacher tells you that you are too dark to wear red. Research should be on the social science colorism and classism, where the examination of healing and appreciation are necessary.

The second limitation was the scarcity of information on the life of Professor William H. Spencer. When I asked the participants if the mentioning of Professor Spencer was in the classroom, all of the participants said rarely, if at all. There are several probabilities for this occurrence. As I continued to look at the Columbus Daily Enquirer, in December of 1890, a meeting of prominent Colored citizens in the area met to address the building of a Colored University in Columbus, Georgia. Professor Spencer held one of the offices in the planning efforts. If the school did not come to fruition the return of donors’ funds, land, and building materials would occur (Lamar, 1890). Although Professor Spencer passed away five years before the establishment of the high school named in his honor, he continuously worked toward opening educational institutions for people of color. The lack of recorded history of Black education in the Muscogee County School District archives proves the importance. The majority of the citizens in Columbus denied the building of the Colored University because there were schools in Atlanta where Blacks could attend. Whites had to travel to Athens to attend university-level studies (Lamar, 1890). Professor Spencer may not have gained the notoriety that he received

from the school board from his very own community, hence why his name was not a part of the SHS landscape. This line of thinking goes back to being too Black for the majority, yet too White for the minority community. However, the silver lining to Black studies is that the Columbus Museum has greatly improved the procurement of Black artisan material with the museum's grand reopening. Patrons can see artifacts and artwork on artists from Columbus. In regards to this study, I am deeply indebted to Mr. Johnnie Warner's artifacts of Professor Spencer and on Columbus' Black history.

Implications for Study

There are implications for the furtherance of policies and practices for desegregation. The implied meanings of this study would be to clarify the message behind desegregation and to find ways to stop the resegregation of schools (Rossell, 2024). Irvine & Irvine (1983) mentioned integrating the schools in 1954 affected teacher perceptions of Black versus White students. Teachers favored White students more than their Black counterparts in schools. However, Black students received more praise from their White teachers in newly desegregated schools than White students. Even though Blacks received more praise, their suspension rates were higher and their grades were lower. In essence, White teachers coddled Black children into thinking that they were doing better than they actually were in school (Irvine & Irvine, 1983). Studying how desegregation affected teacher expectations, suspension rates, and assessment practices would be advantageous topics for education.

Segregation created stronger communities. Black students had the support of the elders, other adults, church members, and small business owners who guided them. The black church was an autonomous institution because the church was free from outside control. The black schools were somewhat autonomous because all-white school boards did not place a lot of

restrictions on the black schools. Black schools had Black supervisors, Black principals and Black teachers. There was a unique comfort level in the communicative exchanges in these settings, the behaviors were different, and the traditions were ever-present. The schools were the bedrock of the community (Irvine & Irvine, 1983). Programs should be in place to create cohesiveness within the present-day schools and to increase school connectiveness to the community and to increase the level of pride.

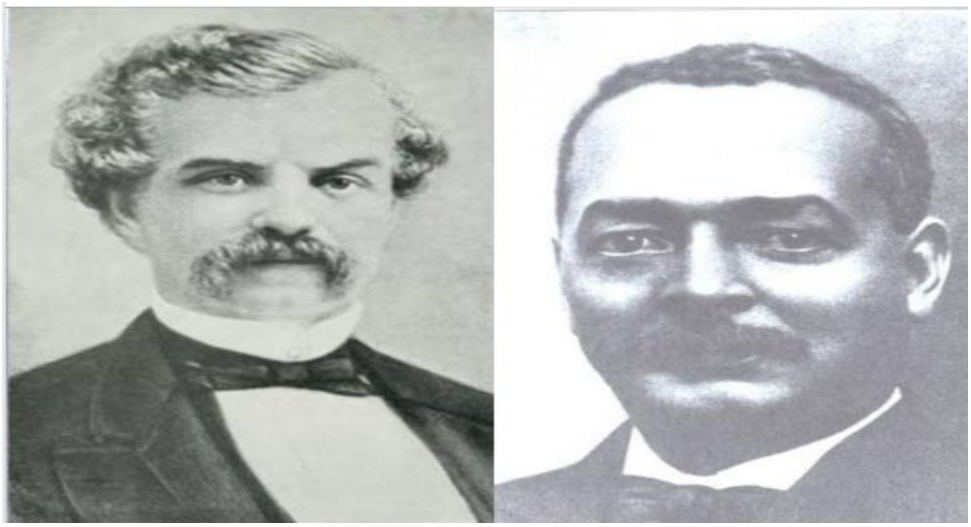
Desegregation disrupted the strength of the Black schools. The initial plan of transferring Black teachers with higher degrees to White schools did not sit well with the Black teachers or the school's community. Black principals became assistant principals. Transferring Black athletes to White schools weakened Black schools' athletic prowess. New White teachers did not want the assignment to Black schools and quickly found ways to leave once eligible (Causey, 2001). The South had to face the conundrum of having to accommodate the Brown v. Board mandate while attempting to appease those who were against it.

