



Maudelle Brown Bousfield in Wendell Phillips HS Yearbook (1947). Printed with permission of Chicago Board of Education Archives.

The Impact of *Brown v. Board of Education* on Black Teachers Outside of the South, 1934-1974

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The National Coalition
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Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

 Black Teachers Matter 5

 Central Questions & Methodology..... 8

 Organization & Central Argument..... 12

1934-1941: GROWING NORTHERN SCHOOL SEGREGATION LEADS TO MORE BLACK TEACHERS 14

1941-1954: WORLD WAR II SPARKS A NORTHERN BATTLE FOR SCHOOL DESEGREGATION 23

1954-1974: *BROWN*, NORTHERN SCHOOL INTEGRATION, & THE RISE OF BLACK TEACHERS 30

CONCLUSION..... 43

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 44

GRATITUDE 44

APPENDIX A – MAJOR STUDIES OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISM IN THE NORTH..... 45

About this Report

This report is part of a series of initial work products emerging from a larger research project entitled *Leveraging Title II of ESSA and Redressing the Post-Brown Decimation of the Black Educator Workforce in the South to Support School Integration and Educator Diversity*, which was conceptualized by NCS D Director Gina Chirichigno and funded by the American Institutes for Research’s Equity Initiative.

Introduction

On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court prohibited racial segregation in U.S. public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This historic ruling signaled that the federal government would uphold Black civil rights for the first time since Reconstruction. It heralded the beginning of the end of state-sponsored racial apartheid and ushered in a vibrant era of Black civil rights activism that—ten years later—resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. As historian V.P. Franklin observed, “The decision was a monumental victory for human rights and set in motion a series of legal actions and social movements that led to the creation of a truly democratic society in the United States.”¹

With these new pieces of key legislation in place by 1965, Black communities, civil rights organizations, and the federal government compelled first Southern schools, and then Northern ones, to desegregate. The process was long and arduous, leading to what many scholars consider to be a “troubled legacy” for the historic *Brown* ruling.²

There were substantial, quantifiable improvements in U.S. public education after *Brown*, including the creation of racially mixed schools in the South and improved educational opportunities and outcomes for Black students. But not all of these gains were lasting; by the late 1980s, many Southern school districts were resegregating as courts scaled back or eliminated court-ordered desegregation plans. In the North, growing residential segregation, shifting public school demographics, and persistent white opposition made it very difficult to create and sustain high-quality, equitable, and racially integrated public schools.³

Today, scholars acknowledge that *Brown*, as implemented, ultimately placed most of the burden of school desegregation on Black communities. In the South, school leaders closed historically Black schools and sent the children to formerly white ones, often destroying schools that were the heart of the Black community. Nationwide, school districts under desegregation orders relied on busing to transport Black children out of their neighborhoods and into predominantly white ones, sometimes creating long commutes for children and making it harder for their families to be involved in their children’s schools.⁴


¹ V. P. Franklin, “Brown v. Board of Education: Fifty Years of Educational Change in the United States,” *Journal of African American History*, 90, no. 1/2 (2005): 1-8, quote p. 1; *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, Kansas. 347 U.S., 483 (1954).

² The phrase comes from James T. Patterson’s book title, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also, Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); James D. Anderson, Dara N. Byrne, and Tavis Smiley, *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2004); Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004 [1974]); Mark Tushnet, “Some Legacies of Brown v. Board of Education,” *Virginia Law Review* 90, no. 6 (2004), 1693-1720; Vivian Gunn Morris and Curtis L. Morris, *The Price They Paid: Desegregation in an African American Community* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002); Harvie J. Wilkinson, *From Brown to Bakke: The Supreme Court and School Integration, 1954-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989 [1979]); Derrick A. Bell, Jr., “The Burden of Brown on Blacks: History-Based Observations on a Landmark Decision,” *North Carolina Central Law Review* 7, (1975): 25-38.

³ Zoë Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma: A History of School Integration and Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Kristi L. Bowman, ed., *The Pursuit of Racial and Ethnic*

Equality in American Public Schools: Mendez, Brown, and Beyond (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2015); Gary Orfield and Erica Frankenberg, *Brown at 60: Great Progress, a Long Retreat, and an Uncertain Future* (Los Angeles: Civil Rights Project, 2014); Richard Rothstein, “Education and the Unfinished March: For Public Schools, Segregation Then, Segregation Since,” (Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2013); U.S. Department of Education, “For Each and Every Child: A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence,” (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2013); James E. Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart: One City, Two Schools, and the Story of Educational Opportunity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁴ Derrick Alridge, Jon Hale, and Tondra L. Loder-Jackson, eds., *Schooling the Movement: The Activism of Southern Black Educators from Reconstruction through the Civil Rights* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2023); Jon N. Hale, *A New Kind of Youth: Historically Black High Schools and Southern Student Activism, 1920-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022); Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).



It was not uncommon for white families to greet buses transporting newly assigned Black children with violence, even outside of the South. In Boston, white families lined the streets to wave bananas and throw rocks at buses, while in Rochester (NY), white parents brought their children to the front lawn of a middle-school to greet Black students by screaming racist insults.⁵ In contrast, white students were less likely to face harassment and intimidation, have their schools closed, or endure long bus rides. As Matthew Delmont finds in his exhaustive study of school desegregation efforts, “school officials, politicians, courts, and the news media valued the desires of white parents more than the rights of Black students.”⁶

One of the most profound costs of Brown for African Americans was its consequences for Black teachers and school administrators.

As historian Adam Fairclough explains, “desegregation...abolished, or at least radically transformed, an anchor of the Southern Black community. It exacted costs—institutional, economic, and psychological—of which Black teachers paid more than their fair share.” Before 1966, federal courts either ignored the question of faculty desegregation or relied on “good faith” judgements of school officials to make fair and rational decisions about teacher placement during school desegregation.⁷

⁵ John Kifner, “New Boston Area Hit by Violence,” *New York Times*, September 20, 1974, 42; John Kifner, “Boston School Buses Stoned a 2nd Day, But City Is Mostly Calm,” *New York Times*, September 14, 1974, 13; Denton L. Watson, “The Detroit School Challenge,” *Crisis* 81, no. 6 (1974), 188-94; “Closing of Rochester School, Ends Furor on Busing,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1972, 47.

⁶ Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), p. 2. See also, Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Sonya Douglass Horsford, *Learning in a Burning House: Educational Inequality, Ideology, and (Dis)Integration* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011); Charles T. Clotfelter, *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Although courts took a clearer stance that meaningful school desegregation required a racially mixed faculty in 1968, tens of thousands of Southern Black educators lost their jobs due to discrimination and biased licensing, hiring, and promotion rules during the decades of white resistance to *Brown*. In some cases, the most experienced Black teachers with seniority were transferred out of majority Black schools as part of court ordered desegregation plans. In a 1971 Senate hearing, Dr. Owen Kiernan, Executive Secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, explained that Black teachers and principals were on the “firing line” after *Brown*, with devastating consequences for Black communities. He elaborated, “In the principalship were competent and dedicated men and women who could be looked up to, and who could serve as prime examples of what American education could produce. Today, many of these community leaders are no longer in a position to set examples or exercise leadership. In far too many cases they have been dismissed or transferred, stripped of their leadership role, and reassigned as second-class professionals.”⁸

This post-Brown reduction of the Southern Black teaching force was especially problematic because the vast majority of U.S. Black teachers worked in Southern and border communities (roughly 85% in 1966).⁹

⁷ Adam Fairclough, “The Cost of Brown: Black Teachers and School Integration,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (2004): 43-55, p. 47.

⁸ *Hearings before the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity of the United States Senate, Part 10—Displacement and Present Status of Black School Principals in Desegregated School Districts*, 92nd Cong. (1971), p. 4905. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.cbhear/equedcopx0001&i=9>. See also, Crystal R. Sanders, “‘In the Face of Her Splendid Record’: Willa Cofield Johnson and Teacher Dismissal in the Civil Rights Era,” in Alridge, Hale, and Loder-Jackson, eds., *Schooling the Movement*, pp. 91-110.

⁹ Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Landing on the Wrong Note: The Price We Paid for Brown,” *Educational Researcher*, 33, no. 7 (2004): 3-13, statistic on page 6. See also, Barbara J. Shircliffe, *Desegregating Teachers: Contesting the Meaning of Equality of Educational Opportunity in the*

Black Teachers Matter

The purpose of this paper is to expand our understanding of how *Brown v. Board of Education*, which established racial equality as a central commitment of U.S. public schools, affected the experiences of Black teachers. Specifically, how might we begin to tell the story of Black educators outside of the Southern context around the time of *Brown*, and why does this history matter?

Thanks to a wealth of historical scholarship, we know that in the two decades after *Brown* (1954-1974), more than 38,000 Black teachers in the South and border states lost their jobs due to the closing of previously all Black schools, new testing and certification requirements, firing and non-rehiring of Black teachers, failure to replace Black teachers who retired, and demotion of Black school administrators.¹⁰ More recently, Leslie T. Fenwick has argued that this number has been grossly undercounted and that nearly 100,000 exceptionally credentialed Black teachers and principals were “systematically and illegally removed and replaced by less-qualified white educators.”¹¹

South post Brown. (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Derrick A. Bell, Jr., “The Burden of Brown on Blacks: History-Based Observations on a Landmark Decision,” *North Carolina Central Law Review* 7 (1975): 25-38.

¹⁰ Martha Lash and Monica Ratcliffe, “The Journey of an African American Teacher Before and After Brown v Board of Education,” *Journal of Negro Education* 83, no. 3 (2014): 327-37; Deirdre Oakley, Jacob Stowell, & John R. Logan, “The Impact of Desegregation on Black Teachers in the Metropolis, 1970-2000,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 9 (2009): 1576-1598; Michael Fultz, “The Displacement of Black Educators Post-Brown: An Overview and Analysis,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 44, no. 1 (2004): 11-45; James E. Lyons and Joanne Chesley, “Fifty Years after Brown: The Benefits and Tradeoffs for African American Educators and Students,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 73, no. 3 (2004), 289-313; Mildred J. Hudson and Barbara J. Holmes, “The Unanticipated Consequences of Brown v. Board on the African American Teaching Force at the Precollegiate Level,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 63, no. 3 (1994): 388-393; Bell, Jr., “The Burden of Brown on Blacks.”

¹¹ Leslie T. Fenwick, *Jim Crow’s Pink Slip: The Untold Story of Black Principal and Teacher Leadership* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2022), x.


¹² Alridge, Hale, and Loder-Jackson, *Schooling the Movement*; Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated*

The scholarship on Black educators in the South has emphasized that Black teachers and administrators supported school desegregation because they believed racial mixing would equalize public education and improve life outcomes for Black youth, even when they feared their jobs were at risk.¹² Black educators organized and fought discriminatory firing and hiring practices by suing school boards in federal court with strong support from the National Education Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (hereinafter “NAACP”). As Jon Hale explains, “By 1970, Black teacher associations were demanding and defending a right to work amid massive dismissal and displacement.” For this reason, the numbers of Black teachers who lost their jobs could have been even worse.¹³ Still, the ranks of Southern Black teachers were decimated in the 1960s and 1970s during the peak of Southern school desegregation, resulting in a sharp reduction in the diversity of the teaching force from which U.S. public schools have never fully recovered.¹⁴

South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Sonya Ramsey, “We Will Be Ready Whenever They Are’: African Americans Teachers’ Responses to the Brown Decision and Public School Integration in Nashville, Tennessee, 1954-1966,” *Journal of African American History*, 90, no. 1/2 (2005): 29-51.

¹³ Jon Hale, “The Development of Power Is the Main Business of the School: The Agency of Southern Black Teacher Associations from Jim Crow through Desegregation,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 87, No. 4 (2018): 444-59, quote p. 453. See also, Carol F. Karpinski, *A Visible Company of Professionals: African Americans and the National Education Association during the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Peter Lang, Inc., 2008); Fairclough, “The Cost of Brown,” pp. 53-4; Wayne J. Urban, *Gender, Race, and the National Education Association: Professionalism and Its Limitations* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Thelma D. Perry, *History of the American Teachers Association* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1975).

¹⁴ Tia C. Madkins, “The Black Teacher Shortage: A Literature Review of Historical and Contemporary Trends,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 80, no. 3 (2011), 417-227; H. Richard Milner and Tyrone C. Howard, “Black Teachers, Black Communities, and Brown: Perspectives and Insights from Experts,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 73, no. 3 (2004), 285-297; Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, “An Analysis of the Problem of Disappearing Black Educators,” *Elementary School Journal*, 88, no. 5 (1988), 503-13.



Black teachers are important for their vital contributions as educators and for their leadership roles in Black communities. In the decades before *Brown*, teaching was one of the best paying and most prestigious jobs available to educated Black men, and especially Black women, due to fierce employment discrimination.

In his survey of U.S. race relations in 1944, Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal attested, “The North is almost as strict as the South in excluding Negroes from middle class jobs in the white-dominated economy. The very lack of [legal] segregation in most Northern schools makes it more difficult for a Negro to get a teaching position.”

Myrdal argued that in the U.S., the fact that 4% of the nation’s professional workers were Black was due to two factors: Black churches and separate schools.¹⁵

Teachers fortified the backbone of the Black middle class in the North as well as the South in the first half of the 20th century—they provided role models, community leadership, and economic support to those around them. These trends continued into the 1960s and 1970s, when African Americans disproportionately

¹⁵ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962 [1944]), 305-6.

¹⁶ Fenwick, *Pink Slip*, xxi. For the data on Black teachers’ post-secondary education rates in 2017-2018, see Kyle Argueta, “Research Roundup: NCEs Celebrates Black History Month,” February 7, 2022. National Center for Educational Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/post/research-roundup-nces-celebrates-black-history-month>. Accessed August 4, 2023. See also, Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*; Elizabeth Todd-Breland, *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago Since the 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Ladson-Billings, “Landing on the Wrong Note;” Michael Fultz, “African American Teachers in the South, 1890-1940: Powerlessness

relied on public sector employment to maintain middle-class status in an era of deindustrialization. Michael Fultz argues that Black communities endowed Black teachers with an almost mythical status as a “race-conscious, activist teacher” able to motivate Black youth, uplift Black communities, and solve the problem of racial prejudice. Black families in the North as well as the South have long emphasized the importance of Black educators as a way to secure desirable teaching jobs, ensure the fair treatment of Black students, and help Black families and communities improve their material circumstances through access to quality public education. As Fenwick writes, “Black educators...were powerful models of intellectual authority and who sought, fought for, and gained exceptional academic credentials as part of their personal and communal fight for unfettered equality and full citizenship in American society.” Even today, Black teachers have a higher rate of post-master’s degree education (13%) than all teachers (9%).¹⁶

Recently, scholars have confirmed what Black families have long known: Black teachers matter. Studying under a Black teacher can significantly improve a Black student’s attitudes about school, as well as their motivation and academic achievement. Adrienne D. Dixson and Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant argue that Black women teachers engage in “everyday advocacy” to support Black children and communities through collective organizing, political activism, and an ethic of risk. Black teachers bring life experiences and cultural competencies into classrooms that positively benefit students of color, help reduce prejudice among whites, and create a more diverse and inclusive school environment for everyone.¹⁷

and the Ironies of Expectations and Protest,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 35, no. 4 (1995), 401-22.

¹⁷ Anna J. Egalite and Brian Kisida, “The Effects of Teacher Match on Students’ Academic Perceptions and Attitudes,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 40, no. 1 (2018): 59–81; Seth Gershenson, Stephen B. Holt, and Nicholas W. Papageorge, “Who Believes in Me? The Effect of Student-Teacher Demographic Match on Teacher Expectations,” *Economics of Education Review*, 52, (2016): 209–24; Anna J. Egalite, Brian Kisida, and Marcus A. Winters, “Representation in the Classroom: The Effect of Own-Race Teachers on Student Achievement,” *Economics of Education Review*, 45, (2015): 44–52; Adrienne D. Dixson, “‘Let’s Do This’: Black Women Teachers’ Politics and Pedagogy,” *Urban Education*, 38, no. 2 (2003): 217-36; Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant, “A Womanist Experience of Caring: Understanding the Pedagogy of Exemplary Black Women Teachers,” *Urban Review*, 34, no. 1 (2002): 71-86; Michelle Foster, *Black Teaches on Teaching* (New

Many Black families and educators emphasize that successful, meaningful school desegregation requires not only racially mixed classrooms, but also racially mixed faculty.

As Cheryl Brown Henderson, daughter of plaintiff Oliver Brown and president of the Brown Foundation in Topeka, Kansas puts it, “Diversity in the classroom needs to start with the teacher in front of the classroom.”¹⁸ This sentiment is shared by many youth activists and supporters of school integration in Northern communities, such as high school students in New York City working with an organization called IntegrateNYC. These students maintain “real integration” requires representation, insisting, “All New York City public high schools must hire faculty that is inclusive and elevates the voices of communities of color, immigrant communities, and the LGBTQIA+ community so that student identities and experience are reflected in the leadership.”¹⁹

U.S. public schools today are more racially and ethnically diverse than ever, and about 14-15% of students identify as Black. Yet, the vast majority of teachers are white and the Black teaching force has declined since 2003-2004. In 2015-2016, the

York: The New Press, 1997). For a perspective that complicates the claim that Black teachers automatically have a positive impact on Black student education and achievement, see Summer A. Carrol, “Perspectives of 21st Century Black Women English Teachers on Impacting Black Student Achievement,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 26, no. 2 (2017): 115-37. The authors in this study argue that it can be simplistic to insist that Black teachers positively impact Black student achievement, and that this claim depends heavily on other factors such as institutional, pedagogical, relational, or social frustrations at school.

¹⁸ Nancy E. Carriuolo, “50 Years After Brown v. the Board of Education: An Interview with Cheryl Brown Henderson,” *Journal of Developmental Education*, 27, no. 3 (2004): 20-27.

¹⁹ “Desegregation Isn’t Enough to Create Equity in our Schools,” IntegrateNYC website, <https://integrate NYC.org/platform>. Accessed August 1, 2023. Demands for more faculty and administrators of color are echoed throughout nonprofit organizations dedicated to educational equality, see for example the NYC Alliance for School Integration and Desegregation (nycASID), <https://www.nycasid.com>, which demands that public schools “Represent diverse community through school

percentage of Black teachers declined to 7% (down from 8% in 2003-2004).²⁰ Political observers fear that the recent attacks on teaching Black history make teaching even more unappealing to Black college graduates. Writing in *The Crisis*, Ashley L. White noted, “State efforts to diminish compassionate, rigorous, and truthful teaching in schools represent not only an attack on the profession at large but an attack on Black teachers and students.”²¹

In other words, today Black teachers are underrepresented in U.S. public schools, the percentage of these teachers has declined in recent years, and current political attacks on Black teachers, specifically, make it unlikely this problem is going to be resolved without a meaningful, strategic intervention.

