

A survey of the public school systems in
the state of New Jersey made under the
direction of the New Jersey State Conference
of N.A.A.C.P. Branches.

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THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF COLORED PEOPLE

A SURVEY OF THE NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

This survey, which covers 52 communities in 18 counties, has been made at the request of the New Jersey State Conference of the NAACP Branches to ascertain the extent of discrimination and segregation in the public schools of New Jersey. The information obtained from this study will be used by the New Jersey State Conference Education Committee to make a concerted drive against segregation and discrimination in the public school systems of New Jersey.

Miss Jensen met with the Education Committee Chairmen of a number of NAACP Branches and the chairman of the Education Committee of the New Jersey State Conference of Branches in Camden, November 16, 1946, at which time the survey was mapped out.

Thirty-two NAACP Branches in the state were sent a letter stating the purpose and extent of the survey, asking them to return the enclosed card if they were willing to participate. Each Branch was also asked to contribute at least \$5.00 to finance the project.

Twenty-two of the Branches took an active part in the survey. In each instance a conference was held with the local Superintendent of Schools and the Executive Board of the NAACP Branch. In several cases a conference was also held with the county Superintendent of Schools.

At the conclusion of the survey Miss Jensen conferred with Dr. Bosshart, the New Jersey State Commissioner of Education and Mr. Bastard, who is head of the Education Division of the New Jersey State Commission Against Discrimination.

In most instances when the Superintendents of Schools and members of the Boards of Education were queried about segregation in the schools, they said they were maintained first, "because Negroes asked for them", and second, "this was the only way Negro teachers could be hired". Contrary to the statement that, "Negroes have asked for colored schools", the following is a report of the Secretary of the Long Branch, New Jersey Board of Education for the year 1884-85 concerning the opening of the Brook Street School.

"Soon after the close of our last scholastic year by order of the Board, a lot was purchased and a building erected to accommodate a colored school which from the early fall, has been in successful operation until the close of the present school year.

At first some of the colored people, who are ever sensitively jealous of their rights as "American citizens of African descent", insisted on sending their children to the white school. Finding that there was no opposition to this on the part of teachers or trustees, and that the colored school was not intended to create a distinction of race, class nor color, other than that ineradicably established by nature, the opposition gradually and quietly gave way, and the later months of the year were marked with some success."

In the majority of segregated school systems visited, the teaching load of the Negro teacher is three times that of the white teacher.

In many instances it has been found that the "all Negro" schools do not have a district and white pupils, who live near it are sent to schools in other districts. Negro principals and teachers seem to be perpetuating segregation in several towns in New Jersey because they are afraid that in the process of integrating the public schools they will lose their jobs. And yet most of these principals and teachers are on tenure which makes it imperative that the local Boards of Education keep them teaching or else pay them a salary.

Most Negro parents contacted during this survey did not know that they had the right to send their children to the nearest school, if there is a colored school in the community.

The following is a description of the type of school system, according to counties, and the kind of discrimination that exists in each one, if any.

(1) Atlantic County
Atlantic City

Here there are loose boundary lines--children have choice of the schools which they may attend. One Negro teacher is in the high school (specialized). The three all-colored schools are staffed with Negro teachers. ✓

Egg Harbor

A segregated elementary school. ✓

Pleasantville

A segregated elementary school. ✓

(2) Bergen County
Hackensack

One all-colored school with a mixed teaching staff. This school is all Negro by reason of population.

(3) Burlington County
Beverly City

A segregated elementary school.

Bordentown County

A segregated elementary school.

Burlington

Two segregated elementary schools.

Cinnaminson Township

A segregated elementary school. (The colored school is close to the white school.) There are two first grades in the colored school because of the large enrollment. The Negro children attend the first grade in two (2) shifts.)

Florence

Two segregated elementary schools.

Moorestown

A segregated elementary school. The colored school includes all eight grades. The white students go as far as the sixth grade then to junior high school. The Negro children are handicapped when they reach the high school because the white children have Latin, French and Elementary Algebra in junior high school, whereas, the colored children have none of these.

Thus it is virtually impossible for a Negro child to take either a classical or scientific course in Moorestown High School.

Mount Holly

A segregated elementary school. The white school has a lunch room while the colored school has no such equipment. The white school has facilities to take care of its children, who are physically handicapped or mentally retarded. This is not true of the Negro school.

Mount Laurel

A segregated elementary school. (The colored school is within half a block of the white school).

Burlington County (cont'd.)

Palmyra

Here a Negro teacher teaches an all Negro class in a white school.

Riverside

A segregated elementary school.

(4) Camden County

Berlin

A segregated elementary school. (This is a two room colored school in bad physical conditions, with outdoor toilets and outside pump.)

Haddonfield

Children are segregated in the first four grades of the elementary school.

Camden

Two all Negro elementary schools with an all Negro staff. (Before September, 1948 the elementary schools were segregated.) The Whittier School is designated on the transfer cards for Negro children. Oftentimes, Whittier School is out of their district.

(5) Cape May County

Cape May

A segregated elementary school.

Ocean City

Here the public schools are mixed with all white teachers.

Rio Grande

The white children after they reach the seventh grade are transported in a bus to West Cape May. In doing so they pass by the school in Whitesboro which includes eight grades. (Cape May County is supposed to have strict boundary lines.)

