

AFFRILACHIAN AGENCY AND THE MYTH OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA'S
RACIAL INNOCENCE: THE INTEGRATION OF BREVARD HIGH SCHOOL

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Scholars have written a number of studies on integration in North Carolina. The majority of these works focus on Eastern North Carolina and the piedmont region. Integration in Western North Carolina remains understudied. Southern Appalachian historiography generally neglects the study of African Americans as an important entity.¹ Recently, John C. Inscoe's groundbreaking article on Appalachian slavery stimulated greater study of African Americans in Appalachia.² Yet, the majority of such recent studies have focused on the late nineteenth century.³ William Turner and Edward Cabbell's *Blacks in Appalachia*, contains relatively few articles on Appalachian Blacks in the 1960s. These articles focus on the invisibility of Blacks in Appalachia to the outside world; wider America as well as the region itself views Appalachia as being solely white.⁴ Cabbell holds that this invisibility created "some of the worst colonial-type racism and exploitation in the country."⁵ Cabbell argues that, historiographically, study of black Appalachians has been neglected by both white Appalachian scholars and scholars of African-American history. Other articles in the anthology focus on demographic history but all neglect to study integration.⁶ Therefore, this case study seeks to fill the scholarly gap on racial integration

¹ William H. Turner, and Edward J. Cabbell, eds., *Blacks in Appalachia*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1985).

² John C. Inscoe, "Mountain Masters: Slaveholding in Western North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 61, no. 2, (April 1984): 144-173.

³ For more on African American life and race relations in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Appalachia see Turner, and Cabbell, eds., *Blacks in Appalachia*.; John C. Inscoe *Race, War and Remembrance in the Appalachian South*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, November 4, 2009).; John C. Inscoe, *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South From Slavery to Segregation*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, March 1, 2005).

⁴ See Leon F. Williams, "The Vanishing Appalachian: How to 'Whiten' the Problem," in *Blacks in Appalachia*, eds. William H. Turner and Edward J. Cabbell, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, March 1, 2005), 201-206.; Edward J. Cabbell, "Black Invisibility and Racism in Appalachia: An Informal Survey," in *Blacks in Appalachia*, eds. William H. Turner and Edward J. Cabbell, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, March 1, 2005), 3-10.

⁵ Turner and Cabbell, *Blacks in Appalachia*, 3.; For more on economic development in Appalachia and its peripheral consequences for African-Americans see Ian C. Hartmann, "West Virginia Mountaineers and Kentucky Frontiersmen: Race, Manliness, and the Rhetoric of Liberalism in the Early 1960s," *Journal of Southern History*, 80 no. 3, (August 2014): 651-678.

⁶ See Jack Guillebeaux, "Not Just Whites in Appalachia," in *Blacks in Appalachia*, eds. William H. Turner and Edward J. Cabbell, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, March 1, 2005), 207-210.; William H. Turner,

in the Southern Appalachian region. Despite low percentages of blacks living in Appalachia, their presence powerfully shaped local experiences of integration.

Brevard, North Carolina, the focus of this study, is a small town located in the Western North Carolina Mountains 34 miles Southwest of Asheville. The town retains a potent memory of the integration of Brevard High School. On the fiftieth anniversary of the completed integration of secondary schools in 2013, the town sponsored a “Freedom Walk.” During the walk individuals from the community gathered and walked to school together. The event served as a celebration of this memory. Local citizen, Joshua Freeman stated at this celebration that “Transylvania County was one of the first school systems in the state to fully integrate... It is quite an opportunity to celebrate an important part of our history. (It is) a history we’re very proud of in Transylvania County.”⁷ The town’s contemporary black community is commonly referred to as the Rosenwald community after the black elementary school which existed prior to integration.⁸ A children’s book was published by a group of Elementary school students entitled *Standing Alone*. The work chronicles the traditional memory of integration in Transylvania County and was celebrated by the community at large. Betty Reed, a local historian, published a book on the history of the Rosenwald School in Brevard which forms the basis of the reminisced history of integration for the county’s residents. All of these mediums serve to keep the county’s celebratory memory of integration alive.

Like a number of towns in the South, this memory depicts smooth integration in contrast to mainstream images of Southern racial conflict.⁹ Forgetting many of the racial tensions in the

“The Demography of Black Appalachia,” in *Blacks in Appalachia*, eds. William H. Turner and Edward J. Cabbell, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, March 1, 2005) .

⁷ Michael Trufant, “Transylvania County Freedom Walk And Interviews” (video), May 8, 2013, accessed May 2, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iKPSRpqfno&feature=youtu.be>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ For this phenomena in the wider South see Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004).; For examples of this memory see Leslie Borhaug, Zach Fisher, Coley Hall, Scott

region, this retelling holds that blacks and whites were often friends and held no hostility towards one another. A majority of the county's contemporary white citizens firmly believe that integration occurred voluntarily and set a standard for other individuals to follow. During the 50th memorial celebration of integration, Jessica Merrill stated during an interview "Transylvania County is unique because we are a leader. We were one of the first schools in North Carolina to integrate."¹⁰ An article published in the *Transylvania Times* in 2013 asserted that the integration of Transylvania County Schools "proved to be an event that set a trend for other school districts in the area... During a time of widespread social tension, Transylvania County schools ultimately tore down the racial barriers dividing schools and students in the county."¹¹ This idea of 'standing alone' or being set apart in order to stand as an example of enlightened peacefulness for the rest of the South is a vital aspect of this local lore.¹² Yet, this memory chooses to forget vital aspects of the county's history.

