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# Longwood College During the Civil Rights Era, 1955-1968

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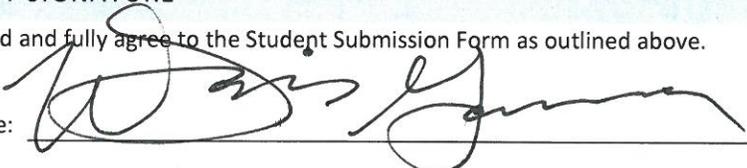
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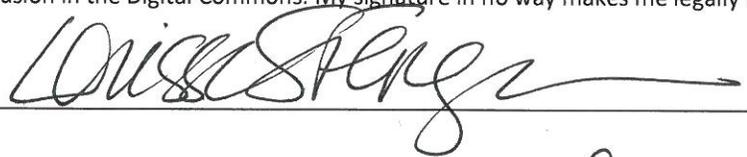
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Longwood College During the Civil Rights Era, 1955-1968

Senior Honors Research Thesis

Spring 2016

Davis Gammon

Advisor: Larissa Fergeson PhD

In Fall 2014 Longwood University's Board of Visitors expressed regret for actions during the 1950s and 1960s. The resolution came on the heels of the fiftieth anniversary of the reopening of the Prince Edward County Public Schools, which were closed from 1959 to 1964, longer than any locality in the nation. The resolution served as a call to action for the Longwood community to live up to its obligation and potential as an institution of higher learning that provides an environment of equity and opportunity for all people. It resolved that, "the University expresses profound regret for these institutional actions, and apologizes to those who have been hurt."<sup>1</sup> Longwood was complicit in the preservation of Jim Crow through its inactivity during a period of community crisis and its maintenance of segregation years after the Supreme Court issued the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. This study explores the Longwood community's response to local civil rights activities from the 1954 *Brown* decision to 1968, when Nancy "Cookie" Scott, who would become Longwood's first African American graduate, was admitted. Longwood's inaction during this period and delay in embracing racial integration was due to its governance by the Commonwealth of Virginia, a political environment hostile to integration, as well as a lack of vision by Longwood's presidents during this period.

The 2014 resolution provoked new interest and questions about Longwood's history in this era. Institutional histories of Longwood, however, provide little detail about what occurred during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1989, English professor Rosemary Sprague compiled an institutional history that included a discussion of race relations at Longwood, albeit a defensive one. Sprague argued, "Longwood College and Dr. Lankford have received some harsh criticism for not exerting more 'leadership' in averting the crisis, but it is difficult to know what 'leadership' could have been exerted."<sup>2</sup> In 2014, the Alumni Association commissioned a second institutional history to mark Longwood's 175<sup>th</sup>. This account is a broad narrative that

unveils much information about Longwood's early history. That study did not fully address the complex issues of race relations at Longwood. It identified the era as a tumultuous period, and argued that through President Francis G. Lankford's "leadership, Longwood was able to make considerable progress in spite of the turmoil."<sup>3</sup>

More broadly, scholarship of Jim Crow and civil rights in higher education is also limited. In 2008 Virginia Tech historian, Peter Wallenstein published a collection of essays and narratives on the civil rights movement in higher education. Wallenstein accurately describes the desegregation of higher education as a piecemeal process that varied from state-to-state and school-to-school. It frames scholarship as important, yet incomplete. "Close attention to the process of desegregation in southern public higher education," he argues, "has the potential to reshape our understanding of the history of individual institutions and, more generally, the course of higher education in the South and the nation." Unlike the movement to desegregate elementary and secondary education, the movement to desegregate higher education was handled on a local and institutional level and did not receive widespread national attention except in a few cases.

Farmville Female Seminary, later Longwood University, was founded in 1839 as an institution for wealthy or middle-class white women to receive an education and continued to serve as such well into the twentieth century. In 1884 the Farmville college became the State Female Normal School, falling under the purview of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Under the leadership of President Joseph Jarman, who served the campus from 1902 to 1946, the now State Teachers College grew in size and reputation, laying the groundwork for the school's transformation to Longwood College in 1949. For much of its history, Longwood remained a white-only institution. Higher education was incredibly rare for women. While higher education

was usually reserved for the sons of wealthy whites, there were some opportunities for African Americans and women to receive an education. Young Southern women attended finishing schools that would instruct women on poise and Latin. In the latter portion of the nineteenth century public education became a priority for state governments, and the demand for trained teachers grew exponentially. In 1884 the Commonwealth of Virginia rose to meet that challenge by transforming Farmville College into State Female Normal School. The new state-managed institution would be a training- ground for teachers.

