Diversity within a Racial Group: White People in Little Rock, 1957-1959

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DIVERSITY HAS BECOME A BUZZWORD. It conveys a desire to open institutions of power to previously excluded groups. This is a worthy goal. But in today’s discussions, diversity carries a meaning so restricted as to undermine this goal. In the national media, the word now refers almost exclusively to racial and ethnic diversity, implying that a skin-deep racial and ethnic diversity will guarantee diversity of cultural and philosophical perspectives. Stephen Carter, an African-American law professor and author, complained recently: “In the new rhetoric of affirmative action, it seems, the reason to seek out and hire or admit people of color is that one can have faith that their opinions, their perspective, will be different from the opinion and perspectives of people who are white—who evidently have a distinctive set of views of their own.”

The assumption that black people automatically think differently from white people and that white people think more or less alike—that any given collection of white people lacks diversity—pervades discussions of diversity. This is not necessarily a mark of racial prejudice on the part of those who advocate diversity. One may assume, without prejudice, that American culture is still strictly segregated. But the assumption of intraracial homogeneity may still be incorrect. The best way to test that assumption is to look at a situation in the past that appears to be extremely polarized between black and white, as in the American South during the


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first two decades after World War II. Intellectuals and other commentators in the national media portrayed white southerners as uniformly provincial and close-minded.2

Little Rock was the scene of the most dramatic confrontation between black and white in the South before the mid-1960s. So polarized and dangerous did the issue become there that federal troops were sent to maintain order. But even in this most dramatic struggle, there was actually great diversity within the white racial group. Although the extreme segregationists in Little Rock insisted that all white people had a common interest, white people never actually coalesced. Their diversity explains why the outcome of the crisis was different from what the segregationists planned. Ironically, northern liberals shared the segregationist assumption, at least insofar as it applied to southern white people. The racial mythology of southern segregationists and northern liberals (still alive in discussions of diversity today) blinded them to the divisions among white people. As things worked out in Little Rock, those divisions made the segregationist consensus impossible to sustain in the face of an integrationist attack, even

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2Examples abound in mainstream northern, and often southern, liberal opinion. See for example, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Indians, and Irish of New York City, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970) xxii, xxiv, which distinguishes between a “northern” and “southern” model of race relations; the “southern” is rigid, violent, and intraracially homogeneous. John Howard Griffin, a southern-reared writer whose narrative actually includes a couple of examples of non-racist white southerners, allowed his book, Black Like Me (New York: Signet, 1961), to be sensationalized into a best-selling oversimplification of southern white attitudes. See especially Griffin’s own preface and the covers of various paperback editions. Griffin’s episodes of southern white kindness often resolve into revelation of the not-so-subtle condescension underneath the posture of most southern “liberals.” See, for example, the climatic episodes of the book, 125-127.


Perhaps the most vivid examples of the stereotype of white southerners are in editorial cartoons. See, for example, Washington Post cartoonist Herbert Block’s 1958 cartoon, “Nah You Ain’t Got Enough Edjicashun To V ote,” reprinted in Straight Herblock (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), and Richard Q. Yardley, “Vindicated!” (which pictures a mentally retarded-looking “latent mob spirit”), Baltimore Sun, September 25, 1957.

though the attack in this case came from a small group of integrationists with no mass support.

White diversity in Little Rock revealed itself in several ways, the most obvious of which was ideological. Though the majority of white people in Little Rock, like white southerners elsewhere, favored segregation, they differed so much in the degree of importance they assigned to segregation that they ended up fighting each other as much as they fought the NAACP.3 There were three basic divisions. The first group were the extreme segregationists, who circulated lurid propaganda about the secret “race mixing” desires of integrationists and denounced moderates for cooperating with the Supreme Court. They asserted that the Brown decision was unconstitutional and called on the state legislature to nullify it. They attacked moderates for their corruption by Yankee dollars. Their propaganda was often anti-Semitic and anti-Catholic as well as anti-Yankee and anti-elite.4