The desegregation of Brevard High School was not the voluntary act of enlightened and progressive mountaineers who tore down racial barriers. Situations in 1962 and again in 1966 combined to make compliance with integration more alluring than its violent counterpart. A record breaking tourist season, money from the federal government to fund an overburdened school system, and direct control of the public narrative created a milder climate for race relations. Yet residents did not welcome desegregation with open arms. Many fought it

Keener, Chesnea Lance, Drew Lowery, Gregory Marshall, Nathan Meece, Brandon Queen, Justin Smith, Richard Thomas, Patience White, *Brevard... Standing Alone: North Carolina First Integrated Football Team the Untold Story*, (Pisgah Forest, NC: Davidson River School, 2005).; Betty J. Reed, *School Segregation in Western North Carolina: A History, 1860s-1970s*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: MacFarland and Company Inc. Publishers, 2011).; Betty J. Reed, *The Brevard Rosenwald School: Black Education and Community Building in a Southern Appalachia Town, 1920-1966*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: MacFarland and Company Inc. Publishers, 2004).; Michael Trufant, "Transylvania County Freedom Walk And Interviews" (video), May 8, 2013, accessed May 2, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iKPSRpfno&feature=youtu.be.>; Nathaniel B. Hall, "The Negroes of Transylvania County 1861-1961," In Mary Jane McCrary, *Transylvania Beginnings: A History*, (Easley, SC: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1984): 153-190.

¹⁰ Michael Trufant, "Transylvania County Freedom Walk And Interviews."

¹¹ *Transylvania Times*, February 26, 2013.

¹² Borhaug, etc., *Brevard... Standing Alone*.

vehemently. Once the decision was made, however, the majority of Brevard's citizens complied for a variety of reasons. These reasons typically did not include their own enlightened progressivism, but instead reflected a response to a deliberate control of the public narrative.

Prior to integration, African American students from Transylvania County attended the Brevard Rosenwald School until they reached high school age. No high school existed in the county for African American students.¹³ An agreement between neighboring Henderson County and Transylvania County Schools since 1949 allowed these black high school students to attend high school at the all black Ninth Avenue School in Hendersonville.¹⁴ African American high school students from Polk, Henderson and Transylvania County attended Ninth Avenue.¹⁵ This agreement provided transportation for the 42 mile round trip to and from the school.¹⁶

When students arrived at Ninth Avenue they received an inadequate educational experience. Many students spent the day roaming the streets of Hendersonville where they would gamble or see a picture show then return to meet the school bus in the afternoon.¹⁷ Parents who were financially capable sent their children out of state to schools in South Carolina, Virginia or Ohio. Brenda Elliot, who attended Brevard High School after integration, remembered her older brothers and sisters leaving home at thirteen; they moved 75 miles away to live with their grandparents so they could attend high school.¹⁸ Even though their parent's taxes supported Brevard High school, Brevard's black children were not allowed to attend the county's public schools. Instead they were forced to attend high school out of county or even out of state, if they

¹³ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 55-57.

¹⁴ Transylvania County Board of Education (Brevard, NC), Minutes of Weekly Meetings, 1945-1970, meeting of June 27, 1949.

¹⁵ Gary Franklin Greene, and the Black History Research Committee, *A Brief History of the Black Presence in Henderson County*, (Asheville, NC: Biltmore Press, 1996): 12.

¹⁶ Letter attached filed with - Transylvania County Board of Education (Brevard, NC), Minutes of Weekly Meetings, 1945-1970, meeting of April 17, 1953.

¹⁷ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald School*, 56.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 57.

attended at all. When African Americans fought for integration in 1962, this lack of local educational facilities constituted their primary grievance.

Seven years after *Brown v. Board of Education* declared segregated schools unconstitutional, a group of African Americans petitioned the Board of Education in May of 1962 to allow their children to attend Brevard High School.¹⁹ The petition was read before the board in June of that year and denied.²⁰ These children had previously attended the Ninth Avenue School and were asking for a reassignment to a school in their home county.²¹ The petition was signed by seven black citizens who argued that, as tax paying citizens, their children should be allowed to attend school in the county in which they lived. The board “deferred any action until a thorough study could be made of the situation.” At that time around 50 black students attended Ninth Avenue from Transylvania County. On July 12, 1962 eight of the 45 who petitioned to attend Brevard Senior High School were given permission to attend for the 1962-63 school year.²² All other students continued attending Ninth Avenue.²³ On July 17, the Board sought legal counsel on the matter.²⁴

The African American community remained discontented and joined with additional members of the black community to file supplementary petitions on July 30, 1962.²⁵ The Board of Education was given these petitions and agreed to hear the group’s argument. Represented by Attorney Reuben J. Dailey, the individuals formed the Transylvania Citizen’s Improvement Organization (TCIO). On August 14, 17 and 21 of that year each student was presented

¹⁹ Transylvania County Board of Education (Brevard, NC), Minutes of Weekly Meetings, 1945-1970, meeting of May 9, 1962.

²⁰ *Ibid*, meeting of June 5, 1962.; “Board of Education Turns Down Re-Assignment Request,” *Transylvania Times*, June 7, 1962.

²¹ “Board of Education asked to assign negro students at Brevard Junior, Senior High,” *Transylvania Times*, May 17, 1962.

²² Transylvania County Board of Education, meeting of July 12, 1962.

²³ “Eight Negro Students Are Assigned Here” *Transylvania Times*, July 26, 1962.

²⁴ Transylvania County Board of Education, meeting of July 12, 1962.

²⁵ *Ibid*, meeting of July 30, 1962.

individually before the Board of Education by Dailey and each petition was individually denied.²⁶ In March of 1963, TCIO sued the Transylvania County Board of Education for admittance of the black students to Brevard High School.²⁷ On March 5, 1963 the Board of Education received a letter summoning them to court.

On March 14 Judge Wilson Warlick of the Western North Carolina Federal District Court in Asheville ruled that each of the plaintiffs should be allowed to attend Brevard High School in accordance with federal law. According to a statement made in the following issue of the *Transylvania Times* “he made no ruling on the elementary schools in Brevard which are expected to remain segregated. Negro students in grades first through the eighth will continue to go to the Rosenwald school here as in the past.”²⁸ Brevard Elementary School remained segregated until 1966 and Transylvania County Schools complied with as little of the court’s ruling as possible.

