

SPECIAL REPORT

SOUTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL

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VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

**Black students talk about their
experiences in desegregated schools.**

By Betsy Fancher



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Southern Regional Council, Inc.

August, 1970

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Mrs. Betsy Fancher is an Atlanta free-lance writer and assistant editor of SOUTH TODAY, monthly publication of the Southern Regional Council's Leadership Education Project. Her report was prepared under the editorial direction of SRC's Research and Information Department.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1968 the Southern Regional Council in concluding a Special Report "Lawlessness and Disorder: Fourteen Years of Failure in Southern School Desegregation," made this observation:

As the summer of 1968 unfolded and a new school year approached, many Negroes, reflecting in varying degrees a concept of "black awareness," had come to feel that school desegregation is no longer a relevant issue. "Why don't whites ever transfer to our schools? Why should we be the ones to do all the sacrificing?" Some voice the attitude, too, that if "quality education" can be achieved in an all-Negro school, then why should Negro children suffer the pain, the estrangement, the cruelty they subject themselves to in desegregating a "previously all-white school." "Separate but equal" never achieved when it was the law of the land, becomes now a sour goal of the disappointed, the disillusioned and the betrayed.

Two years later what was then a sounding of discontent heard in a few isolated localities has become a major concern to black and white leaders across the South who are committed to ending the South's dual school system.

To get some feel of what black students in the region are thinking the Southern Regional Council in July sent Mrs. Betsy Fancher to four communities in which school desegregation has been at times traumatic. We do not

assert that the conversations which she records represent the definitive view of all Negro students in the South. They are in many ways contradictory. Some are extreme, some rhetorical, some moderate and conciliatory. Underlying all is a degree of disillusion with school integration on terms which the students see as having shattered not only their identity as black people, but as human beings. Separatist views, lack of faith in the democratic process are often articulated. Such comments it should be noted come most often from those whose experiences in desegregated situations have been the most bitter. What seems most evident from all their comments is that black youth in the South will no longer play a passive role in decisions affecting their lives and futures. As the 1970 school year approached this was a fact of life that all involved in the process of school desegregation needed to understand: Sixteen years of social upheaval, of an evolving body of law designed to end dual schools, dual societies have brought school integration to the point of being a reality, a personal one-to-one reality, involving conflicts with origins deep in old and false preconceptions, involving give

and take, true human relations. The traumas of the experience are real on both sides. It would take toughness of spirit and mind, wisdom and patience for leaders, black and white, to search for solutions to the problems that the students here raise.

Robert E. Anderson, Jr.
Southern Regional Council, Inc.

In a student center on Mobile's teeming, neon blurred Davis Street, a young black high school student stood under a blazing African mural and scoffed at the whole idea of integration. "They treat us like dogs," he said of his predominantly white high school. "Integration won't work. It hasn't and it won't. You ought to hear my principal call me nigger."

In Greenville, South Carolina, another black high school student, describing his experiences in a desegregated situation, puts it differently: "Integration of students is a good thing, if it can work. It just has to work."

Between the bitter negativism of the first comment and the cautious optimism of the latter may lie the attitudes of most black high school students in the South of 1970. Their attitudes seem crucial as this year's school term begins, when according to the Justice Department some 97 per cent of the South's black students will be attending schools with whites. (The figure is disputed by civil rights advocates and it doubtless is vastly inflated, but all signs do indicate significant percentage increases.)

The 1970 school year is expected to be traumatic. Last year federal action effectively slowed down school desegregation in many localities, putting off crucial integration decisions until September 1970. Paul Rilling, former Southeastern regional civil rights director of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, recently described last year's school desegregation procedures this way:

In the process of capitulation to segregationist pressures a year ago, the administration put everything possible off -- until September, 1970. In asking the courts for delays last year, the Justice Department attorneys state that total desegregation should take place -- in September, 1970. The plans accepted from Southern districts a year ago gave unnecessary delays and provided minimum progress for last year, but without exception they provide for complete desegregation -- in September, 1970. Not one plan has been accepted yet which permits a delay beyond September, 1970.*

An estimated 400,000 white children have fled to new private segregation academies, accompanied by thousands of white public school teachers and in some cases public school equipment. According to testimony by Reese Cleghorn, director of the Southern Regional Council's Leadership Education Project, before Senator Walter Mondale's Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, the number of

* South Today, June 1970.

private schools more than doubled between 1954 and 1967 in deep South states. Some 168 new private schools are known to have been established between 1964 and 1967 in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina, he testified. Their most important supporters: The Citizens Councils of America and the South Carolina Independent School Association, he told the Committee. Testifying before the same committee Miss Winifred Green, director of the Southeastern Public Education Program of the American Friends Service Committee, pointed out that since September, 1969 the number of all-white private schools has increased from 35 to 100 in Mississippi. And Jackson, which recently defeated a 7 million dollar bond issue, has seven new private schools due to open in September of 1970.

The committee heard reports that books, microscopes, desks, and even whole school buildings were disappearing from Southern schools only to reappear in new, all-white segregation academies. One North Carolina district even turned over public school buildings to new private schools for \$1 a year.