Professor Spencer's accomplishments in education toward the end of his career is numerous. Noting how the community responded to Professor Spencer's requests to the board and Professor Spencer as an individual would be advantageous to research. Professor Spencer had several civic affiliations, such as the Prince Hall Masons—Lewis Hayden Lodge number six, the Benevolent Society, the Woodmen of the World, and the Odd Fellows (Grant, 1999). Conduct interviews with the members of these elitist groups and others to see what is known about Professor Spencer. The issue is that the affiliations, like so many others, are secret societies, and may be difficult for the participants to speak on any information. Limited information is known about Professor Spencer's personal life. Spencer was a mulatto of mixed heritage who grew up on the land of Lambert Spencer. The location of Lambert Spencer's home

is what we now know as Buena Vista Road, across the street from the worldwide headquarters of American Family Life Assurance Company (AFLAC). The house was formerly Wynnwood now known as The Elms. The hypothesis is that Lambert Spencer, the original owner of The Elms, was Professor Spencer's father (J. Warner, May 12, 2022). There is a striking resemblance (see Figure 22).

Figure 22

Lambert Spencer and William H. Spencer



Note. From "Columbus Black History Museum and Archives," by Johnnie Warner. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix D).

Colorism is a complex topic within the Black community. A deeper dive into the topics of colorism and classism in Columbus would be a riveting discussion. Often, when Blacks describe other Black people, their descriptions usually include a person's skin tone. Redbone, yellow bone, jet Black, blue-Black, high yellow/jaundice, or damn-near White are just a few of the many deplorable adjectives used by Blacks to describe people within their race. My grandmother, the late Dorothy M. Smith-Price, said her classmates called her Black Beauty at SHS. Unfortunately, notions of the Willie Lynch syndrome of "divide-and-conquer" connect to

the premise of colorism (Lynch, 1999). The stigmas that are related to these monikers are alive and well within the Black community and carry with them the hurt and pain of the past. Black folks have begun to see the added melanin in the complexion as beautiful, but those ideas have not transferred to the board rooms or the courtrooms of America. Conversely, those Blacks with fairer skin tones have their crosses to bear, where they were too Black for White circles and too White for Black circles. This conundrum left some lighter-hued Blacks wanting to pass for White, interacting within "An Imitation of Life" (Hurst, 1933). The parallel lines of "double consciousness" that W.E.B. DuBois (1903) coined in years past blur the identity of mulattoes. These aspects are worthy of further examination.

The final implication would be to examine the other actions of the civil rights movement that occurred in Columbus and how those actions affected the lives of Black citizens. There was an overwhelming sense of resistance within the community regarding the fight against Jim Crow. There are *sanitized* renditions of historical recollections in Columbus. For example, the "Summer of 1971" in Columbus centered around the killing of a Black youth by a White police officer. The response from some of the members of the Black community was to riot by burning down buildings at night. With the heat of tension across the city, Black Columbus police officers stood in front of Mayor Curtis McClung's office in protest by tearing the United States flag off their uniforms (Wooten, 1971). Unmentioned was the fact that the Ku Klux Klan wanted to march down Broad Street to take a stand against the revolt. When the Black Panther Party caught wind of this action, they came to Columbus from their Atlanta headquarters (T. Conner, personal communication, April 20, 2024). No conflicts happened that day in Columbus. The "Summer of 1971" was the preface to the full desegregation educational plan for Columbus. There were happenings in Columbus that were not based on nonviolence or passive resistance. The militant,

intellectual activism of the civil rights movement in Columbus would be a journey of research that is well-intentioned to study.

Recommendations for Future Research

I espouse three areas recommended for future research: the effects of Brown v. Board on Black students, the displacement of the Black educator, and the resegregation of schools. What happened to the self-concept of Black students who attended desegregated schools after Brown v. Board? This is a question that needs further review and investigation. The aftermath of Brown v. Board left many Black students with questions about their next steps after high school. Schools were areas that had layers of protection for students to be successful. However, there was little to no safety nets for Black students after high school or many career opportunities available (Wey, 1966). Information on the development of social and emotional learning and a reflecting self-inventory of aspirations after Brown v. Board would be interesting to ponder.

The Black principal was the cornerstone of the community whose hands were on the pulse of what Blacks faced socially, politically, and economically (Fenwick, 2022). Principals held themselves ultimately responsible for the success of their students. Principals were also the liaisons to their counterparts' communities when it came to requesting funding and other resources. Nevertheless, when Southern states began to implement desegregation, Black principals were the sacrificial lambs. The demotions of Black principals during the desegregation process stripped the principals' voices on behalf of the students and the community (Tillman, 2004). How did the Black principals feel about themselves as educational leaders in the aftermath of desegregation?

The compliance of Southern school districts reduced the segregation of public schools on a momentary basis (Rivkin, 2000). Schools in the South complied just enough to receive federal

funding. The effects of Brown v. Board of Education on Black students were not substantially positive. The majority of Black students continued to attend segregated schools. Black students who remained in segregated schools had a heightened self-concept (Wey, 1966). However, attending segregated schools lowered the academic achievement of Black students and decreased their labor marketability (Rivkin, 2000). Desegregating the schools was a costly venture. School districts that used forced practices, such as creating magnet programs, saw more of a resurgence of resegregation than districts that implemented voluntary desegregation programs (Rivkin, 2000). What were the effects of entitlement funding in relationship to student success rates after Brown v. Board? These topics are worthy of inquiry.

