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Civil Rights and School Desegregation in Sanford

by PATRICIA DILLON

THE civil rights movement in the United States reached beyond the federal legislation that eradicated legal segregation. The movement also fundamentally transformed how white and black Americans interacted on a daily basis in small communities and large urban centers. Historians such as John Dittmer, William H. Chafe, and David R. Colburn have analyzed how national laws affected racial relations at the community level. While Dittmer and Chafe examined the movement in states traditionally associated with the civil rights movement—Mississippi and North Carolina respectively—Colburn looked at the movement in Florida, a state whose contemporary popular image as a tourist haven dominated by theme parks masks its history of racial tension. Seeking to address Florida's controversial past, Colburn and other historians of the state, such as David Goldfield, Randall Miller, George E. Pozetta, Tom Wagdy, and Charles U. Smith, have successfully documented the importance of Florida in the national civil rights movement.¹

This article continues in the current vein of civil rights historiography by exploring the interaction between the black and white communities within the town of Sanford, Florida. Sanford never made national headlines during the civil rights movement, although the city's blacks did participate in sit-ins, marches, and demonstrations. Nevertheless, an examination of the history of Sanford in the crucial decades of the 1950s and 1960s contributes

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1. John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, 1994); William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York, 1980); David R. Colburn, *Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980* (New York, 1985); David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture, 1940 to the Present* (Baton Rouge, 1990); Randall M. Miller and George E. Pozzetta, eds., *Shades of the Sunbelt: Essays on Ethnicity, Race, and the Urban South* (Boca Raton, 1989); Tom Wagdy, *Governor LeRoy Collins of Florida: A Spokesman of the New South* (Tuscaloosa, 1985); and Charles U. Smith, ed., *The Civil Rights Movement in Florida and the United States: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Tallahassee, 1989).

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to an understanding of the daily struggles in one town as it evolved from a legally segregated to a desegregated community.

As the seat of Seminole County, Sanford marched into the twentieth century confident in its ability to ensure sustained economic prosperity and population growth. In reality, however, prosperity was distributed unequally between the white and black communities. This was especially evident in the field of education. In September 1908, the *Sanford Herald* lauded the opening day of Sanford High, which served both white grammar and high school students, by praising its new physical and chemical laboratories and its newly appointed faculty and school board.² Two years later, faced with problems of overcrowding in the combined educational facility, the town constructed a new school solely for high school students. The *Sanford Herald* described it as “a splendid brick structure three stories high, handsomely finished and equipped with all modern conveniences.”³ By contrast in 1929, the Sanford School—for black students—consisted of two separate buildings, inadequately insulated, heated by a wood stove, and without electricity.⁴

Despite inequitable educational facilities, Sanford blacks took great pride in their schools and many teachers emerged as prominent community leaders. One of the most renowned was Joseph Nathaniel Crooms. In 1906, the Orange County School Board appointed Crooms principal of Hopper Academy, which served both grammar and high school students. It consisted of ten classrooms and one auditorium and, as was true of Sanford’s other schools, was soon overcrowded.⁵

In 1926, Crooms and his wife, Wealthy, donated seven and a half acres for the construction of Crooms Academy.⁶ The Academy became the center of the black community, educating its future leaders and providing a stimulating environment in which blacks could question and debate their second-class status within Sanford and the nation. Throughout the 1960s, Crooms Academy graduates emerged as respected civil rights leaders within the black community.

2. *Sanford Herald*, July 23, 1920.

3. *Ibid.*, November 18, 1910.

4. Proposal for National Register of Historic Places: Georgetown, 1990, p. 8, City Clerk’s Office, Sanford.

5. William N. Sheats, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida* (Tallahassee, 1918), 729. At this time, Sanford was part of Orange County. Seminole County was established in April 1913.

6. Proposal for National Register of Historic Places: Georgetown, 1990, p.11.



Faculty of the Crooms Academy, Sanford, 1943. *Photograph courtesy of the Sanford Museum.*

Inequities within the nation's school systems constituted one of the main targets of the modern civil rights movement. Teachers' salaries reflected prevalent racial discrimination. Throughout the 1920s salaries for Sanford's white teachers ranged between \$100 to \$200 per month, while black teachers received \$45 to \$120. Another contentious issue within Sanford's school system was the different term lengths for black and white students. Until the mid-1920s, white students in Seminole County attended school for eight months, black pupils for only six. Seminole County School Superintendent T. W. Lawton justified this discrepancy to Florida State School Superintendent William N. Sheats by arguing that "colored children will not attend with any degree of regularity for a longer term than six months."⁷ School funding, not student attendance rates, dictated the length of Sanford's school terms.