The Commonwealth of Virginia governed the State Teachers College through the state constitution of 1902. The constitutional convention's primary goal was to strip Black Virginians' access to the voting booth through stricter voter registration regulations, including implementing a poll tax. To further protect white supremacy the Constitutional Convention and its Democratic majority also limited African Americans' access to quality education.<sup>4</sup> The new constitution laid out the state's influence in education at all levels. It plainly stated that, "White and colored children shall not be taught in the same school."<sup>5</sup> The convention also authorized local governments to disproportionately fund white and black schools.<sup>6</sup> The constitution designated that a State Board of Education, which included the Governor, Attorney General and a Superintendent of Public Instruction would oversee the state's public schools, including the State Female Normal School at Farmville.<sup>7</sup> As long as the state maintained a policy of segregation so too did its public colleges and universities.

By 1935 Virginia's State Conference of the NAACP targeted public institutions by testing the exclusivity of the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities. The NAACP's early strategy was to expose the inequalities of segregation, challenging the constitutionality of "separate but equal." In July the organization, assisted by Charles Houston began a challenge to

integrate the University of Virginia's graduate school. The plaintiff was Virginia Union graduate Alice Jackson, who had attended private, all-female Smith College, but could no longer afford tuition during the Great Depression. She hoped to continue her education, but had no opportunity to do so in Virginia. Graduate and professional education was not available to African Americans in the Commonwealth. The Board of Visitors rejected her application, doing so in accordance with the state constitution. The NAACP did not pursue Alice Jackson's case in federal court, but instead turned their attention to graduate school cases in other states.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to *Brown* the NAACP chapters across the country challenged the legality segregation in public higher education at the graduate level. In 1936 Maryland's high court mandated that the University of Maryland desegregate their law school. In the case, *Murray v. Pearson*, the court ruled that Maryland violated the doctrine of "separate but equal" by not providing African Americans access to a public law school. The *Murray* case did not integrate higher education across the United States or the state of Maryland, but instead mandated that the state provide equal facilities for African Americans.<sup>9</sup> In 1950 the Supreme Court decision of *Sweatt v. Painter* ruled that applicants to the University of Texas Law School could not be denied admission on the basis of race. Herman Sweatt was active in the Houston, Texas chapter of the NAACP and was the plaintiff in a test case for the organization to integrate the University of Texas Law School. On June 5 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled, four years before *Brown*, that the educational environment in Texas did not meet the judicial standard of "separate but equal" and that Herman Sweatt must be admitted. The *Sweatt* case laid the legal groundwork for *Brown* in that it declared that racially segregated graduate education was not equal.<sup>10</sup>

Following the *Sweatt* decision in 1950, a black lawyer and graduate of Howard University Law School, Gregory Swanson successfully integrated the University of Virginia's

Law School, leaving Virginia's undergraduate programs segregated. Virginia Attorney General J. Lindsay Almond informed the University that the state could not defend the denial of Swanson. Nevertheless, Virginia rejected Swanson's application for admission. The University Board of Visitors responded: "The applicant is a colored man. The Constitution and the laws of the State of Virginia provide that white and colored shall not be taught in the same schools."<sup>11</sup> Following Swanson's denial to attend the University of Virginia, he filed suit in federal court. The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals directed that he be admitted.

Integration at University of Virginia Law School was not a watershed moment for civil rights in the Commonwealth. Communities like Farmville, Virginia, in Prince Edward County remained segregated. Farmville, though surrounded by farmland, was a commercial and agricultural center for timber and tobacco. Thirty-eight percent of the work force in Prince Edward was employed in agriculture. In 1950 of the 15,398 citizens of Prince Edward County only 55 percent of them were white. Despite racial diversity, segregation reigned supreme in Farmville in both its public and private sectors. For the town's African Americans many of the restaurants were take-out only, the movie theatre in town was inaccessible, and the schools separate and undeniably unequal. The African American community leadership was found in community leaders like Reverend L. Francis Griffin, pastor at First Baptist Church in downtown Farmville. He used that position and the pulpit to motivate the African American community to be unsatisfied with conditions.<sup>12</sup>

The unequal school conditions produced protest and challenge from the African Americans most affected, students. When Moton High School was built in 1939 it paled in comparison to the newly constructed Farmville High. The white high school included a cafeteria, gymnasium, laboratories, and a clinic, while Moton included none of these amenities.