To address these problems, we need a clearer understanding of how school desegregation has affected Black teachers in U.S. public schools nationwide, which means we need to better understand what happened to Black teachers outside of the South.

faculty and leaders that reflect the cultures and identities of students and families.” See “Dare to Reimagine Integration for New York City’s Public Schools,” June 2018, p. 4. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5afd4002f7939252a8566b77/t/5b12afe1575d1fa70d2320ca/1527951378397/%23theagendaFINALFINAL.pdf>. Accessed August 1, 2023.

²⁰ Notably, the percentages of teachers who were Hispanic, Asian, and of two or more races were higher in 2015-2016 than in 2003-2004, and the percentages of teachers who were Pacific Islander, American Indian, or Alaska Native remained about the same. See Cristobal de Brey, et al., *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018* (NCES 2019-038), p. 10. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019. Retrieved June 6, 2023 from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

²¹ Ashley L. White, “Improving the State of Education for Black Teachers and Students,” *The Crisis*, May 8, 2023. Accessed June 8, 2023 at <https://naacp.org/articles/improving-state-education-Black-teachers-and-students>.

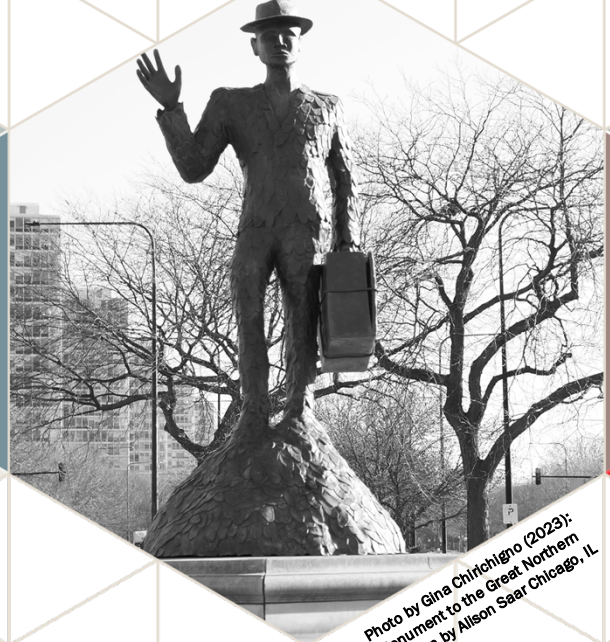


Photo by Gina Chirchigno (2023):
Monument to the Great Northern
Migration by Alison Saar Chicago, IL

Central Questions & Methodology

This paper will consider the problem of Black teacher underrepresentation from a new angle—that of Black teachers in the North, Midwest, and West. While we know that school desegregation after *Brown* significantly reduced the numbers of Black teachers in the South and border states, we know very little about how *Brown* impacted Black teachers outside of the Southern context.

Understanding the historical trajectory of Black teachers outside of the South has profound implications for historical scholarship of African American education, school desegregation, and the long civil rights movement. To date, the question of how school desegregation impacted Black educators and educational equality more broadly has been mostly limited to the Southern and border states that ran dual systems before 1954. We know that over the next 20 years, white Southerners illegally fired or demoted tens of thousands of Black teachers as these dual systems were dismantled, forever transforming the U.S. teaching force.

But a parallel story was unfolding during this same period: the mass migration of Black Southerners out of the rural South to the urban North, Midwest, and West. At the turn of the 20th century, fewer than 10% of African Americans lived outside of the South. But

²² Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migrations* (New York: Random House, 2010), p. 9. See also, Keneshia N. Grant, *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party: Black Voters and the Realignment of American Politics in the 20th Century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020); Ira Berlin, *The*

beginning in World War I and accelerating during World War II and through the 1960s, Black Northerners fled the racial terror of the Jim Crow South in what would become one of the largest internal migrations in world history. As Isabel Wilkerson details, “Over the course of six decades, some six million Black Southerners left the land of their forefathers and fanned out across the country for an uncertain existence in nearly every other corner of America. The Great Migration would become a turning point in history. It would transform urban American and recast the social and political order of every city it touched.”²²

By 1970 a near majority of Black Americans made their homes in the North and West, almost entirely in cities. The places they went were enormous, densely crowded, and expensive, like New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, and San Francisco—and smaller but equally promising in terms of opportunities like Syracuse, Oakland, Newark, Gary, Milwaukee, and Hartford. Each one of these Northern and western cities would be profoundly changed by the arrival of tens of thousands—or even hundreds of thousands—of African Americans in a relatively short period of time. By the turn of the 21st century, there were more Black Americans living in Chicago than in the entire state of Mississippi. The arrival of more than six million Black Americans caused a realignment of American politics in the 20th centuries, especially in the urban North.²³

Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 152-154.

²³ Grant, *The Great Migration and the Democratic Party*; Brian McCammack, *Landscapes of Hope: Nature and the Great Migration in Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); James R.

THE GREAT MIGRATION

- At the turn of the 20th century, fewer than 10% of African Americans lived outside of the South.
- By 1970 a near majority of Black Americans made their homes in the North and West, almost entirely in cities.
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When the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights wanted to understand the state of racial segregation in U.S. public schools in 1967, it did not look to the South exclusively—this would have made no sense. Instead, it gathered data from the nation’s one hundred largest cities. It concluded that school segregation was now most severe in the nation’s major metropolitan areas where two-thirds of the Black and white populations lived, and emphasized that school segregation was not restricted to Southern or border states. Levels of racial isolation for all Black and white children had increased since 1954. The report explained, “The growth of segregation has been rapid. A survey of 15 Northern school systems revealed that the Negro enrollment has increased by 154,000 pupils since 1950, and that 130,000 of these Negro pupils attended schools where the student bodies were more than 90 percent Negro.” Importantly, the Commission added that even as Southern and border states were in the process of desegregating, school segregation nationwide was increasing because of what was happening in Northern cities. In nearly all of these Northern communities, local Black families fought back and demanded racially integrated and equitable schools. Desegregation battles washed over the North, Midwest, and West in the late 1960s and into the 1970s and beyond, with mixed results.²⁴

If our goal is to understand how the *Brown* decision and school desegregation more broadly impacted Black educators, we must expand our analytical framework to include African American educators and students outside of the South. And yet, this is an incredibly difficult and complicated proposition because of the paucity of data on Black educational history in the North, where school administrators did not keep records of students’ or teachers’ racial identities as they did in the South.²⁵

To consider how school desegregation affected Black teachers outside of the South, this paper draws on scholarship in the history of African American education and school desegregation, focusing on the 20 years before and after *Brown* (1934-1974). It centers the agency of Black citizens who made decisions and took actions in response to the changing social, cultural, political, and economic landscape of the teaching profession, and considers how Black families, teaching and civic associations, civil rights organizations, and teachers unions supported Black educators. It carefully examines whether school desegregation resulted in the kinds of mass layoffs, retirements, and push-outs that decimated the Southern Black teaching force. The goal is to explain what we know about this complicated history while also working to identify key gaps in the history of Black teachers outside of the South.

The central finding of this study is that Brown did not affect teachers outside of the Southern context in the same way it impacted Black teachers in the 11 states of the former Confederacy, six border states (Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia), Washington, D.C., and part of three other states (Arizona, Kansas, and New Mexico) that required or permitted de jure school segregation.

Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

²⁴ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Racial Isolation in the Public Schools,” Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967, p. 1.

²⁵ Berlin, *The Making of African American*, 152-53; Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 8-11.

In other words, tens of thousands of Black teachers did not lose their jobs as a direct or indirect result of *Brown* outside of the Southern context. This is partially because there were so few Black teachers in the North, even in the nation's supposedly most progressive cities like New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Additionally, demographic and political factors helped to buttress the Black teaching profession outside of the South, including significant increases in the Black public-school population in some communities, surging Black political power, and growing demands for more Black teachers from Black families and civil rights organizations. By the late 1960s, school desegregation orders and plans outside of the South often included instructions to recruit more Black teachers.²⁶

If *Brown* did not result in the kinds of widespread job loss that Black teachers experienced in the South, how did this historic ruling affect the lived experiences and professional work of Black educators and public schools more broadly? How did the Northern Black teaching force change over time and across the varied kinds of communities where we find Black teachers, especially urban and suburban areas with the highest concentrations of Black families?

*We know that Black teachers have been
profoundly underrepresented
in Northern public schools
before, during, and after Brown.*

Historical case studies show this is the direct result of longstanding white prejudice, institutionalized racism in the teacher education, licensing, hiring, and promotion process, and the opening of the job market

²⁶ Jonna Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights: Teachers, Unions, and Race in the Battle for School Equity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Christina Collins, *Ethnically Qualified: Race, Merit, and the Selection of Urban Teachers, 1920-1980* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011).

²⁷ Kevin Gaines, "Whose Integration Was It?," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (2004): 19-25, pp. 19-20.

²⁸ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*; Davison M. Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

to Black college graduates and women in the civil rights era at a moment when teaching became a less desirable profession due to wage stagnation and loss of prestige. Even very highly motivated Black students found it difficult to pursue the higher education and certification required for teachers from the 1930s through the 1970s, and then faced relentless discrimination at the hands of white-dominated school boards, school administrations, and white colleagues. How did *Brown* in 1954, or school desegregation more broadly, impact these trends? What effect, if any, did court-ordered school desegregation cases, or the threat of litigation, have on the numbers and positions of Black educators as school desegregation moved North?

Answering these questions requires the clarification of key terms including the distinction between desegregation and integration. This paper draws on Kevin Gaines's definition of desegregation as "the overthrow of the regime of racial subjugation defined by the exclusion of Black people to access to power, wealth, education, status and dignity" and integration "as the demise of separate Black institutions" as communities engineered racially mixed schools.²⁷

While Black Northern support for school desegregation—or the removal of racial classifications in school assignments—was unwavering and universal, Black families did not always support integration and sometimes preferred the option of separate, Black-controlled schools.²⁸ What is more, as Vanessa Siddle Walker has asserted, Black communities lost the tradition of strong, caring Black-led schools and related professional networks that supported **advocacy** for Black children and nurtured **aspirations** for excellence and equal citizenship, even when they managed to gain **access** to resources and opportunities through desegregation.²⁹ Siddle Walker's "3As of Additive

²⁹ Vanessa Siddle Walker, *The Lost Education of Horace Tate: Uncovering the Hidden Heroes Who Fought for Justice in Schools* (New York: The New Press, 2018). See also, Mark Newman, *Black Nationalism in American History: From the Nineteenth Century to the Million Man March* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); Ashley D. Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Charles W. Mills, *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*. 3rd edition. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007); Roy L. Brooks, *Integration or*

Integration” framework provides helpful guidance as we work to rebuild the Black teaching profession.

These key concepts of desegregation and integration functioned differently depending where and when we are talking about, which is exactly why this study will focus on regions “outside of the Southern context.” While historians have carefully documented how *Brown* impacted Black teachers in the South, it is less clear how it influenced Black teachers beyond this region. To begin to answer this question, this study examines the history of Black teachers outside of those states that either required or permitted racial segregation in the public schools by law prior to the 1954 *Brown* ruling.

As such, it focuses mostly on towns and cities north of the Mason Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi River, which were home to the largest Black populations outside of the South. This includes New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois; and, occasionally, examples from Iowa, Minnesota, Arizona, Utah, and California appear. The focus is on communities that became home to large (and growing) numbers of African Americans during the time period of this study (1934-1974) because of the ongoing Great Migration of Black Southerners to Northern, Midwestern, and Western cities, as well as white flight out of Northern cities. For the sake of simplicity, this paper will refer to all of these regions outside of the South as part of the larger “North” that represented freedom and opportunity in comparison to the brutal regime of white supremacy in the Jim Crow “South.”³⁰

Importantly, many of these “Northern” states, especially those in the Northeast and middle-Atlantic, outlawed school segregation in the late 19th century, creating a very different context.³¹

Separation: A Strategy for Racial Equality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Revised Edition. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

³⁰ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: W.W. Norton, & Company, Inc., 2017); Berlin, *The Making of African America*.


Unlike their Southern counterparts, Northern public schools did not maintain official records with students’ or teachers’ racial identities until the late 1960s. This makes it much harder for historians to track Black teachers over time.

In addition, Northern school leaders deliberately hid or obfuscated school segregation, precisely because it was illegal. When confronted with charges of school segregation, Northern school officials loudly proclaimed their allegiance to colorblind ideals, racial equality, and to the law while quietly pursuing strategies that concentrated Black students into certain schools. This left majority Black schools subject to the prejudice and discrimination of white community leaders.

As sociologist Robert A. Dentler observed in 1966, “Minority segregated public schools in the North tend quite uniformly to have poorer facilities, less qualified staff, and inferior programs of instruction than majority segregated [white] schools.”³²

³¹ Hugh Davis, *We Will Be Satisfied with Nothing Less: The African American Struggle for Equal Rights in the North during Reconstruction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011): 72-96; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 68-83; Ena L. Farley, *The Underside of Reconstruction in New York: The Struggle over the Issue of Black Equality* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993): 121-40.

³² Robert A. Dentler, “Barriers to Northern School Desegregation,” *Daedalus*, 95, no. 1 (1966), 45-63, p. 46.



To overcome the muddled historical record of school segregation in the North, most scholars of African American educational history have conducted case studies, typically of a single urban school district with a large and politically active Black population. While the school district records are spotty, scholars are able to piece together detailed educational histories through other sources, especially the Black press, studies by Black scholars, court cases, and records of Black civil rights and civic associations. The results are revealing. As studies of major cities like Boston, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit show, Black teachers have always been central to this history in different ways, and have been intimately related to the quest for educational equality and the larger Black freedom struggle.³³

Organization & Central Argument

To consider how *Brown* impacted Black teachers outside of the South, this paper will focus on **three time periods**: before World War II (1934-1941), World War II through the *Brown* ruling (1941-1954), and two decades after *Brown* (1954-1974).

The **first period (1934-1941)** coincides with the spread of Jim Crow schools to Northern communities, a process that began around the turn of the 20th century and accelerated through the 1930s and into the early 1940s. The increase in the number of illegally segregated classrooms and schools meant a rise in the number of Black teachers, which in turn created a moral quandary for Black Northerners. Nobody wanted to see state-sponsored racial segregation expand, but Black communities were eager to secure more teaching positions. The size of Northern Black communities continued to increase as Southern migrants moved North, and thanks to the expansion of public schooling and new enforcement of truancy laws designed to keep young adults out of the labor market during the Great Depression, more students were attending school and staying in school longer than ever

³³ See Appendix A for a list of major studies of civil rights activism in the North.

³⁴ Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *To Ask for an Equal Chance: African Americans in the Great Depression* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009); Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade*. 30th anniversary edition. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009);


before. Growing school districts and the surging size of Black student populations created new opportunities for Black communities to advocate for and secure more Black teaching jobs. However, most Black communities did not have the political power to achieve colorblind, equitable teacher hiring and placement practices. To secure jobs for Black teachers, most Black communities outside of the South had to accept some degree of school segregation before World War II.³⁴

School segregation expanded during the first four decades of the 20th century due to white racism, not Black preference for separate schools. But Black families believed deeply in the importance of Black teachers, whom they viewed as more nurturing and more likely to help Black students succeed, and so many accepted the compromise forced on them.

The number of Black teachers increased during this period, but it also remained very small. Teaching jobs were highly prized during the lean years of the Great Depression and Black teachers struggled in the anemic job market of the 1930s. Those lucky enough to gain employment almost always taught in majority Black elementary schools or the region's very small handful of majority Black high schools. The major exception was New York City, which in theory had colorblind teacher hiring policies, but in practice discriminated against Black teachers.³⁵

David B. Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

³⁵ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*, Chapter 2. Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 15-46; Collins, *Ethnically Qualified*, 104-5.



The **second period (1941-1954)** highlights a Northern school desegregation movement that started during World War II and accelerated through the postwar era. This period witnessed the rejection of school segregation among nearly all Northern Black communities, a stark change from the previous era. With the help of the NAACP, Black Northerners forced school districts to cease race-based student assignments that isolated Black students in segregated classrooms, annexes, or schools. The objective was school desegregation, or a removal of racial classifications on student placement and teacher assignment. During this era, Black Northerners fought for and won the right for Black teachers to work in racially mixed classrooms, a vital reform that increased job opportunities for Black teachers.

Historical evidence suggests that large numbers of Black teachers did not lose their jobs during this pre-*Brown* desegregation movement. Instead, school leaders moved Black teachers into newly desegregated classrooms, typically classrooms that had mostly or all Black students, but had modified their school assignment policies to remove explicit racial classifications. A postwar teacher shortage combined with less racist teacher placement policies improved Black teachers' employment opportunities through the 1940s and into the 1950s.

Meanwhile, the Black public-school population in the North grew rapidly as the Great Migration accelerated during World War II and the postwar era, and more Black teachers moved into secondary schools. The goal of Northern Black educational activists at this time was to enforce fair, equitable, colorblind educational policies, including teacher hiring and placement. This helped more Black teachers get jobs and meant that more Black teachers worked in secondary schools, but still Black teachers were underrepresented compared to the Black student population and most were assigned to majority Black schools, which existed due to extensive residential segregation and discriminatory

³⁶ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*; Collins, *Ethnically Qualified*, 104-5; Tushnet, *The NAACP's Legal Strategy against Segregated Education, 1925-1950*.

school assignment, transfer, and construction policies. The vast majority of Black teachers in the U.S. still worked in separate schools of the Jim Crow South. The Northern Black teaching force was very small in comparison, but it was growing.³⁶

The **third period (1954-1974)** traces what happened to Black teachers in the North for two decades after *Brown*. At first, Black Northerners were more focused on creating racially mixed schools than hiring Black teachers, but this changed in the mid to late 1960s.