The advent of World War I encouraged cooperation between the black and white communities—despite profoundly unequal social, economic, and political conditions—in support of the war ef-

7. William N. Sheats, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Tallahassee, 1928), 729.

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fort. In October 1918, all branches of the Seminole County American Red Cross, including "4 Colored Auxiliaries," met to coordinate their fund-raising activities.⁸ Two months later the *Herald* commended the black community for its contributions to the War Works Fund Drive.⁹

As blacks supported the war effort, they entertained hopes that their contributions would lead eventually to equality at home. Many black servicemen who served overseas encountered for the first time societies unburdened by the racial caste system. They returned to the United States with a renewed desire to fight for equality and respect within their own country. These hopes, however, were quickly dashed. The majority of white Americans, overcome by the technological and cultural changes wrought by the war, sought a return to "normalcy." This desire manifested itself in the growing popularity of the Ku Klux Klan and the formation of other white supremacist groups intent on enforcing traditional race relations.¹⁰

The early postwar period witnessed the lynching of over seventy African Americans throughout the United States, several of whom were veterans still in uniform. The Ku Klux Klan, reorganized in 1915, boasted a membership of over five million by 1920.¹¹ No government or newspaper reports exist which indicate the presence of Klan activities in Sanford. The city council, nonetheless, unanimously passed a resolution on September 12, 1921, denouncing any individuals or associations who attempted to take "into their own hands the administration of the law and the regulations of the life and affairs of Sanford's citizens."¹² The councilmen characterized such actions as unconstitutional, unlawful and a bad example to others. They also reasoned that "any act or acts of violence attempted or done by any person or persons, not duly authorized by law to do so is a menace to good government [and] is an evil to others."¹³ The councilmen passed their resolution not because they sought racial justice, but rather because they feared that

8. *Sanford Herald*, October 4, 1918.

9. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1918.

10. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3d rev. ed. (New York, 1974), 114, 116; Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Lexington, 1994), 10.

11. David Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980* (Baton Rouge, 1982), 148; Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 115.

12. Minutes, Sanford City Commissioners, September 12, 1921, Vol. 2, 277-78, City Clerk's Office, Sanford.

13. *Ibid.*

mob action hindered the capability of law officers and posed a potential threat to the well-being of Sanford's citizens.

At the dawn of the Second World War, Sanford's black and white communities again pushed aside racial animosity, at least on the surface, to unite behind the war effort. Sanford's residents contributed to various war fund drives, and both its black and white male citizens volunteered for the draft, although they registered at segregated draft offices.¹⁴

For African Americans, World War II was a war not only against the Axis powers but also against racism and discrimination. Returning servicemen and women vowed not to abandon their quest for equality as their World War I cohorts had been forced to do, but rather to enlarge its scope and confront all aspects of America's segregated society. African Americans refused to continue to accept their second-class citizenship which entailed all the responsibilities and duties of the ruling class without any of its benefits. The ensuing civil rights movement exposed and attempted to eradicate the historical anomaly of a democratic country discriminating against a significant portion of its people.

Sports emerged as a major arena for civil rights activities. Most white southerners refused to entertain the image of a black man besting a white man, even if only on the baseball field or in the boxing ring.¹⁵ In 1946, Sanford's citizens encountered this scenario when Jackie Robinson, playing for the Montreal Royals, a Brooklyn Dodgers farm team, appeared in town for a "pre-spring" training camp.¹⁶

Until this time, Florida's sporting events were strictly segregated. A few arenas throughout the state provided small Jim Crow sections, but most denied blacks admittance. On March 4, Jackie Robinson and his wife, Rachel, arrived in Sanford for a series of "pre-spring" training exhibition games against the St. Paul Saints. Sanford's Mayflower Hotel refused to allow Jackie and Rachel to remain with the other players. Instead, the Robinsons, along with John Wright, another black team member, stayed at the home of David Brock, a local African American doctor. On the second day of training, Robinson and Wright returned to Brock's home after

14. *Sanford Herald*, October 15 and 29, 1940, August 13, 1941.

15. Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (New York, 1983).

16. Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York, 1984), 101.

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practice and were informed by Branch Rickey Jr., son of the Brooklyn Dodgers' team president, that they had to leave immediately for Daytona Beach. According to Rickey, a group of Sanford citizens had warned him that they would not tolerate blacks and whites playing on the same field and had ordered the players out of town.¹⁷

Dodgers officials refused to elaborate on Robinson and White's quick departure from Sanford and reported to the press only that the players wanted to get settled in Daytona before the start of spring training. On April 7, the Royals again returned to Sanford to play a pre-scheduled game against the Saints. Robinson appeared in the starting line-up and made the first run of the game. The first run, however, also proved to be his last. At the end of the second inning, Sanford's chief of police ordered Royals manager Clay Hopper to remove the black players. Hopper felt there was no point in resisting and removed Robinson and Wright from the dugout.¹⁸ Though the *Sanford Herald* later reported that the Saints beat the Royals 8 to 6, the article failed to mention the ejection of Robinson and Wright.¹⁹

Segregated sporting events filtered down from professional contests to neighborhood baseball diamonds. A month before the confrontation between Robinson, Wright, and the Sanford police chief, a group of black teenagers appeared before the city council requesting funds to construct a baseball park in Goldsboro, the black section of Sanford. The teenagers promised to furnish the labor if the council graded the field and supplied the clay. In this instance the commissioners approved the request. In the following years, however, inequitable recreational facilities emerged as the rallying cry for Sanford's civil rights proponents.²⁰

As these sporting events illustrate, Sanford's black and white communities continued to develop as two separate entities. Segregated housing and zoning ordinances contributed to this demarcation. In spite of the fact that the Supreme Court had ruled in *Buchanan v. Warley* in 1917 that racially segregated zoning was unconstitutional, southern officials quickly learned how to disguise even the most blatant discriminatory zoning ordinances. White home owners ensured the "correct" makeup of their neighbor-

17. *Ibid.*, 103, 106-107.

18. *Ibid.*, 109-110.

19. *Sanford Herald*, April 8, 1946.

20. Minutes, Sanford City Commissioners, March 25, 1946, Vol. 8, 269.

hoods by inserting private deed restrictions within their sale contracts. The construction of housing projects also strictly followed racial lines.²¹

On September 3, 1951, the Sanford Housing Authority laid the cornerstone for Castle Brewer Court, the city's first housing project for African Americans.²² A year later, the city dedicated the cornerstone of another black housing project, William Clark Court. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, President Emeritus at Bethune-Cookman College, delivered the main address. Bethune credited the late William Clark, black realtor and builder, for developing the Goldsboro neighborhood of Sanford. Clark had purchased several lots in the area and quickly populated the community by selling them on terms as low as five dollars down and five dollars a month. When Goldsboro had existed as a separate city, Clark had served as one of its mayors. The Housing Authority of Sanford, in recognition of Clark's community service, named the new project in his honor.²³

Low cost housing programs received support from both Sanford's white and black communities. The location of such projects, however, sparked heated debate. On September 25, 1950, citizens jammed the city council office to protest the re-zoning of a white neighborhood to accommodate black housing. A delegation of white citizens presented the council with a petition containing over two hundred signatures objecting to the proposed zoning program. The Sanford Housing Authority quickly capitulated to the white residents' demands and revoked its zoning recommendation. The committee justified its decision by reasoning that the proposed housing site would be situated across town from the black business district and movement between the two locales would severely increase city traffic.²⁴

Throughout its history, Sanford's city council enforced its rules and regulations without representation from the black community. In April 1950, Seminole County Commissioners denied Talvanis Scarbrough, an African American, the right to run for congressional committeeman on the grounds that he had only recently moved to Seminole County (though he had lived in the county for

21. Roger L. Rice, "Residential Segregation by Law, 1910-1917," *Journal of Southern History* 34 (May 1968), 189; Goldfield, *Cotton Fields*, 68.

22. *Sanford Herald*, September 3, 1951.

23. *Sanford Herald*, May 30, 1952.

