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# *Second-Class Integration: A Historical Perspective for a Contemporary Agenda*

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*In this essay, Vanessa Siddle Walker invokes the voices of black educators who challenged the diluted and failed vision for an integrated South after the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision mandating school desegregation. Through collaboration and activism, these educators fought against the second-class integration implemented in the southern states and instead advocated for true equality and empowerment for black children entering integrated schools. Walker demonstrates that these educators' critiques are strikingly applicable to the present U.S. educational system, as they highlight our country's failure to provide educational equity despite decades of debate about its necessity and reforms to address the injustices. She advises President Obama's administration to incorporate these original visions of black educators in efforts to craft and advance a new vision for integration and racial equality in schools.*

The stories of black educators who taught during U.S. government-enforced racial segregation have been systemically excluded from the vast number of narratives of school desegregation (Baker, 1996; Beals, 1994; Davison, 1995; Harlan, 1958; Kluger, 1977; Martin, 1998; Payne & Strickland, 2008; St. James, 1980; Tushnet, 1987). Where their voices collectively do enter into the story, theirs is a portrait of a lack of participation, fear of job loss, and general antipathy toward the noble cause of acquiring civil rights for all citizens (Tushnet, 1987). When their voices individually appear, their educational affiliation is minimized or they are elevated as anomalous among their peers (Charron, in press; Kluger, 1977). Even scholarship that cites black educators' financial support of the National Association of the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP) fails to recognize the dogged collective commitment that defines black teachers' organizations over time or the myriad activities in which they engaged to ensure an

equitable school integration policy (Fairclough, 2007; Tushnet, 1987). The reasonable conclusion from such omissions, though never stated in the narratives, is that the ideas and sacrifices of black educators at the cusp of the elimination of de jure racial segregation were of little consequence.

No wonder contemporary educators fail to import the ideology of black educators into current discussions about racial desegregation in our schools. Beguiled by a historic account that excludes their agency, today's educators have little basis to imagine that black educators—long dismissed from public service—would contribute anything that adds complexity to past or present desegregation accounts. Moreover, the resurrection of black educators' focus on the advancement of black children in particular could be misconstrued as affirmation of the Supreme Court's recent retreat from its commitment to school desegregation (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2008; Thomas, 2007). Although such omissions and concerns are understandable, they function to suppress a comprehensive account of the vision for school desegregation that black educators championed. They also aid in silencing the voices of black educators in the current conversation—an omission that may be as invidious an action as the firings of these educators in the years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (Tate, 1954b).

This brief expedition into a complicated past explores the perspective and role of black educators—specifically through their organizational structures—as advocates for equality before and after the *Brown* decision. Drawing on a larger study that uses the archival records of black educators' professional organizations to interrogate traditional desegregation accounts, I offer a thematic overview of their activities couched in the commentary of one of their leaders and then use the perspective of black educators as a lens through which to examine the present state of racial desegregation in schools. At its root, this juxtaposition of the past and present is designed to provide some context for a new vision of educational justice for African American children and to elucidate the moral imperative that was somehow lost along the way in the quest for racial desegregation. The election of President Obama and the selection of his administration present an opportunity to reimagine a racial and ethnic integration in the United States that comes closer to realizing the vision of black educators who long fought for desegregation: first-class citizenship for all students.

### School Integration: A Glimpse into the Activity and Beliefs of Black Educators

When Dr. Horace Edward Tate commanded the podium in Atlanta, Georgia, in June 1970, he carried with him the conviction and anger of a man on a mission to educate a community. This speech, presented to members of the religious black community, was not unlike the many others he had presented in his nine years as executive director of the Georgia Teachers and Education

Association (GTEA), an organization for black educators that was conceived in 1878 to protest inequality in Georgia's distribution of school funding. As executive director, Tate was responsible for representing the collective interests of black educators in promoting educational opportunities for black children. Paid by black educators and responsible solely to them, Tate fulfilled the mandate of his office with vigor, enthusiasm, and insightfulness, sometimes placing his life at risk as he endured long hours building on the legacy of leaders who had preceded him (U. Byas, interview with author, November 2008; C. Hicks, interview with author, July 2008).