Conclusion

Black people in Columbus have witnessed the harsh reality of segregation. The act of lynching, the separate areas on methods of transportation, and the separate entrances at facilities were all demeaning behaviors to keep a race of people in their place and within an inferior order. Around the despair and hostility were beacons of light in our communities, churches, and schools. Some chose to combat the system, and others remained silent in fear of retaliation.

Brown v. Board of Education I and II provided an open door for Blacks to attend school with Whites and to have access to resources. Rossell (2024) mentions that in the desegregation cases, the legal agencies did not have the resources that promised to rectify the issues of being separate. In response to desegregation, the Southern Manifesto and other tactics implemented to impede the progression of desegregating the schools. When the transition of desegregation started, some of the Black teachers treated Black students harshly. This could have been for two reasons. Black teachers may not have wanted to appear as if they were showing preferential treatment to Black students. Despite this notion, this action left Black students with no refuge in

White schools. Other Blacks felt as if they were better off remaining segregated. In the final analysis, school districts failed to meet the expectations of desegregation, the highest priority being to balance the differences between the Black-White achievement levels (Rossell, 2024). The school board of Columbus stagnated the progress of desegregating the schools. I would like to present my own manifesto, if you will, in hopes of progressing education. The manifesto examines what happened before and what can fix the issues to purge resegregation. This is my edification manifesto.

Edification Manifesto

Let us meet in the middle. Pulling us through the Middle Passage, into enslavement, toward Jim Crow, and within segregation did not produce communal relationship. Pushing us to travel the Trail of Tears to attend boarding schools did not cultivate common ground. Restricting us by the Exclusion Act to build the transcontinental railroad did not prepare us for collective affiliation. Prohibiting us to warm ourselves with the fires of justice while placing us on ICE (Immigration, Customs, and Enforcement) in cages does not promote goodwill. We are all essential, documented to learn, to grow, and to live the American dream. Provide accommodations that will be beneficial to all children. Our children are suffering from poverty. Go back to when people within communities provided for each other. People are dying due to the lack of education. Go back to the basics. Stop constantly testing and start consistently teaching. Go back to empowering teachers. Offer parents more access to literacy and opportunities to be involved in their community schools. Go back to striving for excellence in educational pursuits. There are no victims, no separatism, and no ignorance in seeking progress. Go back to the spiritual instruction found in

churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and basilicas. Let us join hands in harmony and meet in the middle.

Columbus has made several advancements with race relations, even in the face of the widening achievement gap within the schools. This year marks the 70th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education. Fort Benning's name is now Fort Moore, which reflects the essence of the family instead of the history of the Confederacy. Changing the name to Fort Moore, named after Lt. General Harold Moore and his wife, Julia, was a progressive move for the military. Wives, or even the female gender, were titles never considered in naming military installations (Moges-Gerbi, 2023). There is more cultural representation in our local governmental leadership positions. The school board, school principalships, law enforcement agencies, and the city council reflect the demographics of the community at large. The representation of Spencer High School graduates is in every leadership sector in Columbus. The city made strides to increase diversity in Columbus. However, there are limitations within the community that remain left to contemplate.

This study became a tangible part of my being. I am a unique part of the history, setting, people, and places integral to my life. The participants who shared their experiences with me and the information I have learned changed me forever. I am the finished tapestry of a long-awaited unfinished puzzle of experiences and ideas. The artwork of experiences I leave with is beautiful in shades of old gold (prosperity) and Kelly green (eternity)!

I have been waiting for this moment for most of my adult life. My odyssey of research lasted twenty years. For twenty years, an entire score of years, I have been intrigued with the Black history of Columbus, particularly the existence of William H. Spencer High School. What once stood as a social experiment for marginalized people of color is now a state-of-the-art

institution of excellence. During my matriculation and tenure at Spencer High School as a student and educator, I had the opportunity to meet scholars from various walks of life who have spoken to me about the "Spencerian Mystique." The shroud that covered this mystique became partially uncovered by the rich material rendered to me by the participants' experiential journeys.

Opening an industrial high school for Black students in Columbus, Georgia, was initially an experimental concept. The "great gittin' up mornin'" that Roscoe Chester exclaimed on that November day in 1930 on 10th Street described the jubilation of SHS's opening is now the setting of the sun on this study. Professor Spencer's dream of opening a high school became a legacy whose strength is nearly a century. Throughout the years of seeing SHS take up residence in four different places—from the Liberty District on 10th Street to "up on the hill" on Shepherd Drive, nearing closure from "the best little secret in the big woods" on Victory Drive, and now "the beautiful mecca" on ironically, Fort *Benning* Road (see Figure 23), the legacy of SHS did not die. The school's faculty, some of whom were graduates of SHS themselves, has witnessed thousands of graduates who have made their mark in society and have symbolically lifted the Kelly green and old gold William H. Spencer High School shield (see Figure 24), continuing to break the barriers of race and gender. The activism, the influence of Black teachers, the community relationships, and the memories will last in perpetuity within these pages.