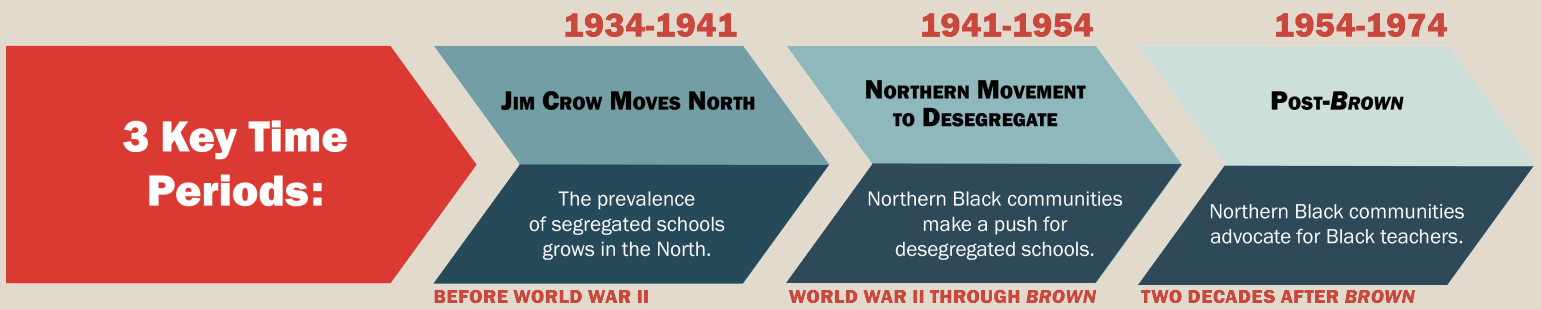
For some Black families, unpleasant experiences with white teachers illustrated the urgent need for change. Others, influenced by the Black Power movement, began to question the premise of racial mixing as a remedy for educational inequality, and instead advocated for community control of majority Black schools, with the goal of concentrating Black teachers and administrators in these schools.

The result was a heated debate over the best strategy for educational reform, but also widespread agreement that Northern schools needed more Black teachers.³⁷

Thanks to Black political organizing among families, teachers, and civil rights leaders, school desegregation plans outside of the South were associated with efforts to recruit more Black teachers. In other words, the number of Black teachers outside of the South increased after *Brown*, which was good, but this increase did not keep pace with the increase in the size and percentage of the Black public school student population, which was problematic, as the following sections detail.³⁸

³⁷ Jon Shelton, *Teacher Strike: Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order*. 2nd ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017.

³⁸ Deirdre Oakley, Jacob Stowell, and John R. Logan, "The Impact of Desegregation on Black Teachers in the Metropolis, 1970-2000," *Ethnic Racial Studies* 39, no. 9 (2009), 1576-1598; "Race-Based Faculty



1934-1941: Growing Northern School Segregation Leads to More Black Teachers

From the turn of the 20th century to U.S. entry into World War II, school segregation outside of the Southern context increased, sometimes in the form of new separate schools with Black faculty and staff and sometimes in the form of majority Black schools with mostly or all white faculty and staff. The process of school segregation varied tremendously, but tended to be most prevalent in cities with the biggest (and fastest growing) Black populations and in smaller towns that were geographically closest to border states that ran dual school systems. Segregated schools violated state laws passed in the 1880s, but expanded with encouragement from the white community. Northern school districts very rarely hired Black teachers to work in a position of authority over white children before 1945. However, as school segregation expanded in the North, so too did jobs for Black teachers.³⁹

Communities that segregated students had the highest percentages of Black teachers before 1945.

Jack Dougherty shows that in 1930, 1.5% of New York City’s teachers were Black (500 teachers), while 6.5% of Cincinnati’s were Black (146 teachers) and 12.6% of Indianapolis’s teachers were Black (238 teachers). In this case, New York City had a large number of Black teachers due to strong Black political power there, but cities that ran separate schools, including Cincinnati and Indianapolis, had higher percentages of Black teachers, even though Black residents in these communities had relatively less political power. Other cities had virtually no Black public-school teachers. This explains why Black educational activists in Milwaukee and other Northern communities agreed not to challenge school segregation in exchange for more jobs for Black educators through the 1930s.⁴⁰

The rise of school segregation was closely monitored by the Black press and by a small but growing number of Black scholars like Horace Mann Bond. Bond wrote, “In Ohio, and Indiana, and Kansas, and Illinois, Philadelphia, and southern New Jersey, wherever the schools are separated, you will find after ten or fifteen years, the colored school is going into decline.”⁴¹ A rapidly increasing Black population, residential segregation, and potent anti-Black racism created segregated schools in Chicago by 1925 and Detroit by the early 1930s. Black civil rights associations including the NAACP (founded in 1909) and the National Urban League (founded in 1910) fought to reverse this trend, to little avail.⁴²


Hiring and Layoff Remedies in School Desegregation Cases,” *Harvard Law Review*, 104, no. 8 (Jun. 1991): 1917-37.

³⁹ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*.

⁴⁰ Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 15-31. See also Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*.

⁴¹ Horace Mann Bond, “The Only Way to Keep Public Schools Equal Is to Keep Them Mixed,” *Afro-American*, March 5, 1932, 18.

⁴² Kenya Davis-Hayes, “Lessons of Place: The Creation of Physical and Curricular Segregation in Chicago between 1910 and 1925.” PhD diss., Purdue University, 2005, 99-100; Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81*. 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 186-96; “Segregation Most Effective Plan for Education of Negro in North, Is Claim,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 25, 1929, in W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. <http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/mums312-b182-i550>; Charles H. Thompson, “The Negro Separate School,” *Crisis* 42, no. 8 (1935): 230-232, 242.



Dougherty argues Northern school districts tended to fall into one of **three categories** in the 1930s.

In the **first category**, Black residents had enough political power to advocate for—and win—Black teaching positions on a non-segregated basis. New York City developed a reputation for its progressive approach to Black teachers as it was one of the few that assigned them to work in white, majority Black, and racially mixed schools. Similarly, Black residents in Cleveland had the political clout to secure Black teaching positions throughout the district. In 1930, 32 of the city’s 84 Black teachers worked in all white or majority white schools, reflecting the fact that Black citizens could pressure school officials to assign teachers on a non-racial basis. In Chicago, Black residents increased the number of Black teaching jobs from 40 to over 300 by 1930 by negotiating with mayor “Big Bill” Thompson, although over 90% of these new hires were restricted to majority Black schools.⁴³

In the **second category** of Northern school districts, Black citizens had much more limited political power and were forced to accept some degree of school segregation in order to secure jobs for Black teachers. Philadelphia, Newark, Indianapolis, Dayton, and Cincinnati were in this category in the 1930s. Newark had only 11 Black teachers in 1930, despite having 39,000 Black residents. A 1939 survey of New Jersey public schools revealed that fewer than 5% of the state’s Black teachers taught in racially mixed schools. Some communities appear to have had unofficial policies that barred Black teachers from instructing white children, such as Dayton (OH), Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and virtually every school district in Pennsylvania. In these places Black teachers worked in classrooms or schools that only served Black pupils.⁴⁴

These communities still fared better than the **third category** of Northern school district, where Black teachers had virtually no jobs by 1930. This included cities like Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Akron,

Des Moines, Evanston, Flint, Trenton, and Minneapolis, where Black residents did not have enough political power to secure teaching positions. Pittsburgh officials bluntly told Black teacher candidates to go South to find jobs, and when they finally agreed to hire Black teachers in 1937, they hired a tiny number and placed them in non-academic subjects such as home economics, physical education, and industrial arts.⁴⁵

Philadelphia, one of the cities in Dougherty’s second category, offers a useful place to consider why and how school segregation expanded in the North and what this meant for Black teachers. The city established public schools on a racially segregated basis, which was common in large cities of the North at this time. There were eight “colored” schools in Philadelphia by 1850 and no Black teachers. In 1862, Black families persuaded school administrators to hire one Black teacher for one of the separate Black public schools.

The number of Black teachers in separate schools quietly grew, until the 1800s, when an “equal school rights” movement swept the North, inspiring Black civil rights leaders to demand an end to school segregation.

In 1881, the Pennsylvania legislature agreed, and passed legislation that prohibited racial segregation in the public schools.

Similar patterns unfolded up and down the eastern seaboard. The resulting legislation opened previously “white” schools to Black students in Philadelphia, but it did not shut down the city’s “colored” schools. These schools remained, although now they hired Black teachers and principals. Black educators were not placed in racially mixed schools.⁴⁶

⁴³ Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 15-18.

⁴⁴ Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 173-75. See also, Lester B. Granger, “Race Relations and the School System,” *Opportunity* 3, no. 35 (1925): 327-29.

⁴⁵ Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 9-19; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 174-5.

⁴⁶ Hugh Davis, “The Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League and the Northern Black Struggle for Legal Equality, 1864-1877,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126, no. 4 (2002): 611-34; Roger Lane, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia, 1860-1900* (Cambridge:

The number of all Black schools in Philadelphia increased in the early 20th century, sometimes with the support of local Black families. In 1908, Reverend William A. Creditt of Philadelphia's First African Baptist Church collected 400 signatures on a petition requesting more separate schools with Black teachers. In response, school leaders selected a racially mixed elementary school and moved the Black students into separate classrooms. Next, they hired eight new Black teachers for these classrooms and then transferred the remaining white students and teachers to majority white schools. Many Black Philadelphians were delighted with this change because it meant there would be more Black teachers, while others, especially the Black elite, were furious.⁴⁷

Led by physician Dr. N. F. Mossell, a group of elite black male doctors, ministers, and newspaper editors organized a citizen's committee to investigate educational discrimination in Philadelphia. They found that Black students were barred from certain schools, and that even in integrated schools, Black children were seated in the back of the classroom, denied the use of textbooks, or assigned to a "badly located, unsanitary and overcrowded" separate annex. *Philadelphia Tribune* editors Christopher J. Perry and John W. Harris charged, "Not withstanding the fact that quite a goodly number of tax payers of our city have made it known that they are opposed to the separate school system, the general public ought to know that Superintendent Brumbaugh, aided by a few sly colored men, is determined to make the colored people of our city endure the objectionable system."

Harvard University Press, 1986): 16-71; Vincent P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979): 12, 30-35.

⁴⁷ Robert Gregg, *Sparks from the Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia's African Methodists and Southern Migrants, 1890-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993): 27-58; Roger Lane, *Philadelphia & Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991): 134-65, 231-52; Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 39-40; William A. Creditt, Speech delivered at the National Memorial Meeting, Washington, D.C., April 2, 1895. Box 36, Reel 22, Speech, Article, and Book File in Frederick Douglass Papers, 1841-1967, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. See also, "Dr. William A. Creditt the Great Educator," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 20, 1917, 2; "Anniversary of Dr. William A. Creditt," *Lincoln University Herald*, 19, no. 2 (1915): 1, Special Collection of the Langston Hughes Memorial Library, Lincoln University,

*There was a divide between the Black elite who prioritized the political goal of full integration and Black families who prioritized Black teachers and more nurturing, supportive schools.*⁴⁸

Northern school administrators before 1954 frequently employed explicit race-based student placement, faculty assignment, and transfer policy to engineer all Black schools. White families and politicians supported any policy that resulted in higher levels of racial segregation, and while Black families were more conflicted, the fact that schools were hiring more Black teachers significantly dampened protest. Philadelphia created a dual list of teacher candidates—one "white" and one "colored"—that remained in effect until 1937, which shows how institutionalized race-based teacher hiring and placement was, even in a state that outlawed school segregation.⁴⁹

Between 1916 and 1918 more than 40,000 Southern Black migrants moved to Philadelphia in search of new opportunities during World War I, and the region's other industrial areas saw similar demographic changes. The arrival of tens of thousands of Black migrants sparked racial tensions and placed enormous pressures on local schools. Black principal Daniel A. Brooks explained, "In 1916, thousands of Southern Negroes were rushing to Philadelphia to engage in war-work. Their numerous children were threatening to

PA; "Rev. William A. Creditt, DD, Makes Strong Suggestions for the Race," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 2, 1912, 1.

⁴⁸ V.P. Franklin, "Voice of the Black Community: The Philadelphia Tribune, 1912-1941," *Pennsylvania History* 51, no. 4 (1984): 261-84; Judy Jolley Mohraz, *The Separate Problem: Case Studies of Black Education in the North, 1900-1930* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 9-12; "Auxiliaries of the Douglass Hospital Entertain Dr. Mossell," *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 18, 1914, 1; "They Object to Separate Schools," *Afro-American*, September 28, 1912, 1; "Along the Color Line," *Crisis* 4, no. 3 (1912): 1.

⁴⁹ Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 51-3; Mohraz, *The Separate Problem*, 89-90; "Dr. Brumbaugh's Views on Race Schools," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 8, 1908, 2; "Agitation Unnecessary," *New York Age*, November 5, 1908, 5.

crowd into the elementary schools where few Negroes had previously entered. The usual 'solution' was proposed: placing them in separate schools."⁵⁰

By 1920, there were over 134,000 Black citizens in Philadelphia, a 58.9% increase since 1910, and in the following decade the Black population would grow to over 200,000. In 1920, the "colored" schools started running on double shifts due to overcrowding, meaning that thousands of Black children only attended school for half a day in segregated, outdated facilities.

Some Black families proposed to capture greater resources for the separate schools while others wanted to cite existing state law and abolish them. But closing the separate schools in Philadelphia posed a direct threat to Black teachers.⁵¹

Black teachers in Northern communities with racially restricted teaching jobs tended to defend separate schools through the 1930s. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Black teachers organized into professional associations modeled on the Black teaching associations of the South: the Pennsylvania Association of Teachers of Colored Children and the New Jersey Organization of Teachers of Colored

⁵⁰ Daniel A. Brooks, "Veteran Principal Compares Present School Conditions with Those of World War I," *Philadelphia Tribune*, December 11, 1943, 20; Berlin, *The Making of African America*, 152-85; Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 12-24; W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Migration of Negroes," *Crisis* 14, no. 2 (1917): 63-66.

⁵¹ Letter from W.F.W./R.R. to Isadore Martin, July 8, 1922; Letter from James W. Johnson to William Lloyd Imes, June 28, 1922; Memo from William Lloyd Imes, Chairman of the Philadelphia Branch of the NAACP, et. al., Committee on Public School Education and Race Relations: A Project and a Program, June 22, 1922; Letter from William Lloyd Imes to James Weldon Johnson, June 20, 1922; All found in folder, "Philadelphia, Pennsylvania branch operations 1919-1922." Papers of the NAACP, Part 12: Selected Branch Files, 1913-1939, Series B: The Northeast. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001425-006-1033>. See also, Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 10-12; Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 51, 60, 65; Meier and Rudwick, "Early Boycotts of

Children. Unlike Southern Black teaching associations, the Northern ones were very small and did not have the capacity to create powerful platforms for advocacy or political coalition building.⁵²

Before World War II, Black teaching associations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania argued in favor of expanding the option of separate, Black-led schools in order to inspire Black youth and improve Black academic achievement overall. As a Black teacher from Pennsylvania detailed, "The reports from teachers revealing their work in teaching their pupils to respect racial achievement were inspiring. Poems are being learned, hero tales selected, special programs given, and our sorrow songs sung and understood. This is the dawning of a new day in which we give our children pride in our race instead of shame."⁵³

Many families believed that their children did better in Black-led separate schools than hostile integrated ones. As W.E.B. Du Bois queried, "How else can we explain the astonishing fact that with practically the same kind of colored population in cities like Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, the 200,000 Negroes in Washington and Baltimore send out 400 colored high school graduates every year, while 250,000 Negroes in Philadelphia and New York send out only 50?" Many Black citizens, including Du Bois, believed Black teachers explained this difference. If the goal was for Black children to reach their highest potential and achieve financial

Segregated Schools;" Anne Biddle Stirling, "Interracial Teaching in the Schools," *Opportunity* 1, no. 3 (1923): 7; "The Victory at Springfield," *Crisis* 26, no. 5 (1923): 200; "The School Strike in Springfield Ohio," *Opportunity* 1, no. 2 (1923): 27-28.

⁵² For more on the tremendous importance of Black teaching associations in the South, see Walker, *The Lost Education of Horace Tate*; Hale, "The Development of Black Power Is the Main Business of the School;" and Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Hello Professor: A Black Principal and Professional Leadership in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2009).

⁵³ "Teachers in Conference Favor Separate Schools," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 6, 1925, 1. See also, "Separate School Is Discussed by Pedagogues," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 22, 1922, 1.

independence, then Black students needed Black teachers.⁵⁴

Because school districts did not keep official records of students' or teachers' racial identities, it is challenging to document the increase in school segregation and the precise number of Black teachers before 1940.

In the 1920s and 1930s Black scholars, journalists, and educators began the difficult work of investigating racial inequality in Northern schools. All of this new research reached the same conclusion—illegal school segregation was on the rise, and so was the employment of Black teachers.⁵⁵

One report estimated the number of “colored” schools in New Jersey increased by 26% between 1919 and 1930. A second study documented at least 70 “colored” elementary schools in the state by 1935, all led by Black faculty and with entirely Black student bodies. In Detroit scholars could locate only 20 Black teachers out of more than 5,800 in 1926, and all worked in majority Black elementary schools. Community protest persuaded officials to hire Detroit’s first Black high school teacher in 1934 to work in Sidney Miller High School, a school that was rapidly becoming majority Black. More Black high school teachers followed, and by 1950 the school’s Black print shop teacher estimated that 95% of the student

⁵⁴ Du Bois, “The Tragedy of Jim Crow.” See also, W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Question of Jim Crow Schools,” *Chicago Defender*, October 6, 1945, 15. “Our Graduates: Northern High Schools,” *Crisis* 14, no. 3 (1917): 124.

⁵⁵ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*, 46-86.

⁵⁶ Cloyzelle K. Jones, “*The History of Sydney D. Miller High School, 1919-1957*,” diss. Wayne State University, Ed. D. 1970, pp. 70-72.

⁵⁷ Dionne A. Dannels, “Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971,” Ph.D. diss. University of Illinois and Urbana-Champaign, 2001, pp. 16-37; Jeffrey Mirel, *The*

body was Black and that 25% of the faculty was Black.⁵⁶


Similar trends were taking place throughout Detroit, so, as Jeffrey Mirel finds, “by the mid-1930s there was growing evidence that the school system was again becoming racially segregated...many of the schools that previously had been integrated became almost completely Black.” In Chicago, Wendell Phillips High School transitioned from majority white to all Black and became so overcrowded the city opened a second high school for Black students in 1935, what became known as DuSable High School. The number of Black teachers was inching up as school administrators agreed to hire Black teachers for the growing number of majority Black schools.⁵⁷

School officials in Dayton, Ohio opened a separate Black elementary school in blatant violation of state law in 1924, and then expanded the number of all Black elementary and middle schools through the 1930s, sometimes by creating a separate annex for Black children located in a building behind a “white” school. As in other cities, school officials in Dayton found they could defuse Black political protest by hiring Black faculty and administrators in these new separate classrooms and schools.⁵⁸

Indianapolis school leaders opened a new “colored” high school in 1927 over the angry protests of the Black community, removing Black students from integrated high schools throughout the city and assigning them all to the new separate one. Crispus Attucks High School opened with 48 Black teachers and a Black principal, all with college degrees and some with advanced degrees. Teaching in a high school was a prestigious job for Black college graduates in an otherwise racially restricted job

Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81. 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 187-88.

