The Transylvania Eight: School Desegregation and Grassroots
Activism in the Face of Black Appalachian Invisibility, 1954-1965

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When army troops escorted the Little Rock Nine into Little Rock Central High School in 1957, Americans watched in anticipation. A monumental movement began to sweep across the nation, reaching some of the most discriminatory and inequitable communities in the American South. However, as successful as it was, the Civil Rights Movement left huge portions of the rural South untouched. The national movement and its renowned leaders did not impact Southern Appalachia, where black communities faced a decision: to demand that their voices be heard by the same local white community that suppressed them, or to wait for a federal government intervention. Appalachian black communities chose action, and bravely fought for their own civil rights. In 1962, just a few years after the Little Rock Nine desegregated Little Rock Central High, eight black students enrolled at Brevard Senior and Junior High School in Transylvania County, North Carolina. Transylvania County was one of the first places in North Carolina to desegregate, but its isolation meant that nobody watched in anticipation, and almost nobody knows its story. The black community in Transylvania County succeeded without the support of the national movement and leaders. Its exceptionalism gives American citizens all the more reason to know its story.

Appalachia tends to be marginalized in the United States, both by the government and by academics, and the black Appalachian minority is further disregarded. For example, images of white poverty dominate peoples’ perceptions of rural Appalachia today. While this image of rural Appalachia is not incorrect, it is not comprehensive. There are severe disparities in Appalachia, but the destitution is not unique to the white Appalachian community. Both the poor white and black populations of Appalachia suffer from poverty and exploitation, but the plight of the black population is ignored. Moreover, the black communities in Appalachia lack sufficient
economic mobility, which causes them to face more severe poverty than the poor white communities.

The black community in Appalachia and its predicament is largely invisible to the white American majority, and even to white communities in Appalachia. This was especially true in the mid-twentieth century, as the Civil Rights Movement promoted racial equality throughout America. North Carolina, like the majority of Southern states, was not keen on giving its black residents the same rights that its white residents enjoyed. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Eastern half of North Carolina received national attention, particularly after the famous Greensboro Four staged sit-ins to protest segregation at a whites-only lunch counter. On the other hand, the national movement and its widespread attention overlooked Western North Carolina. If the black communities in Western North Carolina wanted the same rights that their brothers and sisters in Eastern North Carolina demanded, they needed to face staunch discrimination alone.

The subject of Appalachian desegregation contributes to several bodies of scholarship. First, an enormous and growing body of scholarship that discusses the history of the Civil Rights Movement is developing, the majority of which focuses on the national movement and its roots, leaders, and big-ticket locations. One well-established debate surrounding the Civil Rights Movement tries to classify its revolutionary change as either “top-down” or “bottom-up” reform. Some historians, such as Terry Anderson and Juan Williams, believe that the Civil Rights Movement was not spearheaded by a singular leader or organization, but rather that it resulted from the separate actions of brave individuals.\(^1\) Initial activism by these courageous few inspired a grassroots movement across the South. Williams argues that while these individuals are rarely

remembered by history, they were “just as important to the movement as … people like Martin Luther King, Jr.” On the other hand, some scholars argue that Civil Rights reform was initiated and implemented by the federal government.

Overall, most Civil Rights scholarship pays very little attention to the movement at a local level. Several historians have studied local movements, but largely only in the bigger cities that did not receive much national attention. One historian, James Button, significantly notes that the majority of literature on the Civil Rights movement has covered the dramatic events that captured national attention, and argues that understanding the impact of the movement at a local level is equally important. Button writes that “a major mobilization of blacks … with the invaluable support of the federal government” was a common theme for many smaller communities in their civil rights struggle. Additionally, a few scholars chose to focus on states that did not receive the same national focus as states like Alabama and Mississippi. While the states are not quite “local” movements, these scholars meaningfully debunk the existing myth that some states, such as North Carolina and Florida, were progressive and moderate on race relations. In his monograph about civil rights in Greensboro, William Chafe argues that North Carolina’s social and economic history contradicts its progressive reputation.

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2 Williams, 57.
6 Button, 206–207.
8 Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*. 
Second, the body of scholarship about Appalachia has been growing in recent years. Every Appalachian historian recognizes that the Appalachian region is marginalized in some way, and that most Appalachians are disadvantaged. One prominent scholar, Ronald D. Eller, claims that the federal government failed Appalachia and emphasizes the significance of regional politics.\textsuperscript{9} The importance of regional politics in Appalachia means that scholars have covered the role of politics and political parties in Appalachian history as well.\textsuperscript{10} Several historians discuss grassroots activism in Appalachia, but these studies are limited to “bottom-up” approaches in the War on Poverty.\textsuperscript{11} Mary K. Anglin argues that poor and working class people in Southern Appalachia had to use grassroots activism to respond to their disenfranchisement and economic restructuring.\textsuperscript{12} According to Anglin, disadvantaged Appalachians “want their own voices to be heard directly, not through the misrepresentations of others.”\textsuperscript{13} A common theme in the arguments of historians who write about local politics and activism in Appalachia is that Appalachians had to fight poverty by themselves, because they were not a priority for the federal government. However, their studies have generally focused on white poverty.

Fayette Allen expands this dialogue, asserting that both black and white Appalachians suffer from poverty and exploitation, but that at least the white community is visible.\textsuperscript{14} Writing in 1974, Allen was frustrated with how invisible black Appalachians were during the Civil War.

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\textsuperscript{13} Anglin, 576.

\textsuperscript{14} Fayetta A. Allen, “Blacks in Appalachia,” \textit{The Black Scholar} 5, no. 9 (June 1974): 42-51.
Rights Movement. She felt that the movement passed over black Appalachians due to their isolation, leaving them to fend for themselves. This is an important point, particularly because many historians—both Appalachian and Civil Rights historians—overlook recent black history in Appalachia. Most scholars who study black history in Appalachia focus on slavery, the Reconstruction era, and mining. John Inscoe is one of the pioneering Appalachian historians, but even his work focuses on black history in the context of slavery, the Reconstruction, and the early twentieth century. Inscoe’s monographs do the important work of recounting segregation in Appalachia, but his temporal scope does not cover how black Appalachians fought segregation in the mid-twentieth century. Additionally, there are some broad studies of race in Appalachia, but these do not give civil rights activism the focus that it deserves. In their seminal work, *Blacks in Appalachia*, William Turner and Edward Cabbell assert the invisibility of blacks in Appalachia to the rest of America as well. Cabbell calls black Appalachians “a neglected minority within a neglected minority.” Turner and Cabbell are correct to argue that the study of black Appalachians is neglected by historians, but even their anthology does not deeply explore the black Appalachian experience in the 1960s.

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15 Allen, 42.
Finally, there is a large body of scholarship about race in North Carolina in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Again, most of these studies focus on the turn of the twentieth century. More recently, some North Carolina historians have written about the Civil Rights Movement, but the regional scope is typically Eastern North Carolina and the Piedmont Region because those areas had much larger black populations. Several broad histories of the black community in Western North Carolina do exist, but many of them describe desegregation in Asheville, North Carolina.