The actions of the TCIO, combined with the limited actions of the Transylvania County Board of Education, discount the public recounting which emphasizes that the white community desegregated Brevard High School voluntarily. Transylvania County’s African American citizens also maintain a fundamentally different memory of integration. Edith Darity, a black student at Brevard High School during integration asserted, “Transylvania was not willing to integrate schools. TCIO initiated the move for this to happen.”²⁹ This local black memory remains unmentioned in public memorials. White mountaineers did not hand over rights to blacks. African Americans initiated, fought for, and won those rights with the help of federal law.

²⁶ *Ibid*, meeting of August 14, 17, and 21, 1962.

²⁷ *Ibid*, meeting of March 5, 1963.; “Negroes File Suit Against the Transylvania Board of Education,” *Transylvania Times*, August 23, 1962.; Conley et al. v. Transylvania County Board of Education et al. – Filed with Transylvania County Board of Education minutes.

²⁸ “Judge So Orders,” *Transylvania Times*, March 14, 1963.; Conley et al. v. Transylvania County Board of Education et al. – Filed with Transylvania County Board of Education minutes.

²⁹ Edith Darity, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, United States, March 27, 2015.

The Transylvania County School board also did not integrate Brevard Elementary School voluntarily. The school integrated in 1965, only after a group of parents filed another petition to allow their students to attend school there.³⁰ Facing an overburdened and underfunded school system, the board knew that if it refused to allow these students to enroll at Brevard Elementary they would be in direct violation of Title XI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The act held that any institution receiving federal financial assistance could not discriminate against any individual because of their race.³¹ The act states that “if a recipient of federal assistance is found to have discriminated and voluntary compliance cannot be achieved, the federal agency providing the assistance should either initiate fund termination proceedings or refer the matter to the Department of Justice for appropriate legal action.”³²

Transylvania County Schools could not have subsisted without federal financial assistance. Brevard’s population had risen 25% over the course of the period from 1950 - 1960.³³ The birth of the baby boomer generation combined with a massive influx of outsiders moving to the region to establish businesses and find industrial jobs at DuPont and Silversteen plants overburdened the already stressed educational infrastructure. These overcrowded conditions were often described in the *Transylvania Times*. One article stated that “enrollment figures for the first few days of school in Transylvania show that there is an increase of some 200 students over last year... the total figure of attendance is... 3,825 and last year it was 3,625... crowded conditions are reported.”³⁴ A new building for Brevard High School was built in 1959 to relieve much of this overcrowding.³⁵

³⁰Transylvania County Board of Education, meeting of August 16, 1965.

³¹ *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. U.S. Code 78, Statute 241, (1964).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “Brevard Population Shows Gain of 25 Per Cent During Past 10 Years,” *Transylvania Times*, May 12, 1960.

³⁴ “Good Signs of Times in County,” *Transylvania Times*, January 31, 1954.

³⁵ Transylvania County Board of Education, meeting of June 15, 1953.; *Ibid.*, meeting of February 2, 1962.; “High School Enrollment in County Shows Large Increase,” *Transylvania Times*, March 10, 1955.; “Action is taken by

None the less, the financial difficulties of the overburdened system persisted. According to a survey published in the *Transylvania Times* on March 18, 1965 the county spent approximately 63% of its budget on education.³⁶ Public concern centered on the financial difficulties of the school board.³⁷ *Transylvania Times* editorialized that “our public school problems arise from the fact that our school needs far outweigh our present financial capacity. This is a state-wide... problem arising from our tremendously increased birth rate particularly in the war years.”³⁸ After finally desegregating the elementary school in 1965, the county Board of Education reviewed through the Transylvania Administrative Unit to ensure that they were complying with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and that they would qualify to receive federal funding.³⁹ Financial necessity, not a county-wide interracial bond, drove the desegregation of Brevard Elementary.

The idea that Brevard stood as an enlightened example for other counties also has its flaws. The primary origin of this memory lies in the integration of Brevard High School’s football team.⁴⁰ This community tale is recounted in an article from the *Transylvania Times*. The article memorialized that “it would take a seasoned coach, a special group of young men and a leather ball to exemplify athletic excellence but more important[ly] personal character. The evening (of the first game) had as much implication for the Brevard community as it did the

school board: consolidated high school building out. District committees reappointed,” *Transylvania Times*, May 26, 1955.; “School Situation is Urgent,” *Transylvania Times*, March 9, 1956.; “Staff Writer Tours Brevard High and Opens Closets to Show the Skeletons,” *Transylvania Times*, December 6, 1956.; “New Brevard High School Layout is 60 Per Cent Completed, Tour Made,” *Transylvania Times*, February 12, 1959.; “New High School to Be Completed by September 1st,” *Transylvania Times*, August 13, 1959.

³⁶ “Education in Transylvania is expensive, survey made,” *Transylvania Times*, March 18, 1965.

³⁷ George E Sokolsky, “Behind the News... From Washington: Killing Schools,” *Transylvania Times*, December 14, 1961.; Staff Writer, “Above State Average: Education in Transylvania is Expensive, Survey Made,” *Transylvania Times*, March 18, 1965.

³⁸ “A Matter of Public Interest: The Democratic Candidates for the Board of Education answer some questions concerning Transylvania county schools,” *Transylvania Times*, March 18, 1965.

³⁹ Transylvania County Board of Education, meeting of July 25, 1965.

⁴⁰ Borhaug, etc., *Standing Alone*.

football team.”⁴¹ Community members view the integration of the football team in particular as a signifier that the voluntary desegregation of schools in Transylvania County tore down walls of racism across the community.