Furthermore, the school was built for 180 students, and by 1950 the student population had more than doubled to 477 students.<sup>13</sup> The school board's solution for overcrowding was temporary structures on the school grounds, built in 1948. These were deplorable structures that easily leaked and were exposed to the elements. The tarpaper shacks, as they came to be known, served as a symbol for apathy and injustice in Prince Edward County. On the morning of April 23, 1951, African American students at Farmville's Robert R. Moton High School, led by sixteen-year-old Barbara Johns, went on strike in protest of the disgraceful conditions they endured. Students at Moton faced the burden of severe neglect by the Prince Edward County government. Johns organized the strike with a committee of her peers. In an impassioned speech to her classmates she "called upon the students to stay out of school as long as was necessary to bring about change in conditions."<sup>14</sup>

The strike was not protesting segregation itself, but instead the execution of "separate but equal." The students involved with the strike sought the help of the NAACP in their case for improved conditions at Moton High School. The NAACP took the case and filed suit against the Prince Edward County School Board in federal court. Prominent NAACP lawyers, Oliver Hill and Spottswood Robinson, managed the case. The case became *Davis v. School Board of Prince Edward County*, which was one of the five cases that made up the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* that declared "separate but equal" in public education unconstitutional. As a result of their efforts some historians argue that the Moton High School student strike marked the beginning of the modern student-led civil rights movement.<sup>15</sup>

The events that followed the *Brown* decision in Prince Edward were significant in Virginia's civil rights history. On May 31, 1955 the Supreme Court of the United States handed down a decision to supplement the original *Brown* decision, *Brown v. Board of Education II*.

*Brown II* commanded state and local governments to move toward integration “with all deliberate speed.” The ambiguity of the Court’s order in *Brown II* enabled segregationists to resist school desegregation in multiple ways. *Brown II* did little to bring about public school desegregation in the Commonwealth. Senator Harry Byrd responded to the decision, “If we can organize the Southern States for massive resistance to this order I think that in time the rest of the country will realize that racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South.”<sup>16</sup> Harry Flood Byrd, U.S. Senator and former Governor from Virginia led a political machine. The organization included a force of Virginia politicians that included governors, attorneys general, congressmen, and local representatives. Byrd’s coalition used these political avenues to preserve the white power structure that existed since at least the 1902 convention. *Brown* threatened Byrd and his allies; therefore he instructed Governor Thomas Stanley and Attorney General J. Lindsay Almond to reverse their initial moderation on the decision. The power Byrd had over the other Virginia Democratic leaders markedly transformed the Old Dominion into a leader in resistance to *Brown*.<sup>17</sup>

Byrd and his allies’ influence sometimes extended past political figures and into the realm of private activism. In Prince Edward County, this activism took the form of an organization known as the Defenders of State Sovereignty. Founded following the *Brown* decision to help put pressure on state representatives, the Defenders, like the White Citizens Council of Mississippi, looked to preserve white supremacy and the southern way of life. The Defenders, unlike the Citizens Councils, used vigorous yet peaceful political avenues. Many politicians from the Fourth Congressional District were active members of both the Defenders and the Byrd political machine. Byrd’s reach and influence was especially strong in Southside Virginia, including Prince Edward County.

Longwood College played a role in the Prince Edward community's response to *Brown*. It was the College's presidents that often shaped Longwood's response to regional and local circumstances. On June 7, 1955 citizens of Prince Edward gathered in Longwood College's Jarman Auditorium to discuss the county's response to the *Brown* decisions. The meeting was called by the Farmville PTA and organized and orchestrated by the Defenders of State Sovereignty. Many of the speakers believed that the county should combat school integration at all costs, even going so far as to advocate closing the public schools. One of the notable speakers was Longwood's President and the former State Superintendent for Public Instruction, Dr. Dabney Lancaster. He served as Longwood's President from 1946, until his retirement in 1955. Lancaster was not on the organizers' speaking docket, but felt moved by a previous discussion of school closure. He argued that, "we could not afford to close the schools, that would be bad for whites and that we could not afford to have Negroes running in the streets."<sup>18</sup> Lancaster's remarks concerned citizens on both sides of the issue, because he was seen as sensible, educated, and respected man in the community. He was without question a man of the public school system. The others at the meeting were not as committed to public education, but instead more committed to racial separation.<sup>19</sup> In a keen orchestration, the other segregationists in the county dominated the discussion and as a result the meeting ended with the formation of a private corporation that was to educate white students in an exclusively segregated environment in the event the county was forced to integrate.<sup>20</sup>

In July 1955 a new president took the reins at Longwood College. In the midst of the heated debate over race and the scope of government, the state selected Francis J. Lankford to take over for Lancaster. Lankford was a well-known mathematician who taught the subject at the University of Virginia for twenty years prior to his arrival at Longwood. On Monday,

December 12, in his inaugural address, Lankford emphasized that post-secondary education should be exclusive, arguing that Americans “have accepted universal education as an essential element of democracy...it must stop at some level because ... the ceiling of educational achievement has been reached for many.”<sup>21</sup> The new president also used this juncture to express his views on the Court’s recent *Brown* decision and the Commonwealth’s subsequent resistance. By that time the State Legislature had called for a statewide referendum for voters to decide whether to amend the Virginia State Constitution so that public funds could be used for private school tuition grants, enabling white students to avoid integration. Lankford argued that it was gratifying that the “opportunity is about to be given [to] the electorate to make the final decisions as to what shall be done with our public schools.”<sup>22</sup> Advocates of the change, like Lankford, believed that the unelected Supreme Court of the United States had no business integrating the South’s public schools. In January 1956, the citizens of Virginia approved the referendum.