Contrary to common knowledge, two counties in Western North Carolina—Transylvania and Yancey—were among the first to integrate in North Carolina. While one historian wrote about Yancey’s desegregation, the story of Transylvania’s desegregation lives on only in local memory. In her master’s thesis, Ashley Brewer examines school desegregation in Yancey County and argues that black invisibility in the larger historical narrative perpetuates the myth of ethnic homogeneity in Appalachia. She asserts that through collective action, the black community in Yancey County was able to organize itself and achieve desegregation without a national spotlight. Transylvania County, which is just Southwest of Asheville, desegregated shortly after Yancey, but the only accounts of desegregation in Transylvania are mainly limited

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to local projects, such as a local documentary, an elementary school project, and a paper presented at the Appalachian Studies Association Annual Conference in Asheville.\textsuperscript{26} Only one historian, Betty Reed, makes sure that the broad story of school segregation in Transylvania County is documented in historical memory.\textsuperscript{27}

This is highly problematic, as historians should be wondering why these rural counties became the first to integrate their schools and how it happened so early compared to the rest of North Carolina. Particularly because parts of Transylvania County are still underdeveloped and residentially segregated, understanding the history of the community and its people is an essential step in being able to alleviate some of these problems going forward. On top of doing a disservice to Transylvania County and its black community, the intellectual cost of not studying this topic is tremendous. How can historians fully understand this important chapter of Civil Rights history and the black Appalachian experience if they do not understand how these rural counties integrated without the national movement? If these forgotten counties are the Ground Zero of North Carolina’s school desegregation, how can historians understand the Civil Rights history of North Carolina without understanding what happened in these counties? Transylvania County had one of the first desegregated schools—second only to Yancey County—in the state, and the first integrated high school football team. Who deserves the credit for desegregating


these Appalachian communities? Why was desegregation relatively quick and easy? Did Transylvania County really desegregate for the sake of racial equality, or were there ulterior motives that historians have failed to recognize thus far? What role did the local white establishment—defined as local government, the Board of Education, the newspaper editors, and anyone who had authority over the citizens’ lives and thoughts—play in school desegregation? This paper will aim to answer some of these questions and will contribute to the scholarship of grassroots Civil Rights movements and of the black experience in Appalachian North Carolina.

When Transylvania County celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of desegregation, the implication was that the county was among the first to desegregate, thanks to its progressive approach to racial equality. The white community there sees itself as a leader in integration in North Carolina that set an example for the rest of the state to follow. While Transylvania County might be a leader in integration, the white community cannot claim for itself what the black community fought for. This paper will demonstrate that it was the combination of a tenacious black community and a white establishment that was committed to preserving its economy that led to the early integration of this isolated mountain community. First, the paper will reveal how the obstinate black community demanded equal rights and integration. An examination of oral histories and newspaper articles, as well as the understudied legal complaint against the Board of Education and Brevard High School’s yearbooks, will demonstrate the black community’s exceptionalism. The black community in Appalachian North Carolina was exceptional, and this paper will credit the black community in Transylvania County with pursuing and achieving integration. Through local action in Transylvania County, the black

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community made itself visible, without help from the national movement, in a community that did not want to listen or extend a helping hand.

Next, through the use of newspaper articles and an unexplored private scrapbook, this paper will illustrate how deeply the local white community was split over integration. Finally, using newspaper articles and Board of Education meeting minutes, it will demonstrate that the white establishment did not truly care about racial equality, and it cannot claim the exceptionally early accomplishment of integration as its own. Rather, the white community wanted to maintain a façade of paradise to encourage the tourism that the local economy so heavily relied upon. Early integration did not come because of racial progressivism, but rather because the black community bravely demanded equal rights, and the white community wanted to maintain peace and harmony to preserve its tourist economy.

1. Black Exceptionalism in Transylvania County

Contrary to what most Americans think, there is a sizeable black population in Southern Appalachia, and in Western North Carolina. The black experience in Appalachian North Carolina was not that different from the black experience throughout the rest of the South. Due to what historians of black Appalachia termed “black invisibility,” most people do not recognize the black Appalachian experience. The black community in Appalachia experienced racism, violence, and discrimination that inhibited its socio-economic mobility, and for the most part, the white community there was not progressive. This was true in Transylvania County as well, where black high school students did not even have a secondary school. The black community in Transylvania County was very small, and its invisibility to the outside world left it to its own

29 Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights.
devices. While facing substantial hurdles, Transylvania’s black citizens made huge efforts on their own to achieve integration. Without the support of the national movement, their resiliency and bravery in the fight for racial equality speaks to their exceptionalism.

In 1957, before North Carolina began to desegregate, race relations did not look much different in North Carolina than they did in Alabama or Mississippi. Wilma Dykeman, an acclaimed writer who was known for documenting Appalachians and their culture, and her husband, James Stokely, traveled throughout the American South and tried to capture firsthand what they called the dilemma of the South. They wrote about how “Southern boys, white and Negro, grow up together in … the rural places,” but mentioned that the black communities lived “in the narrow backways.” Their account clearly shows that blacks and whites did coexist in the rural South, but that black citizens were forced to live in the shadows. Dykeman and Stokely went on to write that “segregation today is not only a cause but a symptom, too, of deep disturbances in our national dream and our regional development.” They explicitly stated that not only did segregation cause the issues that plagued the rural American South, such as poverty and underdevelopment, but that the predicament of the South perpetuated segregation. The rural South was trapped, and it needed groundbreaking change to break the cycle. Dykeman and Stokely wrote that “Negroes are crippled,” and “the poverty and inadequacies of the rural Negroes of the South are a drain on all the region and all the nation.” Their intention was to promote integration and racial equality, and their unequivocal statements are moving. Although they did write broadly about the rural South, they did include a few anecdotes about Western North Carolina. In one of “North Carolina’s most mountainous counties,” one white citizen

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32 Dykeman and Stokely, 69-70.
33 Dykeman and Stokely, 71.
34 Dykeman and Stokely, 73.
stated that “‘no, the niggers won’t try nothing here … they know their place.’”35 A question about whether or not integration would reach the Western North Carolina region prompted that response. This demonstrates the intense racism and racial inequality that plagued Appalachian North Carolina. The black community in Transylvania County undoubtedly had a lot to overcome, and it faced it alone. Groundbreaking change was required, and Transylvania County’s black citizens were up to the challenge.

The intense discrimination that the black community in Western North Carolina faced makes it even more outstanding that Transylvania County’s black community achieved desegregation without the national movement. After Floyd McKissick, Sr. left Asheville for Chapel Hill, his fame as a Civil Rights lawyer and activist skyrocketed. Although his experiences with white police brutality and racism in segregated Western North Carolina profoundly shaped his racial consciousness and activism, he is remembered in history as the civil rights activist who desegregated the University of North Carolina School of Law. In a 1989 interview for the Southern Oral History Program at UNC, McKissick briefly recalled his life in Asheville: “I think the struggle parts of my life were the fact that I was black … you were black and not wanted.”36 However, the majority of the interview focused on his work in Eastern North Carolina. Even the construction of this primary source undermines the black experience in Appalachian North Carolina and its role in McKissick’s life. His experiences there were significant, and their lack of documentation emphasizes how little attention most historians give to the black Appalachian experience. McKissick also criticized the newspapers for failing to properly communicate what the black community wanted to negotiate. McKissick said that “you had to take some action. The

35 Quoted directly from Dykeman and Stokely, 75.
only time that they would listen to you was some action,” suggesting that activism was the only way for the black community to make the white community hear its plea.\textsuperscript{37} Furthermore, McKissick stated that “North Carolina has always been able to … put forth a public relations image that they are far more progressive than other southern states,” but mentions that in his opinion, Alabama and Mississippi exceeded North Carolina when it came to educational and employment opportunities for black communities by 1989.\textsuperscript{38} He suggested that black citizens in North Carolina dealt with the same challenges that black people faced throughout the South, and his experience highlights the poor race relations and black invisibility in Western North Carolina.