24. Minutes, Sanford City Commissioners, September 25, 1950, Vol. 10, 116; *Sanford Herald*, September 26, 1950.

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at least nine months). Three years later, Matthew Lee Williams, a prominent leader of the African American community, became the first black to run for the Sanford City Council. Though Williams received 250 votes, he lost the election to Earl Higginbotham, a white employee with Standard Oil.²⁵

One of the most important rulings of the civil rights era occurred on May 17, 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. In this case, the Supreme Court reversed the earlier ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that had upheld the "separate but equal" doctrine. Chief Justice Earl Warren ruled "that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place."²⁶ Before the *Brown* ruling, many school officials had attempted to placate the courts by increasing funding for black schools. In the early 1950s, southern school board members more than tripled their expenditures on school construction and maintenance.²⁷ Sanford was no different. In October 1950, in response to the Sanford Negro Welfare League's criticism of the inferiority of the town's black schools, Sanford school board officials reported that, in the past two years, they had spent \$44,403 more on black than on white institutions; in particular, they pointed to the construction of a new library and football field at Crooms High School. The board neglected to mention, however, that these increased expenditures were necessary to bring black schools up to current building codes. A sanitation report compiled in the 1940s revealed that Sanford Grammar School lacked adequate lighting, self-closing toilet doors, and enough rooms to accommodate its burgeoning student population. The report also recommended that Hooper Academy's school building, sanitation facilities, and drinking fountains receive extensive repairs.²⁸

The *Brown* decision, though, mandated that southern officials end their charade of a "separate but equal" school system. While the decision initiated one of the most fundamental social transfor-

25. *Sanford Herald*, April 15, 1950, October 13, 1953; Minutes, Sanford City Commissioners, November 4, 1953, Vol. 11, 143.

26. Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 146-47; Tony A. Freyer, "Brown vs. Board of Education," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Civil Rights: From Emancipation to the Present*, eds. Charles D. Lowry and John F. Marszalek (New York, 1992), 71, 73.

27. Woodward, *Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 146.

28. Minutes, Seminole County Board of Public Instruction, October 12, 1950, Book 8, 220-22, Seminole County School Board Building, Sanford.

mations in American history, few Floridians acknowledged the ruling. The majority of state newspapers, including the *Sanford Herald*, failed to report the Court's decision.

Florida's calm reaction differed from the violent protests erupting in other southern states. Florida's relatively low percentage of blacks, situated within an increasingly diverse population, helped to mute inflammatory rhetoric. After World War II, a large number of military personnel, previously stationed in Florida, returned to live permanently in the state. Retirees from other parts of the country, utilizing Social Security benefits and early retirement options, increasingly chose Florida as their retirement haven. Since the 1920s, immigrants from abroad had moved to the Sunshine State and established their own thriving ethnic communities. In 1930 Tampa's Ybor City boasted the second largest Hispanic community in the South. By the 1950s, Jewish, Canadian, and Greek communities also contributed to the ethnic composition of the state. Along with its increasingly diverse population, Florida's growing dependence on tourism served to inhibit those reactionary demonstrations that would have tarnished the state's "vacation land" image.²⁹ Florida governor LeRoy Collins emerged as the most important proponent for racial moderation. Though he openly supported segregated schools, he refused to stoop to confrontational tactics or race-baiting rhetoric. In his 1957 inaugural address, he declared integration inevitable and urged Floridians to accept the process gracefully. Most Florida community leaders followed the governor. They opposed desegregation but refused to openly defy the Supreme Court.³⁰

Sanford reacted calmly to the *Brown* decision. No mention was made of the ruling in either the school board or city council minutes. City officials also denied a national pro-segregation group the opportunity to speak in their town. In December 1954, Sanford resident L. A. Baker asked the council to permit Bryan Bowles, president of the National Association for the Advancement of White

29. Raymond Arsenault and Gary R. Mormino, "From Dixie to Dreamland: Demographic and Cultural Change in Florida, 1880-1980," in *Shades of the Sunbelt*, 178-79, 185.

30. David Colburn and Richard Scher, "Race Relations and Florida Gubernatorial Politics Since the *Brown* Decision," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (July 1976), 154; Wagdy, *Governor LeRoy Collins*, 60; Joseph Aaron Tomberlin, "The Negro and Florida's System of Education: The Aftermath of the *Brown* Case" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1967), 57, 76.