White school boards still control desegregated schools;

The result: wide scale firing of black teachers. In one Mississippi school (Starkville), Rims Barber of the Delta Ministry reported as many as 55 per cent of the black teachers fired, and percentages ranging from 23 to 40 per cent were fired in nine other Mississippi schools.

Officials of the National Educational Association testified before the committee that 5,000 black principals and teachers in Southern schools have been either dismissed or demoted because of desegregation, and often replaced by less qualified whites.

Miss Green painted a bleak picture of the problems faced by many black students in newly integrated schools. "In some districts, classes are segregated. Testing and tracking are used to segregate within the school. There are moves to force out black high school students by the use of stricter rules. These students should be described as push outs and not drop outs," she said.

In Dekalb High School in Kemper County, Mississippi, some 108 blacks, all tenth graders, attend all-black classes in a wing of the red brick school building separate from the 190 whites, testified Miss Green. "The blacks ride to and from school in buses driven by blacks, eat lunch

only with blacks and do their homework in an all-black study hall. Black teachers teach only black children. White teachers teach whites."

Five black students testifying before the same committee described the "internal segregation" they had encountered at integrated schools, practices which included separate classrooms, separate lunch and gym periods and separate bells so that blacks and whites do not use the hall at the same time. Buses pick up blacks at 5:30 a. m. in one Louisiana parish so that white students can ride separately. Tyrone Thomas, of Mobile, Ala., told the committee that in his integrated high school black football players carry the ball to "about the 99 yard line," where a white player is substituted to score the touchdown. The students also testified that some Southern schools refused to admit Negro members to all-white student councils, that Afro hair cuts and dress were banned, and that black students were excluded from many school activities.

Observing the student's new militancy, their growing contempt for "white rules" and "white standards," Mrs. Ruby Martin, a former director of the Office of Civil Rights who brought them to Washington said: "It is clear to me

that we can expect problems this fall in integrated schools unlike any we have ever experienced."

Were these students just a bitter, vocal minority? Or did they represent a new wave of militancy, a militancy born out of the painful disillusionment of black students with the great experiment of integration? To find the answer to this and other urgent questions posed by integration, the Southern Regional Council interviewed students in four Southern communities about their school experiences. The communities were widely diverse. Mobile is a teeming port city which voted heavily for George Wallace and whose school integration has been stymied since 1963 by a court case (Davis vs. Board of School Commissioners of Mobile County), a case which has been appealed to the fifth circuit nine times while the city maintained a dual system and students who elected to use free choice were designated "non conformist" and were not officially enrolled in school nor officially given grades. Charlotte, N. C. is a burgeoning, sophisticated city where the hotly debated Charlotte-Mecklenburg County school desegregation case, which could allow for total integration and busing was being watched by the entire nation this summer as the decisive case in the future of school

integration. Greenville is a quiet, pretty little city justly proud of having peacefully achieved an 80--20 ratio in its schools last February. Historic Beaufort, with its columned manses and bleak slums is preparing to integrate its schools in September under an HEW approved plan which is violently opposed by the local blacks. To date Beaufort's schools have operated on a Freedom of Choice basis but only a half dozen white students have elected to go to black schools.

These communities have one thing in common. Each one is the scene of an emotion charged drama of school integration, a drama which involves school board members, principals, teachers and students, a drama which presages the historic conflicts which this fall could bring.

BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA: "THE PAIN IS STILL THERE."

This summer, the visitor to moss-shrouded Beaufort and its surrounding islands feels as did abolitionist Austa French when she first approached the area by sea in the early days of the Civil War. "There steals over you the feeling that you are passing under a great cloud of accumulated wrongs, in which you seem mysteriously implicated, the vague feeling that you have done something awful somewhere in the dim past. . .Slavery is written upon the shore, the trees, the sky, the air. . .the enormous black hawks with their screams seem to be its very spirit. No wonder they 'caw, caw' over this land -- mean vultures, waiting for blood."

The vultures still caw over Port Royal Sound and though slavery was abolished over a century ago, the Beaufort blacks still suffer a deep sense of oppression. Right now it is focused on the issue of school integration, on the fact that grades ten through twelve of two all black high schools, St. Helena and Robert Smalls will be bused this fall to predominantly white Beaufort High School which will be holding double sessions until another high school can be built in the area. School Superintendent Walter Trammel

explains that the busing plan was adopted because Beaufort High had the best facilities. He neglected to add that it is the only accredited high school in the area, that Robert Smalls is flanked by a public dumping area and that conditions at St. Helena are so bad that two Vista workers have been sent in to work with the students.

Nevertheless, the black students love their schools and are adamant about being bused to Beaufort High. "They are very angry," says Andrew Marrisett, a field worker for the American Friends Service Committee, stationed near Beaufort at Frogmore. "They want to know why aren't the white kids being bused from Beaufort High to St. Helena's and Robert Smalls. They have a special feeling for their schools. Robert Smalls was a slave who stole a gunboat and went to the aid of Union Forces during the siege of Hilton Head Island. He later served in the South Carolina legislature and the U. S. Congress and he is one of black Beaufort's heros. They are proud of the name of their school and they don't want to see it changed. They don't want to leave their friends in the lower grades. I do think they'll try a boycott to protest double sessions. I would support the boycott, in fact I'd lead it. But I do see an inkling of

violence. All I can tell you now is we're waiting for September."