⁵⁸ “Ohio Supreme Court Bars Segregation in Dayton School,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 24, 1926, 12; “Dayton Negroes Divided on School Segregation Fight,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 14, 1925, 9; “Dayton Ohio Is Divided on School Fight,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 14, 1925, 16; “Dayton People Divided on Mixed Schools,” *Afro-American*, February 14, 1925, 16; “Bagnall Will Aid in Dayton School Fight,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 27, 1924, 2; William Pickens, “Dayton Allows ‘Jim Crow’ in Public Schools,” *Chicago Defender*, February 16, 1924, 1.



market, but it was very difficult to secure high school teaching positions in most racially mixed schools. For this reason, many of the Black teachers hired to work at the new Crispus Attucks High School were very highly qualified. Dr. Matthias Nolcox, a Black graduate of Indiana University with a doctorate in education from Harvard University, served as principal. The school's athletics teams, drama clubs, debate clubs, and school newspaper became sources of pride for Black families. Black citizens that initially objected to the expansion of separate schools in Indianapolis came to support Crispus Attucks High School, and especially the dedicated Black teachers who worked there.⁵⁹

Lloyd Cofer, the first Black high school teacher in Detroit, explained that Black college graduates during this era struggled to gain entry into professions like law or medicine. He elaborated, "Teaching was about the only field within reach for Blacks during the period... but let me tell you that it was difficult for Blacks to convince schools systems to hire them, even up until the 1950s this was true." The growing Black population and the rise of school segregation in the North meant more Black teaching jobs, which strengthened the Black middle class and delighted Black families.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ella Lou Thornbrough, "The Indianapolis Story: School Segregation and Desegregation in a Northern City," unpublished manuscript, 1989: 42. Collection: BV 2631. Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society. Pamphlet: "Scholarship Luncheon 1984: Crispus Attucks Alumni Association Detroit Chapter," in Folder 5, Box 1, Russell A. Lane Collection, M522. Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Matthias Nolcox oral history interview with Jean Spears conducted in 1970. Transcription in collection, Matthias Nolcox Oral History Interview, ca. 1979. SC2729. Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

⁶⁰ Jones, "The History of Sydney D. Miller High School, 1919-1957," p. 64.

⁶¹ Giles R. Wright, *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History* (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1988), 67-68; Report of a Survey by the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work, *The Negro in New Jersey* (Trenton: New Jersey State Department of Institutions and Agencies, 1932): 37; "Campaign to Stop Separate School Begins," *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 3, 1926, 1. "We Should Fight for These Things," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 20, 1926, 4; "Another Jim Crow School;" "Segregation," *Crisis* 29, no. 1 (1924): 19.

To take another example: in 1919, New Jersey had 187 Black teachers and 52 separate schools, and by 1930 there were 418 Black teachers and 66 separate schools.⁶¹ In 1930 scholars could locate only one Black teacher working in New Jersey's racially mixed high schools, but found 32 Black teachers working at an all Black high school in Bordentown, New Jersey. Black principals, likewise, worked in all or majority Black schools or supervised designated "colored" schools within a racially mixed district, such as Atlantic City, New Jersey. Many Northern communities, including Milwaukee, Akron, Des Moines, Evanston, Flint, Minneapolis, Omaha, and San Diego, resisted hiring any Black educators before World War II. By 1929, the number of separate "colored" schools in Philadelphia had increased to 15. Noting that the number of Black college students was on the rise in the North, one scholar quipped, "The only hope for this new army of the unemployed is separate schools."⁶²

Civil rights leaders were frustrated by the expansion of Northern school segregation and dismayed that Northern Black communities did not fight harder to stop it. They viewed state-sponsored school segregation as a dangerous violation of Black civil rights, and one that could lead to the expansion of Jim Crow in the North. A. Philip Randolph claimed that

⁶² Christina Collins, *Ethnically Qualified: Race, Merit, and the Selection of Urban Teachers, 1920-1980* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011), 13-21; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 174-77; Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 9-33; Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 62-63, 186-88; David M. Katzman, *Before the Ghetto: Black Detroit in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1933), 84-90; Ambrose Caliver, "Some Problems in the Education and Placement of Negro Teachers," *Journal of Negro Education*, 4, no. 1 (1935): 99-112; "From the Press of the Nation," *Crisis* 42, no. 4 (1935): 115; "Along the NAACP Battlefield," *Crisis* 42, no. 2 (1935): 55-56; George Streater, "On to Asbury Park!" *Crisis* 41, no. 5 (1934): 133-34; Rayford W. Logan, "Educational Segregation in the North," *Journal of Negro Education*, 2, no. 1 (1933): 65-67; "The Results of Barring Negro Teachers," *Crisis* 40, no. 9 (1933): 208; Report of a Survey by the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work, *The Negro in New Jersey*, 38-40; Clarana, "Schooling the Negro," 222. Although official records were not kept by the school district, one observer estimates there were between 15 and 20 Black teachers working in the Chicago Public Schools in 1911, where, "as a rule, they are in schools where the majority of the children are Negroes." See "Employment of Colored Women in Chicago," *Crisis* 1, no. 3 (1911): 24-25. A noteworthy exception comes from New York City in 1918, where a Black man served as principal of P.S. 79 on the East Side, where the teachers and students were mostly white. See John Purroy Mitchel, "The Public Schools of New York," *Crisis* 14, no. 3 (1917): 132.

Black leaders were at fault for permitting whites to “force an inferiority complex down the throats of the Negro.” He continued, “The record of the Negro politician is a justification of the notion that the Negro doesn’t want anything in politics.”⁶³ Randolph could not fathom why Black Philadelphians supported separate schools, imagining that only an “inferiority complex” could explain such faulty reasoning. Howard University’s Charles H. Thompson questioned whether Black teachers were really kinder and more nurturing, and added, “this high-sounding claim appears to be little more than a naïve rationalization of a selfish desire for increased and more assured opportunities for employment.”⁶⁴

Civil rights leaders working at the NAACP, the Urban League, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters refused to acknowledge Northern Black families’ concerns about the importance of Black teachers and the perils of hostile learning environments. Without the backing of Black families and teachers, civil rights leaders could not mobilize a Northern school desegregation campaign before World War II.⁶⁵

Northern school segregation between 1900 and 1945 expanded as result of white racism, not Black preference for separate schools.

Although there is evidence that a handful of Black teachers taught racially mixed classrooms in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Hartford, Jersey City and a number of smaller towns, the vast majority of

⁶³ Crisis H. Rush, “What Have You to Say?” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 22, 1929, 16.

⁶⁴ Charles H. Thompson, “The Negro Separate School,” *Crisis* 42, no. 8 (1935): 230-32; 242.

⁶⁵ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*, 46-86. Also see, “Resolution Drafted by Dr. Du Bois,” March 26, 1934; NAACP, “Resolution on Segregation,” March 26, 1934; both in in folder, “NAACP on Segregation,” Papers of the NAACP, Part 11: Special Subject Files, 1912-1939, Series B: Harding, Warren G. through YWCA. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001422-029-0318>.

Northern school districts refused to place Black teachers in a position of authority over white students before World War II.

In his survey of Black education in the North, Davison Douglas shows that many school districts that had once permitted Black teachers to teach white children reversed this policy in the early 1930s. This was a period that saw the rise of scientific racism and the hardening of racial apartheid in the Jim Crow South.

These same trends motivated whites outside of the South to increase school segregation.⁶⁶

Separate, Black-controlled public schools in a handful of Northern cities including Bordentown, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis, or even racially mixed, Black-led schools like Wendell Phillips in Chicago and Sydney Miller in Detroit confirmed that Black schools could offer an excellent education. Indianapolis’ Crispus Attucks High School’s 1933 yearbook listed 92 graduates heading to colleges including Fisk, Tuskegee, Purdue, Howard, Lincoln, DePauw, Dartmouth, Wilberforce, Indiana University, and Oberlin. This kind of evidence cemented many Black families’ support for Black teachers, and if they had to accept some degree of separation, this was a compromise they were willing to make.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*, 46-86; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 172-76.

⁶⁷ Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis *Yearbook* 1933. In Folder 6, Box 1, Russell A. Lane Collection, M522. Manuscript and Visual Collections Department, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. See also, Stanley Warren, “The Evolution of Secondary Schooling for Blacks in Indianapolis, 1869-1930,” in Wilma L. Gibbs, ed., *Indiana’s African-American Heritage: Essays from Black History News and Notes* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2007): 29-50.

It was the economic catastrophe of the Great Depression that began to chip away at Northern Black tolerance for school segregation. As tax bases declined and school budgets shrank, majority Black schools offered a tempting target for white school leaders.

Many supposedly colorblind policies had especially harsh consequences on Black schools and teachers, such as a reorganization of the Philadelphia public schools that resulted in the elimination of the city's Black middle school teachers while leaving the white middle school teaching force untouched.⁶⁸

Surveying the rapidly deteriorating conditions for Black students in Philadelphia in 1931, reporter J. Max Barber wrote, "There is a constantly growing narrowness here that smacks of Dixie. Nowhere is this more evident than in our public schools."⁶⁹ The threat to majority Black schools became more apparent as the Depression dragged on, forcing parents and teachers to reconsider the risks of separate facilities. Black civil rights leaders pressed their advantage and worked to persuade Black Northerners that

⁶⁸ Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia*, 135-43.

⁶⁹ Horace Mann Bond, "Charles H. Thompson Urges Legal Steps to Get Better Schools," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 4, 1934, 7; Horace Mann Bond, "Watch Your School Budget!" *Afro-American*, March 4, 1933, 11; J. Max Barber, "The Philadelphia Public Schools," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 7, 1931, 1.

⁷⁰ Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *To Ask for an Equal Chance: African Americans in the Great Depression* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009); David B. Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Jeffrey Mirel, "The Politics of Educational Retrenchment in Detroit," *History of Education Quarterly*, 24, no. 3 (1984): 323-58; S. Alexander Rippha, "Retrenchment in a Period of Defensive Opposition to the New Deal: The Business Community and the Public Schools, 1932-1934," *History of Education Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1962): 76-82.

⁷¹ Dr. Willis N. Huggins to Mr. Walter White, Feb. 24, 1933. In Folder: 001509-020-0300. Black Teachers in the New York City Public School System. Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational

educational equality required racially mixed schools, classrooms, and teaching assignments.⁷⁰

In 1934, the Pennsylvania Association of Teachers of Colored Children fought for and won the right for Black teachers to work in racially mixed junior and senior high schools. This marked a shift in strategy as Black educators began to view integrated teaching jobs as more advantageous than racially restricted ones. In Pittsburgh, Black community members pressured the school board to hire the district's first Black teacher.⁷¹ Once defenders of separate schools and the job opportunities those institutions represented, Northern Black teachers and parents viewed school segregation with a growing sense of disquiet.⁷²

Despite the rumblings of Black political protest as the 1930s wore on, white school leaders expanded school segregation in communities with growing Black populations in towns like New Rochelle and Rockville, New York; Paulsboro, Toms River, Lawnside, East Orange, and Montclair, New Jersey; Berwyn, Chester, and Brentwood, Pennsylvania; Cleveland and Wilmington, Ohio; Detroit and Port Huron, Michigan; Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts; and Monrovia, California. Black communities in each of these cases protested as school districts created discriminatory school assignment policies, transfer policies, or unofficial "colored" schools. Black Northerners increasingly interpreted school segregation as an act of hostility that exacerbated educational inequality.⁷³

Equality, Series A: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1913-1940. ProQuest History Vault. <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001509-020-0300&accountid=12768>.

⁷² Committee on Race Relations, "Summary of Seminar on Segregation, Held Under the Auspices of the Committee on Race Relations, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania," January 26, 1934, in folder, "NAACP on Segregation," Papers of the NAACP, Part 11: Special Subject Files, 1912-1939, Series B: Harding, Warren G. through YWCA. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001422-029-0318>. See also, Robert Bagnall, "Says Whites Must Be Accepted in Negro Schools if They Apply," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 1, 1937, 4; "303 Colored; 7,386 Whites Teach in Philly Schools," *Afro-American*, June 8, 1935, 14; William N. Jones, "Talking It Over," *Afro-American*, May 18, 1935, 13; "Philly Separate Schools Are Attacked by Howard University Professor," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 2, 1934, 1.

⁷³ "Jim Crow Upheld by Court in Ohio Case," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 27, 1940, 4; William D. Barbee, "High Court Will Hear School Case," *Chicago Defender*, May 11, 1940, 12; "Ohioans Fight Court's Jim-Crow School Ruling," *Chicago Defender*, January 20, 1940, 2; "Parents

Black families organized school boycotts, demanded better funding and more accessible transportation, and filed lawsuits to halt the spread of Northern school segregation, all to little avail.

Following a 1935 race riot in New York City, observers reported, “the Negro in Harlem has made serious complaints against the schools of his community on the grounds that they are old, poorly equipped and overcrowded and constitute fire hazards, in addition to the fact that, in the administration of these schools, the welfare of the children is neglected and racial discrimination is practiced.”⁷⁴ According to Charles S. Johnson, by 1940 laws outlawing school segregation were effectively meaningless in Northern cities with large Black populations. The Black press scoffed that Northern “Jim Crow schools” were the antithesis of American democracy, setting the stage for the coming revolution.⁷⁵

Fight Jim Crow School in Ohio Town;” G. James Fleming, “A Philadelphia Lawyer,” *Crisis* 46, no. 11 (1939): 329-31; “Along the NAACP Battlefield,” *Crisis* 45, no. 10 (1938): 336; William Pickens, “Severe Blow to James Crow in California,” *Atlanta Daily World*, November 21, 1936, 7; “Branch News,” *Crisis*, 41, no. 11 (1934): 370; “Jersey Parents Continue War on Jim Crow School,” *Afro-American*, September 1, 1934, 11; Crump, “Detroit Bolts at Separate Schools Idea;” “Victory at Toms River;” “Jim-Crow School Plan Fought by Montclair, New Jersey, Parents,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 28, 1934, 1; “Fight Color Line in New Jersey Schools,” *Chicago Defender*, September 30, 1933, 1; “The Pittsburgh NAACP,” *Crisis* 40, no. 3 (1933): 58; “Mr. James Crow,” *Crisis* 40, no. 1 (1933): 17; Rayford W. Logan, “Educational Segregation in the North,” *Journal of Negro Education*, 2, no. 1 (1933): 65-67; “Pa. Town Begin Separate Schools,” *Afro-American*, June 11, 1932, 5; “Segregation in Schools Fought,” *New York Amsterdam News*, March 9, 1932, 10; Robinson, “Jim Crowism Is Rampant in Asbury Park;” “No Separate Schools for NJ Children,” *Afro-American*, June 4, 1930, 18.

⁷⁴ The Mayor’s Commission on Conditions in Harlem, “The Negro in Harlem: A Report on Social and Economic Conditions Responsible for the Outbreak of March 19, 1935,” New York, NY (1935): 67; George Streater, “Central High School, Cleveland,” *Crisis* 41, no. 7 (1934): 215; George Streater, “Detroit, Columbus, and Cleveland,” *Crisis* 41, no. 6 (1934): 172-73.

Writing in *The Crisis* in August of 1935, the NAACP’s Charles H. Houston announced a legal strategy to equalize public education for Black children outside of the South. He explained that despite the fact that many Northern Black families supported separate schools with Black teachers, the time had come to fight for school desegregation. Houston chose not to address the question what this would mean for Black teachers in the North, saying only, “schools are not employment bureaus.” He added that in cities like New York and Chicago where Black teachers taught in mixed schools, “such discrimination may be reduced to a tolerable minimum.” Houston explained that even in the North, separate but equal schools were a “fiction” that fueled prejudice and undermined the larger Black freedom struggle.⁷⁶

The NAACP won a series of decisive legal victories for Black educational equality in the years leading up to World War II. By U.S. entry into World War II in 1941, Northern Black support for a broader campaign was beginning to take shape. School desegregation would be a defining feature of this new activism, and Black students, parents, teachers, and ministers were committed to protecting jobs for Black teachers.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Charles S. Johnson, “Source Material for Patterns of Negro Segregation in Chicago, IL, 1940,” page 6. Reel 7. Sc Micro R-6534. Carnegie-Myrdal Study of the Negro in America Research Memoranda Collection, 1935-1948. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library, New York, NY.

⁷⁶ Charles H. Thompson, “The Negro Separate School,” *Crisis* 42, no. 8 (1935): 230-32; 242. See also, “Editorial: More Chickens Coming Home to Roost,” *Crisis* 45, no. 1 (1938): 17.

⁷⁷ Tushnet, *The NAACP’s Legal Strategy against Segregated Education*, 61-81; *Alston et al. v. School Board of City of Norfolk et al.* 112F 2d 992 (4th Cir.), cert. denied, 311 U.S. 693 (1940); “Equal Salaries for Teachers,” *Crisis* 47, no. 1 (1940): 10-12; Thurgood Marshall, “Equal Justice Under Law,” *Crisis* 46, no. 7 (1939): 199-201; Charles State of *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, Registrar of the University of Missouri, et al.* 305 U.S. 337 (1938); *Margaret Williams et al. v. David W. Zimmerman et al.* 172, Md. 563, 192 A.353 (1937); Charles H. Houston, “Don’t Shout Too Soon,” *Crisis* 43, no. 3 (1936): 79; Charles H. Houston, “Cracking Closed University Doors,” *Crisis* 42, no. 12 (1935): 364, 370; Charles S. Houston, “Educational Inequalities Must Go!” *Crisis* 42, no. 10 (1935): 300-1.

1941-1954: World War II Sparks a Northern Battle for School Desegregation

Between U.S. entry into World War II in 1941 and the *Brown* decision in 1954, Black communities outside of the North led a coordinated assault against racial inequality in the public schools, part of growing national Black civil rights movement. The main target was illegal school segregation, a problem that had been getting worse over the past four decades. This represented a profound change in how Black Northerners perceived both school segregation and its remedy, school desegregation. Before the war, many (but not all) Black Northerners had been willing to countenance some degree of school segregation if it meant more jobs for Black teachers and better learning environments for Black youth. But the rising wartime civil rights movement convinced many Black Northerners that school segregation was illegal, immoral, and unjust and that the time had come to eradicate it.