The football team integrated in the Fall of 1963 and memory holds that it was the first in the state of North Carolina to do so.⁴² Verification of the memory that Brevard was *Standing Alone* is unverified. Regardless, the football team became a rallying point for the community when the team achieved its first state championship under the direction of Coach Cliff Brookshire that same year.⁴³ This spirit is demonstrated in a statement by Tommy Kilgore, a black student at Brevard High School at the time of desegregation. Kilgore declared that “Football was the county’s child... athletics broke a lot of ice and opened a lot of doors... They didn’t want an integrated team and they got their first state title with an integrated team... You can see the priorities and priorities generate exceptions.”⁴⁴ Desire for athletic success allowed integration of the football team to occur successfully, not county-wide progressivism.

Memories of inter-racial relationships within the team tended to be supportive. White athletes accepted black athletes and welcomed them as part of the team.⁴⁵ Traveling in the segregated south as an integrated team had its challenges; away games were a consistent nightmare logistically. Cliff Brookshire, the coach of the team during integration, recalled a comedic episode in which Reggie Lynch, one of the black players on the team, was dragged away by a reporter.⁴⁶ Brookshire refused to let the student go and the reporter shouted ‘does he treat you differently?’ Lynch responded ‘no, he treats us all like dogs.’ John Tinsley, a white

⁴¹ *Transylvania Times*, February 28, 2013.

⁴² Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 129.; Borhaug, etc. *Standing Alone*.

⁴³ “Brevard Wins AAA Championship” *Transylvania Times*, November 29, 1963.

⁴⁴ Tommy Kilgore, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, March 27, 2015.

⁴⁵ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 129.

⁴⁶ Cliff Brookshire, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, April 6, 2015.

football player from 1963 to 1965 asserted that “issues... occurred when the team played in places other than Brevard. Such issues involved were the use of restrooms, water fountains and restaurants. Coach Brookshire handled these issues in fairness to all.”⁴⁷ On more than one occasion, the white team members insisted on having their food to go at restaurants and taking it to eat on the bus with their black team mates.⁴⁸

The school’s yearbook and newspaper between the year 1962 and 1970 abound with athletic awards and achievements for various African American students. On March 28, 1969 the school’s newspaper, *The Broadcaster*, acknowledged John Avery as the “most athletic” in its senior superlatives.⁴⁹ Shirley Rigdon received the most valuable player award in 1964 as a member of the girls’ basketball team.⁵⁰ James Whitmire, Keith Elliot and Reginald Lynch received the county sports award in 1965.⁵¹ African-American athletic faces abound in team pictures and other athletic shots through the yearbooks.⁵²

While African Americans were largely represented in athletic organizations, academic clubs such as the Beta Club, Academic Hall of Fame, Homecoming Court and Senior Superlative are largely absent of black faces.⁵³ Even classroom pictures and pictures involving students taking part in academic activities are void of black representation. This same observation was made by John Tinsley, a Brevard High School student during integration. Tinsley observed “as I reviewed my senior yearbook [from 1966] at Brevard High I was saddened because there were no African Americans in activities such as student council, [and] honors student groups... even though integration had officially taken place, a total degree of acceptance for involvement takes

⁴⁷ John Tinsley, emailed to author, April 1, 2015.

⁴⁸ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 131.; Cliff Brookshire, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, April 6, 2015.

⁴⁹ *Broadcaster*, March 28, 1969.

⁵⁰ Brevard High School Year Book, Brevard, NC: *The Brevardier*, 1964.

⁵¹ Brevard High School Year Book, Brevard, NC: *The Brevardier*, 1965.

⁵² Brevard High School Year Book, Brevard, NC: *The Brevardier*, 1962-1970.

⁵³ Brevard High School Year Book, Brevard, NC: *The Brevardier*, 1962-1970.

a much longer time to achieve.”⁵⁴ Linda Lockes, a black student at Brevard High during integration, summed up the meaning of this absence by stating “at that time... football and basketball were the only outlets for blacks and whites to be involved in.”⁵⁵ The two exceptions to the rule were Dottie Hill in 1971 and Neva Whiteside in 1965 both of whom achieved various academic awards over the course of their time at Brevard High School.⁵⁶ For the vast majority of students, to succeed on the field was one thing. To succeed in the classroom was another.

Acceptance in the world of athletics did not mean acceptance in all areas of an individual’s life. In an article in the *Transylvania Times* in December of 1964 it was announced that Keith Elliot and Reginald Lynch had been named to the WNC All-Scholastic Grid Team.⁵⁷ In the article, the two players are heralded for their achievement on the field. Interestingly, their academic and moral achievements are also listed but with a noticeably paternalistic tone. The article noticed that “Keith also studies hard, too. I think he can make it academically. Above all other things he is a good clean boy morally. That makes a big difference.”⁵⁸ Blacks were accepted by whites and expected to achieve success athletically, the same cannot be said academically.

Academic success for African-American students at Brevard High School was often actively discouraged. Joyce Owens, a teacher at Brevard High School throughout integration, noted considerable disparities in academic expectation between white and black students.⁵⁹ Owens noted that she had several students who were well behaved and very smart but school officials advised them to take general math instead of algebra. Valeria Gordon, the first black

⁵⁴ John Tinsley, emailed to author, April 1, 2015.

⁵⁵ Linda Lockes, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, March 27, 2015.

⁵⁶ Brevard High School Year Book, Brevard, NC: *The Brevardier*, 1962-1970.; “Neva Whitesides is a Finalist in achievement tests among negroes,” *Transylvania Times*, October 28, 1965.

⁵⁷ “Elliot and Lynch are named to WNC All-Scholastic Grid Team,” *Transylvania Times*, December 24, 1964.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 123.

cheerleader at Brevard High School, similarly stated that “I felt as if I were at constant competition with my fair skinned peers, always having to prove that I was intellectually equal to them.”⁶⁰ Several students noted a considerable degree of surprise on the faces of their white teachers when they succeeded academically.⁶¹ Tommy Kilgore, a black student at Brevard High School during integration, remembered one instance in which he was discussing the Constitution and Bill of Rights with his teacher and they were surprised “at some of the things we were taught.”⁶² These conditions were so prevalent that a group of African-American parents came before the Board of Education in May of 1963 inquiring about the conditions under which their children would attend Brevard High School.⁶³ If possible, they wanted their children to continue attending Ninth Avenue because of the reputation of academic inequality at Brevard High.