John Gadsden, of Penn Community Center, is frankly cynical about the plan. "I still don't believe when September comes there'll be 'massive' integration. We've had South Carolina decisions before. We've had troops before. I don't believe we'll see the total elimination of the dual school system."

"But we are moving a lot of bodies around," says Frieda Mitchell, one of two black members of the Beaufort school board. She does not believe the boycott will develop. "Most people don't like the idea of keeping kids out of school," she says. As for the busing: "They're being bused because they're black," she says flatly. As the mother of a daughter who went to Beaufort High as one of the first freedom of choice students, she believes she "fared better than most. There was a constant influx of military people and the parents were more broadminded. There was only one incident of violence, when a white boy hit a black with a broken bottle. Things were not bad, but Karen went back to a black school. She said she couldn't participate as much, her grades went down and

there was the problem of identity, of a black kid trying to blend in with whites."

But let Karen describe her experience:

I was spat on, hit with an ink well, with spit balls. I got to the point where I didn't consider some of those I went to school with human. You could see some blacks pretending they had great rapport, but I never saw that, I never saw true communication between human beings. The other students were like machines being controlled by a master switch. They were like puppets on a string, products of their environment, hostile. There was one teacher, one English teacher who was truthful and honest, one human being in my four years. That whole school was strange. In history, for instance, the way they talked about the whole Civil War scene and the role of black people. And whenever you brought up Viet Nam or the Black Panthers, anything relevant, they'd say let's not get too involved. I'm not interested in black schools or white schools, I want a better education, an education relevant to students in the 20th century. I copped out. I used to make lousy grades, but they never discussed anything I wanted to discuss, anything controversial and contemporary. I was completely alienated for four years.

At Beaufort High she got in trouble only once -- for failing to pledge allegiance to the flag. "That's as big a crime as saying you're going to assassinate the president. . . . 'with liberty and justice for all.' Can you see me saying that. 'With liberty and justice for all.' Me being black and American and in the South. Nobody needs to lie. There should be nobody you fear enough to lie to. 'One nation under God.' That's a joke in itself. They can

shoot me down whenever they like but God won't see that."

Karen briefly tried a private school in New England after leaving Beaufort High -- "it was just as unreal, being another token black person" -- and then came back to Robert Smalls. "It was more real, more relevant to me and my community. I was alienated at Beaufort High because I was black and I was there. But at Robert Smalls I could relate to masses of black people. I valued this more than I valued integration."

She had lost all faith in integration when she was asked to go to Washington to testify before the Mondale Committee. "By then I had passed the point of frustration. I had been so humiliated. I thought I was in a nightmare. I thought there's no sense in talking to anybody. It's not going to help. These liberals think integration is going to break down social and legislative barriers. It barely breaks down legal barriers. And then this Commissioner Allen, you know this U. S. Commissioner on Civil Rights, we talked to him, told him some of this, about how the coaches would send a white kid in at the 99 yard line to take the ball away from the black kid, about how black kids were kept out in the rain, how one was permanently expelled.

And the next day he gets fired."

The firing confirmed Karen's conviction that integration is in fact a hoax, that "segregation is a conspiracy between the Federal and local governments. The Federal government puts all the money and the tools in the hands of local school boards who oppose integration." Karen Hawkins stopped smoking in Washington. "My heart started getting heavy," she says, "I had a pain deep in my chest. I thought it was cigarettes and I gave them up, but the pain is still there."

How do other black students feel about entering predominantly white Beaufort High? Miss Arthur Mae Cohen, has completed her junior year at St. Helena school where she was secretary of the student council and a member of a student government committee organized by the Beaufort County School Superintendent to work out plans for desegregation of the school district this fall.

"They should have zoned us. Instead we have massive busing and double sessions," she says bitterly. "But a majority of whites live in the area of Robert Smalls (a black school); that's why we weren't zoned. It's always black people who are bused to white schools. The white

administrators think their kids are too good to go to black schools. The white man feels the black man is not good enough to be where he is. That's the truth of it. The kids on Fripp Island are bused past our schools to private schools. They think we're not sanitary. White people get married in white dresses and go to funerals in black dresses. They think white is pure and black isn't. That's how the white man feels."

Miss Cohen believes Robert Smalls and St. Helena should have been upgraded and that students should remain there. She admits St. Helena's needed new lab equipment, new desks, and a refurbished cafeteria, but it was her school and she loved it. She especially liked the Afro-American Club which was a black history study group. She is going reluctantly to Beaufort High.

MOBILE, ALABAMA: OF DISILLUSION AND A MEASURE OF FAITH

In Mobile, where NOW, a militant black organization and STAND a white supremacist group, have both made heated pronouncements on integration, racial tension has erupted in a series of unexplained bombings and shootings this summer. School desegregation has had a long and tortured history in the port city. Black students have protested the fact that when they elected to use free choice, they were designated "non-conformist" and neither officially enrolled in school nor officially given grades. Black students have been "suspended, intimidated, harassed and jailed," according to Miss Green's testimony before the Mondale Committee. "This situation and surrounding circumstances -- students jailed, threats on the lives of the leaders of the movement, complete unresponsiveness of a school board to the desires of the black community -- makes one understand why the black community might enthusiastically endorse any alternative to this continued method of desegregation," she told the committee.