Figure 23

The Current Location of William H. Spencer High at 1000 Fort Benning Road

Note. The current location of William H. Spencer High School. Reprinted with permission from Mr. Warner (see Appendix D).

William H. Spencer High School's Shield, Mascot, and Alma Mater

As written earlier, former school board member Mrs. J. Nunnally Johnson selected the colors of Kelly green and old gold as the SHS school colors. The bright Kelly green is for eternity, and the old gold is for prosperity (Katatikarn, 2024). The colors and their meanings are attributes that remain a constant in the legacy of SHS. The official mascot of the school is the owl. In Greek civilization, the owl means wisdom, power, divinity, and justice (Bontzorlos, et al., 2023). Owls have mixed perceptions. Some people fear owls because owls are nocturnal by nature and may mean death or sorrowful events. Others connect owls with meaning, wisdom, literacy, success, and victory (Bontzorlos et al., 2023). I think of the latter regarding the official SHS mascot. The unofficial mascot is the Greenwave (see Figure 25). The folklore behind the name Greenwave is that in the 1960s, the football team won game after game. A news reporter

stated that during the SHS games, the football field looked like a “green wave” covering the canvas of the gridiron, hence the mascot Greenwave (B.C. Carswell, Jr., personal communication, May 22, 2000). The lyrics to William H. Spencer High School’s alma mater, *All Hail to Ol’ Spencer*, are appropriate here.

Figure 24

The Official William H. Spencer High School Shield

Note. This historical figure is for educational use only. The reprinting of the figure is under the fair use U.S. copyright law (Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act).

All hail to ol’ Spencer,

Thy colors green and gold,

Stand as a symbol of our love untold,

All hail to ol’ Spencer,

To thee we’ll e’er be true,

To watch over and keep you,

All hail! All hail!

All hail to ol’ Spencer,

Thy beauty do we see,

Here on the highway strength

And peace shall be,

All hail to ol’ Spencer,

We’ll sing our praise to thee,

In trials and victory,

All hail! All hail!

All hail to ol’ Spencer,

Thy sons and daughters true,

Stand now as ever to fight and die for you,

All hail to ol’ Spencer,

We pledge our faith anew,

To guard and protect you,

All hail! All hail! (William H. Spencer High School Alumni Association, 2024).

Figure 25

The Greenwave Mascot

Note. Former principal Dr. Reginald J. Griffin designed this illustration. Dr. Griffin led the creation of Spencer's current magnet, *The Academy of Computer Science and Electronic Game Design*. Dr. Griffin coined the name of the Spencer v. Carver football rivalry game as *The Heritage Bowl*.

The melodious tune of Spencer High School's alma mater forever remains in the hearts and minds of all who have traveled the hallways of our beloved school. Regardless of the cacophony of the inaccessibility of school materials and the colorism that remains prevalent today, Black folks stood in unison like a chorus from the discord of segregation to promote change. The power of the church and the harmonious messages within the music prompted Blacks to question the status quo of Jim Crow and segregation, thereby creating a new nation not bound by the regulation of being *in their place* or a part of *the inferior order*. The quest for excellence is a testament to Professor William H. Spencer's life. Although he passed five years before the establishment of the school (see Figure 26), his continuing legacy remains alive within those who carry the SHS spirit. The questions that were once unanswered from the political,

social, and cultural themes now have clear, vibrant responses with a steadfast purpose, all published for coming generations. This is my dossier of completion. All Hail! All Hail!

Figure 26

Professor William H. Spencer's Final Resting Place at Porterdale Cemetery

Note. The tall monolith of Professor William Henry Spencer (1858-1925) speaks to his impressive, community-based life, complete with the Masonic symbol engraved. He lies at the helm of the Spencer family plot. Reprinted with permission from Mr. Johnnie Warner (see Appendix D).

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Appendices

Appendix A

Letter from Dr. David Kolb Requesting to Use ELT Figure

Re: Request for Study

Brown Kimberly J

To: David Kolb <dak5@msn.com>; Kay Peterson <peterson@experientiallearninginstitute.org> **+1 other**

Thu 8/4/2022 3:36 PM

Thank you so much, Dr. Kolb! I will make this change.
Kimberly

Get Outlook for iOS

From: David Kolb <dak5@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 4, 2022 3:31:27 PM
To: Kay Peterson <peterson@experientiallearninginstitute.org>; Shawn Medero <shawn@learningfromexperience.com>; Brown Kimberly J <BROWN.KIMBERLY.J@muscogee.k12.ga.us>
Subject: Re: Request for Study

Caution
THIS EMAIL ORIGINATED FROM OUTSIDE THE MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT. DO NOT CLICK LINKS OR OPEN ATTACHMENTS UNLESS YOU RECOGNIZE THE SENDER AND KNOW THE CONTENT IS SAFE

Aloha Kimberly--Thank you for sharing this figure and for requesting permission to use it in your study. The figure you sent incorrectly identifies it as my work and is a very incorrect representation of my work on ELT. It is also out of date (1994). I am attaching the latest updated representation of the learning cycle. This and much more current information about ELT is available for free download on our website www.learningfromexperience.com

Let me know if I can help further.