Paternalism characterized race relations in Transylvania County. Mention of the black community in the *Transylvania Times* was restricted to sporadic reference to the community’s church or school.⁶⁴ These articles often took on a paternalistic tone which portrayed whites as selflessly protecting the best interests of their black neighbors.⁶⁵ Race relations in the county are exemplified by the headline of an article published in the *Transylvania Times* in November of

⁶⁰ “Rosenwald Community,” *Transylvania Times*, March 26, 2015.

⁶¹ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 110.; Linda Lockes, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, March 27, 2015.; Tommy Kilgore, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, March 27, 2015.

⁶² Tommy Kilgore, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, March 27, 2015.

⁶³ Transylvania County Board of Education, meeting of May 7, 1963.

⁶⁴ Rosenwald P-TA meets Thursday,” *Transylvania Times*, February 3, 1955.; “Colored Troop To Get Charter,” *Transylvania Times*, June 30, 1955.; “Colored Children to Give Program,” *Transylvania Times*, March 1, 1956.; “To Hold Court of Honor for Colored Troops,” *Transylvania Times*, March 8, 1956.; “Colored Preacher Buried on Sunday,” *Transylvania Times*, February 21, 1957.; “Sam Benjamin, Colored Resident Buried on Sunday,” *Transylvania Times*, February 21, 1957.; “Will Dedicate Bethel ‘A’ In Services, 22nd,” *Transylvania Times*, June 12, 1958.; “Colored Community Center Had Successful year in ’58,” *Transylvania Times*, January 2, 1959.; “Week of Instruction at Bethel A Church,” *Transylvania Times*, July 16, 1959.; “Rosenwald Branch of Library will re-open Friday, September 1st,” *Transylvania Times*, August 31, 1961.; “Ninth Avenue School Make-Up Days Announced,” *Transylvania Times*, March 8, 1962. - list represents a comprehensive list of all mentions of the black community from 1954-1967 excluding integration and criminal activity

⁶⁵ “Entertainers Thanked by the Colored Residents,” *Transylvania Times*, April 26, 1956.; “Negro rid Game to Be Here Next Friday Nov. 5th,” *Transylvania Times*, October 23, 1954.; “Colored Benefit Game Successful,” *Transylvania Times*, November 24, 1954.

1989. The headline read “Brevard’s Black Community: They Have Been Brevard’s Good Neighbors through the Years.”⁶⁶ Reflecting such benevolent otherness, paternalistic memories of interracial interactions abound. As Samuel Raper noted “Nell Ashworth’s son Donald loved his African American neighbor Zeb Hemphill affectionately calling him Uncle Remus.”⁶⁷ The exception to this rule was the portrayal of blacks partaking in criminal activity.⁶⁸ Such incidences typically made headlines, even when a white offense of equal criminality received less coverage.

Beyond schools, the institution of segregation was prominent throughout the county and typical of the wider South.⁶⁹ The two town movie theatres, only served blacks from a side entrance.⁷⁰ Once in the theatre, African Americans were still required to sit in the balcony. Selena Robinson, a prominent black citizen during integration, recalled thinking as a child that an African American could be arrested for drinking from the public fountain in front of the county courthouse.⁷¹ Others remember segregated accommodations at the courthouse and depot.⁷² A prominent business class also existed in both the white and black communities.⁷³ Very few members of this class in either community served members of both races.

The Southern taboo of interracial dating was also prominent throughout the county. A letter to *The Times* appeared in February of 1959 which sourly asserted that the “English speaking people have steadfastly opposed and resisted the mixture of their racial stock with other peoples... a few years of thoroughly integrated schools would produce large numbers of

⁶⁶ “Brevard’s Black Community: They Have Been Brevard’s Good Neighbors Through the Years,” *Transylvania Times*, November 30, 1989.

⁶⁷ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 175.

⁶⁸ “Negro is Fatally Shot on Tuesday,” *Transylvania Times*, July 31, 1958.; “Brevard Negro is Held on Murder Charge,” *Transylvania Times*, February 4, 1960.; “Brevard Negro Being Tried in Court for Murder, Breaks Down on Stand,” *Transylvania Times*, April 7, 1960.; “Two Negro Boys Nabbed in Robbery Here,” *Transylvania Times*, June 15, 1961.; “Negro Youths Confess to Robberies,” *Transylvania Times*, January 25, 1961.; “Two Negro Youths Attack and Rob Brevard Merchant,” *Transylvania Times*, July 25, 1962.

⁶⁹ “Growing Up Black in Brevard in the 1960s,” *Transylvania Times*, February 23, 2015.

⁷⁰ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 117.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 17.

⁷² “Growing Up Black in Brevard in the 1960s” *Transylvania Times*, February 23, 2015.