The second group were the moderate segregationists, who granted the basic legality of the Brown decision. They sometimes expressed the hope that the Supreme Court would change its mind, but they would have no part of the call to flout federal court orders. Moderates called on the pragmatism of the people, asking them to accept the inevitable: economic development required federal contracts and other subsidies, which in turn required compliance with desegregation orders. Moderates avoided racial slurs and refrained from attributing sexual motives to their opponents. They refused to blame Yankees, recognizing that the industrial development of the state depended on northern capital. Most moderates, including both newspapers, initially supported school superintendent Virgil Blossom’s plan for gradual token desegregation. Deep down, some of these moderates may have favored greater desegregation, or they may have feared it as much as the extremists, but their inner motives are not under scrutiny here. What made them moderates was the public stance they took—that defying the law was futile and dangerous and that the Blossom Plan was the least painful way to comply with the law. As the Arkansas Gazette put it, “Few of us are entirely happy over the necessary developments in the wake of changes in the law. But


4Examples of this propaganda are in folder 1, box 4, Daisy Bates Papers, Special Collections Division, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville; and folders 353-355, box 34, Arkansas Council on Human Relations (ACHR) Papers, ibid.
certainly we must recognize that the School Board is simply carrying out its clear duty—and is doing so in the ultimate best interests of all the school children of Little Rock, white and colored alike."

The third group was the small but crucial number of white people in Little Rock who openly identified themselves with the cause of desegregation. One local white minister, Dunbar Ogden, accompanied the black students to school on their first day and faced the wrath of the segregationist mob. The same day, Grace Lorch protected one of the black students from the mob, nearly provoking an attack upon herself as a “nigger lover.” The Rev. Colbert Cartwright published articles supporting integration in national magazines and blamed moderates for temporizing with segregationists. Cartwright, aided by few less prominent ministers and some members of the Arkansas Council on Human Relations, also met privately with church groups and civic leaders to encourage desegregation.

These divisions created difficult political choices for state politicians. Gov. Orval Faubus, the central character in the drama at Little Rock, became a national symbol of southern white intransigence in the fall of 1957. But Faubus began as a moderate, denouncing an extreme segregationist, Jim Johnson, in the 1956 election campaign and defeating him. Extremist publications, in turn, denounced “Awful Faubus” for cooperating with integration. One such publication went so far as to say that Faubus was a “shrewd politician, well-schooled in the tactics of the communist-fronter.” But in August 1957, the extremists recognized that their divisive tactics marginalized them, and they courted Faubus, hoping to legitimize their cause. Upon learning that Faubus had ordered the Arkansas National Guard to surround Central High, Roy Harris, a White Citizens’ Council leader, recalled, “I sat there . . . just scratching my head

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5 *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), September 1, 1957.


7 *Arkansas Faith*, May 1956, in Daisy Bates Papers, box 4, folder 1.
and wondering if he called’em out for us, or agin’ us.” As the guard’s segregationist mission became clear, “Awful Faubus” became “Orval Fabulous,” a segregationist hero. The extremist whom Faubus had defeated in 1956 said, “He used my nickel and hit the jackpot.”

Religious diversity compounded the ideological diversity. The Catholic Church had its own school system, a hierarchy that was invulnerable to local public opinion, and a history of its own victimization by bigotry. These facts may explain the steps beyond moderation taken by Catholics. Many Catholic churches and schools in the South were already integrated. At least two schools in Arkansas—in Fort Smith and Paris—admitted black students in 1954. The Catholic bishop of Little Rock, Albert Fletcher, made a forthright statement shortly after the Brown decision saying that the Court cleared “the way legally for the church to act more freely in giving to all races the same benefits.” Fletcher said, “It is especially urgent that Catholic Negro children be admitted to any Catholic school available in places where there is no Catholic school especially for them,” and reminded his listeners “that persons of every race, creed and nation should be made to feel at home in every Catholic church.” On Columbus Day 1957, shortly after the crisis broke out, nearly one third of the Catholic population of Little Rock and North Little Rock turned out for prayer meetings organized to express disagreement with segregation. A Catholic spokesman said the reason for the strong turnout was not Catholics’ sympathy for integration but their “respect for authority.”