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People (NAACP), to hold a public meeting. Mayor Earl Higgenbotham denied the request saying "he did not feel that any material good could come from such a speech."³¹ He cited the cordial relationship between the city's black and white communities stating "that there has been no trespassing from either side . . . no trouble in schools and churches . . . [and] the colored people are cooperating with the whites, the police, the city and county in every possible way."³²

The most contentious disagreement between the white and black communities continued to revolve around the use of recreational facilities. The minimal funding appropriated for black playgrounds and recreational centers failed to match those that the city allocated to the white football fields, swimming pool, civic center, and baseball diamonds. In the late 1950s, African Americans demanded either the integration of the superior white facilities or the construction of "separate but equal" recreational centers.

In July 1958, between forty and fifty black teenagers marched on the Sanford Civic Center's Youth Wing. Though the Center allowed blacks daytime use of the facilities for recreational activities, officials barred them from entering the building at night for social functions. Within ten minutes after the teenagers reached the Center, Police Chief Roy Williams disbanded the group. He recounted: "There was no disorder. All of the Negro youth left in an orderly manner when told they were approaching the problem in the wrong manner."³³

However, on the following afternoon, two black youths brandishing pocket knives allegedly threatened a group of white teenagers, warning, "We'll see you at the Civic Center tonight."³⁴ Bracing for a possible race riot, Chief Williams stationed six extra policemen at the Center while Sanford's high school students enjoyed their regular Saturday evening dance. The *Sanford Herald* reported "an ominous and tense feeling permeating throughout the evening as police officers checked every area . . . for any groups that might be congregating and attempting to move on the Civic center."³⁵ Though the newspaper reported that a number of Afri-

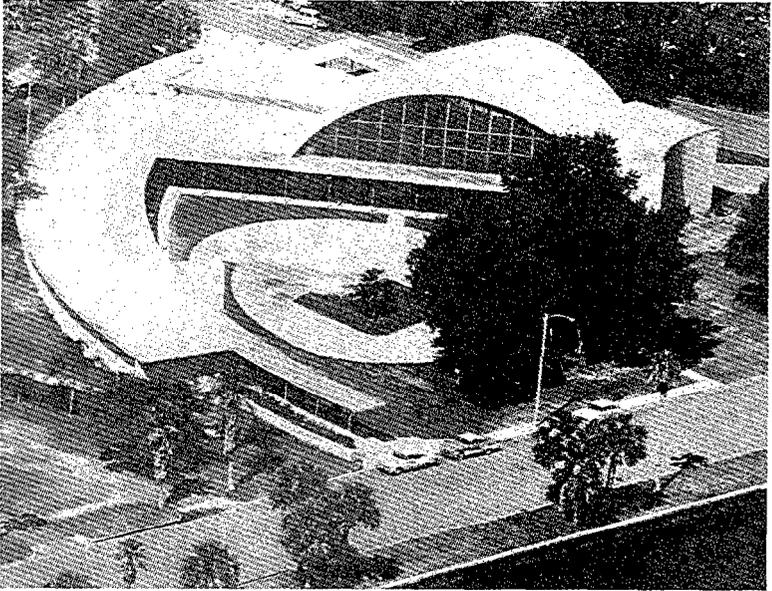
31. Minutes, Sanford City Commissioners, December 13, 1954, Vol. 11, 328.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Sanford Herald*, July 28, 1958.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*



In the late 1950s, black teens marched on the Sanford Civic Center (pictured here, 1960) to protest the facility's discriminatory practices. *Photograph courtesy of the Sanford Museum.*

can Americans were seen driving by the Center, no one stopped or attempted to approach the building.³⁶

The following week the city council met with the demonstration leaders to discuss constructing their own youth center. No commissioner suggested allowing the black youths to use the Civic Center separately from their white counterparts. The image of black and white teenagers dating and socializing in the same building, even on different nights, appalled the sensibilities of the stately councilmen.³⁷

Conflict over the segregated recreational facilities continued into the 1960s. In April 1961, the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) presented the city with a petition calling for the desegregation of all parks, playgrounds, and ballfields. Although the newspaper reported that city officials threatened to close all recreational facili-

36. *Ibid.*

37. Minutes, Sanford City Commissioners, August 25, 1958, Vol. 12, 408.

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ties if blacks attempted to integrate, minutes of the city commissioners' meeting fail to mention any such measure. The final reference to this incident occurred on April 20, when the newspaper listed the names of all African Americans who had signed the desegregation petition.³⁸

In other areas around the nation, civil rights advocates increasingly defied segregation ordinances. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and took a seat. When she refused to relinquish her seat to a white passenger she was arrested and imprisoned, but the resulting year-long boycott by Montgomery's black population ended segregation of mass transit in the city.³⁹