Per Senator Byrd’s demands, Governors Stanley and Attorney General Almond had used the Supreme Court’s ambiguity to enact Massive Resistance. In September 1956 Stanley and the General Assembly passed a series of laws that essentially prohibited local governments from integrating their schools and prevented any integrated school districts from receiving state funds. Furthermore, it authorized the Governor to close any school that attempted to desegregate. In 1958, now Governor J. Lindsay Almond ordered the closure of schools in three school districts: Warren County, Charlottesville, and Norfolk; Massive Resistance had reached its climax. The case against Massive Resistance was filed in both state and federal court, where on January 19, 1959 they both declared that Almond’s actions were unconstitutional and the schools reopened. To the chagrin of Senator Byrd, Governor Almond retreated from Massive Resistance after its judicial rejection.<sup>23</sup>

Following the judicial defeat of segregation in Prince Edward County public schools, the county enacted resistance of its own. On May 5, 1959, Prince Edward was ordered by the Fourth Federal Circuit Court of Appeals to desegregate. On June 2, 1959, Prince Edward County's Board of Supervisors cut the public schools' operating budget so low that the public schools had to close. The county's schools remained closed for five years, while the courts worked to settle the conflict. During that period the opposing sides organized. Much of the white population organized behind the foundation. Because of the foundation, the white students of Prince Edward had a greater opportunity to receive a K-12 education at the all-white Prince Edward Academy. Many African Americans however, stood behind the NAACP and the Prince Edward County Christian Association (PECCA), whose goal was to provide some education to those who were locked out of education. It was not until the 1964 Supreme Court decision of *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward* that the schools were reopened on an integrated basis.

At Longwood there were those who protested the disruption of public schools. The most notable dissent came from the College's Dean and Professor of History C. G. Gordon Moss. As Bob Smith writes, "Longwood, too, had the example of Dr. Moss, who represented public dissent to the point where others of like mind were content to let him speak for all."<sup>24</sup> His dissent was the product of a long racial evolution. Moss grew up in Lynchburg, Virginia in an all-white society. In his life he had not associated extensively with African Americans, but through his life experiences as a missionary, as a student, and as an educator he developed sympathy for the cause of civil rights. He collaborated with like-minded white leaders and the African American community, particularly the Rev. L. Francis Griffin of First Baptist Church, to challenge the abolition of public schools in the county. He gathered together a bi-racial group to meet with Governor J. Lindsay Almond to push for reopening the schools or at least forming a

bi-racial committee to find a solution to the crisis. Almond rejected the proposal immediately, unless Moss could bring aboard the “white supremacists” of the community.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Moss was not deterred, and in the 1960s he began to speak out and become more deeply involved in the movement itself. In Charlottesville in October 1962, Dr. Moss gave an impassioned speech to the Virginia Council on Human Relations, one in which he railed against *Farmville Herald* editor J. Barry Wall and the Prince Edward white establishment. Wall was an overt segregationist and mouthpiece for the Defenders of State Sovereignty through the *Herald*.<sup>26</sup> Moss argued that Prince Edward “was a county where the paternalism, which the white people of Virginia have prided themselves upon in regard to our Negro fellow citizens... is a basic explanation of Mr. J. Barry Wall’s attitudes and actions throughout recent developments.”<sup>27</sup> He went on to claim, “what has caused our situation...is that a small number of wealthy members of the county...have desired to relieve themselves of the financial burden of being the principal supporters of a public school system and to substitute for that the financial burden of maintaining a private school for their own children.”<sup>28</sup> The issue, to him, was not just racial but also economic. The address was taped with Moss’ permission, though the professor knew full well that the speech would make its way to Farmville and further aggravate his opposition. Moss exemplified a commitment to his cause by risking personal and professional retribution.<sup>29</sup>

The College’s muted behavior on the school closings did not satisfy Dr. Moss. Author Bob Smith reported, “In Dr. Moss’ view, silence by the college implied assent with the school closings. He felt that quite probably the college *should* take an official stand against the school closings.”<sup>30</sup> Moss’ position at Longwood came under vigorous attack from within and without the college. He was criticized for his participation in the church sit-ins on Sunday, July 28,

1963. On that day, twenty-two African American activists visited white segregated churches of Farmville. Moss' home church Johns Memorial Episcopal Parish was not excused from the protests. That morning a group of seven black students walked into Johns Memorial to worship; Moss met them and sat them in his pew. For that he was removed from the vestry, the parish's governing body.