The NAACP offered legal counsel and financial support to local Black families fighting for school desegregation during and after World War II. Civil rights leaders like Thurgood Marshall believed state laws provided an effective legal basis for this campaign, and that success in the North would undergird the growing movement against racial apartheid in the South. Davison Douglas calls the 1940s “a watershed” in the fight against school segregation in the North, concluding, “By the early 1950s, almost all explicit school segregation in the North had ended.”⁷⁸ Between 1941 and 1954, the NAACP helped dozens of Northern communities end racist school assignment policies that isolated Black students and teachers in separate schools through petitions, school boycotts, and when necessary, lawsuits.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 219.

⁷⁹ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2017); Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New Press, 2009), 287-332; Douglas, *Jim*

Historical evidence suggests that very few of the region’s Black teachers lost their job during the postwar struggle for school desegregation between 1941 and 1954.


This is largely because school desegregation in communities outside of the South involved very little change to racial demographics in the schools.

Yes, some all Black schools were closed, and in some cases Black teachers lost their jobs, but in most cases a successful school desegregation plan resulted in new rules concerning student assignments, transfer policies, and Black teacher placement that resulted in very modest changes. Schools that had assigned students on an explicitly racial basis agreed to modify school assignment policies and instead use geographic school catchment zones. Ubiquitous residential segregation meant that school leaders could easily draw boundaries in ways that maintained very high levels of school segregation. White families rarely removed their children from the local schools as a result of these nearly invisible changes in policy, and so the student population remained relatively stable and Black teachers were less likely to lose their jobs.⁸⁰

The vast majority of Northern school districts in the decade after World War II agreed to adopt non-racial student assignment policies, and, importantly, non-racial teacher assignment policies. School leaders quietly assigned Black teachers to racially mixed classrooms, often in response to demands from local Black families. A strengthening alliance between Northern Black civil rights organizations and labor, as well as the growing power of teachers’ unions, also helped enforce more equitable hiring and placement for Black educators. This increased Black teacher

Crow Moves North, 219-73; Tushnet, *The NAACP’s Legal Strategy against Segregated Education*.

⁸⁰ Burkholder, *An African American Dilemma*, 87-105; Rothstein, *The Color of Law*; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*.



visibility throughout school districts as they now worked in racially mixed schools and more Black teachers worked in secondary schools.⁸¹

In his study of the postwar campaign for school desegregation, Douglas concludes, “Though the end of racially explicit pupil assignments did mark a significant reversal of earlier white insistence on racial separation, they did not reflect a deep and widespread commitment to racial integration and did not lead to a fundamental change in patterns of racial separation in Northern schools. Rather, these desegregation gains reflected a growing uneasiness with obvious and explicit forms of racial discrimination coupled with the pragmatic need to gain Black political support; they also reflected, by the late 1940s, a desire to end the international embarrassment caused by America’s harsh treatment of racial minorities...most Black children would remain in separate schools because of extensive residential segregation.”⁸²

In other words, Black educational activism in the postwar era successfully removed the most blatant, illegal student assignment and teacher placement rules, but it had very little effect on the high—and growing—levels of racial segregation that isolated Black children in certain schools. Under these conditions, somewhat paradoxically, more Black teachers found work in the public schools and the number of Black teachers outside of the South ticked incrementally upwards.

World War II was the catalyst that jumpstarted Northern Black educational activism. The horrors of World War II and Nazism highlighted the importance of democratic ideals of racial tolerance and fair play, as well as the terrible dangers of state-sponsored racism.

⁸¹ Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 82-115; Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, 196.

⁸² Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 220.

⁸³ Charles S. Johnson and Associates, *To Stem this Tide: A Survey of Racial Tension Areas in the United States* (New York: AMS Press, 1969 [1943]), 106-7.

⁸⁴ On the rise of Black civil rights activism during World War II, see Thomas Guglielmo, *Divisions: A New History of Racism and Resistance in America’s World War II Military* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); Linda Hervieux, *Forgotten: The Untold Story of D-Day’s Black Heroes, at Home and at War* (New York: Harper Collins, 2015); William

The “Double V” campaign symbolizing victory over fascism abroad and racism at home mobilized Black Americans to demand equal civil rights. Sociologist Charles S. Johnson wrote, “Traditional patterns of behavior between Negroes and whites are being rather suddenly disturbed by the war. Negro masses are becoming more articulate and their methods of protest more varied and intense, including, as they do, petitions and picketings, protest parades, mass meetings and mob violence.”⁸³ In Northern towns and cities, many Black families targeted illegally segregated and inferior schools.⁸⁴

Black women played a starring role in this new, more robust educational activism. For example, Black teacher Hattie Kendrick sued the Board of Education in Cairo, Illinois for paying Black teachers less than whites. In Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Trenton, and Montclair, New Jersey Black families successfully desegregated teaching assignments. In Abbington, Pennsylvania, Black parents rejected the school board’s plan to exclude Black children from the local junior high school, while Black mothers in Oxford, Ohio challenged segregated parent-teacher associations, school plays, and high school graduation ceremonies. Urban League members protested that only five teachers out of 800 in Hartford, Connecticut were Black, and that African Americans were underrepresented in administrative and staff positions in the public schools. Black parents in Hempstead, Long Island rejected a new school assignment policy that would send Black children to majority Black schools across town, even though there were majority white schools closer to home. Similar examples unfolded throughout the Northeast, middle Atlantic, and Midwest as Black Northerners spoke up and took action to combat educational discrimination.⁸⁵

P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2013); Cheryl Mullenbach, *Double Victory: How African American Women Broke Race and Gender Barriers to Help Win World War II* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013); Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, eds., *Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience during World War II* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010).

⁸⁵ Although her lawsuit was successful, Ms. Kendrick was fired for her political activism in 1953, see “Decision of the Cairo Board of Education, School District No. 1, July 24, 1954,” in Folder 12, Box 21, and Debra Chandler Landis, “Miss Kendrick Is a Leader, Teacher, and Status-Quo Challenger,” *Southeast Missourian*, August 23, 1981, 9, in Folder 10,

Drawing on wartime themes of brotherhood and fair play, Black mothers in Hillburn, New York demanded the town abolish the separate “colored” elementary school in 1943. When the school board refused, they reached out to the NAACP. Thurgood Marshall visited Hillburn’s two elementary schools, noting that the modern eight-room Main School attended by white children had a library, gymnasium, music room, and large playground, while the nearby all Black Brook School was a three-room, ramshackle building that lacked indoor plumbing.⁸⁶

A local chapter of the NAACP and the town’s three Black teachers agreed to fight for integrated schools, even though white leaders pressured them to accept improved facilities at the all Black school. Black mothers organized a school boycott, which—combined with the threat of litigation—compelled the New York Commissioner of Education to close the Brook School and assign all children to the Main School.⁸⁷ Black principal Kate Savery confirmed local Black educators were “very, very thankful for the Commissioner’s decision.” The three Black teachers from the Brook School were transferred along with the children to the newly integrated Main School—none lost their jobs.⁸⁸

Box 21, Kendrick-Brooks Family Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. See also, *Report on Educational Equality League*, 1977. Box 1, Folder 1 “History Highlights,” Floyd L. Logan Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA; Edna N. Bradley to Ella Baker, November 6, 1943, in folder, “Segregation and Discrimination in Ohio public schools and colleges,” Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series B: Legal Documents and Central Office Records, 1940-1950. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.ProQuest.com/histvault?q=001512-004-0263>; “Philadelphians Block Jim Crow School Plan,” *Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1943, 1; “Colored Teachers Gets Senior High Post,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 3, 1942, 2; Layle Lane, “Federation of School Teachers,” *Crisis* 47, no. 1 (1940): 352-53; Reginald W. Pinckney to Thurgood Marshall, September 21, 1940, in folder, “Discrimination in Pennsylvania Public Schools,” Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series B: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1940-1950. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.ProQuest.com/histvault?q=001512-004-0440>; B.T. Gillespie, “Pittsburgh Divided on Mixed School Facilities,” *Afro-American*, February 17, 1940, 6. On Hartford, see, Stacey Close, *Fire in the Bones: Hartford’s NAACP, Civil Rights and Militancy, 1943-1969*, *Journal of Negro History*, 86, no. 3 (2001): 228-63. On Hempstead, see, Carleton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State: From Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 258-59.

⁸⁶ Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 163-91.

With the war’s end in 1945, the campaign for educational equality crashed like a tidal wave across Northern communities with sizeable Black populations. Black teachers joyfully joined this fight. The inherent dangers of majority Black or all Black schools had been laid bare by the fiscal crises of the Great Depression, and in the heady days of postwar America, a more perfect democracy seemed within reach.

Reflecting this new commitment to racial integration, in 1945 the New Jersey Organization of Teachers of Colored Children changed its name to the New Jersey Organization of Teachers. Five years later, the Pennsylvania Association of Teachers in Colored Schools did the same thing and publicly supported the integration of teachers, students, and curricula in such

⁸⁷ NAACP Flyer: “Hillburn and Hattiesburg, Mass Rally,” October 3, 1943. In folder, “Mass meeting to protest de facto segregation in Hillburn, NY.” Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: Campaign for Educational Equality, Series C: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1951-1955. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.ProQuest.com/histvault?q=001513-002-0015>; “Along the NAACP Battlefront: Hillburn’s Attack on Jim Crow Schools,” *Crisis* 50, no. 10 (1943): 308-9; “Appeal to Dewey in Hillburn Case,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 25, 1943, 1; “Democracy Went to Sleep, Students Strike Protest of ‘Jim Crow’ School,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 25, 1943, 20; “Push Court Fight on Jim Crow School,” *Chicago Defender*, September 25, 1943, 5. For a scholarly account of the Hillburn School Boycott, see Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 163-91; Mabee, *Black Education in New York State*, 262-65.

⁸⁸ National Park Service, Application for the National Register of Historic Places. Main School in Hillburn, NY. U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC. June 26, 2015. <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/8ba3e341-5ea5-467f-b871-1b5d7950e666>; Newspaper clippings: “Fight to Attend Hillburn School Won by Negroes,” *New York Herald Tribune*, October 12, 1943; “Hillburn Schools Close as Negroes Fight Segregation,” *Ramapo Valley Independent*, September 9, 1943; “Town’s Negroes Strike Against Jim Crow School,” *PM*, September 9, 1943, 1; Patricia Bronte, “Showdown is Due on Jim Crow School Between Town’s Negroes and Officials,” *PM*, no date. All in folder, “Closure of Segregated Schools in Hillburn, NY,” Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series B: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1940-1950. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.ProQuest.com/histvault?q=001512-003-0505>.

a way “as to make all Pennsylvania schools the arsenals of the democratic way of life.”⁸⁹

While there were countless victories in this postwar struggle for Northern school desegregation, there were failures as well. In the summer of 1945 Dayton, Ohio school leaders decided to transform racially integrated Wogaman Elementary School into an all Black school. Phyllis Greer, one of Dayton’s Black teachers, recalled, “When school closed in June of 1945, there was an entire white staff at Wogaman. When school opened in September, there was an entire Black staff under a Black principal...and at the same time white pupils who lived in the Wogaman area were transferred by bus out of the Wogaman School.”⁹⁰

Dayton’s Black community was conflicted over this turn of events. Local civil rights activists objected to the illegal expansion of school segregation, but many Black families and teachers viewed a new Black-led school as an asset. Cincinnati NAACP President Theodore M. Berry concluded that it was very difficult to prove school segregation due to the paucity of official school records, and so litigation was unlikely to be successful. The school board “denied that Dayton followed a strict district system, or that Wogaman had been changed to a Negro school.”⁹¹

Dayton was home to Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School, a school with an entirely Black student body and faculty that had a reputation for outstanding academics and excellent extracurriculars. Berry concluded, “It is apparent that Negro citizens of Dayton are divided as to their attitude on separate schools, with a large segment of the group indifferent on the

question.” In those few communities with high-quality, Black-led schools including Dayton, Cincinnati, and Bordentown, New Jersey, Black communities were hesitant to advocate school desegregation if they believed it would result in the destruction of a cherished Black institution or job losses for Black faculty.⁹²

Meanwhile, in response to growing Black political power and more visible civil rights activism, Northern states strengthened their anti-discrimination legislation, which improved employment opportunities for Black teachers.

New Jersey forbid school segregation in its revised constitution in 1947, Indiana repealed its permissive school segregation law in 1949, and Illinois strengthened its existing anti-segregation law by adding an effective penalty provision. States including New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts created commissions and passed legislation outlawing racial discrimination in employment. As a result, state officials could pressure local school officials to cease race-based school assignment and teacher placement policies, typically by threatening to withhold state funds.⁹³

⁸⁹ “Pennsylvania District Teachers Groups Combine,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 17, 1950, 5; Margaret L. Caution, “Jersey Teachers to War on Schools’ Racial Bias,” *Afro-American*, June 2, 1945, 24.


⁹⁰ Phyllis Blackburn Geer, 1972, as cited in Paul R. Dimond, *Beyond Busing: Reflections on Urban Segregation, the Courts, and Equal Opportunity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 9. See also, Joseph Watras, “The Racial Desegregation of Dayton, Ohio, Public Schools, 1966-2008,” *Ohio History* 117 (August 2010): 93-107; Harriet Elaine Glosson, “Trends in School Desegregation: An Historical Case Study of Desegregation in Dayton, Ohio; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; and Seattle, Washington,” Ph.D. diss. Brigham Young University, 1986, 192-202.

⁹¹ Theodore M. Berry to Matral Reese, November 5, 1945, in “Segregation and Discrimination in Ohio Public Schools and Colleges,” Papers of the NAACP. On December 1, 1972 Theodore M. “Ted” Berry

would be sworn in as the first black mayor of Cincinnati. See the finding aid of the Theodore M. Berry Papers, Archives and Rare Books Library, University of Cincinnati, OH. <http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/view?docId=ead/OhCiUAR0135.xml;chunk.id=headerlink;brand=de-fault>

⁹² Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 256.

⁹³ William J. Collins, “The Labor Market Impact of State-Level Anti-Discrimination Laws, 1940-1960,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 56, no. 2 (2003): 244-272. Sally Remaley, “NAACP Meets, Tangles with School Problems,” *Chicago Defender*, August 8, 1963, 1.



Still, change was slow, and white citizens resisted Black demands for school desegregation and equalization. In many smaller towns, the only Black teachers were found in racially restricted classrooms or schools as late as 1948. For example, scholars Hugh H. Smythe and Rufus Smith Washington documented Black teachers assigned to all Black classrooms in otherwise racially mixed schools in the Pennsylvania towns of Aliquippa, Kennett Square, Avondale, West Grove, and Downingtown. They discovered the town of Chester operated separate “colored” elementary schools with Black teachers and an integrated high school with an all white faculty, as did Johnstown, Carlisle, York, Morton, and West Chester. Smythe and Smith estimated that one-third of Pennsylvania school districts segregated students by race and that with the exception of Pittsburgh, which had only recently agreed to hire Black teachers, most schools refused to let Black teachers work with white students. We know that in cities including Philadelphia and Pittsburgh Black teachers were moved into racially mixed classrooms in the 1940s as these policies changed, but it is less clear what happened in smaller towns and suburbs as schools were forced to desegregate.⁹⁴

Black teachers were most likely to find employment in large cities, but small towns or small industrial cities with a sizeable Black population offered another site of possible employment, although the number of Black teachers working outside of the cities was very small. Civil rights organizations documented “colored” schools in 24 towns in rural and suburban New Jersey in 1947, and in each case, school segregation took a slightly different form. For example, the Jersey shore town of Wildwood divided an integrated elementary school into separate white and Black sections; Penns Grove housed a “colored” kindergarten in the

⁹⁴ Hugh H. Smythe and Rufus Smith, “Section C: Race Policies and Practices in Selected Public School Systems of Pennsylvania,” 1952-53, Reprinted brochure from *Journal of Negro Education*, 1948, in Folder 375, Box 19. NAACP Philadelphia Branch Records. See also, “Probe of Alleged Segregated in Pennsylvania Schools Asked,” *New Journal and Guide*, June 19, 1948, 18; “PA Schools Practice Bias—NAACP Survey,” *Atlanta Daily World*, June 4, 1948, 3.

⁹⁵ “A Survey of the public school systems in the State of New Jersey, made under the direction of the NJ State Conference of NAACP Branches,” February 28, 1947. In folder, “School Segregation in New Jersey,” Papers of the NAACP Part 03: Campaign for Educational Equality, Series B: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1940-1950. ProQuest History Vault.

basement of the “white” school; West Cape May assigned Black students to an annex behind the “white” school; in Palmyra a Black teacher taught all the Black elementary school children in a single, ungraded classroom; and Haddonfield segregated Black students through fourth grade, but then integrated them beginning in fifth grade.⁹⁵

The New Jersey Division Against Discrimination confirmed that 52 school districts operated illegal separate schools with Black teachers. In Illinois, 11 counties maintained separate schools with Black teachers in defiance of state law. In the summer of 1953, Harry Ashmore, a moderate white Southerner, commissioned a survey of 25 Northern communities like these that were in the process of ending race-based school assignments. He found, “the experiences reported were as varied as the communities themselves.”

To date, we have no definitive record of what happened to individual Black teachers during this period from 1941 to 1954 as race-based school assignments were ended.

The answer probably matches the extraordinarily diverse and varied conditions of local schooling, where in some cases Black teachers were fired, but in other cases they may have been kept on as a way to placate Black families and avoid drawing criticism from state officials or the NAACP.⁹⁶

<http://congressional.ProQuest.com/histvault?q=001512-003-0001>; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1959” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 245-64; “Segregation Without Protest,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 19, 1947, 6; “Segregated Negro Schools in N.J. Protested by NAACP,” *Atlanta Daily World*, April 15, 1947, 1; “New Jersey School Jim Crow Worst Outside the Deep South,” *Chicago Defender*, February 15, 1947, 5.

⁹⁶ Harry S. Ashmore, *The Negro and the Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 69, 74-5.

Black families and civil rights leaders organized to fight for Black teachers, especially in large cities. The Educational Equality League in Philadelphia, a local organization fighting for educational equality, published a report in 1953 that identified ten out of 186 elementary schools as being completely racially segregated, with all Black student bodies and faculties. The report noted that not a single Black school administrator could be found in the city's senior high schools, and that Philadelphia did not employ any senior Black school staff. It brought these facts to the attention of the school district and the local Black press in an attempt to force school leaders to dismantle segregation for students, teachers, administrators, and staff.⁹⁷

Urban school district leaders tended to deny all charges of racial bias in the public schools. For example, when presented with irrefutable evidence of racial segregation and inequality, Philadelphia Superintendent Allen H. Whetter responded mildly, "We do not have segregation in Philadelphia's public schools. A child may go to any school he wants to, provided there is room for him. Our school boundaries are geographical and have no relationship to a pupil's race, color or creed." This kind of slipperiness—where school leaders claimed "colorblind" policies while refusing to acknowledge racial inequality—made it difficult for civil rights activists to win meaningful concessions or reform. The battle for school desegregation in the urban North would burst into the open only after civil rights legislation of the mid-1960s forced the issue.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Educational Equality League Memorandum: Some Pertinent Facts about Philadelphia Public Schools," c. 1953, in Folder 375, Box 19. NAACP Philadelphia Branch Records. See also, "Report on Educational Equality League," Folder 1, Box 1, Floyd L. Logan Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA.

