

damaging to Black children. In this regard, Kenneth B. Clark, a Black psychologist and professor at the City College of New York, contributed a forceful statement to the brief. So, here again, Blacks were instrumental in helping themselves by crushing the segregated public school policy through their social scientists, psychologists and lawyers who studied primarily in Black colleges and universities and were to bring their knowledge to bear on the problem. Thus, they were able to force on May 17th, 1954 the Supreme Court decision abolishing legal public school segregation in the South and the country.

What did this decision actually mean in terms of the education of Black children? For once, it meant that border states complied first because it was easier for them to do so. Also, with the exception of Baltimore, the District of Columbia and Wilmington, Delaware, Black students comprised a relatively small proportion of the student population. In many instances, careful step-by-step plans were prepared and implemented. Also, population shifts prevented serious problems, for whites scurried to the suburban areas to avoid sending their children to school with Black children. Likewise, free-choice policies in some communities like Baltimore left the system pretty much as segregated as before the Supreme Court decision.

Many school districts avoided early compliance with the Court's decision by using various subterfuges allowed by its "all deliberate speed" doctrine. They delayed desegregation until a study of methods of complying was made. Some insisted on an upgrading of Black teachers. Others wanted to wait until building plans were completed. In some cases, violent actions on the part of whites were used as delaying tactics, including the dissemination of hate literature. More extreme action took the form of standing in the school house door as did Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus in Little Rock.

South Carolina devised a pupil placement law assigning students to schools to which they were "best suited." Georgia passed laws making it a felony for a school official to spend money for public schools in which the races were mixed. Mississippi amended the state constitution to provide for the abolition of public schools. South Carolina also repealed compulsory school attendance laws. Alabama discontinued public schools to avoid friction or disorder. Prince Edward County, Virginia, in complete defiance of the court, closed her schools in 1959 and spent \$2 million to support a white students' private academy. It was not until May 25th, 1964, ten years after the Court's decision, that Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black directed Prince Edward County to reopen its public schools.

As far as higher education was concerned, most colleges and universities in southern states had opened their doors to Blacks by 1956. And by 1961, over half of the 285 tax-supported institutions of higher learning in the South were desegregated. Naturally, the principle worked in reverse at all Black colleges. For instance, one-half of the students enrolled at Lincoln University

are white and West Virginia State College has a predominantly white student body.

As of 1963, Black Americans had spent over 30 years in court litigations in an effort to gain equality of educational opportunity. Obviously, litigation was inadequate for the sustained resistance of whites against desegregation or equality of opportunity for Blacks. What it did reveal, however, was the weakness of the Federal Government's commitment to support court decisions. But a single act by a tired Black woman was to usher in a new era. Rosa Parks, a Black lady, got fed up with the effort and precipitated the Montgomery bus boycott. Consequently, non-violent direct action, street demonstrations and boycotts led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was educated at Morehouse, a Black college, became the order of the day.

Black education became the leverage to change the American social order as students took the

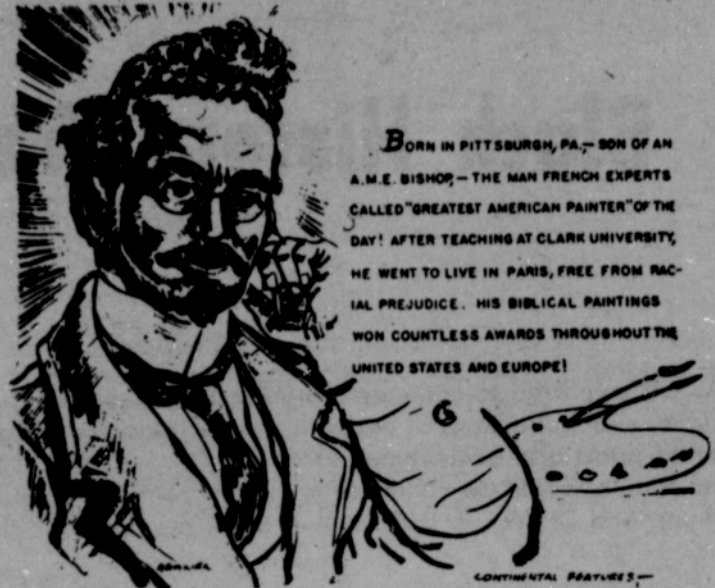
lead in moving from compromise in education to one of confrontation. Spontaneously, a sit-in was started in 1960 by four Black students from North Carolina's Agricultural and Technical College at Greensboro. Students sat in at a Woolworth's five-and-ten-cent store and refused to leave until they were served. The spontaneity of their action caught American society off-guard and the movement quickly spread to other cities across the nation.

On Easter Sunday in 1960 at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) came into being. This organization was a large, loose coalition of Black students formed to keep Black students abreast of the movement in an effort to give support to the student activists fighting against segregation and discrimination.

Some 70,000 students in 20 states across the nation participated in the sit-in campaign. By the end of 1961, the freedom

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