"There is evil in the land," Tate began. His voice was even and compelling, luring listeners into his slow rhythmic cadence. "And wherever there is evil, it must be perseveringly and vigorously pursued until it no more exists" (Tate, 1970a). The beginning was odd. He was giving this speech in the year in which the federal courts were finally enforcing the integration that had been commanded in *Brown* (1954) sixteen years earlier—a victory that represented the end of a fight he and his predecessors had waged against racial inequalities. Despite this, after dispensing with the obligatory commendations to program sponsors and participants and elaborating on the responsibility of all living creatures to eliminate evil, he announced the provocative title and subject of his talk: "Some Evils of Second-Class Integration."

*Tate's Forewarnings about Second-Class Integration and Its Associated Evils*

Tate and the other executive secretaries of the black teachers' organizations throughout the South—a group collectively known as the National Council of Officers of State Teachers Associations (NCOSTA)—had been advocating for "real integration" instead of "second-class integration" (NCOSTA, 1968; H. E. Tate, interview with author, February 14, 2002). He and his colleagues imagined schools where the conditions for blacks would be better after integration than they had been before. They believed the opening of democratic opportunities represented by integrated schooling would be accompanied by a continuation of the vision and agency black educators had used to construct educational opportunities for black children in the past (H. E. Tate, interview with author, February 14, 2002). They did not expect integration to mean the "elimination, annihilation, liquidation of everything initiated, developed or directed by the Negro" (Tate, 1970a). In a memo to his colleagues in 1968, Tate had expressed the sentiment clearly: "Everyone senses that integration is not what is happening" (Tate, 1968). Rather, "outergration" typified the current reality of a desegregation agenda that was disposing of black educators, their ideas, and their organizations. That evening in Atlanta, Tate described a "second-class integration," illustrating the failure of school desegregation policies to meet the expectations of black educators and, further, to point out that their voices were being diminished.

Horace Tate was never known to mince words. "I've lived in this society for forty-seven years," he began, "and thirty-one were spent in an atmosphere per-

plexed with the evils of legal segregation. Ever since I was old enough to know what it was, I have detested it and made every effort to help eradicate it” (Tate, 1970a). As he spoke, Tate no doubt remembered childhood experiences of racism, but the address also captured the intersection of his personal history of undeserved professional oppression with his and other black educators’ long-standing organizational advocacy for equality of opportunity for black children (Perkins, 1989; Picott, 1975; Porter & Neyland, 1977; Potts, 1978).

By the time Tate had become a school principal in 1943, the fight for educational equality in Georgia was fifty-four years old. Among the GTEA’s past activities had been a push for a more equitable agenda for black children in 1918 (using monies available through the Smith-Hughes Act) and its campaign in the 1920s to use philanthropic funding from the Rosenwald rural school-building program to construct elementary schools for black children throughout the South (GTEA History Committee, 1966). By the 1940s, the GTEA’s ongoing strategy of petitions, letters, publications, and formal appearances before local authorities to advocate for change was expanding to embrace litigation (Walker, 2005). As a young principal, Tate drove the executive director of the GTEA, Charles Harper, back and forth between Atlanta and Greensboro, Georgia, through the dead of night. The two would be met on a lonely road just beyond the Oconee River by parents who would later pretend that neither man was behind their requests to the local school board for school bus transportation and better facilities for the local black high school. Harper would repeat the trip in countless communities throughout rural Georgia, often employing that strategy of silence to prevent local officials from knowing who was circulating the petitions for formal legal protest (GTEA, 1947–1949; H. E. Tate, interview with author, February 14, 2002).

Tate’s understanding of the role he and other black educators had played in the fight against educational inequality made his next words more ominous:

But, in trying to wipe out segregation, it is not my desire and it must not be your desire to substitute second-class integration for segregation, for second-class integration is evil no matter who thinks otherwise. In a manner, second-class integration is more evil than was segregation because second-class integration has a way of [entering into] the psyche and penetrating the fibers of the brain and of the soul. (Tate, 1970a)