⁷³ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 8.

indoctrinated young southerners free from all prejudice against mixed mating.”⁷⁴ A poll was taken by the school newspaper, *The Broadcaster*, six years after integration in November of 1968. In response to the statement “inter-racial dating is objectionable,” the poll found that 60 of the students polled agreed and only 24 disagreed.⁷⁵

Whites in Transylvania County tend to remember relatively peaceful interactions with their black neighbors when the two communities intersected. Local historian Betty Reed stated, “although black citizens of Transylvania were kept ‘in their place’ by the practice of segregation during the first 50 years of the twentieth century, their interaction with the white community was frequently positive.”⁷⁶ Memories of peaceful race relations are common phenomena in Southern History.⁷⁷

Anecdotal and circumstantial evidence does suggest that when the two communities intersected the results were not always positive. Greasy Corner, the gathering point of the African American community was often home to racial conflict.⁷⁸ Young white boys often revved their engine at the top of the hill and proceeded to race down it at top speed. The boys often threw cherry bombs into the crowd as it dispersed. Edith Darity, a black student during integration remembered walking in to school with her books and being tripped on the way to her locker.⁷⁹ One black student remembered an incident that occurred the first day of school after integration. He remembered that “parents, community leaders and fellow students gathered to escort us down Oakdale Street to the school... white teenagers... did cause trouble, shouting racial slurs and jeering at us... The racial slurs, encounters and even confrontations did not stop

⁷⁴ Herbert Ravenel, “letters to the Times,” *Transylvania Times*, February 19, 1959.

⁷⁵ *The Broadcaster*, November 21, 1968.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

⁷⁷ Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name.*; “The Civil Rights Movement,” Oral Histories of the American South, last modified May 2, 2015, accessed April 6, 2015, http://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/civil_rights.html.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

⁷⁹ Edith Darity, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, United States, March 27, 2015.

that day or for the remainder of my high school career.”⁸⁰ Yet, the majority of Brevard’s contemporary white community understandably chooses to see past race relations in the county through rose colored glasses. As Reed justly observed “no doubt a great deal of hostility existed in Transylvania County in the 1960s, but time has allowed those negative memories to fade.”⁸¹

While race relations in Transylvania County were not ideal, integration occurred relatively peacefully compared to areas such as Montgomery or Little Rock. As Reed pointed out, “Rosenwald students intent on integration... did not require the escort of armed guards.”⁸² Integration transpired without much fanfare and the event itself occurred without any organized violent opposition. Linda Lockes noted that there were a number of white students at Brevard High School who she is still friends with today. Speaking about racial tension at the time Lockes remembered “there were people who probably didn’t like seeing me there. But thank god it wasn’t as vivid and open [as in other areas] but I knew. You could tell.”⁸³ DuPont and Silversteen, the two mills in the town had been integrated since the 1950s.⁸⁴ Raymond Merrill, a student during integration commented “many of the parents of both blacks and whites worked together at Ecusta. This... aided in acceptance in our county.”⁸⁵ Cliff Brookshire remembered taking the integrated football team to various churches in the community.⁸⁶ Throughout the Fall of 1963 the team attended several churches in the area including Bethel ‘A’, the black church in town. Brookshire recalled that the team only faced conflict at his own church when several of the older members in the congregation walked out of the service. An article even appeared in the school’s newspaper, *The Broadcaster*, in September of 1962 congratulating the school and

⁸⁰ “Growing Up Black In Brevard,” *Transylvania Times*, February 23, 2015.

⁸¹ Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 175.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Linda Lockes, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, March 27, 2015.

⁸⁴ “Black Community – Good Neighbors,” *Transylvania Times*, November 20, 1989.; “Reporter’s Notebook,” *Transylvania Times*, April 15, 1959.; Reed, *Brevard Rosenwald*, 9.

⁸⁵ Raymond Merrill, written to author, April 29, 2015.

⁸⁶ Cliff Brookshire, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, April 6, 1959.

student body on the recent integration of Brevard High School.⁸⁷ This peace was not the result of limited racism but rather the direct control of public discourse. This control actively contrasted Brevard with more notorious disruptions elsewhere in the South undergoing integration.

Prior to integration, a considerable amount of debate on the issue of desegregating Transylvania County Schools appeared in the *Transylvania Times*.⁸⁸ The majority of these articles took stances against integration. An article from December of 1956 revealed that Brevard College had voted 130 to 92 against desegregation.⁸⁹ Typically known as a liberal entity within the community, the majority of the individuals in the county's most liberal institution advocated the maintenance of segregation. In January of 1959 an advertisement for the Raleigh based Organization of the North Carolina Defender of States' Rights appeared in the paper.⁹⁰ This overtly racist organization believed that "the Western European culture which is our heritage is superior to the African and the Asiatic... we observe that there are concentrated efforts by many groups and organizations including the Supreme Court, the so-called liberal clergy... the Communist Party, the NAACP and many others to destroy... both the white and negro races by

⁸⁷ "Broadcaster would like to acknowledge," *The Broadcaster*, September 21, 1962

⁸⁸ For examples see "Facts Given on Racial Situation here, State", *Transylvania Times*, June 10, 1954.; "Possibility of Special Session to Discuss Segregation Is In Offing," *Transylvania Times*, August 25, 1955.; "College Split On Segregation," *Transylvania Times*, December 18, 1956.; "Pick of the Press in the Carolinas: Yes, Virginia There is a USA," *Transylvania Times*, December 11, 1958.; LC Lecomplte, "Comments from our readers... letters to the times," *Transylvania Times*, January 1, 1959.; "Senator Sam Ervin Says," *Transylvania Times*, April 9, 1959.; "Senator Sam Ervin Says: Oppose Compulsory Integration," *Transylvania Times*, October 1, 1959.; "Announcing the Organization of the North Carolina Defenders of States' Rights, Inc.: National Integrity, Constitutional Government, Racial Integrity, State's Rights, Individual Liberties, Private Property," *Transylvania Times*, January 29, 1959.; Herbert Ravenel, "letters to the Times," *Transylvania Times*, February 19, 1959.; "Segregation vs. Integration," *Transylvania Times*, May 24, 1962.; Subscriber, "Comments From Our Readers... Letter to the times," *Transylvania Times*, May 24, 1962.; Mrs. FB McGuire Jr., "Letters to the Times," *Transylvania Times*, May 31, 1962.; Subscriber, "Letters to the times," *Transylvania Times*, May 31, 1962.; Robert K. Van Deusen, "Letters to the Times," *Transylvania Times*, July 5, 1962.; Oscar C. Stacy, "Letter to the Times," *Transylvania Times*, July 12, 1962.