West Cape May

A segregated elementary school. (The colored school which is within fifty feet of the white school is called "the annex.")

Cape May County (cont'd.)

Whitesboro

Here there is one all colored school in an all Negro community. The school is very overcrowded and quite dilapidated.

Wildwood

The elementary school is divided between Negro and white. The white teachers each have one grade. The one Negro teacher has three grades.

(6) Cumberland County

Bridgeton

Here there are mixed schools taught by all white teachers.

Port Morris

A segregated elementary school. (The colored school is in very bad condition with a leaking roof that makes the schoolrooms a pool of water when it rains or snows.)

(7) Essex County

Montclair

There are mixed schools with one Negro teacher.

Newark

The public schools are mixed with Negro teachers teaching in elementary, junior and senior high schools. However, the Negro teachers in the high schools are classed as 'permanent substitutes'.

Orange

Here there are mixed schools with five colored teachers teaching in a predominantly Negro school. The loose transfer system which prevails in this school system means that the children select the schools which they attend.

East Orange

The public schools are mixed, but the teaching staff is all white.

West Orange

Here there are mixed schools taught entirely by white teachers.

Essex County (cont'd.)
South Orange

The public schools are mixed, but the teachers are all white.

(8) Gloucester County
Mollucca Hill

A segregated school. (The colored school is a one room school with eight grades taught by one Negro teacher.)

(9) Hudson County
Bayonne

The public schools are mixed with one Negro teacher in the system.

Jersey City

Here the public schools are mixed with Negro teachers in the elementary, junior and senior high schools.

(10) Mercer County
Princeton

A segregated elementary school. (The white school is overcrowded while several rooms in the colored school are not used because of the small enrollment.)

Trenton

The public schools are mixed with Negro teachers in the elementary, junior and senior high schools.

(11) Middlesex

There are no colored schools in the county. There are no Negro teachers either. However, the county Superintendent has no record of an application from a certified Negro teacher.

Perth Amboy

The public schools are mixed, but there are no Negro teachers.

Metuchen

The public schools are mixed, but there are no Negro teachers.

(12) Monmouth County
Asbury Park

One elementary school recently mixed with a Negro principal and a mixed staff.

Fair Haven

A segregated elementary school. (The existence of this colored school was recently challenged by our NAACP Branch in Long Branch and other interested citizens.)

Freehold

One segregated elementary school.

Leonardo

The public schools are mixed, but the teaching staff is all white. In the high school the practice has been in the gym class to line the students up for folk dancing according to height, except for Negro students, who are all placed at the end of the line.

Keyport

The public schools are mixed and the teaching staff is entirely white.

Matawan

Here the public schools are mixed, but there are no Negro teachers.

Neptune Township (Ocean Grove)

The elementary school here was recently integrated with a mixed teaching staff.

Red Bank

The public schools are mixed and the teaching staff is white.

(13) Morris County
Morristown

The public schools are mixed, but as yet there are no Negro teachers. The local Board of Education has asked for an application from a Negro girl, who has the necessary qualifications.

(14) Ocean County
Lakewood

The public schools are mixed with an all white teaching staff.

Ocean County (cont'd.)

Tom's River

A segregated elementary school which is very crude and is situated out in the woods.

(15) Passaic County

Paterson

The public schools are mixed and so is the teaching staff.

(16) Somerset County

New Brunswick

The public schools are mixed, but there are not any Negro teachers.

Somerville

The public schools are mixed with an entirely white teaching staff.

(17) Union County

Elizabeth

The public schools are mixed and so is the teaching staff.

Plainfield

The public schools are mixed and there is one Negro teacher teaching in a predominantly colored school.

Summit

The public schools are mixed, but the teaching staff is all white.

(18) Salem County

Marshalltown

A segregated elementary school. (A one room school with eight grades taught by one teacher.

Penns Grove

A segregated elementary school. (The kindergarten of the colored school is housed in the basement of the white school. Here Negro children have to walk about a mile and a half in order to get to the bus, while the white children ride all of the way.

Salem County (cont'd.)

Salem

One segregated school. (The colored school is within fifty feet of the white school).

Swedesboro

A segregated elementary school.

Woodstown

A segregated elementary school.

It is quite obvious from this survey that segregation and discrimination is most extensive in the state of New Jersey, even though there is a New Jersey school law which reads as follows:

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL LAW

Exclusion on account of Religion, Nationality or Color a
Misdemeanor.

(Revised Statutes of New Jersey 18: 14-21)

No child between the ages of four (4) and twenty (20) years shall be excluded from any public school on account of his religion, nationality or color. A member of any Board of Education who shall vote to exclude from any public school any child on account of his religion, nationality or color shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and punished by a fine of not less than \$50.00 nor more than \$250.00 or by imprisonment in county jail, workhouse, or penitentiary of county in which offense has been committed for not less than thirty days nor more than six months or by both such fine and imprisonment in discretion of the court.

Inasmuch as the New Jersey School Law makes the practice of segregation or discrimination on account of color a misdemeanor and punishable by fine, parents of children affected must break down the fallacy that segregated schools are maintained in order that Negro teachers may have a job, by insisting upon the integration of schools, by demanding mixed teaching staffs and by insisting that all pupils attend the school in their district whether they are white or colored. If a school is designated as a 'colored school' it behooves the local NAACP Branch to break it up by making a concerted attack against it.

NCMA JENSEN
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