Tate’s concern was based, in part, on the firings and dismissals of black educators during desegregation.<sup>1</sup> He viewed their dismissals as a means of diminishing the qualifications of black educators in the public mind, and he understood that their absence in the implementation of desegregation would open the way for second-class integration.<sup>2</sup> Many black segregated schools were characterized by self-efficacious, committed, and well-trained black teachers; extracurricular activities that encouraged students to utilize their multiple talents; strong leadership that engaged parents in the support of the children’s

education; and institutional and interpersonal forms of caring that encouraged students to believe in what they could achieve. Despite the daily insults of a segregated environment, black educators characteristically restructured negative societal messages and reminded students that they should be prepared to assume their places as citizens in a democracy (Davis, 1996; Foster, 1997; O. Hill, interview with author, July 19, 2003; Jones, 1981; Morris & Morris, 2002; Walker, 1996, 2000, 2001; Walker & Tompkins, 2004; Walker with Byas, 2009).

Thus, the firing of black educators, as much as the individual job losses, represented the destruction of a system that both sought to eradicate injustice and foster psychological resilience in the face of overt oppression within black boys and girls. In schools without black teachers, Tate worried that no one would tell black children that they could “be anything [they] wanted to be, that it was [their] brains that made the difference” in their success (H. E. Tate, interview with author, November 10, 2000). He wondered who would call the “aunts, uncles, parents, whoever” to reinforce the message that they had a child who “could ascend to the highest height” but who needed their support.

Tate wanted to be sure his audience understood the implications of the destruction of a school-based commitment to the development of black children:

Second-class integration is evil because it is designed to steal from the Negro boy or girl that black image which has motivated boys and girls and made them to roll up their sleeves and carve out a new role for what we call democracy in this country. Second-class integration is evil because it is designed to make the Negro feel he is not good enough or trained enough or qualified enough to be the head of anything with which whites are involved. Second-class integration is evil because it does not consider the desire, the customs, the mores, the traditions, or feelings of black people as important in the scheme of our society. There can be no first-class citizenship with second-class integration. I say to you again that second-class integration is evil. (Tate, 1970a)

Importantly, Tate was not protesting integration. Like others of his colleagues, he had anticipated the *Brown* decision and celebrated its announcement. As a principal in 1954, he had spoken in laudatory and anticipatory language to his black student body, explaining to them the ways they would be “the beneficiaries of the new endowment,” noting firmly their capacity to “survive in mixed schools,” and speaking of the hope of the race for a “brighter future” (Tate, 1954a). With confidence, he had asserted that he knew they would not fail.

However, many twists had occurred in the integration agenda since those words were spoken. On that evening in 1970, the sharp language in his speech captured the frustration that had accumulated over the years as he watched those who should have helped ensure a more equitable system retreat into a desegregation that was not what he and other black educators had sought.

*The Costs of Collaboration*

To understand some of Tate's disillusionment it is essential to explore the GTEA's collaboration with three other agencies—the NAACP, the National Education Association (NEA), and the federal government, particularly the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW)—and the divergence in agendas that resulted.<sup>3</sup> Before NAACP attorneys began in the 1930s to litigate suits for equalizing teachers' salaries, the GTEA was advocating a broad agenda for black education, including political issues, such as school bus transportation, facilities, teacher salaries, and lunchrooms, as well as professional schooling issues related to curriculum development, leadership training, testing success, and school dropouts (GTEA History Committee, 1966; Walker, 2000; Walker with Byas, 2009). When black educators first joined with the NAACP in the 1940s to seek racial equality, the collaboration focused on areas of mutual interest: inequality in school facilities and salaries (Harper, 1947; Williams, 1947). For the NAACP, focusing on school inequality, easily measured and documented, represented a strategic way to challenge the structural inequalities in the society; for the GTEA, legal support was the only viable solution in southern settings consistently rejecting the petitions, letters, and personal visitations that characterized the advocacy of black educators (Fairclough, 2007; Walker, 2005).

Although the NAACP's school agenda was not as broad as the GTEA's, the early collaboration served both organizations. The NAACP needed the financial support, plaintiffs, and systemic structures of black educational organizations to achieve success in the school campaign and to increase its strength in the South (Tushnet, 1987). Unlike the GTEA, which had an organizational structure that connected every rural area and city throughout the state, NAACP chapters numbered few, in part because of the danger membership posed to blacks in southern rural areas. For the GTEA's part, the NAACP provided strategic advice, legal expertise, and a shield behind which the GTEA could advocate for schools. The fact that some leaders were members of both groups allowed individuals to don either organizational mask to suit the particular needs of individual school situations.