In another oral interview through the Southern Oral History Program at UNC, another black Asheville native, Richard Bowman, stated that he “never dreamed it would take this many years as it did before [integration], … they still have some schools under mandate for busing for integrating.”\textsuperscript{39} He then described that North Carolina shut down many black schools after continued orders of integration, and argued that “you have some whites that are in favor of a level playing field, but you have more that are not than you have, that are [sic].”\textsuperscript{40} While this sentiment rang true throughout the South, Bowman also implied that Western North Carolina was especially oppressive of its black community. He said that specifically the Asheville area stifled blacks and did not provide them job openings, so young blacks went to different parts of the country to “[succeed] in reaching [a] higher level than they ever would have reached in Asheville.”\textsuperscript{41} Only once these black people reached retirement did they return to Asheville to use “that knowledge to help push Asheville up.”\textsuperscript{42} If opportunities were so limited that some black

\textsuperscript{37} McKissick Sr., interview by Bruce Kalk.
\textsuperscript{38} McKissick Sr., interview by Bruce Kalk.
\textsuperscript{40} Bowman, interview by Kelly Navies.
\textsuperscript{41} Bowman, interview by Kelly Navies.
\textsuperscript{42} Bowman, interview by Kelly Navies.
citizens felt the need to leave Western North Carolina for the majority of their lives, then it is impressive that parts of the region desegregated so quickly. How did blacks in Western North Carolina, specifically Transylvania County, mobilize in the face of such adversity, without the national Civil Rights Movement?

It is evident that the violent racism that black people in Western North Carolina experienced did not suddenly change with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, in which the Supreme Court ruled that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place.” Western North Carolina was in need of a movement of brave individuals who demanded immediate integration.

Transylvania County’s moment came in 1962. Initially, a black high school existed in Transylvania County, but after it burned down, the Board of Education did not build another one. Instead, in 1949, a motion was made to bus black high school students to Hendersonville’s high schools in nearby Henderson County. This journey was forty-two miles roundtrip, through the mountains, but the black students did not have any other choice at the time. However, once the fight for desegregation of schools began to gain momentum throughout the South, the black community in Transylvania knew it was time to act.

Before Transylvania County’s black community started to openly fight for school desegregation, it formed the Transylvania Citizens Improvement Organization (T.C.I.O.) in 1960. For the organization’s fortieth anniversary, it published a booklet that described its mission “to promote the civic, educational, political, and economic opportunities for African American Citizens in Brevard and Transylvania County.” The local archive does not have any records of

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43 Williams, 34.
44 Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, 1949.
how T.C.I.O. organized, but its members formed the group of black citizens that fought for integration of Transylvania’s schools—and eventually won.

In the late spring of 1962, a group of black citizens demanded that the Transylvania County Board of Education allow black students to enroll at Brevard Junior and Senior High School. *The Transylvania Times* published one very small blurb about it towards the bottom of its May 17, 1962 edition, sandwiched amongst trivial articles like one advertising a broom sale. The heading of the short article was one of the smallest on the page, which made it easy to miss amidst the other headlines.46 The article assured that “the local Board of Education deferred any action until a thorough study could be made of the situation.” 47 It is not clear what type of study the Board of Education did, but less than a month later, *The Transylvania Times* published a much larger and longer article to announce that the black citizens’ request was turned down. The article briefly references their unsuccessful petition, but the majority of the article was not about the black students at all. Instead, it listed all of the maintenance projects that the Board of Education approved to improve the school. 48 The author’s choice to follow up the announcement of the Board’s decision to decline the black citizens’ request with a lengthy description of school improvements accomplished two things. It reminded black readers that continued segregation would keep black students from access to a better education and facilities. Additionally, it served as a slap in the face to black parents, whose taxes went to improve a school that refused to educate their children, solely on the basis of race.

46 See Appendix 1 for the front page of the *The Transylvania Times*, May 17, 1962.
Unfortunately, no records of the initial petition to the Board of Education are available. The black citizens’ requests were not even well recorded in the Board of Education meeting minutes.\textsuperscript{49} However, the petitioners’ persistence paid off, because by July 18, eight black students were assigned to enroll at white schools in Transylvania County for the 1962-1963 school year.\textsuperscript{50} The Board of Education did not issue a public statement, but \textit{The Transylvania Times} did publish a three-sentence article on the bottom corner of its front page.\textsuperscript{51} The enrollment of eight black students at whites-only Brevard High School was a huge victory, but the black community refused to be appeased, and rightly so. There was another whites-only high school in Transylvania County, Rosman High, but it was less than a quarter of the size of Brevard High, and the majority of the black community in Transylvania County lived in Brevard rather than Rosman.\textsuperscript{52} The rest of the black students in the county were going to be bused back to Henderson County, or sent to live with family out of state just to get a high school education. The T.C.I.O. later called this “token integration,” offered by the Board of Education, but T.C.I.O. members wanted to send the message that their policy was “all, or nothing.”\textsuperscript{53}

It was common during the 1950s and 1960s for black citizens to take white school boards to court to fight for integration, but most of them had the support and guidance of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Without the national movement and the NAACP, taking the Transylvania County Board of Education to court was a bold move, but it sent the message that the black community was not going to back down. On August 17, 1962,

\begin{itemize}
\item Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, 1962.
\item \textit{Plaintiffs v. Transylvania County Board of Education} (W.D.N.C. 1962), 5. Filed with Transylvania County Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 1963-1971.
\item “Eight Negro Students Are Assigned Here,” \textit{The Transylvania Times}, July 26, 1962.
\item The 1961-1962 school year enrollment numbers were reported as 1,250 students at Brevard Senior and Junior High, and only 295 students at Rosman High. See: “Enrollment In Transylvania Schools Totaled 4,298, Costs Are Revealed,” \textit{Transylvania County}, May 31, 1962.
\item Transylvania Citizens Improvement Organization, \textit{Reflections}, 1.
\end{itemize}
fifty-eight black plaintiffs filed a complaint against the Transylvania County Board of Education for “discriminating against the plaintiffs and other Negro citizens of Transylvania County because of race or color.”\(^{54}\) The complaint notes that black children were previously bused to Hendersonville to attend school, which “requires undue hardship including the necessity of traveling at least forty-two miles per day, none of which hardships are faced by white children.”\(^{55}\) In order to do this, they enlisted the help of the first black attorney in Asheville, Ruben J. Dailey.