⁹⁸ Educational Equality League Memorandum: Some Pertinent Facts about Philadelphia Public Schools," c. 1953, in Folder 375, Box 19. NAACP Philadelphia Branch Records. See also, "Report on Educational Equality League," Folder 1, Box 1, Floyd L. Logan Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, PA.

⁹⁹ Thomas J. Sugrue find that battles over school integration in the postwar era most often erupted in small Northern cities and suburbs with black populations and skipped over the larger cities until later. See *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 174-75. For quote, see Virgil A. Clift, "Democracy and Integration in Public Education," *Crisis* 59, no. 7

Northern school desegregation and equalization campaigns were most successful in suburban towns and small industrial centers between 1941 and 1954. These communities tended to have a critical mass of Black families with enough political power and visibility to advocate for change, as well as a small enough school district where racist policies were easily identifiable.

Desegregation battles erupted in Gary, Indianapolis, Evansville, and Elkhart, Indiana; Long Branch, Fair Haven, Camden, and Mount Holly, New Jersey; Alton, Argo, Cairo, Ullin, Sparta, and Tamms, Illinois; Willow Run, Muskegon, and Albion, Michigan; Chester and Downingtown, Pennsylvania; New Rochelle and Hempstead, New York; and Dayton, Cincinnati; and Williamsport, Ohio. For now, they skipped over the region's densely packed major cities.⁹⁹

By the time the *Brown* decision was handed down in the spring of 1954, there were very few school districts outside of the South that used racial school assignment and teacher placement policies. "School

(1952): 414-20, 472. On local various Northern school integration battles, see, Ronald D. Cohen, "The Dilemma of School Integration in the North: Gary, Indiana, 1945-1960," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 82, no. 2 (1986): 161-84; Ashmore, *The Negro in the Schools*, 66-75; "Albion Closes Jim Crow School," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 31, 1953, 20; "Editorials: School Paradoxes," *Crisis* 60, no. 8 (1953): 485; "Along the NAACP Battlefront: Schools," *Crisis* 59, no. 9 (1952): 586-87; "N.J. Schools Held Model," *Afro-American*, August 15, 1953, 8; "Cairo School Situation," *Crisis* 59, no. 3 (1952): 143-44; June Shagaloff and Lester P. Bailey, "Cairo - Illinois' Southern Exposure," *Crisis* 59, no. 4 (1952): 208-13, 262-65; "Cairo, IL Parents Turn to Courts in School Fight," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 19, 1952, 3; "Officials Fight Cairo School Discrimination," *Atlanta Daily World*, January 30, 1952, 6; "Illinois Town Ends Separate School System," *New Journal and Guide*, December 1, 1951, A11; "Along the NAACP Battlefront: Segregation," *Crisis* 58, no. 10 (1951): 676-77; "N.J. Mixed School Drive Nearly Complete—Driscoll," *Afro-American*, May 27, 1950, 14; "Along the NAACP Battlefront: School," *Crisis* 57, no. 1 (1950): 37-40; Berni Fisher, "Blast Hub Jim Crow School Set Up," *Newsday*, November 10, 1949, 3.

desegregation,” insofar as the official removal of racial classifications in assignment went, was accomplished outside of the South. Of special significance: the number of Black students in the public schools was growing, as was the number of Black teachers, and Black teachers were no longer restricted to working in all Black classrooms or schools.¹⁰⁰

However, the number of Black teachers outside of the South in the 1940s and early 1950s was still very small relative to the Black student population. Black teachers were grossly underrepresented in the teaching force.

While successful school desegregation campaigns of this era did not decimate the Black teaching force, they also did not bolster it significantly. This is because Northern school districts insisted on colorblind teacher hiring policies, which tended to privilege white ethnics at the expense of Black teachers due to systemic racism in teacher education, certification, hiring, and promotion.

This trend is well-documented in New York City. In the postwar era, the numbers of Black teachers remained low because of inequitable, biased, and discriminatory practices across the teacher education, accreditation, licensing, hiring, and advancement processes. In the 1930s and 1940s, high school guidance counselors did not encourage Black students to take the academic

¹⁰⁰ “Report on Educational Equality League, 1977.” In Folder 1, Box 1 Floyd L. Logan Papers. Ethel L. Puryear to NAACP, September 15, 1947; Memorandum from Franklin H. Williams to Thurgood Marshall, September 15, 1947; Both in folder, “Segregation and Discrimination in New Jersey Public Schools and Colleges,” Papers of the NAACP. See also, Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 219-73.

¹⁰¹ Collins, *Ethnically Qualified*, 22, 43, 70-76. See similar evidence in Chicago, Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 112-14.

¹⁰² Memorandum from Mr. Walter White to Mr. Reeves. December 5, 1941, in Folder 00513-013-0366. Racial Situation in New York City

courses they needed to apply to college. Those few that completed college faced infamously difficult written and oral teacher certification exams, which rejected most Black teacher candidates for supposed “speech deficits.” As a result, only a very small number of Black teacher candidates graduated from college, passed these exams, and received certification and placement as full-time teachers; most worked as low paid, uncertified “substitutes.”¹⁰¹

Black New Yorkers were increasingly suspicious of the city’s so-called colorblind teacher hiring and placement policies. A particular point of contention was the very low number of Black teachers in Wadleigh High School, the only public high school in Harlem. Noting the troubling statistics on academic achievement at Wadleigh, reformers requested, “The placing in the schools in Harlem a larger number of young Negro teachers whose very presence...will serve as an inspiration.” In the 1930s, Black educational activists had celebrated New York City’s relatively progressive educational policies, but this changed in the 1940s as the Northern school desegregation campaign advanced. Black educational activists not only wanted more Black teachers, but they also wanted school leaders to deliberately place Black faculty in the city’s majority Black schools.¹⁰²

In 1946 the New York school administrators proposed changing Wadleigh High School into a combined junior-senior high school. The NAACP feared this would increase school segregation in Harlem by ensuring that children who lived there “would begin their school years and end them in the Harlem area.” Norma Jensen, a white educational campaigner at the NAACP explained, “The ‘plum’ that has been offered to the Negro community if Wadley [sic] were to become a junior-senior high school is that a Negro teacher, Miss Lawson, would be made principal of the school.”¹⁰³

Public Schools, 1941-1949. Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series C: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1951-1955. ProQuest History Vault. <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001513-013-0366&accountid=12768>.

¹⁰³ Memorandum to Walter White from Norma Jensen. April 15, 1946 in Folder 00513-013-0366. Racial Situation in New York City Public Schools, 1941-1949. Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series C: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1951-1955. ProQuest History Vault. See also Kimberley Johnson, “Wadleigh High School: The Price of Segregation,” in Ansley T.

White school administrators found it was relatively easy to hire more Black teachers and school administrators and place them in majority Black schools—this satisfied Black community demands without angering whites, and maintained high levels of school segregation throughout the district.¹⁰⁴

Black educational activism in the postwar era desegregated Northern schools and teaching assignments, which cracked open the job market for Black teachers. But a long history of racial discrimination against Black teachers meant they were severely underrepresented by 1954.

What is more, racial discrimination affected prospective Black teachers at multiple points, from high schools that tracked Black students into vocational tracks, to racially restricted colleges, to discriminatory teacher licensing exams.

Simply removing racist restrictions from Black teachers was not enough to equalize employment opportunities, much less to meet the needs of a surging Black population in the public schools. These conditions would set the stage for the next stage of Black educational activism in the decades following *Brown*.

Erickson and Ernest Morrell, eds., *Educating Harlem: A Century of Schooling and Resistance in a Black Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 77-102.

¹⁰⁴ Clarence Taylor, “Harlem Schools and the New York City Teachers Union,” in Ansley T. Erickson and Ernest Morrell, eds., *Educating Harlem: A Century of Schooling and Resistance in a Black Community*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), p. 138; Kristopher Bryan Burrell, “Black Women as Activist Intellectuals: Ella Baker and Mae Mallory Combat Northern Jim Crow during the 1950s,” in Brian Purnell, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, eds., *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North: Segregation and Struggle Outside of the South* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 89-112.

¹⁰⁵ James D. Anderson, Dara N. Byrne, and Tavis Smiley, *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2004);

1954-1974: *Brown*, Northern School Integration, & the Rise of Black Teachers

On May 17, 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that *de jure* school segregation as practiced in 17 Southern and border states was impermissible. From the beginning, however, it was unclear how *Brown* applied in the North. Explicit, race-based school assignments had been largely dismantled between 1945 and 1954 as a result of the Northern campaign for school desegregation. In spite of these reforms, school segregation had increased in the urban and suburban North due to growing Black populations, severe residential segregation, and discriminatory school assignment, construction, and transfer policies. Northern public schools did not require segregation, and in fact school leaders insisted their policies were colorblind and nondiscriminatory. But the lived experiences of Black families told a very different story.¹⁰⁵

By 1954, many Black Northerners believed school segregation was as deliberate and insidious in the North as it was in the South, and that therefore the *Brown* ruling applied equally to them. Black educational activist Ruth Batson elaborated, “The reading of this landmark decision by members of the [NAACP] Boston Branch Public School Subcommittee was that if [*de jure*] segregation was illegal, it followed that the *de facto* segregation in practice in Boston would also be illegal. In our minds, segregation was segregation.”¹⁰⁶

Charles T. Clotfelter, *After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Desegregation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1-22; Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004 [1974]); Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 64-9; Gary Orfield and Susan E. Eaton, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996).

¹⁰⁶ The Batson quote is from an unpublished copy of a book manuscript, Ruth Batson, *The Black Educational Movement in Boston: A Sequence of Historical Events*, pp. 47-8, in Folder 1, Box 2, the Papers of Ruth Batson, 1919-2003, Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study,

Wartime civil rights activism pushed membership in the NAACP to nearly half a million people by 1945, and for the first time the NAACP included large numbers of working-class Blacks and fought for their interests. By the mid-1950s, the organization was a powerhouse in the North, where members were largely free of the kind of threats and intimidation they were subject to in the South in the wake of *Brown*. NAACP leaders agreed that *Brown* provided Northerners with a powerful legal basis to attack school segregation and inequality. In its “action plan for Northern branches,” the NAACP wrote, “Racially restrictive practices in the North, although rarely dependent on law, do the same harm as the segregation which the Supreme Court outlawed. To the extent that these decisions will encourage NAACP Branches, invigorate our friends, fortify state statutes prohibiting discrimination, and generally create a favorable climate of opinion in race relations, they will invaluablely assist persons fighting bigotry in the North.”¹⁰⁷

In the fall of 1954, Black families in Englewood, New Jersey successfully cited *Brown* in a formal complaint to the state commission of education, and won. In New York City, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, Black educational activists escalated their attacks on

Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. The book was published by Northeastern University Press in 2001.

¹⁰⁷ For NAACP quote: “Implementing the Supreme Court Decision: Report of the NAACP Workshop, Action Program for Northern Branches,” July 1, 1954. See also, “Separate School Cheats Children,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 14, 1958, 4. Both in folder 377, Box 19, NAACP Philadelphia Branch Records. Drafts of similar documents include: “Desegregation in Northern Areas: The Public Schools,” produced by the Legal Defense and Educational Fund and distributed to various community organizations such as the American Jewish Congress. Enclosed with Don J. Hager to Gloster B. Current, January 8, 1957; Memorandum from June Shagaloff to Robert L. Carter, “NAACP Program on De Facto Segregated Public Schools,” August 28, 1959. Both in folder, “De facto segregation and desegregation efforts in Northern and Western states,” Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series D: Central Office Records, 1956-1965. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001516-003-0001>. On the NAACP in the 1950s see, Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New Press, 2009), 287-332; Douglas, *Jim Crow Moves North*, 219-73; Tushnet, *The NAACP’s Legal Strategy against Segregated Education*.

¹⁰⁸ On the Englewood, New Jersey struggle, see: “Englewood Shows Slight Integration,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 8, 1955, 20; “The Englewood Pattern,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 4, 1955, 6; “Discrimination Charged in Suit at Englewood,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 8, 1955, 8; “Englewood City Board Denies Bias,” *Afro-*

school segregation.¹⁰⁸ A school integration case in suburban New Rochelle, New York in 1961 demonstrated that the courts would no longer tolerate the so-called *de facto* segregation of Northern schools and inspired Black families in many other communities to fight for racially mixed schools.¹⁰⁹

Established in 1957, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights documented the spread of Northern school integration campaigns in the wake of *Brown*. Whereas Black Northerners between 1941 and 1954 had fought to desegregate the schools, the activism that grew out of the *Brown* decision after 1954 focused on the more explicit goal of breaking apart majority Black schools and seeking an integrated, racially mixed education for Black students.

In 1962 The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights observed, “Success in New Rochelle has stimulated Negro citizens in other cities from coast to coast to protest the segregation of their children in public schools...Thus, at this time, agitation against segregation and discrimination Northern style is actively being pursued in 43 cities and 14 Northern and Western states.” With support from the NAACP, Black families targeted gerrymandered school lines,

American, November 6, 1954, 6; “Englewood Parents Decry School Bias,” *New York Amsterdam News*, October 30, 1954, 38; “School Bias Case Heard in Jersey,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1954, 30; “School Bias Probed in Englewood, NJ,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 11, 1954, 12; “Englewood Faces School Bias Case,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1954, 13. See also, Emily Joy Jones McGowan, “A Case Study of Dwight Morrow High School and the Academies at Englewood: An Examination of School Desegregation Policy from a Critical Race Perspective.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2011; Charles Anthony Cobb, “Segregation, Desegregation and Race: A Case Study of the Englewood, New Jersey Public School District, 1962-2000.” Ed.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 2007, 79-86.

¹⁰⁹ Dan W. Dodson, *Crisis in the Public Schools: Racial Segregation Northern Style* (New York: Council for American Unity, 1965); “New Rochelle Parents Fight Segregated School,” *New York Amsterdam News*, April 27, 1957, 17; NAACP Statement, March 21, 1957, pp. 1-11. In folder, “New Rochelle, New York School Desegregation Efforts,” Papers of the NAACP, Part 03: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series D: Central Office Records, 1956-1965. ProQuest History Vault. <http://congressional.ProQuest.com/histvault?q=001516-006-0721>; “New Rochelle Criticized on School Bias,” *New York Times*, April 2, 1957, 33; “Race Issue Posed by a New School,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1957, 21; “New Rochelle Asks Big School Project,” *New York Times*, December 20, 1956, 46. On the history and development of the New Rochelle Public Schools, see, Austin D. Devane, “History of the New Rochelle Public Schools, 1795-1952,” Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1953.

transfer policies, discriminatory feeder patterns, overcrowding of predominantly Black schools, site selection that perpetuated segregation, discrimination in vocational programs, and discriminatory employment and assignment of Black teachers as they advocated for integrated, equal public schools. Swept up in the escalating national Black civil rights movement, Black communities from New York to Massachusetts to California used petitions, marches, sit-ins, boycotts, and when necessary, litigation to pursue their goals.¹¹⁰

Black teachers played a starring role in post-Brown school integration and equalization campaigns outside of the South. They organized through professional associations and civil rights organizations to advocate for more Black teaching jobs, but also for greater access to more prestigious assignments and to equitable representation as professionals.

Their advocacy significantly changed employment opportunities for Black educators and helped expand Black faculty representation. By the mid to late 1960s, a rising Black Power movement inspired Black students, parents, and civil rights organizations to demand more Black teachers.

¹¹⁰ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "Civil Rights USA: Public Schools North and West, 1962," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1962, pp. 1-2. On other Northern communities, see: "Negro Progress in 1961," *Ebony*, January 1962, 22-27; "Danger in Sudden Integration of Teachers Staffs," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 31, 1958, 2; "Chicago Wants More School Integration," *Afro-American*, November 9, 1957, 19; Leo Shapiro, "Boston Integration Problem Serious, Says Negro Leader," *Boston Globe*, October 21, 1957, 6; Everett G. Martin, "Detroit's Orderly Integration Tied to Firm Policy," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 10, 1957, 3; Robert E. Baker, "Integration Difficulties Embarrass New York," *Washington Post*, August 25, 1957, E1; Frank Johnson, "Bar White Girl's Shift from 7-1 Negro School," *Newsday*, August 16, 1957, 7; "New York Tension High over School Integration," *Hartford Courant*, April 30, 1957, 22E; Paul Sampson, "Segregation Troublesome to N.Y. City," *Washington Post*, February 25, 1957, B1; "New York Moves Tan Pupils by Bus to Mixed School," *Afro-American*,

After the 1968 Green v. New Kent County ruling, court-ordered school desegregation began to more directly address inequalities for Black teachers and administrators.¹¹¹

There was a great deal of support, in other words, for not only protecting the jobs of Northern Black teachers after 1954, but also for increasing their numbers and ensuring Black educators were placed in leadership roles in secondary schools, administration, and school boards. As an administrator from Berkeley, California elaborated, "You have to have minority representation from one end of the district to the other, relative to classroom teachers, counselors, support service people and administrators...through members of the board." The question was, would these efforts be enough to equalize employment for Black teachers?¹¹²

The main objective of Northern Black educational activists shifted from school desegregation to integration, defined as racial mixing, after 1954. Black Northerners believed that racial mixing of students and faculty would equalize educational opportunities for Black students.

February 16, 1957, 17; "Would You Believe It, School Integration Trouble in New York?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 10, 1956, 15.

¹¹¹ Jon N. Hale, *A New Kind of Youth: Historically Black High Schools and Southern Student Activism, 1920-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022); 143, 195-203; Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 111-177; Claire E. Smrekar and Ellen G. Goldring, *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009); "Race-Based Faculty Hiring and Layoff Remedies in School Desegregation Cases."

¹¹² U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "Fulfilling the Letter and Spirit of the Law: Desegregation of the Nation's Public Schools," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC. August, 1976, p. 90.

Initially, Northern Black educational activists believed that racial mixing would ensure that Black students had fair access to high-quality teachers, as it was well-documented that majority Black schools had less experienced teachers and higher percentages of full-time substitute teachers. However, in the mid to late 1960s, this strategy evolved into demands that prioritized assigning more Black teachers to work with Black students.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 empowered the federal government to break apart schools that were “identifiable” on the basis of “staff composition” in terms of race, color, or creed.