The national and regional Protestant organizations also made statements supporting desegregation, and initially their affiliated churches in Arkansas showed signs of following suit. The state Disciples of Christ, for example, resolved in April 1956 to “exert efforts toward orderly compliance” with desegregation and called upon political candidates to refrain from race-baiting in the upcoming election campaign. Little Rock’s white ministerial alliance (sixty ministers) integrated itself with the black min-

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9Jim Johnson in Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence since 1945 (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 92. Even after this point, Faubus continued to espouse moderation, saying that he sent the troops to prevent violence, not to prevent integration. He implied that he was protecting the black students from extreme segregationists.


isterial alliance (thirty ministers) in April 1956.\textsuperscript{12} But Ernest Campbell and Thomas Pettigrew note in their study of the Little Rock ministry that most of the local Protestant ministers did not forthrightly lead their congregations in support of desegregation—even though many believed that segregation was morally wrong. In other words, they remained moderates. They opposed lawlessness and violence but feared reaction from their parishioners if they took controversial positions on principle. Colbert Cartwright did lose 10 percent of his church members. Preachers in less liberal churches feared a greater reaction.\textsuperscript{13}

There is evidence that at least some church women did not feel so constrained, adding another dimension of diversity along gender lines. The Council of Church Women of Little Rock and North Little Rock issued a statement expressing “our Christian conviction that enforced segregation of any group of persons because of race, creed, or color is a violation of Christian principle. The national and state bodies of the denominations which we represent are all on record with statements saying that the Supreme Court rulings are in keeping with Christian principles.” The church women were “shocked and dismayed that the governor of our state has placed military troops within our community to defy the order of the federal court.”\textsuperscript{14} Women were also disproportionately present at the Columbus Day prayer meetings.\textsuperscript{15} Groups of church women had a degree of freedom that ministers, constrained by their direct financial dependence on their congregations, lacked.

Generational differences may have been as important as gender differences. Campbell and Pettigrew’s figures indicate that young ministers were most likely to oppose segregation, sometimes even challenging their congregations. The most effective resistance to pastors who hinted at integrationist views came from the older, more established church members. The young ministers had little influence but voiced sentiments that senior clergymen dared not voice.\textsuperscript{16}

Setting aside the gender and generational divisions, there was some correlation of denomination with ideology. Vigorous opposition to integration came from independent sects and small Baptist churches affiliated with the American Baptist Association and the Missionary Baptists of Ar-

\textsuperscript{12}Southern School News, May 1956, in Record and Record, Little Rock, U.S.A, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{13}Campbell and Pettigrew, \textit{Christians in Racial Crisis}, 2-3, 17, 37, 65; Christmas Message from Colbert Cartwright, December 14, 1958, ser. IV, folder 215, SRC Papers, reel 141.
\textsuperscript{14}Reprinted in \textit{Christian Century}, October 2, 1957, ser. IV, file 217, SRC Papers, reel 141.
\textsuperscript{15}Campbell and Pettigrew, \textit{Christians in Racial Crisis}, 34.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 69-70, 82-83.
kansas rather than with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). In a resolu-
tion that was adopted by the American Baptist Association, the pastor of
Little Rock’s Antioch Baptist Church condemned integration as not only
ungodly but unlawful.\textsuperscript{17} On the other hand, virtually all the Catholic and
Episcopal churches, most of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, and
the larger, SBC-affiliated Baptist churches took the moderate position of
opposing resistance to the Blossom Plan without explicitly endorsing in-
tegration.\textsuperscript{18} Sixteen prominent ministers stretched the moderate position by
signing a statement strongly protesting Governor Faubus’s use of National
Guard troops to prevent integration; most of the signers were pastors of the
Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and the larger SBC-affiliated Baptist
churches.\textsuperscript{19}

The ideological and denominational divisions derived in large part
from a class division. From the start, there was strong opposition to Blos-
som’s desegregation plan among the lower classes. In a March 1957 school
board election, opposition to the Blossom Plan came from a minority
(abou one third of all voters) concentrated in the working-class wards of
the city.\textsuperscript{20} The reason was easy to see. The Blossom Plan called for inte-
gregation of Central High, a predominantly working-class and lower middle-
class school, while leaving the white upper-class high school, Hall High,
untouched. The smaller churches opposing integration were generally
working-class churches, and they made a point of attacking the hypocrisy
of the upper-class church leaders who supported integration of Central and
sent their children to Hall.\textsuperscript{21}