Mobile students have seen integration blocked nine times, most dramatically in 1968 when, on the eve of massive

desegregation, some 10,000 members of the newly formed STAND opposed a mandate of the Fifth Circuit court and won yet another year under freedom-of-choice. In August, 1969 the judge in the Southern District of Alabama granted a delay in the implementation of an HEW school desegregation plan that left approximately 5,500 blacks in all-black schools. Mobile now has a new plan that almost doubles the number of black students left in all-black schools.

It has been received with angry cynicism by a group of black parents who have formed a separatist organization, STEP (Steps Toward Educational Progress) initiated by Roy Innis, director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to push for two racially determined school districts, the black district under black control. Innis, who earlier had discussed the plan with four Southern governors, has met several times with high ranking officials of the Justice Department one of whom is reported to have suggested Mobile as a test city for his "separate but equal" proposal.

The young people have also formed an activist organization, the United Student Action Movement of Mobile. Their Davis St. center, stocked with African literature and emblazoned with African murals, serves as a "center for

the advancement of Black awareness," a center for tutoring, recreation, organizing and legal aid. Says their prospectus:

Every time we have taken any action we have been harassed, intimidated, suspended from school, and jailed. Everyday we see our Black brothers and sisters getting their heads beat by cops, store owners, etc. We are sick of it, and must have full time legal help to defend ourselves and to try to put a stop to the endless brutalization of the Black man in Mobile. Legal aid is essential for the organization of an effective center.

The group has led boycotts and demonstrations to protest segregation, inadequate school facilities, the lack of black history courses, and the use of the word "nigger" by teachers. They have confronted the school board with their suggestions, forced it to readmit a black student who was suspended because of his beard, organized Vietnam Moratorium programs and held dances to raise funds for white teachers who supported their boycotts.

What are their feelings about integration? What are their attitudes toward whites? How do they view the democratic process and the viability of working through the system? What can we anticipate when school opens? How do they feel about the quality of education they are receiving? Do they favor black control of black schools? If so do they see this as different from the old "separate but equal" doctrine?

Are they totally negative about the possibility of black-white cooperation?

These questions were put to a group of Mobile high school students, members of the United Student Action Movement, all of them, by the Southern Regional Council this July. The students queried included Tyrone Thomas and Herbert Patterson of Vigor High School, Gary Smith, of Toulminville High, Dora Finley, who will enter Springhill College this fall, Vincent Washington, of Blount High School, Anita Showers, of the University of South Alabama and Joycelyn Finley of Bishop Toolen High School.

The long years of court battles, sporadic violence and racial tension have taken their toll. But listen to them discuss it.

---Integration? It's no good.

---It don't mean a thing to me.

---Well, this is the way I see it -- we know integration (I should say desegregation -- the court always uses that word) desegregation has been going on for a long time now. That's why black folks have thirteen shades of color. But integration is playing out, it's played out. In Mobile integration just won't work because

when we go to a white school they treat us like some dog. We never get to be the officers of the class so we'd rather just stay in our own schools.

---I think its an impossibility at this time. How can you have integration when the white man is on the top of the pole? He controls everthing, he's the head of everything and he owns the power structure and we're at the bottom of the pole. We aren't equal in the white man's eyesight. He sees us as inferior and a lot of black people see themselves as inferior so I see a need for black people to have their own school districts and when the white man sees we can control our own money and our own power maybe then we can come together.

---I don't believe it's the time yet. Black folks will have to get themselves together and share their ideas and white folks have to get themselves together -- when we have all white and all black schools and have shared all our ideas, that's when we can both come together.

So far integration has meant only humiliation, oppression and a loss of identity to these black students. They can't conceive of it working until black people control "their

own money and their own schools and their own school districts."

---Right now the white man feels the black man can't control his own money, his own resources in the community. If we have the chance to show the power structure that we can control our own schools, our own money while they control theirs then we can come together. But you have to be true to yourself.

---I say let's start separatism. As it is now, it's the white man who controls the dollar.

---Black folks don't even control the little money that's coming into our schools now and its never been separate but equal because the white man always controls the money. Now if the black man can control the money and can control what should be put into that black school, black students would be aware of their identity. As it is today we're not even aware of our identity. The only way we can be aware is by all the black folks being together and teaching each other their identity. If we're in an integrated school, the white man hires the teachers.

---We know we have some brilliant black teachers

in Mobile today. But when they got the so called integration thing together they took them out to the white schools to let them teach them. They never did what you call integrate. They only integrated the teachers.

The students contended that black students could never prove themselves in integrated classrooms because they could never win the vote for student council, cheer leader and other offices. The black student who did win an office, they said, was invariably the one with the straightest hair. But all-black Central High was raided for football players who are now scoring touchdowns for two predominantly white schools. On the whole, they believe white schools rob students of their identity and make them feel inferior. They express it this way:

---Okay, the teacher looks at him in the morning, one little black kid, and to make him feel good he says "good morning" to him and says nothing to the little white folks and that's turning the white folks against him and at the same time it's making him feel inferior. He be walking down the hall and they look at him and he is dressed one way and they are dressed another

way and he has to go back and dress like them. He can't wear his afro in a white school. There are rules at Mercy and other schools that black people cannot wear Afros, cannot wear beards and dashikis. Your hair has to be not over so many inches, you can't wear dashikis unless its tucked in you pants.