Best, Dave

Re: Permission to use images in research

Some content in this message has been blocked because the sender isn't in your Safe senders list. I trust content from elizabeth@historiccolumbus.com. | Show blocked content

EW Elizabeth Walden <elizabeth@historiccolumbus.com>

To: Brown Kimberly J

Fri 9/9/2022 1:35 PM

Caution

THIS EMAIL ORIGINATED FROM OUTSIDE THE MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT. DO NOT CLICK LINKS OR OPEN ATTACHMENTS UNLESS YOU RECOGNIZE THE SENDER AND KNOW THE CONTENT IS SAFE

Kimberly,
You certainly have permission to use them! Thank you for all you do for our community's children. Please let me know if you need anything else.

Thank you!
Elizabeth

On Fri, Sep 9, 2022 at 1:30 PM Brown Kimberly J <BROWN.KIMBERLY.J@muscogee.k12.ga.us> wrote:

> Hello, Elizabeth!
> It would be the pictures that are in reference to early educational opportunities for African Americans in Columbus (Professor Spencer, Spencer High School, the Spencer House, etc.). I would like permission to use the images regarding teacher resignations and desegregation and our beginnings in education.
> https://www.historiccolumbus.com/post/early-african-american-education-in-columbus-and-william-h-spencer

Appendix B

Interview Questions

The following questions asked to the participants of the study for responses. The questions are experiential in nature.

1. Tell me about your childhood. What was it like growing up in the time period of segregation? Were you in Columbus, Georgia at the time? If not, where were you during your formative years?

2. Tell me about being a student at Spencer High School. How did you feel about attending Spencer? What were your experiences like at Spencer during desegregation?

3. How did your experiences at Spencer High School influence other areas of your life? How did your high school experience influence who you are today?

4. Would you like to share anything else? As a follow-up, describe a typical day at Spencer High. What types of activities were you involved in while at school? What were your teachers like? Who was your favorite teacher and why?

Appendix C

Permission from Historic Columbus to Use Images for Research

Re: Permission to use images in research

Some content in this message has been blocked because the sender isn't in your Safe senders list.
I trust content from elizabeth@historiccolumbus.com. | Show blocked content

EW **Elizabeth Walden <elizabeth@historiccolumbus.com>**
To: Brown Kimberly J
Fri 9/9/2022 1:35 PM

From: Elizabeth Walden <elizabeth@historiccolumbus.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 6, 2022 10:49 AM
To: Brown Kimberly J <BROWN.KIMBERLY.J@muscogee.k12.ga.us>
Subject: Re: Permission to use images in research

Caution

THIS EMAIL ORIGINATED FROM OUTSIDE THE MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT. DO NOT CLICK LINKS OR OPEN ATTACHMENTS UNLESS YOU RECOGNIZE THE SENDER AND KNOW THE CONTENT IS SAFE

Kimberly,

If you could let me know which images, that would be great. It shouldn't be an issue at all to provide permission. We would love to get a copy of your dissertation for our research library! Thank you!

Appendix D

Permission from Mr. Johnnie Warner to Use Images

W **warnerjohnnie@aol.com** Yesterday at 9:04 PM

To: Kim Boynton Details

Use of Images of William H. Spencer Artifacts

To Whom it May Concern,
Kimberly Boynton has permission from Johnnie C. Warner Jr. to use images of William H. Spencer Artifacts for her personal, school, and professional use!

Thank you,

Signed
Johnnie C. Warner Jr.
Founder, Director
Hammurabi Black History Institute

Appendix E

Permission from Columbus Museum to Use Images

RE: Aimee Brooks sent you Images requested via WeTransfer

BA **Brooks Aimee**

To: Brown Kimberly J

Fri 9/23/2022 9:26 AM

Start reply with: Thank you so much! I really appreciate it! | Great, thank you so much! | This is perfect, thank you! | Feedback

Sure. This email is confirmation that Kimberly Brown has permission to use the images we provided in her dissertation project.

Let me know if you need anything more formal.

Good luck with your dissertation,
Aimee

Aimee Brooks
Collections Manager
The Columbus Museum
1251 Wynnton Rd.
Columbus, GA 31906
706.748.2562 ext. 3210
www.columbusmuseum.com

Stay in touch!

Appendix F

Permission from Dr. Rossell To Cite from Unpublished Article

RE: Greetings from Columbus, Georgia!