Generational differences may be important here as well. Prominent
students at Central expressed moderation, and students generally seemed
much less opposed to integration than the parents—who were publicly rep-
resented by a militantly segregationist group, the Mothers’ League of Cen-

\textsuperscript{17}Record and Record, \textit{Little Rock, U.S.A.}, 17.
\textsuperscript{18}They did this by joining the prayer meetings on Columbus Day, 1957, which,
although many organizers remained noncommittal on the merits of integration, were a
gesture of opposition to a rival prayer meeting organized by avowed segregationists.
Campbell and Pettigrew, \textit{Christians in Racial Crisis}, 30-33. See also “To the Churches of
Little Rock,” by the Episcopal bishop of Little Rock, Robert Brown (who initiated the
Columbus Day meetings), September 23, 1957, in folder 48, box 5, ACHR Papers.
\textsuperscript{19}Ministers’ statement with list of signers and their churches in \textit{New South} 12 (Octo-
\textsuperscript{20}Elizabeth Jacoway, “Taken by Surprise: Little Rock Business Leaders and Desegre-
gation,” in \textit{Southern Businessmen and Desegregation}, ed. Elizabeth Jacoway and David
Colburn (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 22.
\textsuperscript{21}Campbell and Pettigrew, \textit{Christians in Racial Crisis}, 41-42, 47. It should be noted
that the students of Hall High themselves voted overwhelmingly (70 percent) in favor of
desegregating their school in 1958. Fred Routh to Harold Fleming, September 23, 1958,
ser. IV, folder 220, SRC Papers, reel 141.
Central High. Shortly after classes opened in the fall of 1957, the student body president at Central, Ralph Brodie, was quoted in the news as saying he did not object to sitting next to black students in class. Asked whether he personally thought black students should be admitted immediately, he replied, “Sir, it’s the law. We are going to have to face it some time . . . . If it’s a court order, we have to follow it and abide by the law.”22 Earlier that year, Brodie had participated in a goodwill effort to help black students to prepare for their entry in the school.23 Craig Rains, a white senior and student council member, recalled seeing the first black student being harassed by the mob. “I was just dumbfounded,” he said. He could not believe “people would actually be this way to other people. I began to change from somebody who was moderate, who if I had my way, would have said, ‘Let’s don’t integrate, because it’s the state’s right to decide,’ to someone who felt a real sense of compassion for these students. I also developed a real dislike for the people that were out there that were causing problems. It was very unsettling to me.”24 Marcia Webb Lecky, a white girl who was secretary of the senior class, later recalled thinking that the federal troops came “because Faubus was causing problems.” She said that the most of the students at Central “were glad when the resolution came with President Eisenhower taking charge.”25 In December 1957, Daisy Bates, head of the state NAACP and organizer of the integration effort, stated that inside Central High, the nine black students now faced only “scattered” insults and were “comparatively happy.” She said that in a school of nineteen hundred students there were only fifty to one hundred “agitators,” who bothered the black students.26 One white girl told reporters that there was “very little trouble at all” inside the school and that the majority of her classmates were “disgusted” with the white students who protested desegregation by leaving class. Superintendent Blossom said “the majority of students acted with dignity and tact,” and one white school administrator at Central said that many white students “spoke words of encouragement to the Negro children and urged them to ‘stay and fight it out.’”27

22Arkansas Gazette, September 10, 1957.
25Marcia Webb Lecky in Hampton and Fayer, Voices of Freedom, 50.
26Kansas City Star, December 8, 1957, in Bates Papers, folder 9, box 12.
27White student and Blossom in Record and Record, Little Rock, U.S.A., 59-63; Huckaby, Crisis at Central, 36.
When Governor Faubus chose to identify himself with the extreme segregationists, upper-class business leaders were more open to desegregation than the population as the whole. This was partly opportunism. Winthrop Rockefeller, whom Faubus had appointed to the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission, told the Little Rock Women’s Republican Club in 1956 that “Big industry is shying away from Southern states” because those states were defying the federal government on segregation. As Elizabeth Jacoway shows in her study of Little Rock business leaders, however, most businessmen were slow to follow this logic to its conclusion and, before extreme segregationists insisted on closing the schools in the fall of 1958, contented themselves with quiet statements of respect for the law.