This legal complaint contains the only available record of what occurred since the black citizens’ initial petition to the Board of Education on May 14, 1962. After receiving that petition, the Board denied the requests on June 4. The resilient black citizens did not give up, and their determination finally started to pay off. By June 16, they submitted applications for reassignment to white schools in Brevard. Eight of the original group were reassigned to white schools in Transylvania County beginning on August 24, 1962, but the rest of the applications were denied.\(^{56}\) The rest of the original group appealed the Board’s decision on July 23, but the Board refused to hear them until August 21. August 21 was only three days before school began, and it would have been nearly impossible to enroll at such a late notice. The Board was systematically blocking black students’ access to Transylvania’s white schools. The plaintiffs, knowing that there was no way the Board would allow them to enroll for that 1962-1963 school year, decided to take legal action. Their statement argued that they made every other administrative effort to integrate schools, without success, and that “each of them and those similarly situated have suffered and will continue to suffer irreparable injury and harm caused by the acts of the
defendant Board.”

They demanded that the Court hold the Board accountable to creating a desegregation plan “for the reorganization of the entire school system of Transylvania County into a unitary nonracial system which shall include … the elimination of any other discrimination.”

The plaintiffs’ actions, likely because they directly defied the white Board of Education, became the largest headline on the August 23, 1962 edition of The Transylvania Times. The article stated some of the plaintiffs’ demands, and wrote of the complaint “alleging that the plaintiffs must be transported by bus 21 miles to Hendersonville.” The author’s choice of the word “alleging” is interpreted as accusatory and demeaning, particularly because the complaint noted that the black students were actually bused forty-two miles each day. This sentence suggested that the plaintiffs were over exaggerating their hardship, and it diminished the severity of their predicament. After reiterating that the Board refused to allow any additional black students to enroll in Transylvania’s white schools, the author changed the subject and noted that the school buses in Transylvania were “better than is recommended by the State Board of Education.”

This digression at the end of the article served to imply that the black citizens of Transylvania were lucky to have a Board of Education that treated them better than state requirements. It also shed light on how the white establishment in Transylvania viewed itself. It thought that it was treating its black community better than the rest of North Carolina did, or possibly the rest of the South. It thought that its approach to busing was progressive, simply because it provided slightly more than the bare minimum requirements for its black students.

57 Plaintiffs v. Transylvania County Board of Education, 8.
58 Plaintiffs v. Transylvania County Board of Education, 9.
60 “Negroes File Suit Against The Transylvania Board of Education.”
Despite the racism and obstacles that it faced, the black community’s strong fight quickly resulted in good news. In addition to taking the white Board of Education to court, two brave black female T.C.I.O. members, Vinie Gordon and Selena Robinson, testified in court against the white Board.\(^{61}\) The legal process took a while, but in March 1963, Judge Warlick in Asheville ruled that twenty-two additional black students would be enrolled at Transylvania County’s secondary schools. *The Transylvania Times* was quick to note that because he did not rule on the elementary schools, those would remain segregated.\(^{62}\)

Of the six black students who were assigned to go to school at Brevard High School, only five of them—Minnie Lee Davenport, James Madison, Paul Scruggs, Reginald Lynch, and Sanford Killian—appeared in the school’s 1962-1963 yearbook, *The Brevardier*. It was a small victory that their pictures were even published in the yearbook, but the yearbook did not list any of their involvements. It is likely that they were not very involved during that first year.\(^{63}\) The next year, Reginald Lynch was not mentioned in *The Brevardier* at all. A number of other black students were enrolled in the senior class, but the transfers did not get involved on campus. Paul Scruggs, however, was listed as part of the football team, the track team, and the school chorus.\(^{64}\) Years later, Keith Elliott recalled in an interview that many of the students were reluctant to leave behind what they knew at Ninth Avenue High in Hendersonville.\(^{65}\) Paul Scruggs’ extensive involvement, compared to the low involvement by the new seniors, suggests that they felt uncomfortable or unwelcome at Brevard High, which still had an overwhelming white majority, or perhaps the white students did not initially want to document their involvement any more than

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\(^{63}\) *The Brevardier*, 1963.

\(^{64}\) *The Brevardier*, 1964, 54.

\(^{65}\) *Almost Cured*, directed by Tim Dierolf, aired 2017 (Brevard: Tom Dierolf, 2018), MP4.
they had to. Transylvania’s main high school was officially integrated, but a lot of work was left to be done.

The T.C.I.O. worked on other projects as well as school integration. While these are not the focus of this study, it is important to recognize the amount that the black citizens of Transylvania County were able to accomplish. For example, the T.C.I.O. fought hard to integrate the Transylvania Community Hospital and initiated the fight to obtain public housing in Brevard. These undertakings required much more time, likely because the hospital was a private entity and because the local government could just deny its requests for the construction of public housing. Again, the black community’s perseverance paid off—the hospital was integrated by 1963 and a plan to develop public housing was in place by 1974.66

By 1965, many of North Carolina’s public schools were still not totally desegregated, and Robert S. Rankin from the United States Commission on Civil Rights noted that there was “a very tense situation in the school system of North Carolina.”67 However, in Transylvania County, it had been almost three years since integration was initiated. In 1965, Brevard’s Mayor Bennett declared that “we have made progress. We are far better off than many places in America,” and that “all of North Carolina is proud of the Transylvania County school system.”68 He did not explicitly proclaim that race relations were good in Brevard, as the headline of his reprinted address claimed. Perhaps it was not true, but he wanted his constituents to believe it anyway, without needing to publicly lie to them. However, he alluded to the racial progress that Transylvania County had made relative to the rest of North Carolina, specifically within the

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66 Transylvania Citizens Improvement Organization, Reflections, 2-4.
68 “Race Relations Are Good Here, Mayor Says In Dedicatory Talk,” The Transylvania Times, May 6, 1965.
public school system. Transylvania’s schools were not completely integrated by 1965, but the county was much further along than the rest of North Carolina. All of the credit goes to the exceptionally determined black community in Transylvania County, not to the largely anti-integration white community.

2. Segregation vs. Integration

Due to the small size and isolation of Transylvania County during the mid-1900s, most of the recorded personal responses and feelings towards the Civil Rights Movement were filtered by the white establishment. Most of the primary sources that historians are left to work with were initially created for the public eye, in the forms of newspaper articles or public statements. These sources suggest that the white residents of Transylvania County were split over issues of integration from the beginning and made their feelings known, but the subject was clearly not a top priority for the white establishment. Based on available evidence, the majority of residents in Transylvania County were staunchly anti-integration, although there were some pro-integration people who promoted racial equality. However, it is important to note something interesting about the debate over integration. The majority of available sources are newspaper articles, so they had to be approved by the editor of the newspaper before going to print. The Transylvania Times was the major source for the white community’s opinions and the main newspaper that serviced Transylvania County. Therefore, if these articles and letters—mostly anti-integration—were actually reflective of the white community’s opinions, then it is clear that the white community itself was not supportive of integration. On the other hand, if these articles and letters were not reflective of the white community’s opinions, then it is evident that the white establishment was not supportive of integration, and did not want its constituents to be. It is
impossible to know which is the case, but either one illustrates what obstacles the black community had to overcome. The majority of white residents and the white establishment did not care about racial equality.