In contrast to historical accounts that unilaterally hail school initiatives as the NAACP's strategy, the communication between the two organizations suggests that black educators viewed themselves as equal partners in the quest for justice in schooling opportunities for black children and that this view was reciprocated by the NAACP legal staff. GTEA letters frequently used terms such as "giving assistance to the NAACP and others who will support *our* [italics added] cause" (Harper, 1947). Elsewhere the GTEA noted its plan for "moving in on several Boards of Education in this State who are discriminating against Negroes in the matter of length of school term, transportation, salary, and housing" (Harper, 1947). GTEA representatives continued, "If the Association does not get satisfactory results through these petitions, the board of directors in cooperation with local NAACP branches and patrons



plan to take these superintendents and Boards of Education into the Federal Courts.” Although the NAACP national office expected its affiliates to be part of litigation, the letter highlighted the initiative of the GTEA.<sup>4</sup> This language, which consistently captured the idea of a mutual venture, was utilized even after the *Brown* decision. Daniel Byrd, a representative of the Department of Teacher Welfare and Security of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, emphasized to NCOSTA that the NAACP stood “ready to assist and cooperate in whatever manner state associations desire” (GTEA, 1956).

However, in later years a divergence in agenda emerged. While the opening of doors to white schools served the political ends of both the NAACP and the GTEA, the force of southern resistance drew the NAACP into multiple suits aimed at forcing desegregation in additional settings. The NAACP continued to represent the interests of black educators in dismissal suits, but the number of suits decreased by 1970 as massive desegregation occurred and school boards dismissed black educators. In the same period, black educators attempted to generate a focus on the *type* of desegregation that would occur. In the words of a fired Georgia principal, D. F. Glover, black educators had wanted structures that would create “a favorable atmosphere of respect for the dignity and worth of all races” (Glover, 1968, p. 9). Consistent with the ruling in *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, which had mandated integration across a range of school variables, black educators had imagined that white students would go to black schools and vice versa—that faculty, staff, custodians, and activities would all be merged. They had believed that integration would maintain the best of the activities of their schools *and* give them the monetary and social benefits of being schooled with whites. After calling on governors to convene conferences to implement a fair integration plan (Tate, 1969), GTEA members compiled a booklet, *An Inclusive Guide to School Integration* (GTEA, 1970), which summarized the organization’s beliefs, including their adamant concern that school boards, 99 percent of whose members were white and who were responsible for maintaining segregation, could not be trusted to implement fair integration policies. As the GTEA sought to focus attention on its agenda—justice within the schools—these concerns were summarily ignored by school boards, state officials, and the national press. With this divergence of agendas, NAACP activities became a matter of national memory and support, while the GTEA agenda was muffled by a historiography that narrowly focused on its concern over black educators’ firings and dismissals.

As with the NAACP, the GTEA’s admission into the NEA in 1951 began as a promising collaboration. Despite knowing its prior history of exclusion and the reluctance of its executive director to advocate for equality (Carr, 1965), black educators believed affiliation with the NEA would provide support for additional professional development in their schools. They intentionally rejected the solicitations of the American Federation of Teachers and instead focused on becoming full participants in the NEA’s representative assemblies and using a variety of strategies to build an active coalition (NCOSTA, 1957;



Threat, 1958). Through closed sessions on black college campuses, late-night strategy sessions at NEA conventions, phone and written correspondence with other state associations, and a bevy of telegrams, they garnered support for integrating NEA's governing board and eliminating the dual professional associations—one serving whites and the other serving blacks—that characterized teacher associations in the southern states (Byrd 1958; Greene, 1958). In 1959, they still held the hope that the merger of black and white teacher associations would honor the needs and interests of both groups as equal professionals. However, the expectation for similar visions for integration was short-lived. White teachers' associations removed the restrictive membership clauses they held and invited blacks to become members, but when black teachers' organizations accepted the invitations of white teachers' associations, they compromised their capacity to represent the interests of black children (H. E. Tate, interview with author, February 14, 2002).