The boycott in Montgomery touched off similar protests throughout the United States. On May 27, 1956, two Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) students, Wilhelmina Jakes and Carrie Patterson, boarded a Tallahassee city bus and sat in the only vacant seats, located in the front of the bus. The driver ordered the co-eds to stand in the back, but the students resisted. They offered to leave the bus if the driver returned their fare, but he refused. The police arrived on the scene and arrested the women, charging them "with placing themselves in a position to cause a riot."⁴⁰

On the following day, Broadus Hartley, FAMU student government president, urged his fellow students to follow Montgomery's example and boycott the city's buses for the remainder of the semester. Their actions launched the first mass civil rights demonstration on an American campus and the first student-initiated boycott.⁴¹

Tallahassee's black business and religious leaders supported the students' actions. Reverend C. K. Steele organized the Negro Inter Civic Council (ICC) to represent the black community during the boycott. ICC leaders met with Tallahassee city officials and presented them with a list of demands which included the seating of passengers on a "first-come-first-serve-basis"; the hiring of more

38. *Sanford Herald*, April 18-20, 1961.

39. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern*, 76, 95-96.

40. Leedell W. Neyland, "The Tallahassee Bus Boycott in Historical Perspective: Changes and Trends," in *The Civil Rights Movement in Florida and the United States*, 30-31.

41. *Ibid.*, 31; Glenda Alice Rabby, "Out of the Past: The Civil Rights Movement in Tallahassee, Florida" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1984), 15-16.

black bus drivers; and the extension of courteous treatment to black riders. City leaders refused to meet the demands and the boycott continued. However, on December 21, 1956, the Supreme Court upheld *Browder v. Gayle* which ruled that segregation on public transportation violated the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. Shortly after the ruling, ICC leaders boarded a Tallahassee city bus and rode in the front seats.⁴²

In 1957, two African American students traveling by Greyhound bus from Bethune-Cookman College to Orlando sat among white passengers. After the driver made sure no white passengers were standing, "the bus continued with the whites and coloreds mixed without incident."⁴³ This event exemplified Sanford's white residents' typical reaction to the gradual desegregation of their community. As long as African Americans asserted their rights unobtrusively and did not inconvenience the white community, integration proceeded in a slow but non-confrontational manner.

On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act. Its passage redefined social interaction within every American community.⁴⁴ Sanford Mayor A. L. Wilson, in an open letter to the *Sanford Herald*, implored all citizens to abide by the Civil Rights Bill. Three days later, the mayor happily reported that "the people of Sanford are taking the provisions of the new civil rights bill in stride and are remaining God-loving and law abiding, peaceful citizens."⁴⁵ The newspaper also cited unofficial accounts of food and beverage businesses quietly integrating without incident.⁴⁶

Another component of the Civil Rights Bill, Title VI, empowered the federal government to withhold money from any program that maintained discriminatory practices. Even though federal educational aid was a relatively recent phenomenon, Florida's schools depended heavily on their allocations. The threat of losing such aid prompted Sanford, along with other Florida communities, to finally address school desegregation.⁴⁷

42. Rabby, "Out of the Past," 19; Neyland, "The Tallahassee Bus Boycott," 33, 39; Marshall Hyatt, "Montgomery Bus Boycott," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Civil Rights*, 362.

43. *Sanford Herald*, January 17, 1957.

44. Mark Stern, *Calculating Visions: Kennedy, Johnson, and Civil Rights* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1991), 80, 160.

45. *Sanford Herald*, July 6, 1964.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Hugh Davis Graham, *The Uncertain Triumph: Federal Education Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Years* (Chapel Hill, 1984), xviii, 5.

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On February 18, 1959, school board members at Orchard Villa Elementary School, in Dade County, unanimously voted to admit four black students for the next semester. On September 8, the four black children attended school with only eight registered white pupils. White students were absent not only because parents insisted that they boycott the integrated school, but also because of the changing racial structure of the surrounding neighborhood. Most white families left when increasing numbers of black residents moved to the area. On October 7, the Orchard Villa School Board registered 379 black students and replaced the white faculty with black teachers. Instead of designing an innovative desegregation program, the board merely created another all black school.⁴⁸