There was significant pressure from the segregationists, and in addition from Longwood's President Francis Lankford. Lankford balanced segregationist pressure and Moss' popularity amongst colleagues and students. No matter his strong disagreement with his subordinate, Lankford refrained from dismissing Moss, which he certainly was expected to do by some in the community. In a November 1963 in a letter to the *Farmville Herald* a disgruntled citizen posed the question, "Why doesn't Dr. Moss resign his position at Longwood or get a job in a place more to his liking, where he can spend all his time integrating the races?"<sup>31</sup> Despite his disruption of Longwood's desire for the status quo, he was able to maintain his position until his retirement.

Though his position at Longwood was unscathed, his position in the community was not. He and his son were subject to public ridicule. 17-year old Richard "Dickie" Moss was featured in a 1963 *Time* magazine article entitled "Dickie's Decision" that chronicled his and Dr. Moss' struggles during the school closings. The article depicts the situation detailing that, "For four lonely years, in letters, speeches and interviews, Dean Moss has urged his fellow citizens to reopen public schools. He has been snubbed, ostracized, threatened – all to his son's increasing admiration."<sup>32</sup> Rather than go to the local private school or continue with his preparatory school education in Richmond, in 1963 Dickie Moss chose to finish his education as a senior at the Prince Edward Free Schools. The Free Schools were opened to accommodate African American

and poor white students who had been shut out of the county's public schools since 1959. As the *Time* article explained in 1963, "What Dickie is not getting is white sympathy. Hecklers razz him: 'You gonna keep going to school with those niggers?'"<sup>33</sup> Because of his stance, the community ostracized Moss and his family.

Professor Moss was not the only Longwood professor to feel the wrath of racial conservatism at the college and in the community. Moss' fellow history professor Marvin Schlegel faced a similar experience. Schlegel, too, was a member of Johns Memorial Episcopal Church until 1959 when the parish allowed the Foundation to use its sanctuary for a meeting. There was also pressure from within the town for Longwood to dismiss Schlegel. Lankford defended the professor, as long as he did not incite further protest. In fall 1966 he left Longwood to join the faculty at Norfolk State College, one of Virginia's historically black colleges.

Where Dr. Moss' advocacy reached mostly outside the borders of the College, English Professor Dr. Richard Meeker's encouragement permeated the student body. As advisor of the student newspaper, *The Rotunda*, Meeker encouraged his students to express their beliefs through writing. This expression of academic freedom was the very fear that many segregationists had about higher education. They feared that liberals would indoctrinate their children, which would lead to interracial marriage and the downfall of Western society. Because of his views on the school closings, Meeker was denied a promotion and stripped of his position as advisor to *The Rotunda* by President Lankford. In August 1962, Meeker eventually escaped Longwood and Farmville to Buffalo, New York.<sup>34</sup>

Longwood students found it equally difficult to dissent publicly under Lankford's administration. In May 1961, the NAACP came to Farmville to host a rally to commemorate the anniversary of the *Brown* decision. President Lankford prohibited any Longwood students from

attending the commemoration. Even the College's Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) was not free from the regulation of President Lankford. In Spring 1962 the organization sought to hold a public education forum that included an African American speaker. Lankford persuaded them to abandon their effort.<sup>35</sup>

In fall 1963, Lankford took a leave of absence in Pakistan to help establish public schools in that country. The irony was not lost on those students who were sympathetic to the shut out African American students. In October 1963, *Rotunda* editor Donna Humphlett wrote an editorial criticizing the segregated movie theatre in downtown Farmville. She was barred from publishing the article if she did not modify it according to acting President Fred Wygal's instructions. Humphlett instead published a blank space where the editorials were usually displayed. It was accompanied by an explanation, "The tone of the editorial which was to appear here was considered by the administration to be too antagonistic for publication." She continued, "The blank space is to remind us that an unsolved social problem exists and will continue to exist until we find a satisfactory solution to it. Such a solution can come about only through the combined efforts of the groups that have created it. May we be willing to put forth that effort."<sup>36</sup> The 1963 dispute between the *Rotunda* editorial board and the College's administration was indicative of Longwood's desire to maintain the status quo and shield itself from the local community and political activism.