Rossell, Christine <crossell@bu.edu>

Tue 3/12/2024 8:05 PM

To:Brown Kimberly J <BROWN.KIMBERLY.J@muscogee.k12.ga.us>

1 attachments (228 KB)

Rossell, The Tragedy of School Desegregation, 2024-2.pdf;

You don't often get email from crossell@bu.edu. Learn why this is important

Caution

THIS EMAIL ORIGINATED FROM OUTSIDE THE MUSCOGEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT. DO NOT CLICK LINKS OR OPEN ATTACHMENTS UNLESS YOU RECOGNIZE THE SENDER AND KNOW THE CONTENT IS SAFE

Attached is a pre-publication version. I rotated two long tables that will be on their side in the journal. There are two minor errors that will be corrected for publication. The first is in line 3 of the abstract. "creation of the civil rights state, at the state and federal level," should be "creation of the civil rights state at the state and federal level." The second is in line 3 of the Author Notes. "edit books" should be "edited books."

Christine

From: Brown Kimberly J <BROWN.KIMBERLY.J@muscogee.k12.ga.us>

Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 7:53 PM

To: Rossell, Christine <crossell@bu.edu>

Subject: Re: Greetings from Columbus, Georgia!

Dr. Rossell,

I saw the abstract on this site:

https://academic.oup.com/psq/advance-article-/doi/10.1093/psquar/qqae016/7624319?redirectedFrom=fulltext

Thank You,

Kimberly

Get Outlook for iOS

From: Rossell, Christine <crossell@bu.edu>

Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 7:49:02 PM

To: Brown Kimberly J <BROWN.KIMBERLY.J@muscogee.k12.ga.us>

Subject: RE: Greetings from Columbus, Georgia!

How did you hear about the article? It hasn't been published yet.

Thanks,

Christine

From: Brown Kimberly J <BROWN.KIMBERLY.J@muscogee.k12.ga.us>

Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 1:20 PM

To: Rossell, Christine <crossell@bu.edu>

Subject: Greetings from Columbus, Georgia!

Importance: High

Good afternoon, Dr. Rossell:

This is Kimberly Brown and I am a doctoral candidate at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia. My dissertation topic is about the transition of desegregation at a historically Black high school here in Columbus. I am deeply intrigued by your recent journal article, *The Tragedy of School Desegregation*. May I receive access to your work?

I thank you so much in advance for your help and your expertise!

Sincerely,

Kimberly

Kimberly Brown, Professional Educator

Jordan Vocational High School College &Career Academy

Columbus, Georgia

"We are Rebuilding the Brand of Excellence!"

Appendix G

Institutional Review Board Submission

Institutional Review Board Submission

Addenda for Institutional Review Board

Addendum A: Letter to Local Churches for Recruitment
Addendum B: Letter of Inquiry to Proposed Participant
Addendum C: Flier for Study Recruitment
Addendum D: Demographic Information Sheet
Addendum E: Informed Consent Form
Addendum F: Interview Protocol Questionnaire
Addendum G: Human Subjects Research Training Certificates

Addendum A: Letter to Local Churches for Recruitment

From the Desk of Kim Brown-Boynton

6101 Mary Allison Drive

Columbus, Georgia 31907

(706) 662-5899

September 15, 2023

In all things, give thanks.

I Thessalonians 5:18

Proposed Churches:

Greater Shady Grove Baptist Church

First African Baptist Church

Metropolitan Baptist Church

St. James AME Church

Fourth Street Baptist Church

Lewis Memorial Baptist Church

Canaan Missionary Baptist Church

Revelation Missionary Baptist Church

Dear Proposed Church,

My name is Kimberly Brown-Boynton, and I am working on a doctorate at Columbus State University in the Department of Teaching & Learning. I am in the process of gathering data for my dissertation study on graduates of William H. Spencer High School in Muscogee County during segregation and during the transition of desegregation. Your selected was because from a historical perspective, your church may have members who are Spencer High School graduates who have an extensive background on segregation and desegregation in Columbus.

I am hoping to interview several people from your church who attended Spencer High sometime between 1954 to 1975. The information I get will serve a didactic purpose: 1) it will be in my dissertation, and 2) with your permission, interview transcripts without your name will be to the Black History Museum of Columbus.

I appreciate you in advance in announcing this or printing it in your bulletin. I would like to visit your church soon to explain what I desire to do in this study and to answer any questions. If you have any questions for me, please feel free to call me on my cellular at 706-662-5899.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Brown-Boynton,

Professional Educator & Doctoral Candidate

Addendum B: Letter of Inquiry for Proposed Participants

From the Desk of Kim Brown-Boynton

6101 Mary Allison Drive

Columbus, Georgia 31907

(706) 662-5899

September 15, 2023

Dear Proposed Participant,

This is Kimberly Brown-Boynton, and I am working on a doctorate at Columbus State University in the Department of Teaching & Learning. I am in the process of gathering data for my dissertation study on graduates of William H. Spencer High School in Muscogee County during segregation and during the transition of desegregation. I think you would be a prime candidate for enriching my research due to your participation and extensive background about Columbus at that time.

I am hoping to interview several people in the local area who attended Spencer High sometime from 1954 to 1975. The information I get will serve a didactic purpose: 1) it will be used in my dissertation, and 2) with your permission, interview transcripts without your name will be donated to the Black History Museum of Columbus.