Responding above all to a breakdown of public authority, business leaders did begin to turn against the extreme segregationists. Faubus’s decision to block the desegregation plan with armed force, whatever else it did, challenged the authority of the mayor, police chief, and school superintendent of Little Rock. Faubus testified that increased sales of knives and revolvers among Central students justified his interference. Mayor Woodrow Wilson Mann, however, testified that there was no indication there would be violence. Asked about Faubus’s testimony, police chief Marvin Potts said, “Let’s just say I haven’t heard what Gov. Faubus says he has heard.” Superintendent Blossom said there was no evidence of increased knife and revolver sales in the police information available to him. When Faubus, under pressure from Washington and the federal courts, withdrew the National Guard and violence did break out, Mayor Mann sent a telegram to Washington saying, “The immediate need for federal troops is urgent . . . . Situation is out of control and police cannot disperse the mob.” Only after this breakdown of local authority did President Eisenhower send in the federal troops.

With the city occupied, the division between moderate segregationists and extreme segregationists grew. Realizing that desegregation was the only way to restore order, moderates saw that they could put responsibility for desegregation on an authority distant from themselves. Faubus chose

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28 Rockefeller quoted in Fred Routh to Nat Griswold, April 19, 1956, ser. IV, folder 220, SRC Papers, reel 141.
29Jacoway, “Taken by Surprise,” 15-41.
30Blossom in Harry Ashmore, Hearts and Minds: A Personal Chronicle of Race in America (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 257; Potts in Record and Record, Little Rock, U.S.A., 34. Judge Ronald Davies cited Mayor Mann’s testimony that there was no indication there would be any violence in his decision to throw out the injunction requested by the Mothers’ League.
31 Ashmore, Hearts and Minds, 266; Mann’s telegram in Stephen E. Ambrose, Eisenhower: The President (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 419.
to court the lower-class voters in Little Rock who resented this imposition of outside authority on them. This probably helped him in the state as a whole, but in Little Rock it drove the wedge deeper between the governor and rival claimants of public authority in the city.

From that point on, gender differences are crucial to understanding the position of the white upper class. A group called the Women’s Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools formed in July 1958 in anticipation of Faubus’s order to close the schools. These were mostly college-educated women married to business managers. Like the churchwomen (with whom their membership overlapped), they were not as vulnerable to economic retaliation as their male counterparts. They could afford to take controversial position that their husbands and ministers could not take. They may also have had unique resources with which to persuade their husbands. Irving Spitzberg suggested a Lysistrata effect when he quoted a news reporter as asking a member of the Women’s Emergency Committee, “Irene, did you instruct your girls to withhold sex if their husbands didn’t behave?” She answered, “Damn straight,” though she later indicated that she was only joking.

Developments in the public eye gave business leaders reason to redefine moderation as active defense of desegregated schools. In September 1958, sixty-three prominent lawyers declared in a paid advertisement their view that Faubus’s effort to operate the schools as private schools was illegal. They defined the issue as either “a limited integrated school system” or “no public school system.” Disorder and school closings hurt business. Investment in new and expanded plants in Arkansas dropped from $130 million in 1956 to $50 million in 1957 to $25 million in 1958.

Segregationism, meanwhile, became associated not only with lower-class resentments but with disorder and violence—all bad for business.

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33 Jacoway, “Taken by Surprise,” 31. The gender division seems to have functioned differently among the lower-class women than among the upper class. Female status did not seem to free lower-class women to take a more explicit or militant position than their husbands. There seemed to be complete congruence between the Mothers’ League of Central High and segregationist statements made by men. Women did perhaps strengthen the segregationist appeal, however, by invoking the special authority they had as mothers.


35 A related advertisement by doctors indicated a strong consensus among professionals against Faubus. Nat R. Griswold manuscript, June 3, 1959, folder 277, box 27, ACHR Papers.