_The Transylvania Times_ published several news articles about the possible desegregation of Brevard College in the 1950s, but these articles were always a low priority compared to other news. In the early 1960s, the black community in Brevard started to demand school integration and _The Transylvania Times_ began to give more attention to the issue, although it remained a low priority. On the fourth page of the May 24, 1962 edition, an article titled “Segregation vs. Integration” commended the Board of Education for delaying its decision on the petition and urged citizens to trust the Board’s decision. According to the article, Transylvania’s schools were already overcrowded with white students. On the other hand, Henderson County’s student body was so small that one of its high schools was at risk of losing its qualifications if Transylvania stopped busing its black high schoolers there. The tone led the readers to believe that integration of Transylvania County’s high schools would not only rob white students in Transylvania of an education, but it would also negatively impact the schools in Henderson County that supposedly relied on black students to be recognized as a legitimate high school. This news article appeared to convey relevant and pressing information, yet the editor of _The Transylvania Times_ chose to give it a very small section in the middle of the newspaper instead of a front page feature. Instead, the front page discussed impending elections, and a few articles about awards banquets, local graduations, and the opening of the summer tourist season. These

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70 “Segregation vs. Integration.”
71 _The Transylvania Times_, May 24, 1962.
editorial choices demonstrate that *The Transylvania Times* likely wanted to direct its readers’ attention away from the possibility of school integration.

While the subject of integration may not have been a priority for the news, it was for the religious community in Transylvania County. *The Transylvania Times* reprinted a statement that was distributed in all of the county’s churches in early August 1962, and titled it “Christain [sic] Approach Urged In Facing Integration In Brevard.” One can speculate over whether or not “Christain” was an intentional or accidental spelling error, as the rest of the publication uses the correct spelling of the word.\(^\text{72}\) It is impossible to know why the word is misspelled in the headline and whether or not it was meant to mock the content of the Transylvania Ministerial Association’s statement, but it is significant to note that it is the only headline misspelled in years of publications. The statement pleaded “for tolerance, cooperation and clear thinking at this time” and appealed to “all the leaders of Brevard to exercise their leadership for goodwill and harmony in our community.”\(^\text{73}\) It also warned that hatred, bigotry, and disobeying the law would give way to violence and chaos, which must be avoided at all costs. The people of Brevard were likely watching the violence on the national news as other schools throughout the South began to integrate, and it was a priority of the Christian community to maintain peace.

In addition to its news and editorials, *The Transylvania Times* published readers’ opinions on previously published articles or community issues in a section called “Letters to the Times.” As integration became more of a possibility, the letters became more frequent and opinionated. For example, during the summer of 1961, the “Letters to the Times” section was quiet, averaging one or two short letters about all sorts of topics per edition. However, by the summer of 1962, as the possibility of integration became more realistic, the “Letters to the

\(^\text{72}\) “Christain Approach Urged In Facing Integration In Brevard,” *The Transylvania Times*, August 2, 1962.

\(^\text{73}\) “Christain Approach Urged In Facing Integration In Brevard.”
Times” section became a much larger part of the newspaper. As the black community was petitioning the Board of Education, there were typically at least five or six letters per edition. These letters were much longer, and at least half of them in each issue discussed and took a stance on local race issues.

In the immediate wake of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision, the Transylvania County Board of Education remained relatively silent on the issue of integration of primary and secondary schools. However, the residents of Transylvania County had a lot to say. Particularly towards the end of the 1950s, residents of the surrounding area began writing both positively and negatively about issues of race and segregation to The Transylvania Times. The first instance was on January 1, 1959, when Asheville native L.C. LeCompte wrote to complain about an article that had been published in the December 11, 1958 edition. LeCompte argued that the integration orders from the federal government deprived the Southern states of their rights, and called the increasing black population in Western North Carolina “a great problem.”

One characteristic that distinguished Transylvania County from nearby Buncombe County was the economic diversity of its population. Transylvania County was much poorer than Buncombe County, which meant that the educational opportunities for the poor white community in Transylvania County—albeit much better than those for the black community—were limited. This fostered an environment in which Transylvania’s white community vehemently sought to keep white students as the top priority of its secondary schools, as “the possibility of school integration causes many white parents apprehension.” Meanwhile, black high school students were bused all the way to Henderson County every day. By the spring of 1962, after several black students and their families demanded to be enrolled at Brevard High

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School, letters from local people discussing integration flooded the “Letters to the Times” section. There were letters both for and against integration from community members, but the local government and authority still did not take a strong stance. In the May 31, 1962 edition, two letters, from Rose Baylese and Mrs. David C. Lea, spoke fairly neutrally about the issue and commended the editor for his fair publications on the issues.\(^{76}\) Rose Baylese simply praised the editor on his “handling of the issue raised by our good colored friends … it certainly deserves to be discussed,” and Mrs. David C. Lea thanked the editor for respecting freedom of the press and wrote that she feels “certain [the Board] will diligently work on the problem and carefully consider every facet of the matter before making a decision.”\(^{77}\)

On the other hand, one anonymous subscriber sent in a provocative letter that opposed integration and used a strong tone to dissuade black parents from enrolling their children in Transylvania County’s white high schools and white parents from allowing it. The author wrote that if “God intended that we all live and be alike, I don’t believe there would have been a difference in the first place.”\(^{78}\) The argument was that white children would not be “happy and satisfied” in a school with black children, as it is impossible for the two races to coexist.\(^{79}\) In another anonymous letter to the Times, a subscriber wrote that “it would be so grossly unfair to our white children (and remember that they have rights too) for our Board of Education to even consider … school integration.”\(^{80}\) Transylvania County could not afford to build larger schools, and the existing schools were already overcrowded. This letter evoked the broader sentiment that integrating schools would inhibit white children from receiving their education. Additionally, the

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\(^{77}\) Baylese, “Letters to The Times.”; Lea, “Letters to The Times.”


\(^{79}\) Anonymous, “Letters to The Times.”

writers’ anonymity is notable, as the Editor’s note clearly stated that the names would not be published if the writer desired to be anonymous. The writers’ choices to omit their names suggests that they were possibly aware of the highly controversial statements in the letters. This raises questions about whether or not there were more aggressive and racist letters sent to the editors that remained unpublished.

About a month later, the July 5, 1962 edition published a letter that encouraged desegregation and advocated for more freedom for the black community. In his letter, Robert K. Van Deusen invoked the Declaration of Independence to argue that all men, not all white men, were created equal and bestowed with the same rights by their creator. Deusen wrote that blacks are “met with barriers of prejudice and laws and customs which prevent [them] from enjoying the freedom of American citizenship to which he is lawfully and justly entitled.” He went on to draw comparisons between the black organization to fight segregation and the colonists’ struggle in the Revolutionary War, and called segregation “un-American.” However, another resident wrote a negative letter in response to the various pro-segregation letters. Oscar C. Stacy wrote that the specific reader he responded to “must have failed to read the news stories about the six colored boys who raped a white girl.” He argued that in forcing desegregation, the government was depriving American whites from their freedom to choose how their schools were run, and implied that the freedom to equal, integrated education is the “freedom to abuse [whites].” Additionally Stacy urged readers not to “follow the blind lead of those who urge integration, but who dare not practice it themselves.” This statement called out the hypocrisy of the federal

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83 Stacy, “Letters to The Times.”
84 Stacy, “Letters to The Times.”
government, and suggested that its homogeneity prevented it from understanding the true consequences of integration.