I appreciate having your story as a part of this history. The interview would take about an hour, and I have attached a list of questions I plan to explore to give you an idea of what kinds of subjects would come up. Also, if you know other people who might want to share, kindly let me know. I will be contacting you by phone next week. In the meantime, if you have any questions for me, please feel free to call me on my cellular at 706-662-5899.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Brown-Boynton,

Professional Educator & Doctoral Candidate

Addendum C: Flier for Study Recruitment

Attention, Spencer Alums!

Did you graduate between the years 1954 to 1970? Would you like to participate in a study on the desegregation of Spencer? Please contact me, Kimberly Brown-Boynton (Class of 1987), and share your story by calling 706-662-5899!

I look forward to hearing from you!

	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899	Spencer HS Study 706-662-5899

Addendum D: Demographic Information Sheet

From the Desk of Kimberly Brown-Boynton

6101 Mary Allison Drive

Columbus, Georgia 31907

706-662-5899

Demographic Information Sheet

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

William H. Spencer High School Year of Graduation: _____

Current Age: _____

Current/Retired Occupation: _____

Addendum E: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

You are to participate in a research project conducted by Kimberly Brown, a student in the Educational Leadership Department at Columbus State University. Dr. Patricia Patrick is my professor supervising this study.

3. **Purpose:**

The purpose of this project is to collect and examine the stories of African American/Black residents in Columbus, GA who attended W.H. Spencer High School from 1954-1970 to determine how their lived experiences during the transition between segregation and desegregation at W.H. Spencer High School influenced their lives.

II. Procedures:

My request from you is to take part in a research study as a purposely selected individual. You will contribute your experiences about the desegregation process in Columbus, GA. The Interview Protocol Questionnaire (the questions that I will ask) will be via an audio-recorded dialogue which will take approximately one (1) hour. A follow-up Interview Protocol Questionnaire of the same questions will be as an audio-recorded dialogue in order to increase validity.

You will be a series of open-ended questions from the Interview Protocol Questionnaire about your lived experiences as a high school student who encountered the acts of segregation and the transition of desegregation in Muscogee County and how those experiences have influenced who you are today. I will gather information from you, referencing your experiences during the transition between segregation and desegregation. A copy of the published study will be in The Black History Museum for further research. The transcript and the audio recorded copy of our dialogue from the Interview Protocol Questionnaire will be in The Black History Museum as a

living document. If you do not wish to have your transcript and recording to be in The Black History Museum, please indicate your choice at the bottom of this form.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:
There are no possible risks of discomfort on your part, or any promotion of harm.

IV. Potential Benefits:
- Educators and historians will find this noteworthy to add to their toolbox of learning and sharing with others who find interest in this topic.
- This study is significant to anyone who is interested in your story about what happened during the transition from segregation to desegregation.
- Your experiences will be timeless information for local and regional political leaders, future community leaders, educators, and students to learn about this point in history that has remained untouched for six decades.
- Your participation contributes to the overall political, social, and civic educational history of Columbus, Georgia, increasing transferability.
- Your participation allows your memories to become a living document for future research.

V. Costs and Compensation:
There is no compensation for you.

VI. Confidentiality:
The data that I collect from you will only be accessible to me and my co-investigator, Dr. Patricia Patrick. Dr. Patrick is my dissertation chairperson and methodologist. The stored data (written documents) will in a locked filing cabinet at my home address. The iPad that will be of use will store the transcript and the encrypted audiotaped recording (electronic data) will be by a pinned passcode that only Dr. Patrick and I will have access. When not in use, the iPad will be in the locked filing cabinet. There will be no unauthorized access to any of your materials, including written documents and your audio recording. I will keep all documentation in the locked filing cabinet for 6 months, or for the duration of the study. All deleted electronic data from the hard drive will use Darik's Boot and Nuke (DBAN). Darik's Boot and Nuke is a free downloadable product that will quickly erase selected data from the hard drive of the device in question. I will shred any hardcopy/paper material. This process will take 6 months to collect.

Your identity will only be based on your identifying content that you share with me. Your identity will be by occupation, the year of graduation, and details of your experiences. After the published dissertation, a copy of it will be at The Black History Museum in Columbus, Georgia.

VII. Withdrawal:
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Kimberly Brown, at 706-662-5899 or brown_kimberly14@students.columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. There was time spent answering questions. I have agreed to do the audio recording. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project. After signing this Informed Consent, please mail the form back in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

I DO_____ (initial) or DO NOT_____ (initial) (**circle one and initial behind your selection**) wish to have my electronic transcript and audiotaped recording of the interview in The Black History Museum in Columbus, Georgia.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

Addendum F: Interview Protocol Questionnaire

Interview Questionnaire for Research Study

Interview Protocol

Your response to the following questions as a participant to the following:

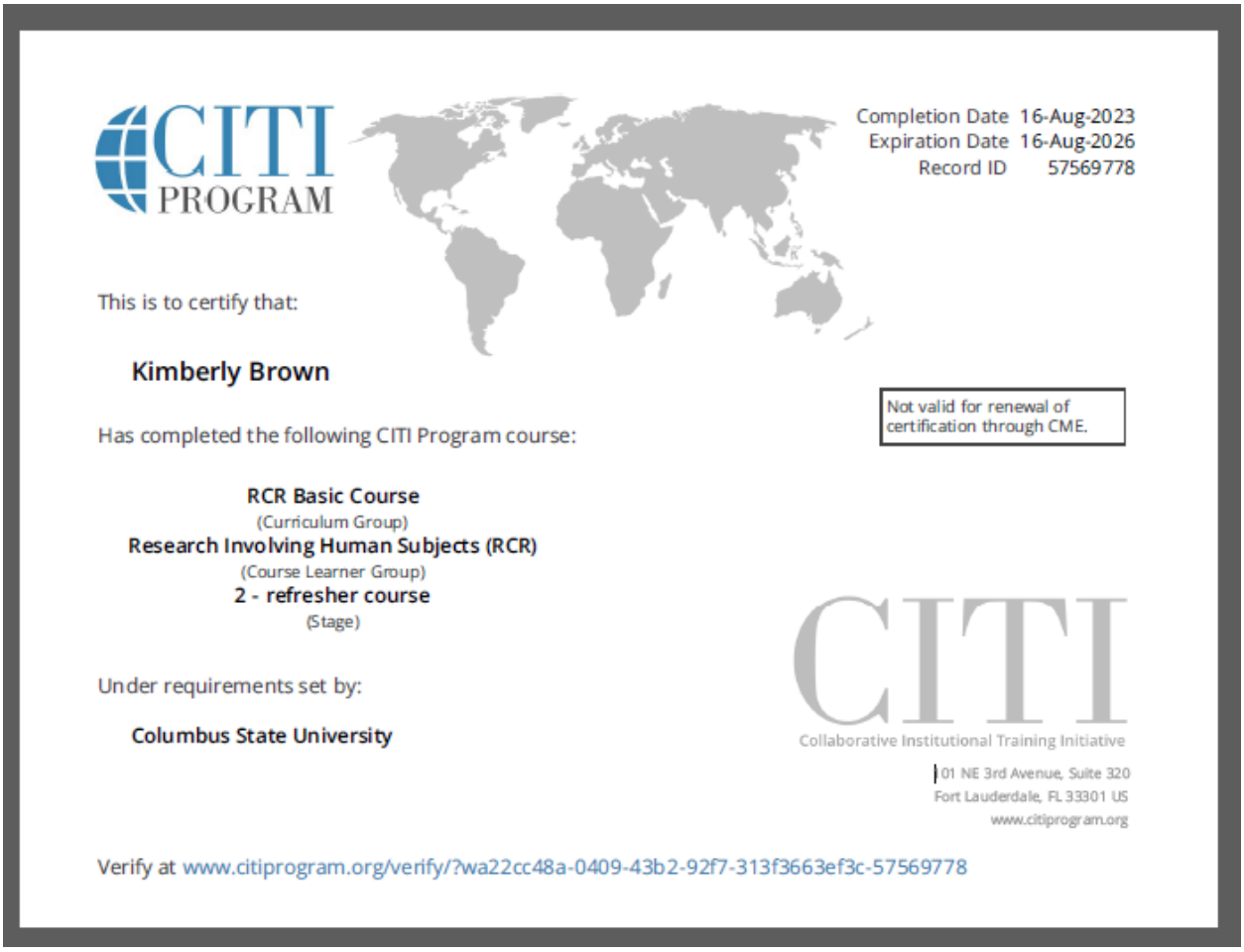
1. Tell me about your childhood. What was it like growing up in the time period of segregation? Were you in Columbus, Georgia at the time? If not, where were you during your formative years?

2. Tell me about being a student at Spencer High School. How did you feel about attending Spencer? What were your experiences like at Spencer during desegregation?

3. How did your experiences at Spencer High School influence other areas of your life? How did your high school experience influence who you are today?

4. Would you like to share anything else? As a follow-up, describe a typical day at Spencer High. What types of activities were you involved in while at school? What were your teachers like? Who was your favorite teacher and why?

Addendum G: Human Subjects Research Training Certificates:
Kimberly Brown & Dr. Patricia Patrick



CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 16-Aug-2023
Expiration Date 16-Aug-2026
Record ID 57569778

This is to certify that:

Kimberly Brown

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

RCR Basic Course
(Curriculum Group)
Research Involving Human Subjects (RCR)
(Course Learner Group)
2 - refresher course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Columbus State University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

01 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wa22cc48a-0409-43b2-92f7-313f3663ef3c-57569778

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 06-Sep-2023
Expiration Date 06-Sep-2026
Record ID 52350341

This is to certify that:

patricia patrick

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

RCR Basic Course
(Curriculum Group)
Research Involving Human Subjects (RCR)
(Course Learner Group)
2 - refresher course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Columbus State University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w0b837832-aab0-4c1e-a575-36517277d352-52350341

Appendix H

Newspaper Clipping of Muscogee County Preparing to Integrate Schools

1971 School Year

The Sunday Ledger-Enquirer

County ready to begin total integration plan

Note. This historical clipping is for educational use only. Reprinted under fair use U.S. copyright law (Section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Act).