Lankford and other conservatives grew weary of the increased national attention the local community received as a result of the school closings. The May 8, 1964 edition of *The Farmville Herald* announced that Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy was to visit the Prince Edward Free Schools. Just six months earlier the Attorney General's brother, President John F. Kennedy, had been assassinated in the streets of Dallas. The Attorney General had not made

many public appearances since the death of his brother, which made his visit to Prince Edward truly special. His goal for the trip was to recognize the Free School students for their collection of pennies to go toward the Kennedy Memorial Library project. President Kennedy and his brother invested a deep personal and political interest in the Prince Edward situation. The Attorney General was joined by a set of Virginia dignitaries that included: Free School Superintendent Dr. Neil Sullivan, former Virginia Governor Colgate Darden, and the current Governor of Virginia Albertis Harrison. Harrison had also served as Attorney General during much of Massive Resistance where under the orders of Senator Harry F. Byrd he defended the Commonwealth's position of defiance to the *Brown* decision. Like many Byrd operatives, Harrison came to understand that segregation was no longer defensible and desegregation was an inevitable reality in the Commonwealth. As a result, Harrison attempted to mold the Democratic Party around the Kennedy coalition. Kennedy and his delegation also planned a stop at Hampden-Sydney College, where the Attorney General would speak to a select group of students, faculty, and staff.<sup>37</sup>

The Attorney General used his visit to inspire students in the community to become more active participants in their social and political environment. While at Hampden-Sydney, Kennedy emphasized to the audience that “the young people of America – both white and Negro – should become personally involved in the problems facing the country and ‘make an effort to give some leadership.’”<sup>38</sup> He argued that citizens of all ages should take personal responsibility for their communities' future and well-being.

Although Kennedy was scheduled to visit Hampden-Sydney, he was not welcome at nearby Longwood College. Nonetheless, the Attorney General's motorcade made its way down High Street and made an unexpected stop across from the College's iconic Rotunda. The

*Richmond Time Dispatch* reported that, “At Farmville, Longwood College girls mobbed the motorcade and caused it to stop completely.”<sup>39</sup> The Longwood women were in awe of the Attorney General; hundreds of girls surrounded his car to listen to his words of political and social action.<sup>40</sup> President Lankford, however, was not as impressed as his students. In a letter to Governor Harrison, Lankford conveyed his frustration, “We did not desire a stop by the Attorney General at Longwood. His lack of respect for our wishes irritated me a good deal.”<sup>41</sup> The president’s comments were consistent with his actions limiting student and faculty activism during the school crisis and the broader civil rights freedom struggle. Lankford’s racial conservatism continued to permeate in his 1964 letter to the governor; he also argued that Kennedy’s visit incited the advancement of a “radical” racial agenda. He wrote, “I am afraid all of this is only an indication of more problems that are ahead for us in this community...It makes it even more troublesome when some of our students and faculty are entirely sympathetic with their [the Kennedy’s] efforts to promote intermingling of the races on our campus.”<sup>42</sup> During the Lankford administration there was no foreseeable path to the College’s desegregation.

Longwood’s tradition of segregation continued in the denial of African American applicants. The *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, the predominant African American newspaper in Virginia, reported on May 9, 1964 that Longwood had rejected a seemingly qualified applicant for admission. “Longwood College at Farmville, which has never had a Negro student in its 80-year history, has rejected the application of a Negro honor student of Prince Edward Free School Association.”<sup>43</sup> Grace Elizabeth Poindexter of Prince Edward was president and valedictorian of her senior class at the Prince Edward Free Schools. The College claimed that Miss Poindexter had submitted the application late, though there was no reported deadline.<sup>44</sup>

While resistance to desegregation at Longwood occurred with little fanfare, at the University of Mississippi resistance turned violent. A concerted effort by both university officials and Democratic governor Ross Barnett to prevent James Meredith from admittance led to a stand off between the state of Mississippi and President John F. Kennedy. Barnett and Kennedy engaged in numerous heated phone calls. Through these phone calls the attitudes of Ross Barnett and the state of Mississippi were revealed. Governor Barnett was an ambitious political opportunist. The governor was unquestionably attached to his electorate, and his electorate was passionately defiant of integration. Barnett spoke frequently at White Citizens Council meetings. On the night of September 29 violence erupted between students and the occupying National Guard. The riot left three dead, including a French reporter, and forty injured. Despite the violence, Meredith was eventually admitted to and graduated from Ole Miss in August 1963.

Alabama faced a similar showdown in June 1963 at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. Democratic Governor George Wallace had campaigned for office on the promise that segregation would remain the law and practice in Alabama. From the exact spot at the state capitol where Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederate States of America, he proclaimed, "In the name of the greatest people that ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever." With his promise laid before the people of Alabama, the proposed admissions of Vivian Malone and James Hood provided him with his first opportunity to put words to action. On June 11, 1963, despite a federal marshal escort the students were met by the governor who stood defiantly in front of Foster Auditorium blocking the students' admittance. Wallace eventually stepped aside, but not without drawing national attention to him

and to resistance to integration in Southern higher education. While there were not dramatic standoffs between state and federal officials on Longwood's campus, there was still a concerted effort by the college administration to keep Longwood a segregated institution.