As the 1960s progressed, the GTEA engaged in an increasingly bitter battle with the white Georgia Education Association (GEA) over these issues. It was a battle that NEA sought to manage but did not handle to the GTEA's satisfaction (Tate, 1964, 1966; H. E. Tate, interview with author, February 14, 2002). The GTEA protested the proselytizing of its membership by the GEA and decried the GEA's professional ethics because of its willingness to seek the money from black teachers while benefiting from their dismissal. As the two groups were pushed toward merger by an all-white NEA board, one that Tate noted was not integrated, the GTEA believed its interests were willingly being sacrificed to the NEA goal of unification.

Instead of protecting the interests of its black affiliated groups, the NEA circulated kits on intergroup relations, made copies of the "Study on the Status of Negroes," supported some cases of teacher dismissal, elected its first black president, and agreed to sponsor histories of each of the former black associations (NCOSTA, 1960a). These activities helped increase membership and possibly furthered the NEA's long-held agenda of leveraging federal money for schools. However, the NEA complied with a form of desegregation that appeased southern white teachers' associations. It consistently opposed the proposed Powell amendments that would have ensured equitable desegregation policies in the South, and it exhibited little interest in assuming the protection for black children that had been characteristic of the black organizations (NCOSTA, 1960b). As was the case in the GTEA's relationship with the NAACP, what had begun as an anticipated collaboration ended in a divergence of agendas. The NEA agenda prevailed, and the collective influence of black teachers was mitigated in the new structure.

The GTEA collaboration with federal government agencies concerned with education also eventually eroded. In 1962, John F. Kennedy appointed Francis Keppel to the rather low-status job of commissioner of education. Although Keppel was advised by his new colleagues that "civil rights in the sense of race

relations was absolutely unconnected with education and that [he] should stay out of it," Keppel "did the opposite" (Killacky & Conroy, 1985–1986, p. 5). His efforts to address inequality were unpopular with his peers, but, spurred by the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the education office soon took on "one of the most significant roles in education" ("Mr. Howe Meets the Press," 1965). Although Keppel would shortly resign from government service, his successor to the office, Harold Howe, was equally committed to the federal agenda. Appointed in December 1965, Howe announced at his first news conference that it was his duty to enforce the provisions that flowed from the Civil Rights Act, an act that prohibited discrimination in the distribution of federal funds. In response to a direct query about whether the government should force white students to accept black teachers, Howe conceded that "it's illogical to talk about a move toward the integration of students and not talk about a move toward the integration of school staff" ("Mr. Howe Meets the Press," 1965). He conceded that school systems certainly had some right to decide who would teach the children but emphasized that "school systems do not have the right to say that someone should be prevented from doing that because he is a member of a race or of any other particular group."

Strong federal support for equality in schooling, with federal purse strings attached to the prohibition of discrimination, suited the purposes of the GTEA and assisted in achieving measurable progress for black educators in Georgia, where black educators used the federal climate to accomplish long-held ends. For example, although black teachers had finally been awarded a salary scale in 1951 that entitled them to salaries comparable to those of their white counterparts, at least thirty-eight systems in Georgia "allowed 'white' teachers and principals to receive salary supplements while denying a like salary supplement to Negro teachers and administrators" (Tate, 1965). Four times in the early 1960s, the GTEA decried this practice before the state board of education to no avail. Not until 1964 did the state legislature approve a Senate bill that allowed the state board wider powers to influence unequal practices throughout the state—a victory linked, as the GTEA understood, to the federal climate in Washington.

However, after Howe was removed amid virulent southern protests about his policies, the federal government aligned its advocacy with the desires of white southerners (Anti-Howe letters, 1966–1968; Cecelski, 1994; Killacky & Conroy, 1985–1986). D. F. Glover (1968) depicted the disdain the Georgia black community held for HEW policies, arguing that HEW was, in part, to blame for the public perception that made "inadequate and inferior education . . . synonymous with Negro education" (p. 10). HEW, he emphasized, knew that there was "an unyielding determination of some superintendents and boards of education throughout [Georgia] to subjugate Negro teachers and pupils" (p. 10). Yet, it had abandoned its earlier principles and was willing to sacrifice black

schools and black educators. This new federal agenda served the interests of white school boards but was no longer useful in the GTEA's quest.

