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Segregation's Citadel Unbreached in 4 Years

By Robert E. L. Baker
Staff reporter

At 12:40 P.M. Monday, May 17, 1954 the marble courtroom of the United States Supreme Court was crowded. Chief Justice Earl Warren began reading a unanimous decision. His eight black robed associates sat motionless.

The reading was completed at 1:10 p.m. and the Court had made the most unanimous ruling of the century on a social problem.

The Constitution, said the Court, forbids enforced racial segregation in the public schools. Discarded was the "separate but equal" doctrine set by the Court in 1896.

At the time of the decision, 17 states and the District of Columbia had laws enforcing segregation; 16 states had laws prohibiting it. Four states permitted, segregation on a local option basis and 11 had no laws on the subject.

Today, seven states--- Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi--- still maintain complete segregation in the public schools. Two of these--- Virginia and Louisiana--- have integrated public colleges.

"The Border Acquiesced"

It has been a remarkable four years. In many ways Students of the South pegged the picture accurately from the outset. Of the 17 state Southern area, seven states were of the "border" variety: Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas.

Among these, only Texas cast its lot with the Confederacy in the Civil War. The plantation system had never taken hold in the Border States as it had in the others. There were fewer Negroes, the states were more industrial minded and only Kentucky had a strong social and sentimental link with the South.

And so it was. Generally--- and there are always exceptions in the paradoxical South--- Border State officials announced that their states would go along with the decision.

Defiant "Hard Core"

The real South, then, comprised the 10 states inside the border; the seven which still have no integration whatsoever in the public schools plus North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas. Here is where the hardest resistance and defiance were expected, such turned out to be the case.

The Supreme Court implemented its decision May 31, 1955, and rejected the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's plea for immediate desegregation. Instead, the Court directed the Federal district courts to handle the inherent problems on a local basis.

Between the two decisions, there were disturbances. Students and adults demonstrated against desegregation in Washington, Baltimore, Millford, Del., and White Sulphur Springs, W. Va. Generally, it was of little consequence, although desegregation at White Sulphur Springs was delayed a year.

Organized Resistance

By September, 1958, however, the demonstrations had turned meaner. By this time, the never never ----- had become better organized and desegregation was moving into or toward the Deep South communities.

White Citizens Councils sprouted and prospered and allied groups were formed ranging from the Tennessee Federation of Constitutional Government and the Virginia Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties to the quaint-sounding Pond Hollow Segregation Club.

And by this time, more than 100 Southern Senators and Congressmen had issued a manifesto sharply attacking the "naked judicial power" of the Supreme Court. State Leadership in the Deep South, as opposed to that of the Border States, set a course of defiance.

Popping into the news in the September were places that most Americans had never heard of Clinton, Tenn.: Mansfield, Tex.: Sturgis, Clay and Henderson, Ky.

The Tennessee National Guard rumbled into Clinton with tanks as mobs formed and were excited about the talk of a Yankee segregationist from Greenwich Village, John Kasper.

The Kentucky National Guard, 200 strong, with fixed bayonets escorted nine Negro pupils through a heckling, shouting mob of 800 persons to a Sturgis school.

During the 1956-57 school year, there were increasing verbal attacks on the Supreme Court. The NAACP and interracial groups and the charge of "Communist" was spread about the South.

Up until this time, the effort for desegregation has been left almost solely to the judiciary, traditionally the weakest of the three branches of Government.

In September, 1957, came Little Rock, Arkansas Gov. Orval E. Faubus called out his National Guard and prevented Negroes from entering Central High School. The resulting court action, screaming mobs and the entrance of the executive branch of the Federal Government when President Eisenhower dispatched 1000 paratroopers to the scene--- all this became the biggest desegregation story of them all.

Simultaneously, Kasper showed up in Nashville. Desegregation in that city, of great significance because it is a Southern cultural center, was marked by the dynamiting of a school and a resulting quick crackdown by citizens who had had enough.

North Carolina, which had carefully preserved an official position of non-defiance of the Supreme Court decision, voluntarily began desegregation in three school districts with relatively little disturbance.

26.7 Per Cent Desegregated

The 1957-8 school year is now near an end. What has happened in the four years since the Supreme Court decisions is the subject of a survey by the current edition of the objective Southern School News, published by the Southern Education Reporting Service, Nashville.

The News reports that the 17 states and the District of Columbia have a total of 8000 school districts, of which 2889 are biracial, meaning those which have both white and Negro pupils. Of these 2889 biracial districts, 764 are desegregated--- 26.7 per cent.

This compares with 685 desegregated districts at this time last year--- an increase of 79. Thus, while the news of Little Rock, Nashville and North Carolina was stressed last September, some 70 school districts were desegregating without particular note.

The map above shows the seven states where no integration has taken place in yellow. The counties which have begun desegregation in the other 18 states are shown in blue.

Here is the present status of desegregation in the school districts of these 17 states:

Total Districts

State	Total Districts	Biracial Districts	Desegregated
Alabama	111	111	0
Arkansas	423	228	9
Delaware	102	61	17
Washington, D.C.	---	---	2
Florida	87	87	0
Georgia	200	196	0
Kentucky	217	170	114
Louisiana	67	67	0
Maryland	26	23	21
Mississippi	151	151	0
Missouri	----	244	209
North Carolina	172	172	3
Oklahoma	1450	---	216
South Carolina	107	107	0
Tennessee	152	141	3
Texas	1458	722	123
Virginia	114	114	0
West Virginia	55	43	47
Total	8000	2889	764

No New Attempts

The news reports that desegregation has been accomplished in all of West Virginia's biracial school districts, 91 per cent of Maryland's, 80 per cent of Missouri's, 80 per cent of Oklahoma's, 70 per cent of Kentucky's, 29 per cent of Delaware's and 17 per cent of Texas'.

No additional school districts announced plans for desegregation last September, the News reported, although some districts plan to further desegregation programs already in effort.

All of the seven segregation states except Mississippi have school suits providing in court. Virginia seems at this point to be the nearest to a showdown between its anti-integration laws and Federal court orders.

Arlington has been offered to admit seven Negroes to four all-white schools, a decree now before the Supreme Court an appeal. Desegregation decrees also have been handed down for Newport News, Charlottesville, Norfolk and Prince Edward County.

No one knows what next September will bring.