The city of Chicago provides a useful place to consider this evolving context in the two decades after *Brown*. Here, the Urban League worked with Black families and educators to prove the city’s sprawling system of public schools were segregated and unequal. According to its research, in 1961 approximately 65% (260 of 400) Chicago elementary schools were virtually all white. Of the remaining schools, 25% were all Black, and only tiny percentage—about 10%—were believed to have a racially mixed student population. Civil rights activists estimated that more than 90% of Chicago’s Black elementary students attended schools that were virtually all Black. Observers noted that once a school reached a student population of about 30% Black, it transitioned to all Black within a year as white families removed their children. The Urban League interviewed local educators who agreed that district policy restricted Black educators to majority Black schools,

¹¹³ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Civil Rights USA: Public Schools North and West, 1962,” 185-90. See also Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, Danna, *Desegregating Chicago’s Public Schools*

¹¹⁴ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Civil Rights USA: Public Schools North and West, 1962,” 185-90, quote page 187.


but without official school records that identified teachers by race, this was difficult to prove.¹¹³

Complaints from Black civil rights organizations attracted the attention of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. In a 1962 report it confirmed, “There is currently no way to estimate the degree of dispersal of Negro and white teachers among the Chicago schools except through the gathering of opinions of administrators and teachers. Such sources are generally agreed that the number of Negro teachers in white schools is minuscule. On the other hand, there appears to be a fair number of white teachers in Negro schools, which fact has been confirmed by personal observation.” The superintendent agreed there were no Black administrators who worked at majority white or racially mixed schools, and that most all Black schools had white administrators.¹¹⁴

These observations reflect some of the potent changes that had been taking place in cities like Chicago since 1945 as the teaching force diversified and Black teachers moved into leadership positions thanks to Black political protest. But it also reflects the very real limits of those reforms and the discrimination that constrained employment opportunities for Black educators. The number of Black teachers and administrators had increased in Chicago, but these Black educators were still grossly underrepresented and largely restricted to working in majority Black schools. It was not uncommon to find zero Black administrators in majority white schools, but mostly white administrators in Black ones.¹¹⁵

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights blamed Chicago’s bureaucratic policies of teacher certification and assignment for the high levels of teacher segregation and the low number of Black teachers, and notably, such policies were typical throughout the urban North. To begin, the teacher certification process required college graduates to pass a written and oral exam, a process scholars have shown contained multiple points of racial bias. Assuming Black candidates made it this

¹¹⁵ Mary Lou Finley, Bernard LaFayette, Jr., James R. Ralph, Jr., and Pam Smith, eds., *The Chicago Freedom Movement: Martin Luther King Jr. and Civil Rights Activism in the North* (Lexington: University of Press of Kentucky, 2016).



far, they entered the confusing process of teacher placement. In Chicago, a new teacher could only work in schools with vacancies. Since teachers with seniority got preference, it meant the new teachers—both Black and white—typically found openings only in majority Black schools as “the ‘popular’ schools with fewer openings are generally in the white areas.” Once a teacher had worked long enough to gain seniority, he or she was eligible to apply for a transfer to any school with a vacancy, but the principal of that school was permitted to refuse a transfer request. White teachers transferred out of majority Black schools in Chicago at a much higher rate than Black ones, but observers were unsure why. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concluded it was most likely Black teachers’ preferences related to “distance of the school from the teacher’s residence, fear of rejection in white schools, dedication to the teaching of underprivileged Negro children, and sheer inertia.”¹¹⁶

In other words, Black teachers faced anti-Black bias if they attempted to transfer to a “white school” and the promise of longer commutes since Black teachers could not secure housing in white neighborhoods. What is more, Black teachers felt a moral, ethical, and social responsibility for working in majority Black schools, even if they were under-resourced and overcrowded, because they were dedicated to uplifting Black children, families, and communities. Chicago continued to struggle with faculty desegregation for many years.

Philadelphia reported nearly identical problems with Black teacher underrepresentation and segregation in 1961. Philadelphia had one of the longest running traditions of separate, all Black schools in the North. Five years after *Brown*, the city finally announced an official non-discrimination policy in teaching hiring and placement. This did little to change established practices, and in 1961 observers reported, “it is by and large true that white teachers teach in the ‘white schools,’ and Negro teachers teach in the ‘Negro schools.’”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Civil Rights USA: Public Schools North and West, 1962,” 206. See also, Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 123-25.

¹¹⁷ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Civil Rights USA: Public Schools North and West, 1962,” 162-72.


While roughly 29% of the teachers in Philadelphia were Black by 1961, they were still underrepresented compared to the Black student population of 49%. As in Chicago, Philadelphia teachers with seniority had the option to transfer to the school of their choice. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Observers agree that a qualified Negro applicant who is determined to teach in a ‘white school’ can obtain the necessary appointment.” But Black teachers felt pressured to stay in majority Black schools. As one school administrator explained, “They are guided by the legend that if they ‘buck the system,’ they will receive lower ratings and less chance for advancement. What this means, of course, is that white teachers are generally still going to ‘white schools’ by choice and that Negro teachers are generally still going to ‘Negro schools’ by choice.”¹¹⁸

These teacher placement and transfer policies were well established in the North, and fiercely protected by veteran teachers. The power of labor-affiliated teachers’ unions grew considerably through the 1950s and 1960s in Northern cities, in part as white teachers agreed to join labor unions in order to protect these kind of seniority benefits.

Teachers’ unions had moments of collaboration—and conflict—with Black teachers and the demands of Black educational activists more broadly, but generally fought to protect teachers’ professional rights over the demands of Black civil rights activists.

Jonna Perrillo traces this complicated history in New York City, where the city’s teaching force proudly supported efforts to combat racial prejudice during

¹¹⁸ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Civil Rights USA: Public Schools North and West, 1962,” 162-72. See also Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).



World War II, but then balked when asked to voluntarily transfer to majority Black schools after 1954.

Until the 1960s, New York City teachers eschewed labor-affiliated teacher unions in favor of the city's approximately 70 different professional teaching associations. However, this changed when the Board of Education began to consider involuntary teacher transfers as a way to assign more qualified and experienced teachers to majority Black schools in the wake of *Brown*. These involuntary transfers would dismantle the placement rules that left the least experienced and least qualified teachers in majority Black schools as teachers with seniority transferred out. It was a sure-fire strategy to improve the quality of teachers in majority Black schools as measured by years of experience and levels of certification.

However, teachers recoiled at this proposed change, arguing it was not fair to force experienced teachers to work in what they saw as the most difficult jobs. They claimed involuntary teacher transfers “limit[ed] the freedom of teachers to select the schools where they can do their best work.” The New York City Teachers Guild used the issue to recruit tens of thousands of new members as the Black student population continued to soar. By 1966, one in every three public school students was Black and the number of majority Black schools had increased. White teachers expressed strong preferences to work in majority white schools, which could only happen if the existing placement rules remained in effect. Perrillo writes, “In response to these anxieties, the Teachers Guild and the United Federation of Teachers (hereinafter “UFT”) which the Guild would transform to in 1959, developed a postwar strategy that focused on insulating teachers from civil rights demands.” By 1968, when this strategy culminated in the infamous Ocean-Hill Brownsville strikes, more than 53,000 of the city’s 57,000 teachers had joined the union.¹¹⁹

Black teachers were underrepresented and isolated in majority Black schools in New York City and in schools throughout the North through the 1960s, a problem

¹¹⁹ Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 4-5.


that was well-documented by Black civil rights organizations and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

In January of 1962, the NAACP ordered all local branches to investigate segregation of both students and teachers. A large number of Northern communities reported severe discrimination against Black teachers, including very few Black teachers, teachers restricted to elementary schools, and Black teachers concentrated in majority Black schools. White school administrators resisted assigning Black teachers to high school positions, as these jobs were viewed as the most prestigious and intellectually rigorous. The NAACP offered advice and support to help desegregate public school faculties and ensure non-discrimination in every aspect of teacher hiring and placement, and in many communities this activism helped open up previously restricted jobs and resulted in a slight increase in the number of Black faculty.

Black educational activists from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s worked to remove racial barriers for Black teachers and improve the quality of teachers in majority Black schools, but with less concern about whether these teachers were Black or white.

Activists assumed that breaking apart segregated schools would generate greater access to high-quality teachers, and that equal employment opportunities would fulfill the mandate of school desegregation. There was some logic to this, as teachers working in majority Black schools tended to have less experience and lower levels of certification. The more experienced, more credentialed teachers worked in majority white schools.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 84-86, 122-23. See detailed report, June Shagaloff, “NAACP School Desegregation Front in the North and West,” Memorandum. June 1962. In Folder 001453-006-0277, June Shagaloff, including school desegregation, educational surveys, segregation in the



A 1967 report entitled “Racial Isolation in the Public Schools” investigated 100 city school districts nationwide and found that overall, “Negro students are more likely than whites to have teachers with lower verbal achievement levels, to have substitute teachers, and to have teachers who are dissatisfied with their school assignment...The quality of teaching has an important influence on students’ achievement.” The report concluded, “racial isolation in the public schools is extensive and has increased since 1954,” and that it was mounting most rapidly in urban areas outside of the South.¹²¹

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights insisted that Black students and teachers recognized a “stigma of inferiority” attached to segregated schools that “has a negative effect on their attitudes and achievement,” ultimately reaching the conclusion that this could only be remediated by dispersing them to majority white schools. “The time spent in a given kind of classroom setting has an impact on students’ attitudes and achievements,” the report affirmed. “The longer Negro students are in racially isolated schools, the greater the negative impact. The longer Negro students are in desegregated schools, the higher their performance.” These assumptions were based on leading psychological, educational, and legal theories of the day and reiterated the logic behind the *Brown* ruling. They help explain why Northern Black families and civil rights activists in the first decade after *Brown* prioritized racial mixing as a strategy to ensure all students had equal access to high-quality teachers, resources, and curricula.¹²²

By the mid-1960s, however, Black Northerners began to reconsider whether racial mixing was an effective strategy to improve educational equality. While there

employment of black teachers, de facto school segregation in the North, and removal of Shagaloff as director for education program,” Papers of the NAACP, Part 17: Supplement, National Staff Files, 1956-1965, Group III, Series A, Administrative File, General Office File, <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001453-006-0277&accountid=12768>. ProQuest History Vault.

¹²¹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Racial Isolation in the Public Schools,” Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967, p. 4.


¹²² U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Racial Isolation in the Public Schools,” p. 5. See also Leah N. Gordon, *From Power to Prejudice: The Rise of Racial Individualism in Midcentury America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social*

were a handful of districts that successfully used busing to create racially mixed schools, most Northern communities resisted meaningful school integration and school segregation was on the rise, even in places like New York City and Chicago where Black families fought for school integration. Labor unions like the UFT in New York City fought against any changes in teacher assignment policy that would undermine long-standing seniority rules. In addition, an explosive Black Power movement reignited a long tradition of Black nationalism in the late 1960s. For many African Americans, this translated into a renewed interest in community control of majority Black schools.¹²³

By the late 1960s, Black students, teachers, and civil rights activists throughout the North insisted that Black students needed Black teachers in order to succeed, and therefore that increasing the number of Black teachers was a major priority. For many of these activists, the racial identity of a teacher was now more important than his or her level of education, years of teaching experience, or certification. They believed Black teachers would serve as role models, provide appropriate discipline and high standards, and nurture and affirm Black racial identities. Robert Kelley, a Black teacher and political organizer in Stamford, Connecticut detailed, “There is a very, very great disparity in the proportion of minority teachers in the system...and as a result the minority kids who go there have no role models and the white students are deprived of that kind of contact with another culture.” A Black high school student added, “Black and Puerto Rican students feel that they can relate to somebody who is either Black or Puerto Rican. The majority of the

Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880-1996 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 71-136; Walter A. Jackson, *Gunnar Myrdal and America’s Conscience: Social Engineering and Racial Liberalism, 1938-1987* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

¹²³ Sokol, *All Eyes Are Upon Us*; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Peniel Joseph, *Waiting ‘til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-63; Theoharis and Woodard, eds., *Freedom North*.



teachers in the school are white...and they don't know what it's like to be living in a certain neighborhood."¹²⁴

Black educational activists who supported school integration and those who preferred community control of majority Black schools may have disagreed over reform tactics, but they increasingly agreed that Black students needed more caring Black teachers.

Black Northerners turned their attention to the problem of how to secure more Black teachers, but they also wanted these Black teachers to work with Black children, which meant they no longer necessarily supported integration plans that dispersed Black teachers throughout the district.

This change happened alongside a growing federal enforcement of teacher desegregation nationwide, as the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (hereinafter "HEW") cited Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to press for revised faculty assignment policies that would transfer Black faculty into majority white schools.¹²⁵

With strong support from local Black communities, Black teachers seized leadership positions in the battle for educational equality outside of the South. Black teachers engaged in "dual struggles," according to Elizabeth Todd-Breland, by advocating for themselves as Black public service workers who deserved higher pay and better working conditions, and by advocating for the Black youth and communities they served. As the ranks of Northern Black teachers swelled, especially in cities, Black educators engaged in political organizing that helped strengthen Black

¹²⁴ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "School Desegregation in Stamford, Connecticut," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1977, 30.

¹²⁵ Walter Lee Burt, "The Impact of the 1964 Civil Rights Act: Title VI and Title VII on Employment of Black Administrators in Michigan School Districts from 1964-74," Ed.D. diss. University of Michigan, 1975; "U.S. Officials Plan Better Enforcement of Desegregation in Northern Schools," *New York Times*, Aug 13, 1975, 20; William Clarence

communities and improve the quality of public education for all students.¹²⁶

Without this self-advocacy, Black teachers struggled to have their voices heard during school desegregation orders. Some even found their jobs at risk, not because racist whites were pushing out, demoting, or firing Black teachers as they were in the South, but instead because employment contracts made Black teachers especially vulnerable.

Teachers' unions affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers tended to defend what they viewed as color-blind employment protections, which sometimes put unions at odds with the goals of Black educators.

This was especially visible in cities like New York and Newark, where local struggles for community control of the schools turned into violent clashes between Black communities and the teacher's union. Black families felt betrayed that striking teachers seemed to put their professional agenda above the needs of Black students, while teachers' unions fought to secure desperately needed improvements in pay, working conditions, professional autonomy, and benefits.

Lauderman, "Faculty Desegregation: An Investigation of Teacher Attitude Change," Ed.D. diss. Wayne State University, 1972; Dean W. Determan and Gilbert Ware, "New Dimensions in Education: Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," *Journal of Negro Education*, 35, no. 1 (1966): 5-10.

¹²⁶ Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 111-40.

*Black teachers were caught in the middle, forced to choose between joining their coworkers in demands for professional autonomy and respect, or joining Black families in a bid to have more control over teacher hiring, firing, and curriculum.*¹²⁷

Black teachers in the South faced similar problems when working with white-led teaching associations like the National Education Association or the National Association of Secondary School Principals, as Vanessa Siddle Walker shows. However, Northern Black educators did not have the same kind of strong, well-established Black teacher associations as their Southern colleagues, which provided an “intellectual home” for Black educators fighting for the twin goals of Black educator advancement and improving the quality of education for Black students.¹²⁸

Consider, for example, the small city of Pontiac, Michigan, which in 1968 operated a school system that included elementary schools that were virtually all white and all Black. Pontiac’s tiny number of Black teachers were assigned almost exclusively to majority Black schools. Due to shifting demographics in recent years, school segregation was growing steadily worse. Black families and civil rights leaders raised their voices in protest, but they faced resistance from racist whites.

¹²⁷ Burkholder, *African American Dilemma*, 129-66; Heather Lewis, *New York City Public Schools from Brownsville to Bloomberg: Community Control and Its Legacy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), 42-47; Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 148-80; Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*.

¹²⁸ Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Hello Professor: A Black Principal and Professional Leadership in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 81-123.

¹²⁹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Five Communities: Their Search for Equal Education,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1972, p. 17.

The deteriorating situation attracted the attention of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, which found, “teaching staffs of the individual schools, with minor exceptions, and the school district in general, is by and large segregated; and, with minor exceptions, racial imbalance of faculties is worsening...in those schools that are predominantly Black by student attendance, the school district followed consciously or unconsciously, a ‘matching’ process; white teachers are assigned to predominantly ‘white schools,’ Black teachers to predominantly ‘Black schools.’ Thus, in the 1967-1968 school year, half the district’s 218 Black teachers were assigned to six of the district’s 36 schools. These schools were located in Black neighborhoods and had virtually all Black student bodies.”¹²⁹

Finally required to integrate as a result of a NAACP lawsuit, Pontiac school leaders came up with a desegregation plan that cost \$540,000 for the 1971-1972 school year. With no other viable option, the district decided to lay off 200 teachers in April 1971 in order to make up the budget. Like many Northern school districts, teachers’ contracts called for those with the least seniority to be fired first. But, again like many school districts, many of the recent hires were Black, so that 70% of the Pontiac teachers who were fired were Black. This fueled already explosive racial tensions in the city, which included violent racial altercations at Pontiac High School and the bombing of school buses by a local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).¹³⁰ When Pontiac school leaders were able to secure funding and rehire the dismissed teachers later that summer, fewer than half came back.

¹³⁰ Jolene Bebeker, “The Desegregation of the School District of the City of Pontiac, Michigan, 1969-1972.” Ph.D. diss. Wayne State University, 1973; William K. Stevens, “5 Ex-Klansmen Convicted in School Bus Bomb Plot,” *New York Times*, May 22, 1973, 21; Jerry M. Flint, “Pontiac to Integrate, Despite Bus Bombings,” *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1971, 25; Jerry M. Flint, “U.S. Judge Orders Integration of All Schools in Pontiac, MI,” *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 1970, 26.

¹³⁰ Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 111-40.

Northern school desegregation plans that did not specifically protect Black teachers, as this example illustrates, had the potential to reduce the Black teaching force in a district that was already struggling to diversify its faculty. Situations like this put Black teachers, civil rights activists, students, and parents on notice.

Black families imagined sympathetic Black teachers as essential to their children's success, and increasingly, they measured educational equality in part by the number of Black teachers, administrators, and staff in the district.¹³¹

Inspired by the rising Black Power Movement, student-led boycotts in multiple cities demanded school integration, more Black teachers and administrators, and new courses in Black history, literature, and arts. To take one example, on April 5, 1968, 250 Black high school students in York, Pennsylvania barricaded themselves inside the school auditorium and pronounced it Black Pride Day. Students created a list of demands including more classes on Black history, to be taught by Black teachers, and more Black teachers and counselors, especially gym teachers, sports coaches, and teachers in the arts and sciences. This was the first time Black students in York organized, boycotted classes, and demanded specific reforms. Local news outlets covered the event, offering support to Black students and encouraging the school district to address students' valid concerns.¹³²

¹³¹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "Five Communities: Their Search for Equal Education," 16-23.