While Longwood continued to be segregated, the nation took steps to embrace civil rights, due to the social protest movements that had swept the South. On May 22, 1964 President Lyndon Johnson posed a question to the graduating seniors of the University of Michigan: "Will you join in the battle to give every citizen the full equality which God enjoins and the law requires, whatever his belief, or race, or the color of his skin?"<sup>45</sup> This was the President's introduction to his Great Society, a series of laws that were meant to provide opportunity and equity for the politically, socially, and economically deprived. What became a highlight of the Great Society was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It was the most comprehensive civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. Title II of the Act protected African Americans against discrimination in business settings such as hotels, restaurants and theatres. No longer would Africans Americans in the Jim Crow South be subjugated by signs that read, "White Only." Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in government agencies receiving federal money. These agencies included federal agencies, schools, and publically subsidized companies. The schools -- elementary, secondary, and college levels -- were answerable to Title VI.

A year later the United States Congress and the President demonstrated their commitment to education for all with the passage of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The law provided expanded resources and funding to places of higher education, especially in rural and urban areas. The HEA set-up programs to help train professionals, namely teachers, through the National Teacher Corps.<sup>46</sup> The law likely made a significant impact on schools like Longwood,

schools that taught teachers. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, however, made clear that no school that practiced discrimination would be privy to these new resources.

Much like in 1955 when presidential transition affected Longwood's response, so too it happened again in 1965. On February 6, 1965, President J. Lankford announced that his term as President would come to an end. In a letter to Student Government Association President, Mildred Woodward, Lankford stated he would be making his return to teaching at the University of Virginia. According to the student newspaper, "He explained his decision to return to teaching by stating that he has held a desire to teach again for a long time."<sup>47</sup> His departure left a vacancy at the college's head at a pivotal point in the College's physical growth and social change. His replacement was another Southerner, James H. Newman. Newman's previous position was as the executive vice president at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. The November edition of Longwood's alumnae bulletin reported that, "Under its seventh president since 1884 Longwood College will continue to enjoy administrative leadership of a very high order and in which there will be deep respect for the proud traditions of the college."<sup>48</sup>

Newman's tenure, however, did not live up to expectations. The finances of the College and its relationship with the community deteriorated during his administration as a result of controversies over expansion and eminent domain. The campus' southern edge bordered a vibrant African American neighborhood. That neighborhood conflicted with Longwood's plans to extend southward. The College looked to claim the land, which led to some African Americans in the community protesting the effort. The middle and late 1960s was a period of turmoil and transition at Longwood, which included President Newman's firing from the college in June 1967. According to Dean Richard Brooks, Newman was removed for repeated absenteeism, a failure to communicate, a centralization of power, and rampant indecision.<sup>49</sup> In

announcing his dismissal the *Richmond Times Dispatch* explained, “expansion plans are being slowed by local controversies over displacing Negro homes and relocating the families elsewhere. The president called the land acquisition program southward into a Negro residential area as potentially a ‘powder keg.’”<sup>50</sup> Newman’s replacement was a thirty-six-year old Chesapeake City school administrator, Henry Irving Willett Jr. Willett presided over the most transformative period in Longwood’s history. During that time Longwood saw a growth in student population, it saw the admission of full-time male students, as well as its first black graduate.

Virginia, unlike the Deep South, sought to integrate higher education with little national attention or hostility. By the middle to late 1960s admission of black student into traditionally white undergraduate programs faced little opposition or attention. The local and regional newspapers did not report on desegregation of Virginia state colleges and universities. Therefore, oral histories and personal recollections are incredibly important to the recovery of this history.

Longwood admitted its first African American in 1966. There is very little known or reported on Barbara Bowles. The only tangible record of her presence at Longwood is her picture in 1966-67 *The Virginian* yearbook in 1966-67. Neither the Board of Visitors nor the student newspaper mentioned Barbara’s presence on campus. A white alumnae, Loraine Clawson, remembers inviting Bowles to all-white, Farmville Baptist Church. The following week they were both called into the Dean of Student’s Office with the pastor and deacons of the church. Bowles was told she was no longer welcome at Farmville Baptist.<sup>51</sup> Though Longwood had admitted its first African American student, the town and campus administration were not

prepared for full integration. Bowles transferred to Virginia Commonwealth University in spring 1968. Bowles' departure reinstated Longwood's status as an all-white institution.