Unfortunately, most of the publicly available primary sources that take a direct stance on integration were filtered through the editors of *The Transylvania Times*. However, the Brevard High School football coach’s wife, Nancy Brookshire, kept an extensive scrapbook about the football team that spanned from 1960 through 1965, including the integration of the team. The scrapbook’s coverage of 1960 and 1961 provides photos of smiling white football players, cheerleaders, majorettes, and newspaper clippings about their games and the highlights. Newspaper headings included “Brevard State Champs Play At Bryson City,” and “Brookshire Named Coach Of West Stars.” Curiously, although neither the high school nor the football team were integrated in the 1961-1962 school year, the scrapbook includes a newspaper clipping that mentions the football team’s black trainer. A newspaper clipping titled “Brevard Negro Slain; 3 Persons Charged,” wrote that Harold Mooney was killed by three other black people, and that their motives were unclear. The clipping has neither a date nor an indication of which newspaper it came from, but Mrs. Brookshire penciled in that “early in ’62, we lost Harold Mooney – a great trainer and a fine person.” Black students were not yet allowed to attend Brevard High, but Nancy Brookshire’s note about Mooney suggests that she and her husband saw him as an equal.

In the fall of 1962 when a few black students enrolled at Brevard High School, the football team was still not integrated and Mrs. Brookshire’s scrapbook was full of photos and articles similar to those from 1960 and 1961. It is unclear whether or not the black students

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wanted to play on the football team that year, but by the fall of 1963, Brevard had the first integrated football team in North Carolina. The first page of Mrs. Brookshire’s 1963 scrapbook included a photo of the integrated team, next to which she wrote the names of all of the players by hand. Next to where Mrs. Brookshire wrote “First Integrated Team in N.C.—Brevard H.S. 1963 Team,” six black players sat proudly amongst their white teammates.88 One black player, Keith Elliott, later recollected being told that “we would be trailblazers, and we had to make sure that we did not do anything that would hinder that cause.”89 The Brookshires were proud of the integrated team, but the news article on the next page that claimed to “preview the Brevard Blue Devils” did not highlight any of the black players or mention the integration of the team at all.90 However, as soon as the first game of the season brought an “impressive win” for Brevard, the newspaper articles were quick to highlight the Ninth Avenue transfers and their stellar performance on the field. Mrs. Brookshire underlined each of the boys’ names, and wrote “First integrated game in North Carolina” across the top of the page.91 It is important to note that while the black players, like Whitmire, Ferguson, and Scruggs, were individually praised for their athletic ability in the newspapers, the majority of photos of the 1963 team in the newspaper clippings were of white players.92 After integration, the author of the newspaper articles could not deny what skills the black players brought to the team, but the lack of individual photos of them still indicates that they were not perceived as equals. On the other hand, the scrapbook reveals how Mrs. Brookshire and her husband were proud of the players—both black and white.

89 *Almost Cured*, directed by Tim Dierolf, aired 2017 (Brevard: Tom Dierolf, 2018), MP4.
91 See Appendix 4 for the newspaper clippings with Nancy Brookshire’s handwritten notes. Brookshire, *Scrapbook for the Brevard High School Football Team*, 1963.
These letters and the scrapbook from normal citizens indicate that there were mixed feelings over desegregation of Brevard and Transylvania County. The intense debate amongst Transylvania County residents in the Letters to the Times section and other opinion pieces suggest that the initial decision to integrate Brevard High School was a highly disputed one. Historians may never know whether or not the “Letters to the Times” were truly representative of the white community’s opinions, but the evidence suggests that local residents were mostly anti-integration, until they understood that the black students were just as talented as the white ones. The black community had to prove itself worthy, and it definitely did.

3. The White Establishment

If the majority of white citizens were anti-integration and the black community, though exceptional, had a lot to overcome and no help, the question of why integration happened so quickly remains unanswered. The events that the front page of The Transylvania Times promoted as “significant” news and meeting minutes from the Board of Education reveal more of the story. The white establishment in Transylvania County remained relatively silent on the issue of integration. Instead, both the newspapers and the Transylvania County School Board focused on other issues that the local fight for integration could impact, namely the tourism industry that brought thousands of people to Transylvania County every year. Finances were the primary concern of the white community, and the tourism industry played an important role in driving the local economy. Additionally, the Transylvania County school system was struggling with funding for its schools, so a healthy economy was essential. The Transylvania Times served as a particularly useful tool in directing readers’ attention away from any mounting racial tension. During a time in which there were outbreaks of racial violence all throughout the South, the local
white establishment desperately wanted peace to protect the bottom line—its local economy. Ultimately, the Board of Education allowed for integration to prevent additional issues and the possibility of violence, and *The Transylvania Times* made sure that public attention was on how well the economy performed.

As early as the 1800s, Western North Carolina was a tourist destination for wealthy families all over the American South. Transylvania County is not called the Land of Waterfalls without reason. The county is absolutely beautiful, and it is nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains and Pisgah National Forest. In the twentieth century, the mountains brought many visitors each year, and the local economy was very dependent on tourism, year-round but particularly during the summer. In fact, by 1964, tourism was a billion-dollar business in North Carolina, and tourists increased the tax revenue of local governments by millions of dollars a year. It was in the local government’s best interest to maintain the peaceful atmosphere that drew so many tourists to Transylvania County every year. For this reason, especially because the integration petition and the court case against the Board of Education happened in the summertime, local authorities likely wanted to suppress the news and avoid any violent outbreaks. The desire to maintain Transylvania County’s reputation as a family-friendly place for a relaxing summer getaway is what drove the white establishment to welcome integration so quickly. It realized that the black community would not give up, and it was afraid of the racially-charged violence that occurred throughout the South in the early 1960s. This is particularly plausible when, by 1965, the majority of North Carolina’s school districts, along with many districts in states like Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and Mississippi, had not yet proposed integration.

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There was no pressure from the rest of the state to integrate. Instead, the pressure came from within the county. In the meantime, The Transylvania Times kept its readers focused on increased tourism and the booming economy throughout the 1950s and 1960s, rather than on what was happening throughout the United States as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum.

Even when the Brown v. Board of Education decision came out in May 1954, The Transylvania Times did not mention it or any plans for Transylvania’s schools to desegregate. In fact, the biggest headline on the front page of the June 10, 1954 edition stated that “Indications Point to Good Tourist Season In County, Camps Are Filled.” The article discussed how the forest overflowed with people as the summer began and told readers that funds were finally available to finish a section of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The importance of tourism in Western North Carolina and in Transylvania County only continued to grow. By the early 1960s, the summer camp industry was booming and expanding faster than ever before. During the summer of 1961, The Transylvania Times published an article about either the Brevard Music Camp or one of the other various summer camps in the area on nearly every page. The paper boasted that “year after year campers return to our outstanding institutions, and … weekend tourist travel is breaking all records.” Another article recognized how important the camps were to the local

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96 “Indications Point to Good Tourist Season In County, Camps Are Filled,” The Transylvania Times, June 10, 1954.
97 “Indications Point to Good Tourist Season In County, Camps Are Filled.”
economy, as “the 18 camps could be compared to a half million dollar industry, or even larger.”