¹³² Dwayne C. Wright, "Black Pride Day, 1968: Black High School Student Activism in York Pennsylvania," *Journal of African American History*, 88, no. 2 (2003): 151-62. For examples among high school students, see, Countryman, *Up South*, 223-57; Richard J. H. Johnson, "Negro Students Stay Out at Plainfield High," *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 1969, 21; "Students at Los Angeles Rampage in Protest," *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1969, 30; "Philadelphia Seizes 57 in Negro Rioting," *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1967, 1. On Black college student activism, see, Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Peniel Joseph, "Dashikis and

In this tense political climate, Black teachers throughout the North organized to advance their professional interests. If the local teachers' union refused to help, Black educators partnered with civil rights organization or created new Black-led teacher associations like the Black Teacher Caucus in Chicago.

For example, in Chicago more than 700 Black teachers worked with Jesse Jackson and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to demand the promotion and appointment of more Black teachers and administrators, and end to overcrowding, utilization of more community-based resources, improvements and renovations in facilities, and Black studies curricula across subject area. When the Chicago Teachers Union refused to support Black objectives in educational reform, Black teachers threatened to create a separate Black union. Nationwide, Black teachers were organizing, collaborating, speaking out, and demanding reform to improve access and representation for Black faculty and educational opportunities for Black students. Government officials agreed the time had come to integrate and equalize public school faculty in the urban North. In 1969, the U.S. Department of Justice and HEW demanded that the Chicago public schools desegregate its teaching force, reflecting increased federal agency support for and enforcement of more equitable faculty integration. Teachers' unions strongly supported colorblind hiring and promotion policies as well as anti-discrimination measures, but were not necessarily advocates of affirmative action programs designed to hire and promote more Black educators. Teachers' unions also did not want to give up control over teacher hiring or curriculum to non-profession "community control" boards, in some cases placing the unions at odds with Black communities.¹³³

Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," *Journal of African American History*, 88, no. 2 (2003): 182-203; Joy Ann Williamson, "In Defense of Themselves: The Black Student Struggle for Success and Recognition at Predominantly White Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Negro Education*, 68, no. 1 (1999): 92-105. On Black high school student activism in the South, see Jon N. Hale, *A New Kind of Youth: Historically Black High Schools and Southern Student Activism, 1920-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022).

¹³³ Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 111-14; Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*.

By the early 1970s, Northern school leaders routinely adopted plans to hire more Black teachers, at the suggestion of local Black families, civil rights organizations, the courts, or federal agencies. Dr. Joyce Jackson, a school administrator in Minneapolis, acknowledged, “The recruiting schedule was drastically changed in terms of the types of the schools where we went [to recruit new teachers]. We expanded to many colleges with minority students...the proportion of minority employees was increased significantly in the Minneapolis schools.”¹³⁴

Portland, Oregon more than doubled the percentage of Black faculty from 2.7% in 1968 to 6.7% in 1975. The school board of Tempe, Arizona voted unanimously to implement an affirmative action program to increase the numbers of “minorities” (Black, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American) and women on the faculty. The city of Stamford, Connecticut initiated an “extensive minority recruitment program” that included recruitment efforts in New York City and in Southern Black colleges, which resulted in a very modest increase in the number of Black teachers from 65 in 1971 to 76 in 1975. A 1977 school desegregation order in Los Angeles recommended, “The district should combine staff and student integration planning to coordinate racial and ethnic reassignments of both teachers and students,” and suggested affirmative action to hire more Black and Hispanic teachers.¹³⁵

When the court ordered the city of Pasadena, California to desegregate its segregated “neighborhood schools” in 1970, it ordered large-scale busing combined with a recruitment plan for Black teachers that included specific racial quotas. “Each school was to have no fewer than 15% and no more than 45%

minority teachers.” Two years later, Pasadena school officials placed a pair—one Black, one white—of teachers as community relations specialists into each junior and senior high school, where they hosted human relations workshops and community meetings. These positions were funded with grants from the Emergency School Assistance Program, a 1972 law that provided federal funds to support school integration.¹³⁶

For the most part, Northern communities with a critical mass of Black families saw a significant increase in the gross numbers and percentages of Black educators. Black teachers were now placed in schools districtwide, including secondary schools and majority white schools. Many districts developed transfer policies as part of desegregation orders that moved Black teachers into majority white schools and vice versa, a process that was sometimes unpopular, but that nevertheless increased Black teacher representation. Despite these notable improvements, nearly all Northern communities continued to struggle with Black teacher underrepresentation (gaps between the percentage of Black students and Black teachers in the district).

*Efforts to recruit and hire more Black teachers were not enough to make up for the long history of racial discrimination in teacher education, hiring, and placement outside of the South.*¹³⁷


¹³⁴ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1977, 13.

¹³⁵ The following year, 1974-75, Tempe hired 14 new Hispanic teachers, 4 new Black teachers, 2 new Asian American teachers, and one new Native American teacher, as well as 91 new white teachers, see U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Tempe, Arizona,” U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC, 1977, pp. 8-9. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Stamford, Connecticut,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1977, 29-32; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Portland, Oregon,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1977, p. 3; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Los Angeles School

Desegregation,” U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, DC., 1977, p. 92.

¹³⁶ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Five Communities: Their Search for Equal Education,” 6-12. See also, Jackie Kimbrough and Stephen Crocker, “An Evaluation of the Emergency School Aid Act Nonprofit Organization Program: Vol. IV, Conclusions and Recommendations.” U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. R-2312/4-HEW. Washington, DC., Dec. 1978. <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2006/R2312.4.pdf>

¹³⁷ Paul Delaney, “Chicago Is Facing New U.S. Aid Loss: Could Lose Funds in Battle over Teacher Integration,” *New York Times*, Apr. 4, 1976, 22; “Racial Directive Stirs in Cincinnati: Factions Ponder Order for



In Waterloo, Iowa, for example, school leaders hired the district's very first Black teacher in 1952 and then increased the number of Black teachers to six by 1966, representing 0.8% of the faculty in a district where 15% of the student population was Black. This so-called "progress" was too little and too slow for local Black citizens. In the summer of 1967, Black youth organized and marched for their civil rights, including better treatment in the public schools. Byron Washington was a rising Black high school junior who joined the Waterloo protests. "Picketing and marching ain't getting us anywhere, man," Byron said, explaining why he was arrested for brandishing a rock at a recent protest. He continued, "The whites got to face it man, this is a new generation. We aren't going to stand for the stuff our mamas and fathers stood for."¹³⁸

In response to Black student protests, the Waterloo school board issued its first statement in support of school desegregation in 1967, but very little changed in the next few years. In 1972, Dr. Robert Harvey, a Black dentist and member of the school board, formally requested the district hire more Black teachers and administrators. When the board ignored this entreaty, Black students walked out in protest against the insensitivity of white teachers and organized a sit-in at the superintendent's office. Black teachers looked the other way when students left class to join the protest, offering their tacit approval. Black community leaders, students, and teachers all took action to advocate for reforms, including the urgent need for more Black teachers.

In 1973, the state intervened and required Waterloo to desegregate its schools and faculty, and by 1976, there were 56 Black educators in the district, representing 6% of the faculty. So, while the percentage of Black faculty increased from 0.8% in 1966 to 6% a decade later, Black teachers were still significantly underrepresented in a district that had a

Faculty Integration," *New York Times*, Mar. 18, 1974, 22; Seth S. King, "Pupil Segregation Up in Chicago While Faculty Integration Gains," *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1972, 18; Seth S. King, "Chicago Gets Plan to Mix Teachers," *New York Times*, Jun. 13, 1971, 71; "Integration Set in Philadelphia: State Board Fixes Deadline to Desegregate Faculties," *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1967, 19.

¹³⁸ Gene Roberts, "Waterloo, Iowa, Puzzled by Riots," *New York Times*, Jul. 14, 1967, 30.

Black student population of over 15%. As this example shows, there were significant gains thanks to tireless Black community activism at all levels—and yet, this still was not enough to fully equalize the schools or result in a fair number of Black educators in the system.¹³⁹

To consider another example, in 1968 the Tacoma, Washington public schools had 2,037 certified faculty members, of whom 48 (or 2.4%) were Black. By 1975, 114 (or 7%) of the faculty was Black, and this was in spite of the fact that the number of faculty had shrunk to 1,612. Meanwhile, the Black student population of the schools had increased from 9.7% to 12.3% of the Tacoma public schools, so while the number of Black faculty increased significantly, Black teachers remained underrepresented.¹⁴⁰

In Stamford, Connecticut the size of the Black population grew 80% between 1960 and 1970. NAACP activists there complained of growing school segregation, and so in 1962 school leaders instituted a voluntary, rolling plan that desegregated the high schools in 1962, the middle schools in 1967 and 1968, and the elementary schools in 1970 and 1972. Facing community pressure to hire more Black teachers, the district increased the number of Black faculty in the Stamford public schools from 65 in 1971 to 76 in 1975. By 1975, 24.6% of the student population was Black, but only 5.5% of the district's teachers were Black. The Black Educators of Stamford (BEST) noted that, as of 1975, five elementary schools still had no Black teachers, even as the district now bused hundreds of Black students to these schools. Frustrated, the Black community was split into factions between those who supported a more aggressive school integration plan and those who wanted to scale back busing and instead opt for community control of majority Black and Puerto Rican schools, in large part

¹³⁹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "School Desegregation in Waterloo, Iowa" 5, 8-9.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "School Desegregation in Tacoma, Washington," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1979.

so they could ensure Black and Puerto Rican children had the chance to work with teachers of color.¹⁴¹

In response to demands from local Black students, families, and teachers as well as encouragement from state and federal agencies, Northern schools with substantial Black populations hired more Black teachers and modified their teacher certification, hiring, placement, and promotion policies. This, in turn, fueled caustic divisions among teachers in large cities, and New York, Newark, and Chicago witnessed growing tensions between white and Black teachers in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

White teachers felt anger and resentment at changes to historic colorblind policies that seemed to unfairly benefit Black candidates, while Black teachers fought to establish parity and equality in a system long controlled by whites. There was sharp disagreement over how teachers could best support Black students, especially when massive teacher strikes roiled the cities and fueled racial tensions.¹⁴²

For two decades after *Brown*, Black teachers made significant inroads in the teaching profession outside of the South, but there were limitations to these gains. For one thing, most appeared in communities—and school districts—with a significant Black population. In

¹⁴¹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Stamford, Connecticut,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1977.

¹⁴² Perrillo, *Uncivil Rights*, 148-80; Jon Shelton, *Teacher Strike: Public Education and the Making of a New American Political Order* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Clarence Taylor, ed., *Civil Rights in New York City: From World War II to the Giuliani Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011); Golin, *The Newark Teachers Strikes*; Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*.

large cities, industrial centers, and diverse suburbs where Black families were well established, the number and percentage of Black teachers increased. There is little evidence to suggest that the region’s many lily-white towns and suburbs witnessed the same increases in faculty diversity.

What is more, even in Northern communities with a large and politically active Black population, the increase in Black faculty simply was not enough. In Minneapolis, school leaders added 188 new Black teachers between 1968 and 1975, but they could not keep pace with the growing numbers of Black students in the district, which increased from 8% in 1968 to 14% in 1975. This meant the likelihood a Black student would have a Black teacher actually decreased, despite an increase in the number of Black teachers. Head of the Kalamazoo, Michigan Education Association, Robert Sikkenga, charged that school leaders in his community made insufficient efforts to increase the number of Black and Hispanic teachers and insisted the affirmative action hiring record, which had increased the number of minority teachers from 7% in 1970 to 12% in 1976, had been “very poor,” as its target was to have 20% minority faculty. The Boston Branch of the NAACP offered assistance in helping school leaders recruit more Black teachers, but remained frustrated by the slow rate of change.¹⁴³

As this section has documented, in the wake of *Brown*, Black Northerners initially focused on racial mixing of students as a strategy to access high-quality teachers. This changed in the late 1960s as Black families, teachers, and civil rights activists began to prioritize access to Black teachers as a key feature of educational equality. Across the region, school districts with sizeable Black populations implemented affirmative action policies to hire more Black teachers (as well as Hispanic, Native American, and Asian American). These results, while meaningful, fell short

¹⁴³ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota,” p. 19. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC., 1977, p. 11; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “School Desegregation in Boston,” U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC., 1975, p. 55.

of activists' goals. Other factors, including the opening of the job market for African Americans in the late 1960s and the declining prestige of working as a public-school teacher, combined with fiscal crises in urban areas, have kept the number of Black college graduates entering the teaching profession low. Today, Black teachers are underrepresented in both teaching and administrative positions in the vast majority of U.S. school districts, a problem that exacerbates racial inequality and undermines the promise of *Brown* to provide equal, high-quality education to all students.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

The number and percentage of Black teachers continued to increase in majority Black and Latinx urban school districts outside of the South through the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984 Chicago's Black teachers outnumbered their white colleagues for the first time. Between 1972 and 2000 in New York City, Black teachers grew from just 9.5% to almost 21% of the teaching force. What is more, many Black teachers continued the long tradition of choosing to work in majority Black schools. For example, in New York City the percentage of Black teachers in Harlem was much greater than the percentage of Black teachers in the school district at large. The Black teacher population in Harlem grew to a high point of 70% in 2000, and then declined again over the next two decades.¹⁴⁵

The increase in Black teachers in Northern cities, however, was not matched in the nation's increasingly diverse suburbs and small towns. Between 1970 and 1986, the percentage of Black educators as part of the overall U.S. teaching force declined. The decline in African American women teachers has been especially steep. Scholars have worked to explain these trends,

¹⁴⁴ Lawrence Blum and Zoë Burkholder, *Integrations: The Struggle for Racial Equality and Civic Renewal in Public Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021); Rothstein, *The Color of Law*; R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy, *Inequality in the Promised Land: Race, Resources, and Suburban Schooling* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), p. x; Walter David Greason, *Suburban Erasure: How the Suburbs Ended the Civil Rights Movement in New Jersey* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013); Horsford, *Learning in a Burning House*.

¹⁴⁵ Todd-Breland, *A Political Education*, 114. Bethany L. Rogers and Terrenda C. White, "Teaching Harlem: Black Teachers and the Changing Educational Landscape of Twenty-First Century Central Harlem," in

noting that the most important change was the opening of the job market to African Americans and women in the civil rights era.

In the immediate postwar era, roughly 79% of Black women college graduates were teachers, but by the mid-1980s, only 23% worked as teachers.

The percentage of Black teachers has fluctuated since then, but as Sabrina Hope King notes, "the limited presence of [Black] teachers is still quite apparent."¹⁴⁶

The purpose of this paper was to initiate a conversation among scholars, educators, citizens, and policymakers over the vital question of what happened to Black teachers outside of the South as a result of the *Brown* ruling and subsequent desegregation efforts. As a history of Black teachers before and after *Brown* shows, there is no simple answer to this question. A very long history of racial discrimination, segregation, and exclusion of Black teachers in Northern public schools means that Black teachers were catastrophically underrepresented across the region by 1954.

The gains made in the two decades after *Brown* are heartening, yet very limited in scope. This history encourages educational reformers to take seriously the problem of Black teacher underrepresentation in the past and today, which is inseparable from the larger struggle for racial equality and meaningful integration in our public schools.

Ansley T. Erickson and Ernest Morrell, eds., *Educating Harlem: A Century of Schooling and Resistance in a Black Community*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

¹⁴⁶ Sabrina Hope King, "Limited Presence of African-American Teachers," *Review of Educational Research*, 63, no. 2 (1993): 115-49, p. 125; National Education Association, *Status of the American Public School Teacher, 1985-86* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1987); Samuel B. Etheridge, "Impact of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Decision on Black Educators," *Negro Educational Review*, 30, no. 4 (1979): 217-32.



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Appendix A – Major studies of civil rights activism in the North

Major studies of civil rights activism in the North include: Brian Purnell, Jeanne Theoharis, and Woodard, eds., *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North: Segregation and Struggle Outside of the South* (New York: New York University Press, 2019); Jason Sokol, *All Eyes Are Upon Us: Race and Politics from Boston to Brooklyn* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008); Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-63; Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Case studies of civil rights activism in cities outside the South include: Mary Lou Finley, Bernard LaFayette, Jr., James R. Ralph, Jr., and Pam Smith, eds., *The Chicago Freedom Movement: Martin Luther King Jr. and Civil Rights Activism in the North* (Lexington: University of Press of Kentucky, 2016); Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Kevin Mumford, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. revised ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Scholarship in the history of education has focused on the history of Black education in the South, see: Rachel Devlin, *A Girl Stands at the Door: The Generation of Young Women Who Desegregated America's Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 2018); Ronald E. Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People: Teaching, Learning, and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Christopher M. Span, *From Cotton Field to Schoolhouse: African American Education in Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Adam Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001); James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

Some scholars have considered the history of Black education in independent schools, see: Michelle A. Purdy, *Transforming the Elite: Black Students and the Desegregation of Private Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Russell Rickford, *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Broader perspectives on the history of Black education include: Dionne Danns; Michelle A. Purdy, and Christopher M. Span, eds., *Using the Past as Prologue: Contemporary Perspectives on African American Educational History* (Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2015); John L. Rury, *The African American Struggle for Secondary Schooling: Closing the Graduation Gap* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2012); Charles M. Payne and Carol Sills Strickland, eds., *Teach Freedom: Education for Liberation in the African American Tradition* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2008); James D. Anderson and Vincent P. Franklin, *New Perspectives on Black Educational History* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978).

Major scholarship on the history of Black educational activism and school desegregation in Northern cities include: Ansley T. Erickson and Ernest Morrell, eds., *Educating Harlem: A Century of Schooling and Resistance in a Black Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); Elizabeth Todd-Breland, *A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago Since the 1960s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); Dionne Danns, *Desegregating Chicago's Public Schools: Policy Implementation, Politics, and Protest, 1965-1985* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Heather Lewis, *New York City Schools from Brownsville to Bloomberg: Community Control and Its Legacy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013); Hilary J. Moss, *Schooling Citizens: The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Jack Dougherty, *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Jerald Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean-Hill Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Vincent P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979).

Only Davison M. Douglas's *Jim Crow Moves North: The Battle over Northern School Segregation, 1865-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) has attempted a synthesis of the history of Black educational history in the North, and while excellent and highly detailed, this legal history focuses on explaining the role of law in accomplishing racial change in the years preceding *Brown v. Board of Education*.