⁸⁹ "College Split on Segregation," *Transylvania Times*, December 18, 1956.

⁹⁰ "Announcing the Organization of the North Carolina Defender of States' Rights Inc.: National Integrity, Constitutional Government, Racial Integrity, State's Rights, Individual Liberties, Private Property," *Transylvania Times*, January 29, 1959.

encouraging the integration of them.”⁹¹ In the following edition of *Transylvania Times* a letter to the editor appeared praising the organization.⁹² After the school board denied the first petition by African-Americans for integration an editorial also appeared in *Transylvania Times* affirming the board’s decision.⁹³ The editors asserted that “the Transylvania Board of education acted wisely in deferring action on the petition to integrate Brevard junior and senior high school.”⁹⁴

A number of individuals did come out in favor of integration but they were fewer and far between. An editorial in the school newspaper published in 1955 questioned whether segregation was entirely American.⁹⁵ The article did not forcefully advocate integration but commented more heavily on sectionalism than anything else. A letter to *Transylvania Times* published in July of 1962 vocally denounced segregation in direct opposition to the local majority. The article stated “I note that you have published a number of letters opposing the integration of schools... I would like to stand up and be counted as one who backs our fellow negro Americans in their efforts to obtain greater freedom.”⁹⁶ Later in the letter, the same individual admitted that he only supported school integration and not total social integration. A vocal majority existed prior to integration that opposed desegregation.

After a decision on integration had been made, however, local officials purposefully controlled and limited public discourse on the matter. Prior to integration the public was often encouraged to give their opinion on matters concerning the school. The newspaper directly solicited opinions regarding the building of the new Brevard High School building.⁹⁷ In 1954 when a Peabody survey was published on the condition of the county schools community

⁹¹ “Announcing the Organization,” *Transylvania Times*, January 29, 1959.

⁹² “Letters to the Times,” *Transylvania Times*, February 19, 1959.

⁹³ “Segregation vs. Integration,” *Transylvania Times*, May 24, 1962.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Broadcaster*, March 1955.

⁹⁶ Robert K. Van Deusen, “Letter to the Times,” *Transylvania Times*, July 5, 1962.

⁹⁷ “Asking Public Opinion,” *Transylvania Times*, March 28, 1957.

members' involvement was actively sought and encouraged.⁹⁸ The same did not occur on the issue of integration. On August 2, 1962, the Thursday after school desegregation was announced, The Times released a statement in which it laid out the proper response to integration.⁹⁹ Written by the Transylvania Ministerial Association, the announcement had been distributed in every church in the county the previous Sunday. The announcement was run "in lieu of editorials" and stressed that "since the board of education has rendered a decision concerning the integration of our schools we commend them on the decision... Let us choose to work together with dignity and pride... Hatred, violence, and defiance is not the answer to our problems. We plead for tolerance cooperation and clear thinking at this time... As citizens we may hold divergent opinions on racial issues but as law abiding citizens we must seek peaceful ways in upholding the law of the land."¹⁰⁰ Officials in Transylvania County deliberately developed a narrative of tolerant race relations from the onset of integration.

Articles after this announcement was released suddenly took on a more positive tone regarding race relations. After 1962, no article ever again appeared in the *Transylvania Times* opposing desegregation. Articles did appear heralding the progressive nature of race relations in the county. Two articles published in the *Transylvania Times* in the Spring of 1965 described race relations in the county as impeccable.¹⁰¹ Another article published in *Transylvania Times* in February of 1965 editorialized that "down here things have changed since the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Restaurants integrated so quietly that it seemed segregation had been forgotten."¹⁰² Such genuine long held cultural beliefs as those outlined above do not simply disappear overnight. The

⁹⁸ "Interest is vital in Peabody Report," *Transylvania Times*, May 20, 1954.

⁹⁹ "Christian Approach Urged Facing Integration in Brevard," *Transylvania Times*, August 2, 1962.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ "Race Relations are Good Here Says Mayor in Dedicatory Talk," *Transylvania Times*, March 25, 1965.; Daniel M. Reid, "On Race Discrimination," *Transylvania Times*, May 13, 1965.

¹⁰² Harry Golden, "The New South," *Transylvania Times*, February 25, 1965.

lack of diverse discourse on such a previously contentious subject substantiates the claim that public discourse was purposefully muted by those in positions of power. These individuals controlled and conformed public discourse in order to carefully sculpt a racially progressive Brevard.

Officials also kept racial hostility from escalating by purposefully managing any racial conflict that did occur. Two events demonstrate this trend. Edith Darity, a black student at Brevard High School when it integrated, described one of these accounts.¹⁰³ Darity detailed an instance in which a young black girl was drinking out of a water fountain on school grounds. Someone shoved her head in to the water and her older brother became upset. Darity remembered that “it caused him to have to leave Brevard because they didn’t want any racial tension while they were going through this transition.”¹⁰⁴ Tommy Kilgore, another African American individual described a pep rally at Brevard High School in the mid-1960s.¹⁰⁵ Dixie was played prior to the national anthem at many school events. Kilgore, who had been exposed to the Black Panthers on television, stood and raised his right fist in the air. He was escorted out of the pep rally and suspended for three days. School officials purposefully extinguished racial tensions through disciplinary action in order to keep black students’ freedom at bay by controlling black autonomy and forcing respect for white attitudes.