Particularly during the summer of 1962, the newspapers served as a great distraction from the racial tension as the black community rightly stood its ground. Paul Scruggs, one of the first black students to attend Brevard High School, later remembered sitting in at a drugstore counter in Brevard in the early 1960s with his friends, James Madison, Tommy Ferguson, and James Whitmire. Scruggs stated that “we didn’t get served, but we stayed long enough to be recognized.” The Transylvania Times did not publish any front page news articles, or any at all, about these local sit-ins, which served to publicly challenge segregated spaces. Instead, most newspaper headlines in the early 1960s were focused on how quickly summer camps and access to the nearby forest were growing. On both the June 15, 1961 edition and the June 14, 1962 edition of The Transylvania Times, a big bold headline read: “Banner Tourist Season Expected, Summer Camps Opening At Capacity.” The reappearance of the exact same newspaper headline one year later was eerily reminiscent of propaganda, encouraging and promoting unity and pride in the community and its economic success. Additionally, the exact same 1961 articles, “Cordial Welcome To Campers, Visitors,” and “Camps Are Big Assets,” were republished in 1962. Throughout the summer of 1962, The Transylvania Times continued to emphasize the importance of summer camps and placed an even greater focus on publishing content for tourists. The Transylvania Times made sure that it appealed to visitors and highlighted all of the beautiful attractions in Transylvania County that tourists could enjoy. Just a few weeks later, an

101 Almost Cured, directed by Tim Dierolf, aired 2017 (Brevard: Tom Dierolf, 2018), MP4.
article on the front page stated that “officials … join hands in issuing a most cordial welcome to
the campers, summer visitors and others here for a vacation this season,” and editor John
Anderson urged all readers to take note of what Transylvania had to offer. It described
Transylvania County as a “beautiful land of lakes and waterfalls, which is also recognized as a
‘mecca for summer camps,’” and announced that “this summer will be a peak year in tourist
business.” If the tourists that Transylvania’s officials wanted to attract back year after year
were reading the local paper, they needed the local news to reflect the peaceful, beautiful
environment that they promoted. For this reason, in the midst of the black community’s petition
to integrate schools, the newspaper prioritized publishing articles such as “Pisgah National
Forest Offers Many Attractions, Used Widely,” and “Pisgah National Forest Having Record
Number Of Visitors.”

The second page of the June 28, 1962 edition printed a beautiful birds eye view of the
town of Brevard and loudly welcomed visitors to the “Southern Gateway to [the] Blue Ridge
Parkway and Pisgah National Forest.” This photo was another repeat from the paper in 1961. The next few pages of the June 28, 1962 edition urged summer visitors to “keep posted
… read the Transylvania Times each week,” and published lists of all of the amenities that
downtown Brevard provided. Yet another page advertised the camps, swimming pools,
waterfalls, lakes, hikes, and everything else that Transylvania County had to offer. This
compelling list of what made Transylvania County so great was also a reprint from the summer

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104 “Welcome To County Extended, All Campers, Summer Visitors,” The Transylvania Times, June 28, 1962.
105 “Welcome To County Extended, All Campers, Summer Visitors.”
106 “Pisgah National Forest Offers Many Attractions, Used Widely,” The Transylvania Times, June 28, 1962;
110 “Welcome Visitors to Transylvania County, A Scenic Blending of Agriculture, Industry, Education, Culture,
of 1961. Later in the summer of 1962, while Transylvania’s schools were preparing to integrate, the newspaper continued to direct readers’ focus to how profitable the 1962 summer season was. One article stated that “it is most encouraging to note that more visitors than ever before are coming earlier and staying later.”

While the newspaper served as an outlet for the mayor and other local government officials to influence residents’ opinions, the Transylvania County Board of Education met behind closed doors. The Board’s meeting minutes were sparse, which makes them tough to analyze, as it requires making sense of the silence. However, they did suggest that the Board members were not keen on integration either. The Brown v. Board decision was made on May 17, 1954. The Board of Education met on May 18, 1954 and again on May 28. Board members did not discuss the order to integrate in either meeting, and instead focused on choosing teachers and planning the calendar for the next school year. Generally, the Board’s primary concern was about funding for white schools. A year before the Brown decision, the Board responded to questions about building a black high school in Brevard. Its excuse for refusing to build a black high school was that the “Supreme Court decisions will require facilities equal to Brevard High School.” In a letter to North Carolina’s Senator Robert Gash, the Board argued that the cost was too great, and “would postpone indefinitely construction of any other new buildings in the county.” Thus, because there was not enough funding for black students, the Board justified continuing to bus the students to Hendersonville. Funding continued to be an issue for

114 Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, 1954.
Transylvania County’s schools, although, ironically, in 1960, the Board of Education Office was redecorated as part of the renovations at Transylvania’s schools.\textsuperscript{116}

In 1962, when the black community and the T.C.I.O. started to challenge the white establishment over segregation, the Board of Education largely ignored the issue, until it was forced to face the question by the local black community. It only began to address the issue when it started to become a public problem that citizens and tourists might hear about. Its February 5, 1962 meeting minutes indicate that it was considering “the potential increase of students over the next three years,” but specifics were not given.\textsuperscript{117} In order to keep up with the growing demands and number of students, “a continuous program of improvements was being carried on.”\textsuperscript{118} It is fair to assume that these preparations were being made for additional white students, as the Board always explicitly referred to the black students as “negro students.” Thus, while these improvements were being funded by taxpayers, both black and white, only white students benefited from them. When the group of black citizens finally demanded a meeting with the Board of Education, the only note in its meeting minutes was that “the negro population had asked for a special meeting to discuss problems peculiar to the colored people as related to education.”\textsuperscript{119} The Board scheduled the meeting and then spent the remainder of its meeting reviewing budgets, again indicating the greater importance of finances compared to equal access to education. Finally, in the June 5, 1962 meeting, the Board mentioned that it rejected the petition for integrated schools. However, the minutes did not account for how the decision was made and whether or not the Board took into account what was best for the black population.

\textsuperscript{116} C.W. Bradburn to Board of Education, 8 January 1960, in Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, 1960.
\textsuperscript{117} Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, February 5, 1962.
\textsuperscript{118} Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, March 6, 1962.
\textsuperscript{119} Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, May 9, 1962.
They simply stated that the Board “did not think it wise or practical to make such reassignment at this time.”