Longwood's first African American graduate was a pioneer, consistently overcoming the obstacles of segregation and racial prejudice. Fairfax County school guidance counselor and a 1948 State Teachers College graduate, Virginia Dofflemeyer told a young Nancy Scott that it was "her responsibility to be a trailblazer at Longwood College."<sup>52</sup> Scott, who grew up in poverty in both Fairfax County and Richmond, understood the difficulty and injustice of Jim Crow Virginia. Therefore, she was eager to be a pioneering force against racial injustice. From a young age Nancy "Cookie" Scott felt a deep responsibility to be a trailblazer, to make her life about something greater. While Cookie was a young student in Richmond, the City's school board was delaying the full effect of *Brown*. Instead of fully integrating Richmond city schools, they, like so many other school districts; hand picked a number of African American students to integrate the previously all-white schools. Scott was one of those students chosen by the Richmond City School Board. According to Scott, remaining at the all-Black, Maggie L. Walker School was the wisest academic and social choice for her, but she felt a higher responsibility. She believed she was duty-bound to make a difference in her community and for her race. Therefore, Scott entered Thomas Jefferson High School as one of the first 122 Black students to attend "Tee Jay." She did not graduate from Thomas Jefferson, however, as she and her mother returned to Fairfax County. Upon her return, Ms. Dofflemeyer saw this courage in Cookie when she drove her to far-off Farmville to visit Longwood College and told her, "This is where you should be."<sup>53</sup> Despite being accepted to Sweet Briar College in Lynchburg, Scott decided to apply to Longwood. She was subsequently accepted without fanfare and without resistance.<sup>54</sup>

Scott returned to Farmville that August to move in as a student at Longwood College. Cookie joined her mother at Roses, a local department store, to purchase some necessary supplies for the upcoming school year. While at Roses her mother wished to eat lunch at their lunch counter. They were never served, but instead ignored by the staff. This experience at a local business set her mother on edge for what the next four years would hold. Cookie, however, was not at all apprehensive; she was instead determined to be the first African-American graduate from Longwood.

Upon her acceptance to Longwood, Scott found a white roommate with whom to live, but the College determined that Scott could only room with the one other African American student who was accepted in 1968, Nella Barnett. By the end of the year Barnett left Longwood, leaving Scott to reside more closely with her white peers.

Cookie and her friends were naïve to the history of race relations in the county and so they did not think about how local people would respond to their interracial friendships.<sup>55</sup> For the four years that Scott was in Farmville, she admittedly did not have a vibrant social life. Her nonexistent social life insulated her from what could have been hostile treatment from her peers. There were those that were incredibly encouraging; it was those individuals with whom she surrounded herself. Her reception at Longwood by students, faculty and staff encompassed a wide range of attitudes. Scott recalls that, “For the most part the faculty were the most supportive, they took care of me.”<sup>56</sup> While there were those professors that looked out for Cookie, there were those that rejected her presence on campus. There were some faculty members who refused to seat her in class. Moreover, some social and natural science professors continued to lecture that blacks were scientifically inferior to Whites.

Cookie also aligned herself with some of her white peers. While at Longwood, Scott befriended a white student, Nancy Pyle from Augusta County. Though most of the students were not as strong of a companion as Pyle, they were not overtly hostile toward her attendance at Longwood. The student body's silence did not reflect a completely enlightened campus. While an upperclassman, Scott was informed by her suitemate that her father was the Grand Wizard of her local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>57</sup>

In addition, in the community there was still some adjustment to interracial friendships. Scott and Pyle remembered one instance when walking in downtown Farmville that two cars crashed into one another while looking curiously at the friends. The integration of races in Farmville was an unfamiliar sight. A member of the community went so far as to confront Scott about her presence in the community. During freshman orientation the first year students were required to attend a prayer service at Farmville Baptist. While there Scott was told by the church's pastor that he appreciated her attendance at the prayer service, but she would not be welcome on Sunday mornings. Soon after, Scott received a letter from the president of the Baptist Student Union explaining the actions of the pastor. She claimed that Scott's exclusion from services was for her own protection.<sup>58</sup>

Scott is currently the sole reflection by much of the staff, administration, and student body of Longwood's pioneering generation. The Board of Visitors' resolution was truly the first sign that the institution was interested in the history of the period. The one reminder for faculty, staff, and students of an otherwise hidden history is the N.H. Scott Center for Diversity and Inclusion. There is not, however, a scholarship of the particular events and issues that engulfed the institution during this time. There is within the Longwood community a broad understanding that Longwood, as an all-white institution during Jim Crow, was guilty of racial misconduct.

Longwood's racial history is deeper and more complicated. So too is the broader history of race relations in higher education in the South. Longwood is a window into this broader scholarship.

Longwood College was truly unlike any other college campus in Commonwealth of Virginia in its proximity and involvement in the Black Freedom Struggle. Its home, Farmville, Virginia was the birthplace of the modern student-led Civil Rights movement with the student strike against the conditions of the County's Black high school. Moreover, Longwood played witness to the only school district in the nation to close its doors for five years in defiance to integration of public schools. Longwood, a place of higher education that committed itself to the improvement of quality education through its own education of Virginia's teachers, found itself at a racial crossroads. Even following the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the reopening of the Prince Edward County Public Schools, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Longwood College was an all-white institution. The delay was encouraged by a culture and environment of white supremacy that persisted in the community and across the South.

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