In the following years, however, other Florida schools introduced integration on a more permanent level. In 1961-62, four counties—Volusia, Broward, Palm Beach, and Hillsborough—admitted blacks to formerly all white schools. By the end of the 1963 term, 3,650 African American students, 1.5 percent of the total black school enrollment population, attended integrated schools. Ninety-eight percent of all black pupils, however, remained in segregated institutions.⁴⁹

Sanford eventually enacted a “freedom of choice” plan to initiate school desegregation. This plan allowed parents and students to select the school they wished to attend. The program, however, limited integration by relying on residential segregation. Most parents chose schools within their neighborhoods and, since residential patterns remained segregated, school populations continued to reflect this trend.⁵⁰

48. Colburn and Scher, “Race Relations and Florida Gubernatorial Politics Since the *Brown* Decision,” 160; Wagy, *Governor LeRoy Collins*, 128-30.

49. Tomberlin, “The Negro and Florida’s System of Education,” 200, 220.

50. Charles Grigg and Charles U. Smith, “School Desegregation in Florida,” in *The Civil Rights Movement in Florida and the United States*, 206. A number of historians also credit southern business leaders for urging compliance with school desegregation legislation. Their actions did not stem from their belief in black equality, but rather from the fear of losing northern business investment. Though motivated by self interest, businessmen often provided important mediation between the white and black communities. The most violent confrontations occurred in southern cities when business leaders failed to advocate compromise. See David R. Colburn, “The Saint Augustine Business Community: Desegregation, 1963-1964,” and Steven F. Lawson, “From Sit-In to Race Riot: Businessmen, Blacks, and the Pursuit of Moderation in Tampa, 1960-1967,” in *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation*, eds. David R. Colburn and Elizabeth Jacoway (Baton Rouge, 1982), 211-35, 257-81.

On January 28, 1965, the Seminole County School Board presented its desegregation plan to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The plan allowed Seminole County pupils to attend schools closest to their homes and enabled students to transfer to any county school as long as such a "transfer is not based on racial considerations."⁵¹

Earlier that month the school board approved two out of three applications by black students to attend schools near their homes. Ingrid Burton, "a straight A student at Crooms High School," transferred to Seminole Junior High. Jocelyn Harold, "also an above average student," was reassigned to Southside Elementary School. The board denied Charlotte Ringling's request because she lived closer to Hopper Elementary than Southside.⁵²

In July 1965, the school board focused on desegregating school faculty and recreational facilities. The Personnel Assignment Ordinance mandated that black and white faculty and administrators jointly attend all meetings and training programs. The board also demanded that all students be granted equal opportunity to participate in any school activity and utilize the services of any recreational facilities.⁵³ On August 12, 1965, the *Sanford Herald* reported that "the majority of schools will enroll Negro and white students. . . . Token desegregation was begun last school year and school officials anticipate routine adjustment in a matter of days."⁵⁴

For the next several years, Sanford's black and white communities continued to work toward desegregation. By the 1970s, the federal government ruled that "freedom of choice" plans inherently limited integration and mandated busing of children to previously segregated schools.⁵⁵ Though de facto segregated schools still exist in the nation's inner cities and affluent suburbs, most white and black students casually interact on a daily basis.

Historian Glenda Rabby has argued that the civil rights movement occurred not only in the "halls of Congress or the White House,"

51. Minutes, Seminole County Board of Public Instruction, January 28, 1965, Book 12, 235.

52. *Sanford Herald*, January 25, 1965; Minutes, Seminole County Board of Public Instruction, January 19, 1965, Book 12, 233.

53. Minutes, Seminole County Board of Public Instruction, July 8, 1965, Book 12, 268.

54. *Sanford Herald*, August 12, 1965.

55. Minutes, Seminole County Board of Public Instruction Minutes, March 27, 1969, Book 14, 48.

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but also, and more dramatically, “in the main streets of communities across the nation.”⁵⁶ The integration of Sanford’s black and white communities transpired in the shadow of the more spectacular civil rights battles. The national media failed to cover Croom’s high school students’ march on the Civic Center or the quiet integration of Sanford’s drinking and eating facilities following the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Major television networks also neglected to report on the peaceful desegregation of Sanford’s school system. Lack of media attention, however, does not lessen the significance of the act. Together these incidents, along with the violent and nationally televised confrontations in Little Rock, Selma, Birmingham, Montgomery, St. Augustine, and Tallahassee, eradicated legalized segregation in the United States.

56. Rabby, “Out of the Past,” 4.