This control was tailored to portray a specific image to the tourists who consistently visited the county. Since the late 1800s, tourism in Southern Appalachia as a whole capitalized on a carefully cultivated image of tranquility.¹⁰⁶ Local evidence suggests that Brevard, NC was

¹⁰³ Edith Darity, interviewed by author, Brevard, NC, United States, March 27, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Park Baker, “Speakers Recall County’s Racial History,” *Transylvania Times*, March 9, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Richard D. Starnes, “A Conspicuous Example of What is Termed the New South: Tourism and Urban Development in Asheville, North Carolina, 1880-1925,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 80 (January 2003): 52-80.

no exception. An advertisement for tourist activity in the region was published in 1961 emphasizing the scenery, tranquil atmosphere and progressive nature of Brevard's citizens.¹⁰⁷

Exploitation of the myth of Southern Progressivism did not escape the mountains of Western North Carolina either.¹⁰⁸ Articles published in *Transylvania Times* since the mid-1950s demonstrate the permeating effect of Southern Progressivism. Any development in the county from diversified farming to the installation of dial telephones is portrayed as a progressive step for the county.¹⁰⁹ Each article also notes that the town's summer visitors will appreciate and enjoy these progressive changes. An article published in the *Transylvania Times* in June of 1966 demonstrated that this image was being purposefully manufactured for outside consumption. The article stated "every tourist center experiences the same thing, from both visitors and former citizens... everyone (almost)¹¹⁰ likes progress... Progress does not permit a town or an individual to stand still... we are always glad to have visitors to come back home to spend both time and money."¹¹¹ A plethora of articles championing the direct involvement of citizens in the projection of this image were published in the *Transylvania Times* around the time of integration.¹¹² One article describing the increase in tourism published in 1961 urged the "citizenry to... have a say in the promotion of progressive Brevard and Transylvania County."¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ "Welcome Visitors to Transylvania County A Scenic Blending of Agriculture, Industry, Education, Culture and Tourist Attraction," *Transylvania Times*, June 20, 1961.

¹⁰⁸ For analysis of progressivism in the wider South see William Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism: 1880 – 1930*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁹ "Another Progressive Step," *Transylvania Times*, April 29, 1954.; "Summer Visitors Note Diversified Farming," *Transylvania Times*, June 30, 1955.; "Excellent Publicity for County," *Transylvania Times*, May 7, 1959.; "Prohibition is Anything but Progress," *Transylvania Times*, February 4, 1960.; "Progressive Change Noted on Local College Campus," *Transylvania Times*, June 20, 1961.

¹¹⁰ Emphasis original

¹¹¹ "Things Change, Whether We Like It Or Not," *Transylvania Times*, June 23, 1966.

¹¹² "Tourist Committee Sponsoring Trip to Gatlinburg November 11th," *Transylvania Times*, November 5, 1959.; Frances Walker "A Reporter's Notebook," *Transylvania Times*, July 18, 1957.; "Things Change Whether We Like It Or Not," *Transylvania Times*, June 23, 1966.; "Questions For Transylvanian, Where Do We Go From Here?," *Transylvania Times*, January 13, 1966. – this does not represent a comprehensive list

¹¹³ "More Visitors Than Ever," *Transylvania Times*, June 20, 1961.

Increased promotion of the tourism industry is a key goal listed in the first edition of each year's *Transylvania Times* from 1955-1966.¹¹⁴

Integration occurred at a moment in Transylvania County's history in which the tourism industry was at its peak. Tourist facilities throughout the county had drastically increased since 1958.¹¹⁵ Several new hotels had been built and a link to the Blue Ridge Parkway completed. In June of 1961 a record high tourism season left citizens with an optimistic outlook for the industry's future.¹¹⁶ By 1965, 'selling tradition' had become a billion dollar a year industry in North Carolina.¹¹⁷ The industry was North Carolina's third largest business at the time of integration and had been growing at a rate of 7.7% annually since 1948. This growth rate was much higher than the 5.5% recorded nationally. The vast majority of these tourists were typically from out of state.

The business of tourism undeniably affected political decision making concerning integration; especially when those decisions concerned politics of perception. Throughout the South, consequences for business were often taken into account in decision making processes in the wider South throughout integration.¹¹⁸ Therefore, national perception and its effects on tourism helped Transylvania County's African Americans to gain leverage in their fight for integration. A letter to *Transylvania Times* written by Rose F. Baylese which appeared in May of 1962 demonstrates this connection clearly. In her congratulatory remarks to the ministerial association responsible for the announcement described above Baylese articulated the role of tourism in political decision making. She congratulated the board "on your handling of the issue

¹¹⁴ *Transylvania Times*, 1955-1966.

¹¹⁵ Frances Walker, "Tourist Facilities Are Increased in Town, Other Building Continues High," *Transylvania Times*, May 15, 1958.

¹¹⁶ "Banner Tourist Season Expected, Summer Camps Opening At Capacity," *Transylvania Times*, June 14, 1961.

¹¹⁷ "Tourism Now Billion-Dollar Business in North Carolina," *Transylvania Times*, July 29, 1965.

¹¹⁸ Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*.

raised by our good colored friends. In view of its importance to our social and economic status as well as to our image... it certainly deserves to be discussed.”¹¹⁹ This line of reasoning falls directly in line with Edward Starnes’ findings about race relations in Asheville in the late nineteenth century.¹²⁰ Starnes argued that “tourism boosters had a vested interest in portraying black residents in a positive light. No southerner [or New Englander] would summer in a city fraught with racial unrest.”¹²¹

Citizens of Transylvania County were not the heroes of integration that public memory in the area asserts. Like all historical characters throughout all of history, they made decisions as well as they knew how based on the circumstances surrounding them. Race relations were calmer than in the cities in the Deep South who seem to monopolize the Civil Rights discussion. This relative peace has helped create and keep the progressive narrative alive. That does not mean that racism and racial violence did not exist. They did. The Board of Education did not desegregate voluntarily. A court case initiated by the county’s African-American citizens and compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made integration a reality. Local elites, in turn, took control of public discourse and black activism to create and circulate the progressive image on which local tourism relied.

¹¹⁹ Rose F. Baylese, “Letters to the Times,” *Transylvania Times*, May 31, 1962.

¹²⁰ Starnes, “‘A Conspicuous Example of What is Termed the New South’.”

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 77.

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