---You can't take a black student out of a black school where he has been all of his life and throw him in a white school for one semester and expect him to pass. You can't do that, you've got to give him a chance to adapt to the white man's way. Anyway you'll turn him white, white, white. Teachers are turning children white because they have to adapt to the white man's way, not our way. But if we controlled our money them we wouldn't have to adapt to the white man. It all stems from money and I'm sorry it does.

How do they feel about the quality of education they are now getting?

---I don't think we are getting an education, period. Because if we had been getting an education, we wouldn't have prejudiced teachers. Over in Murphy, teachers are prejudiced. In the black school, I got a "B", but

then over in the white school, I got a "E" in Algebra and I was flunking. This has happened to a lot of the Mobile students when they switch over from a black to a white school. Their grades were good at the black school, but when they got over to the white, their grades were lowered. If they got an "A" in the black school and an "E" or "D" in the white school they were flunked. Going by the white man's way, that should have averaged out to a "C" or "D" at the most. But these students got flat "E"s which means they have to go to summer school. If you go to a black school half of your life and they send you over to this white school, you got to adapt to this and this is not right.

They sneered at the pattern of integration in Mobile. Freedom of choice had been a farce, they said. To them it meant simply this:

---It was something the judge came up with to avoid integration. What they meant was that black schools are already so bad, so low down and raggedy no white folks are going to come to them. Okay, and then they knew that black folks weren't going to walk another

five miles to go to a white school. What they are doing now is closing down Central High and they're sending the better black students to white high schools and those from the real ghettos to the bad schools. You see what they're saying is since we got to do it then we just send the better black students.

The students favor Roy Innis' two district separatist plan. They spoke bitterly of the present school board and the fact that one of its former members was a leader in the ultraconservative STAND group that fought desegregation. But what's going to prevent old line conservative black leaders from controlling the board of the black school district?

---Because young folks will be the ones to do the voting.

---If we feel they are mistreating us like the white man was mistreating us then we just walk out of the school, you see. We walk out until they put somebody up there to do it right. At Dunbar fifteen of us walked out in April and started throwing bricks and the next day 700 students walked out. The only ones who didn't walk out were still controlled by the white

man, they were still living in the slums and ghettos and ditches.

The students were asked if they would favor a completely integrated school system under a completely integrated school board. The answer was, no.

---It still would not work, because white people would still have money and would still feel superior. If there were 250 here and 250 there, it still would not work. Because people are still not ready. Just like the white people say. White and black are not ready.

But what they mean by "ready" does not have the presumption of racial inferiority that whites give the term.

---This is when we can get along by ourselves. When will this happen? When they find out they need us. I can tell you when they like to found it out, when the buses went on strike, when the white folks' dishes were beginning to pile up. They got to realize that we can come together. But right now whites are not going to give us a fair share. If black schools get one million dollars, whites will get two million. And the million the black folks get will be controlled by

the whites.

Do they have any faith at all in the democratic process?

Here's how they view it:

---You mean that all men were created equal? I don't believe this because when Thomas Jefferson wrote it he did not intend it for the black man because black men were rated not as men but as maybe one quarter human or equal to a horse or a cow. Historically, it was not intended for the black man.

---Here is what the system offers: using the constitutional rights, going to court, getting bogged down. That is just what we were doing and getting nothing. As long as you have a racist judge and a racist lawyer and a racist President along with his cousin, George Wallace working through the system is like working through hell. The only way we can survive, and the only way we can have our own system is to make white people listen through violence.

---I'll put it this way. We can hand the white man rough stuff. Black folk will be slaughtered in the streets. I know the white man will not sell you bullets to kill him in the streets. All right, what I am

saying is that the revolution, the bloody revolution will not win. But it will bring freedom to the black people of the United States. I say if we die, let us die for something. I don't care. A lot of other people don't care if they die or not, we are not getting anywhere nohow. So if we die, so what? A lot of them don't care if they die. So after the revolution, then maybe people can get together, then we will see.

When people are pressed and everthing else, people get tired of this and the only way out is to burn all of the buildings down. Since the white man has all of the money and owns the buildings, he will have to build something better. It's got to come out of his pocket and that's a revolution.

What are they expecting when school opens this fall?

The answer comes in a chorus. CHAOS.

The next day Tyrone Thomas showed a reporter from the Southern Regional Council a black school (its lab and shop facilities were woefully inadequate) and his own alma mater, Vigor High School. Summer school was in session and the rambling, well equipped buildings were bustling with students. Tyrone tried to see the principal, Mr. Styles, and was told

he was busy. Minutes later Mr. Styles appeared, flailing the air with both fists, ordering Tyrone off the school grounds, threatening to have him arrested, promising him a two year sentence. The youth who intends to study for the ministry, left without a word.

"Why are you coming back here next fall," he was asked. His reply seemed at once to belie the cynicism he had earlier expressed and to affirm a faith that perhaps he himself did not realize he still had.