In each collaboration, the other group eventually accepted the removal of black educators and subordinated the GTEA's beliefs about necessary practices for integration. As Tate's 1970 address indicated, the vision of black educators for integration was degenerating into a powerless desegregation where black children would be left with little support to forge new educational terrains. Black children now lacked the support of black educators and the organizations they had used to lower dropout rates and boost college attendance rates and literacy rates. Clear on that evening was that neither the people nor the structures of the GTEA would maintain power in desegregated settings. Tate concluded, "We must work to hasten the day when second-class integration is no longer in existence" (Tate, 1970a). He ended the speech with a phrase he had used in its opening, reminding the audience that "what man has made bad, he can make good—if only he has the desire and the will so to do." He sat down to thundering applause.

### School Outergration: New Questions Emanating from the Black Educators' Narrative

Is the previous account a romantic portrayal of disgruntled educators perturbed because they and their voices were quieted upon desegregation, or does it offer a necessary contextual critique of school desegregation that challenges the norms commonly accepted today? Black educators sought real integration, integration that maintained the power of black educators and continued the curricular initiatives that were part of their schooling. How might their vision inform the contemporary dialogue about desegregation?

The comparison might begin by calling us to reenvision integration itself, a principle in which black educators believed so strongly that they willingly voted their own organizations out of existence as a means of advancing it. In the current climate, many black children have been returned to segregated schools, or they never left them. Schools today reflect challenges not unlike those that the GTEA fought: unequal resources, teacher credentials, teacher attendance, and parental support (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Orfield & Lee, 2006). Children who were part of desegregation experiments in the 1970s and 1980s have grown into adults who value their experiences in desegregated schools but fail to support policies to ensure similar experiences for their own children (Wells, Holme, Revilla, & Atanda, 2009). Meanwhile, school districts across the country employ *Plessy v. Ferguson* methods to address the gaps rather than seek opportunities to continue desegregation policies. By every measure, black educators' dream of integrated schools has not been realized in this generation. Indeed, even the second-class integration they rallied against is being aborted in a climate that refuses to allow student assignments based on race.

Where desegregation has been maintained, the result is unsatisfying when evaluated against the measure of the original dream. Although some black children do benefit from access to wider networks of upward mobility, too many others are stuck in classrooms with poorer-credentialed teachers who focus on state curricular mandates rather than motivating children, infusing teaching with care, and inspiring aspiration (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Irvine, 1990, 2002; Kober, 2001). Some educators, black and white, exhibit characteristics reminiscent of the teaching values of the previous generation of black teachers, but their beliefs and activities are not valued in a climate that rewards measurable achievement (Irvine, 2003). In numerous settings, black children are disproportionately placed in special education and disciplined more frequently than their white counterparts, even when they have committed the same offense (Blanchett, 2006; Witt, 2007). As black educators foreshadowed, desegregation has gained black students access to facilities and resources, but it has ignored school climate, involvement of black parents, equity, and inspiration in the formula for success.

An examination of the forms desegregation has assumed has led some members of the African American community to retreat from the principle of integration. Frustrated with chasing desegregation dreams, these parents emphasize that black schools do not have to mean “inequality” (Schmidt, 1991). But this way of thinking fails to consider the network of black organizational support and advocacy that seeded the development of black schools during segregation (Walker with Byas, 2009). Few communities understand the kind of activities in which people like Horace Tate were involved, nor do they understand how these structures functioned cohesively to deliver the educational experiences some remember. Without the power wielded by organizational structures, the capacity to leverage mutual interests across communities will be mitigated. Furthermore, accepting the continued presence of racially segregated schools neglects the painful historical truth that the segregation of black students has consistently yielded inequalities in personnel, facilities, or resources. Finally, resegregation ignores the dream for which educators fought; integration was supposed to accomplish citizenship ideals that would create a better form of democracy (Walker with Byas, 2009). To retreat from the vision of equality for all citizens indicts America’s ideals.

The contemporary relevance of the GTEA’s role in advocating for real integration compels a new conversation about education and desegregation that is broader than the current focus on testing. The unfortunate truth for federal policymakers blindly convinced that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) will solve the ills of education is that NCLB testing will never produce the kind of just education black educators had hoped for. It focuses on a public report card as a substitute for supporting school leaders and teachers in the kind of ongoing school-based professional development that would help them teach children. Moreover, continuing such policies will do little to address the deep structural inequalities embedded in failed integration and desegregation efforts.