When the black community resubmitted its request to integrate Transylvania County’s schools, the Board of Education brought its attorney in to advise them. Again, the thought process behind its decision is not documented, but the minutes clearly indicated that it accepted eight of the applicants and rejected thirty-seven others. Why accept eight and reject the rest? It is impossible to know, but it is likely that the attorney advised them to allow a small number of black students to attend Brevard Junior and Senior High in an attempt to appease the black community and avoid further problems or violence. This logic is upheld by the fact that the next entry in the meeting minutes described how the entire Board voted no to fully integrate Transylvania County’s schools. If the Board was going to reject the majority of applicants, why accept any at all? The Board listened to all of the black community’s grievances but still unanimously voted not to allow any additional black students to attend school in Transylvania County, right before voting to allow a white student to transfer to Brevard Senior High. This suggests that the Board was preparing to accept and make financial sacrifices for more white students, but that it wanted to accept as few black students as possible.

Once the first group of black students enrolled at Brevard Junior and Senior High, the Board of Education closely monitored their grades and success. The Board members did not monitor the grades of new white students, which is peculiar. The black and white students all entered the same new environment, so why only monitor the black students? Would not the Board want to oversee the impact of integration on both the white and black students? Again, it

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120 Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, June 5, 1962.
121 Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, July 12, 1962.
122 Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, August 1962.
is impossible to know, but these actions suggest that the Board had little faith in the ability of black students to thrive at a whites-only school. Additionally, the meetings suggested that the Board went to court peacefully and did not protest the legal process, even though it was dealing with a black attorney. It is unclear whether or not the Board thought it would win, but when it received Judge Warlick’s Court Order in April 1963, the Board accepted it without a fight. It is significant to note that after voting unanimously against integration, the Board quietly acknowledged the Court Order to fully integrate Transylvania’s schools. The Board had the power, and if it really wanted to, it likely could have fought the decision. Transylvania County did not have to be one of the first counties in North Carolina to integrate its schools. However, after watching violence escalate in other communities that resisted integration across the United States and North Carolina, the Board and the white establishment likely did not want to take any risks that a future outbreak of violence might disrupt the peaceful mountain town that they invited tourists into with open arms.

Both the Board of Education minutes and *The Transylvania Times* demonstrate how important finances and the economy were to the white community. As a community that was located in Appalachia, where white and black poverty was rampant, and that struggled to provide an education for the white students, the white establishment wanted to protect the economy at all costs. Any hint of violence would have deterred tourists and wealthy families from sending their children to spend their summers in Transylvania County. Thus, to protect its economy and prevent violence, the white establishment accepted integration without much of a fight and brushed it under the table like it had never happened. If the white community was actually proud of integration and wanted to send a message to promote racial equality, the Board of Education

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123 Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, November 13, 1962.
124 Transylvania County Board of Education, Minutes of Weekly Meetings, April 2, 1963.
and the local government would have publicly recognized it. However, neither the Board nor the government did. Transylvania County did not integrate with its black community’s best interests in mind. Integration was more self-serving, as quietly allowing it was better than the alternative of more widespread attention and racial violence. Quiet integration, even if the white establishment did not want it, would allow it to safeguard its main priority—the economy. Transylvania’s black community had sent the message that it would not give up, and the white establishment conceded in fear of what it might do next. Integration had not yet been completely achieved, but the walls created by segregation began to crumble.

“Too many things need to be done”\textsuperscript{125}

The national Civil Rights movement did not make it to Appalachia, which left Appalachian blacks to mobilize themselves. This thesis argued that the black community in Transylvania County was particularly exceptional, because it started fighting for its rights early and it stood its ground. It faced many obstacles, such as a very pro-segregation white community and a white establishment that cared more about finances than its black constituents, but its boldness in filing a legal complaint against the white Board of Education and refusing to back down paid off. The black community’s sheer will and determination, paired with a white establishment whose main priority was to protect the tourism industry and the local economy, led Transylvania County to be one of the first counties in North Carolina to desegregate.

The legal complaint that the black citizens of Transylvania County filed had not been previously analyzed in depth, and it played a key role in school integration in Transylvania County. Additionally, though some of the local projects, such as the paper presented at the ASA

\textsuperscript{125} Bowman, interview by Kelly Navies.
Annual Conference, considered the yearbook and several similar newspaper articles, the sources were not analyzed as thoughtfully as they should have been. The story of Transylvania County’s exceptional black community is important to study, as it was one of the first communities in North Carolina to desegregate its schools. This is particularly meaningful because there was no pressure to integrate schools from the federal government until the mid-1960s. Additionally, it is essential to recognize the role that the black community in Transylvania County played. The integration of Brevard High School was a result of its hard work, not the result of a progressive white community that sought to be a leader in integration. It is impossible to understand the history of such an important chapter in North Carolina’s Civil Rights history if its roots are not explored. Further research can still be completed. There are no public records of the T.C.I.O.’s meetings in the early 1960s. If a historian could access any of its private records, they would shed more light on the perspectives of the black community in Transylvania County at the time. There are even more questions to be asked and to be answered in regards to the history of the Civil Rights movement in Appalachian North Carolina and in Appalachia more broadly. For example, how did these small movements influence and support each other, if at all? Did the Appalachian black communities stick together when the national movement failed to fight for justice on their behalf?

The Appalachian region still struggles with poverty and a lack of upward socio-economic mobility today. In 1965, the Appalachian Economic and Political Action Conference met to propose a plan for organizing and developing Appalachia, and to discuss registering black voters in Appalachia. This proposal for organizing Appalachia described the incredible opportunity to unite the black and white populations of Appalachia in solving their mutual problem of
poverty. The immediate impact of this conference was not directly relevant to school
desegregation in Transylvania County, but it is hard to confidently state that its goals have been
accomplished yet. Appalachia is still plagued by poverty—both black and white—and the
American South remains intensely racially divided. The American South is still effectively
segregated, and the progressive attitude that some white elites thought they had in the 1960s still
does not exist in many places. For the most part, black communities in the South are
impoverished and undereducated. There are still many things to be done.

Particularly because Transylvania County remains very residentially segregated and
because its black population and low-income population almost completely overlap, it is
important to understand the history that shaped the community there today. Appalachia is not
racially homogenous, and neither is Transylvania County. The story of the more recent black
experience in the region cannot be ignored. America fails its black Appalachian citizens by
overlooking their role in fighting for their own rights. It is a disservice to the history of
Transylvania County to let it stand that it was a heralded leader in integration. It was only a
leader in the sense that it was one of the first counties to integrate. The white community there
did not lead in promoting racial equality and all of the other things that the Civil Rights
Movement fought for. Appalachia remains isolated, both in reality and in historical memory. In
order to fully understand the Civil Rights era in the American South, and to tackle problems of
poverty and development in the rural South moving forward, the holes in Appalachian history
need to be filled.

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126 Carol Stevens, *Appalachian Economic and Political Action Conference Minutes and Proposal for*
*Records of the Program Department* (Atlanta: Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc.).
Appendix 1.

Appendix 2.

The Transylvania Times, June 7, 1962.
Appendix 3.

This photograph of the 1963 Brevard High School Football Team—the first integrated team in North Carolina—appears on the first page of Nancy Brookshire’s 1963 scrapbook. Her scrapbooks provide a well-documented record of the team in the early 1960s, and are now in the archive at the Transylvania County Library.
This newspaper clipping describes the first integrated high school football game in North Carolina, with Nancy Brookshire’s visible annotations. This appears on the twelfth page of Mrs. Brookshire’s 1963 scrapbook.
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