"I'm coming because it may do some good."

CHARLOTTE, N. C. -- INTEGRATION IS WORTH THE TRAUMA

In Charlotte this July, Federal Judge James D. McMillan was considering four plans for elementary school desegregation -- The Finger plan, submitted by court consultant Dr. John A. Finger of Rhode Island College which called for wide scale busing of students to achieve almost total desegregation; an HEW plan which proposed clustering of schools to achieve a measure of integration; a plan submitted by the majority of the school board which would employ gerrymandering to integrate junior and senior high schools and would leave 17 all-white elementary schools and ten all-black elementary schools; and a minority school board plan which would allow for more integration.

(Secondary schools are due to open in the fall under an earlier order that requires busing some pupils to desegregate the city's last all-black high schools and increase the number of Negro pupils in predominantly white schools.)

In ruling on the case in early August, Judge McMillan gave the school board the option of implementing portions of the Finger plan, the HEW plan and the minority school board plan. The most important element he said was to bring about desegregation of the schools. His ruling was being appealed by the school board to the U. S. Supreme

Court. The high court's ruling in the Charlotte-Mecklenberg case is expected to define the meaning of a unitary system.

Earlier the Finger plan, which had gained wide support among civil rights advocates, was under attack from the all-white Concerned Parents Association which mailed pamphlets to 60,000 parents of school children urging them to flood school board chairman William E. Poe with telegrams in opposition to the plan. The organization vowed it would lead a boycott of public schools if desegregation requires assigning children to schools on the basis of race or busing them out of their neighborhoods. Their stand has provoked a bitter reaction among Charlotte's black youngsters. "The concerned KKK of America" the black students call the organization. "Yes, they're concerned for their children stepping up and sitting on a bus with a black kid," scoffed one Charlotte teenager.

In a pleasant living room in a black neighborhood this summer three students met to discuss it. They were Cornelia Graham, Bobby Graham and Judy Hunter, all recent graduates of integrated Harding High School. With them was a former teacher, Miss Shirley Moore.

---You don't need violence to get what you want.

I won't scratch my kids for nothing.

---Whites have a lot to learn from association

with us. It's better if they learn early. The blacks need it too. I know too many blacks who say they hate all white people. Integration is good.

Do they equate integration with equal opportunity?

---Yes, if it can be black and white together in the same facilities.

But couldn't they get the same opportunity from good black schools?

---The school board isn't going to put money into black schools.

---Integration is worth the trauma. You know you are achieving, you're getting somewhere, you see some light, some hope. You can prove to the white man that the black man can comprehend. No man knows prejudice like a black man. He don't know how it is to sit in back of the bus or not be able to walk in this store.

How do they feel about the Finger plan?

---I'm against busing elementary kids across town. The white concerned parent is concerned for his kid and we're concerned for all.

---There's no school in this system where my child will have any importance, any power. If there's got to be integration I'd like to see

the white people suffer, let'em all feel the pinch and the pain.

---Busing is old to us. We've always been bused. We've been bused past white schools to black. You can learn something on the bus.

Integration has closed some black schools for which they feel a deep loyalty. Among them is Second Ward, which was closed last year after an integration suit, a move bitterly opposed by the students. Judy would have been Valedictorian there this year. She wonders wistfully what has happened to the Second Ward trophy case, to all the symbols of black achievement in the school. She herself, transferred to predominantly white Harding, felt "like a vegetable, like something just thrown in." And next year she is going to a black college, "to be with my own kind again." And yet they agreed with Cornelia when she said:

---I believe integration has to work. If the parents and adults would stay out of it and let the kids work it out. It's the only way to advance. How are we going to change? Through education in the white man's way. The power lies in his hands. We have no power but the few jobs they throw blacks. I want the best and the best is not in black schools.

Why don't they live an entirely black life?

---We've tried militancy and black power. We've been living a black life. The only thing we have as a whole is religion. The black man worships the white man's god. We don't have the power, the equipment, the training. If only the power structure would see people as people. But we are masses. Masses of color. It'll take a tragedy to change things, a terrible tragedy.

---How do you get power? Violence. You're so afraid we're going to overpower you that you won't give us any learning. You took us into captivity, you gave us names. You set us free. No, you didn't set us free. We set ourselves free. It started with the black man and it'll end with the black man.

---It'll end with a terrible tragedy.

Miss Shirley Moore, a former teacher in an all-black school in Charlotte found her students so paralyzed by the prevailing climate that she finally retired from teaching to work at an employment agency. She speaks out of years of bitter frustration:

"My students had lost all desire to learn. They'd just say, "why bother?" They felt, "what's the point?" A lot of them were getting militant. We lost our best

minds to militancy. The majority were failing. They'd been defeated before they could start. You've got so much in you to give, you want to help your race grow intellectually. How could I get these children to understand that if you have anything whitey can use he'll buy it? This is the white man's world. The Indian was too slow to learn this. If they'd learned they would have survived. I can't stand to watch our young people shouting riot, black militancy and violence. I don't want anything because I'm black. Being black isn't excuse enough or reason enough. It got so bad I started taking tranquilizers. I lost my drive, my initiative, even the sense of my own knowledge. That's when I got out.