## New Opportunities under the Obama Administration

President Obama has a unique opportunity. The president's personal experiences and heritage allow him to understand why all the black kids sit together in the cafeteria in desegregated schools (Tatum, 2003). He understands their struggles to belong in a racially segregated society and the rejection of a system that does not value personhood (Obama, 1995). He likewise understands the success to be gained when black children are able to tap into the benefits of an integrated world. Though his shared perspective and ethnic identification will not be sufficient to discount the myriad barriers black children face in their daily school encounters, he has demonstrated a capacity to inspire the nation to refocus its agenda, and that agenda should include black children.

Obama is a master of language, communication, and hope. With these capacities, his administration has the tools to ignite a new conversation about racial and ethnic integration in schools and to address how failed strategies can be reinvented in ways that honor the needs of all constituents. This new conversation should be informed by a revisionist history that values the practices and beliefs of the black educators who had the most experience motivating success among black children, even during difficult circumstances. President Obama should acknowledge frankly the previous policies that failed to produce equality and evaluate honestly the ways current school structures are linked to local school board priorities that intentionally subordinate black children's educational needs. He should applaud the possibilities of desegregation evident in the rise in test scores among black children after desegregation, while also recognizing that the generation whose test scores rose had both desegregated facilities *and* some oversight from black teachers from formerly segregated schools. Since student success could be attributed to a combination of these variables, he might intentionally advocate the findings of current research demonstrating the way educators can teach content while simultaneously creating culturally sensitive classroom climates. As president, Obama might also modify the current educational model that champions competition and individual success to instead encourage collaborative ventures across constituents. Above all, he might inspire the hope that a partially implemented desegregation plan does not have to be America's twenty-first-century legacy.

History, of course, will not provide a road map for the action that needs to follow the conversation. In a country still jittery about race, owning our past failures and suggesting a new vision of justice in American education will be, as Obama's mother might have put it, "no picnic" (Obama, 1995). However, in his 2008 speech on race, Obama demonstrated that he is not daunted by the challenge. Indeed, this unique moment in history provides an opportunity to respond to the challenge posed by Horace Tate so many decades ago: "What man has made bad, he can make good—if only he has the desire and the will so to do" (Tate, 1970a). Perhaps in this new era, Americans might find the desire so to do.

## Notes

1. Tate's papers include a stapled collection of references that support the contention that "advocates of segregation are spreading this propaganda to scare Negro teachers and liberals of both races who want an end to Jim Crow schools." The clippings include "Negro Teachers May Lose Jobs If Segregation Ends," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 10, 1954; and "Future of State's Negro Teachers Found Uncertain," *Topeka Kansas State Journal*, January 14, 1954 (Tate, 1954b).
2. Tate was not alone in his concerns about the loss of black educators. Tate was vice chairman of NCOSTA and was actively involved in its varied efforts to utilize press conferences, telegrams to the president, meetings with black parents, bus charters to the NEA headquarters, and communications with the Office of Civil Rights to heighten public awareness about the form integration was assuming throughout the South. NCOSTA leaders hoped to reshape the national agenda and preserve the people and ideas they believed helped serve black children (GTEA, 1956, 1969; NCOSTA, 1957; Palmer, 1968; Picott, 1975; Tate, 1968, 1970b).
3. In naming these three agencies, I omit the GTEA's collaboration with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to compel southern districts to respond to ongoing school inequalities (H. E. Tate, interview with author, February 14, 2002). I also omit its efforts to leverage federal monies to address economic issues confronting the black community.
4. Follow-up communications to Thurgood Marshall—referred to as "My dear Attorney Marshall"—outlined the GTEA's request that Marshall or someone on his staff "draw up for us a rather general letter which we might use to send to the several boards of education" (Brown, Cranberry, & Harper, 1947). With precision, they provided detail on the several components needed in the letter and provided a draft of one section in "skeleton or suggestive form in which we might fill in the details." The letter ended, "Thanking you for your very fine cooperation in the past and soliciting your support in this effort."

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