36 Not a single new industry located in Little Rock in the academic year that the schools were closed; *New South* 14 (June 1959): 10.
The extreme segregationists drove moderates into de facto support of de-segregation. Business leaders—often led by their wives—rallied to the cause of keeping the schools open. A new group, Stop This Outrageous Purge (STOP), which was formed at a meeting of some 200 businessmen, protested the mass firing of forty-four teachers and administrators who had supported the Blossom Plan.\(^{37}\) The initiative behind STOP came from a Parent-Teacher Association chapter in Pulaski Heights. Two prominent upper-class women were the main organizers. Soon prominent upper-class men joined in, with the industrial director of the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce campaigning for reopened schools and making mildly explicit statements in favor of desegregation.\(^{38}\) The Chamber of Commerce polled its membership and found that 819 favored, while only 245 opposed, “re-opening the Little Rock public high schools on a controlled minimum plan of integration acceptable to the federal courts” (83 did not vote). In March 1959, the Chamber of Commerce issued a statement saying,

> The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, however much we dislike it, is the declared law and is binding on us. We think that the decision was erroneous and that it was a reversal of established law upon an unprecedented base of psychology and sociology. But we must in honesty recognize that, because the Supreme Court is the court of last resort in this country, what it has said must stand until there is a correcting constitutional amendment or until the Court corrects its own error. We must live and act now under the decision of the Court.\(^{39}\)

By May 1959, the leader of STOP said that the fear that had kept business and professional men like himself from taking a public stance, because a stance would hurt business, had vanished.\(^{40}\) A coalition of black and upper-class white voters drove the extreme segregationists off the school board in a recall election that month.

When schools reopened in the fall of 1959, local authority reasserted itself. Little Rock police made twenty-four arrests and used billy clubs and fire hoses to disperse the mob that gathered to resist the re-entry of black students. The extreme segregationists retaliated by bombing the fire chief’s car and the offices of the mayor and the school superinten-

\(^{37}\) *Arkansas Democrat* (Little Rock), May 9, 1959.

\(^{38}\) Jacoway, “Taken by Surprise,” 34-36.

\(^{39}\) Chamber of Commerce vote tally and statement in *New South* 14 (June 1959): 8-9; and in Jacoway, “Taken by Surprise,” 33.

\(^{40}\) *Arkansas Democrat*, May 9, 1959.
Terrorism, predictably, thinned the support for defiance of desegregation even further.

The bombings were the most extreme example of the segregationists’ divisive tactics. These tactics exacerbated the divisions among the white people of Little Rock, but they did not create those divisions. The Blossom Plan, by aiming at a lower-class school, drove the first wedge between social classes in the city. The moderates’ hesitation and lack of conviction probably encouraged Faubus to move boldly against the plan’s implementation. But in doing so, he became associated with extreme tactics. The extremists alienated large numbers of moderates, who wanted segregation but did not want disorder. The extremists gained the governor as a de facto ally and helped his political career, but they also drove Little Rock’s economic and political leaders into a de facto alliance with the NAACP. They put the NAACP in the position of standing for the most conservative goals, including law and order and a good investment climate. Even the governor could not completely associate himself with the extremists but clung to his position as a protector. The school closings, the purge, and the bombings, though worth the trouble to those who held segregation to be a sacred principle, were too much for those who held segregation as just one priority among many.

White diversity was especially important in Little Rock because there was less black solidarity there than in any other major civil rights battle in the 1950s and early 1960s. The movement in Little Rock was a top-down effort coordinated by the local NAACP leader Daisy Bates, rather than a church-based mass movement. Bates indicated that she was isolated. She said that her friends stopped coming to see her during the crisis, because they were afraid. Although Kenneth Clark reported an increased unity and resolve in the black community because of the crisis, Bates knew the unity was fragile. “If one black child had died,” she said years later, “the black community would have chased me out of town.” Her position was precarious because local black people saw her as an “outsider,” who was “stirring up trouble.”

Against that background, had there been greater white solidarity, the segregationists’ position would have been secure. Instead, there was enough diversity among the white people for the civil rights forces to gain a limited victory. The most important aspect of that victory was not the to-

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44 Bates, interview, 60, 54.
ken desegregation of Central High School but the decision of the federal government to intervene. Without the conflict and resulting breakdown of local authority, the extremely cautious President Eisenhower would not have taken the risk. Eisenhower’s move set a precedent, pitting the executive branch of the federal government against the states’ righters. The popularity the defiant governor gained among resentful lower-class voters also set a precedent, one that encouraged other governors to provoke federal intervention in other states.