GREENVILLE, S. C.: A "MODEL" CITY, BUT "WE NEED SO MANY THINGS."

On February 17 of this year, Greenville, S. C. achieved total integration--"with style and grace" the Chamber of Commerce boasted--less than a month after the Fourth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the district must create a unitary school system immediately. One element of the community's acceptance of integration undoubtedly was the fact that the district has an 80 white to 20 per cent black ratio. Another was the positive, aggressive leadership of Governor Robert E. McNair and Mayor R. Cooper White according to Dr. Ernest Harrill, a Furman University professor who chaired a citizens committee helping with the transition. "They created a climate of stability," he said. Also, according to Chamber of Commerce vice president, Gerald Bartles, the black community provided strong leadership. "They didn't like the school board plan but they stood up for support of the public schools."

There was dissent. Negroes in the Greenville area complained that they were bearing the whole burden for desegregation, that some Negro schools were being closed and that needed repairs were done only when whites were transferred into the schools. And a number of white

parents groups were formed, one of which urged a county wide school boycott. But on the whole the Chamber of Commerce had a right to boast. The white students at Greenville's Wade Hampton High, who erected banners welcoming the 300 blacks who joined them under court order, became a national symbol of racial harmony. How do those students feel today? Fifteen of them came together one July day at Christ Church School where they are enrolled in a tutorial program, sponsored by the Greenville Education Committee aimed at motivating disadvantaged blacks. Its effectiveness can be measured by its alumnae who include, among dozens of successful college students, writer Joan Frances Bennett, Barnard student and author of a poignant autobiography, "Members of the Class Will Keep Daily Journals." The students interviewed included Linda Massey, Janice Dillard, Brian Porter, Lynette Moore, Cheretta Sayles, Pamela McSelvey, Raul Thomas, Elaine Cannon, Morris Garrett, Janice Harrison, Heyward Holloway, and David Pendarvis. They are enthusiastic about the unstructured and innovative program at Christ Church School but they are deeply critical of the public school system, of testing and guidance methods, of the system of social promotion, of the educational establishment, both black and white, and of integration as it is presently being carried out. Listen as they discuss their own recent experiences with integration:

---Integration of students is a good thing, if it can work. It just has to work. But one thing I don't think is too fair, some of the black schools weren't too well equipped. So before they made the change, they went around to the Negro schools painting them up for the white children. If the black schools were not right in the first place, then how come they built them like that? If Nickletown didn't have a sidewalk, why didn't they put a sidewalk there (in the first place) and if Sulton's playground wasn't paved, why hadn't they paved it?

---Sterling High is pretty worn out so they didn't send any white students there. If the blacks were good enough to go in the building, the whites are good enough to go in it too. If it is so bad the whites couldn't go in there, they should not have had students in there at all.

---The school board took advantage of the black community. Some of the black schools were just as well equipped and some of the white children should have been displaced like the black children were. We shouldn't have had to bear all the burden.

---It's not fair for the smallest children to go all the way across town to school. For the older kids it's not too bad.

---For the younger children it's bad. They're not use to it. The bad thing is it's only happening to the blacks.

---The black schools were in good condition but they were minus some things they had in the white schools, Bunson burners for instance in the chemistry labs. It's not that these things weren't asked for, we asked for them but we didn't get them.

---Another thing, the white schools had a whole set of different books, new math books, science books and things that are all up to date. In our school in the 6th grade we had a Social Studies book published in 1964 and when integration comes around they think that white children are going to get behind so they put in new books published in 1970. And all that time we'd had those old books and were getting behind.

---A lot of people fail in their grades because some whites come over and they be kind of bad and some try to be like them. You get hooked up with them. You know they are doing the wrong things, but yet still you follow behind them.

If they had teachers who are really committed to really teaching children, I think these kids can learn and integration can work.

---When integration occurs, we must adapt to a change because we are in a new environment. I don't think I adapted very quickly to the changeover because when I came over to this school I had an "A" and my grade dropped to a "D". The class was noisy and loud, I was not able to adapt to this environment. I had to work on it.

At least one student thought his predominantly white school was not nearly as good as his former all black school. He complained that it is an old school, that the teachers were old and prejudiced. "I feel most of them have not been able to cope with black people," he said. Others accused their white teachers of deliberately lowering their grades. Said one: "I found that students that were making C's went down to D's and students who were making A's went down to B's. The teachers were never satisfied. They would always find fault in our papers. We could never write a perfect paper. They would always find fault in them.

Many students resented being forced to change schools. "I don't think you can do a good job if you are going to a school you don't want to go to," said one. Another disagreed. "I am not saying that I am getting a better edu-

cation now than at the school I went to first, which was a black school. I don't see any difference. Going to school is just one job and that is to get an education.

The students were deeply troubled by reports of black students carrying knives at some integrated schools and of lowered morale at Wade Hampton High School. They denied both allegations and said if there was any friction at Wade Hampton it was not between black and whites but between students and teachers--in short, it was the generation gap. They felt the older generation was not only impeding integration but the learning process itself. They expressed it this way:

---The older people is the problem. I think if they just let the younger people run schools it would be better. I had a letter from South Dakota University and the students there feel the same way I do. If the younger people ran the schools we could get along but as long as the older people are running it and standing in our way, it will never change our world completely, we will always feel prejudice for each other.

---If young people could run the schools there would be no prejudice and no dropouts. One reason the students are dropping out is because of the establishment, which is square. I mean the black

and white establishment.

---When I was in school after the integration I got along with everybody there and there really wasn't much difference. But the parents get all upset about integration. It's the students who have to go to school, the parents have had their education.

---I think that it will take a new generation for us to accept one another because even if the older people would stay out of it they have already taught their children prejudice. The whites have taught their children they are superior and more intelligent. The children are impressionable and I think it will take another generation to erase the prejudice.

---The reason so many black parents are upset is because they took so many black children and put them in the white schools and closed so many black schools. I believe they should have moved more white children than they did and I believe that the parents are teaching the children around the first grade that the black children are this and that and the white children are always right. I know one kindergarten class where there are only two little Negro girls and the rest whites and

those girls felt so rejected that all they did was talk to the teacher. No one would play with them because of something they had heard from their parents.

---One white teacher slapped my sister's face. She was just so uptight and frustrated with the class all cutting up that she slapped my sister's face. She sent all the white children to the office.

---Even if the parents didn't brainwash the children, the teachers would. When I went to Greenville Junior High, the speech teacher was very old and she would say, "all the niggers stand up," and that made us mad and there is still prejudice about it. If the parents would stop brainwashing the students, the teachers would still do it, so it is a big problem. This brainwashing is every where.

Yet despite all their criticism of integration, most of them agreed with the student who said:

---There's a lot to criticize about integration, but it has a lot of good points. The two races should be living together and finding out a lot about each other. The school I go to, there are a lot of black officials in school government

and they have a lot of white support. Integration can work if people will stop and listen to something besides all this foolish nonsense. I think it would work out real good.

The criticisms of Greenville's students carries none of the bitterness or militancy which characterized the comments of Mobile's black students. Many black teachers are frankly optimistic about the success of the unified system. Among them is Joseph Vaughn who this summer was teaching at Christ Church School. He believes the change would never have come naturally. It was due to an enlightened leadership, both in the black and white communities. His analysis of Greenville's educational system today:

---On February 16 I went from the 6th grade at Sullivan, which was all black, to Hughes Junior High. My reception was quite good. The administration is making integration work. All the students are finally getting the benefit of equal facilities. Black students are finally being exposed to people of other races and cultures. I'm very optimistic about the overall results. Greenville has become a model. The general public is not aware of what we have accomplished. Desegregation has spotlighted the gross inequities and fallacies of our whole educational system.

As far as educating our children is concerned, we are losing the battle. Between grades one and twelve half of our children have dropped out. That's fifty per cent of our children who are not being educated. We'd rather invest in highways rather than in quality education. And the blacks have suffered more. Our facilities are inferior; we need to find ways to keep these youngsters in school. We need a series of vocational schools -- all students are not college bound. We need to eliminate the social promotion and address ourselves to the needs of these students. We've got to have something to offer them. In the competition between the streets and the schoolroom, the schoolroom is losing out. We complain about the welfare system, but we are producing this system. We need better training for teachers, better guidance counselors, we need so many things. . . .

* * *

From all the rhetoric, the threats, the criticism, and the inevitable contradictions of students from communities as diverse as Charlotte, N. C. and Mobile, Ala., certain

truths do emerge.

What is happening still -- to an observer -- did not seem to be a mass embracing of separatism. When the students did talk separatism, they did not seem to do so out of intellectualized doctrine. Few spoke in the harsh, anti-white, anti-human terms of the violence prone street militant. But many were clearly being edged toward separatist views by a combination of factors, foremost among which were their humiliating experiences in desegregated classrooms; the sense of their own government's betrayal in enforcement and finally, though not always in readily determined ways, the influence of "black consciousness" thought that has been articulated by some black leaders for some time now. What would happen in the fall -- the likelihood of some school boycotts -- was far easier to predict than what the students would be doing and thinking five to ten years hence. Their options were diminishing to their way of thinking. In a time of polarized national thought when the aspirations of black people seem less assured of realization than in the past it would take a turnabout of national values to rekindle the young people's enthusiasm for integration. It could be done, but first the South and the nation needed to

understand what they were risking by delay.

Those students who have found the rich promises of integration to be only a cruel hoax tend to lose all faith in the American system. They may not have dropped out of school but they have, in effect, dropped out of society. The new militancy is being spawned in the bitterly racist climate of cities like Mobile where integration has been aggressively resisted since it became the law of the land. In Greenville, where integration was accomplished, with considerably less tension, students may be aware of the inequities of the process but they are working within the system. Integration is no longer the big issue to them, but rather, the quality of education they are being offered. But the racist climate of many other Southern communities has stunted the growth of thousands of black children.

The educational structure itself is being threatened, not only by racism but by archaic attitudes, teaching methods and approaches to learning. But youth will have its say, and 1970 may well be the year. They may speak out violently as the new militants threaten or passively by simply dropping out of the American system. But they will speak out. To fail to listen could be a tragic, even fatal mistake.