

**FIELD  
REPORTS  
ON  
DESEGREGATION  
IN THE  
SOUTH**



**College Desegregation Without Popular Support**

by

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# BEAUMONT, TEXAS: College Desegregation Without Popular Support

In September of 1956 desegregation by court order came to Lamar State College of Technology in Beaumont. This east Texas city (25 miles out of Louisiana) is 29.4 per cent Negro, which makes it much closer to being "Deep South" than most other Texas cities. As might be expected, segregationists protested. The protest, to date, has not succeeded in barring the campus to Negroes. What happened in the community is therefore of interest to those who seek understanding of the problems and processes of desegregation. The following report attempts to describe the Beaumont case. It should be noted that most of the information was supplied by whites, and some of the incompleteness of the report is due to this fact.

## Population Data, 1950

	BEAUMONT	JEFFERSON COUNTY
Population 1956 .....	112,000	218,900
1950 .....	94,014	195,083
1943 .....	77,335	—
1940 .....	59,061	145,369
Per cent non-white .....	29.4	22.7
Per cent foreign born .....	2.3	2.6
Median income .....	\$2940	\$3279
Per cent engaged in manufacturing .....	21.0	31.5
Median years education .....	10.2	9.9
Number not in same county in 1949 (persons 1 year old and older) .....	6,675	11,800

All data are taken from the 1950 census, except populations for 1956 and 1943, which were furnished by the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce.

*Note:* Jefferson county includes Beaumont and Port Arthur (pop. 58,000 in 1950). The county is 90.4 per cent urban, 8.1 per cent rural non-farm, and 1.5 per cent rural farm. It is in the top decile of counties of the state with regard to industrialization and income. Port Arthur, although smaller than Beaumont, has higher rates of income and proportion engaged in manufacturing. The proportion of Mexicans is very small, about 4 per cent.

*Industry in Beaumont.* Six large oil refineries produce some 10 per cent of the nation's output. Petrochemicals and shipbuilding. Rice, cattle, timber. The historic Lucas gusher blew in at Spindletop in 1901.

*Lamar State College of Technology.* Became four-year college by act of legislature in 1950. For some 25 years it had been a junior college, with vocational emphasis. Present enrollment is about 5,300, with many vocational and night students.

*Class Structure.* One feature of the city is that a class cleavage seems to exist, as between the "average" people of the north and south sides (east), and the wealthier "West Side," with a large proportion of new-rich. Lamar Tech has few students from the west side—most come from more modest areas, and Port Arthur and the surround-

ing towns. As one informant told me, "These people on the West Side read in the paper that Lamar Tech is desegregating, and they say, 'So what?'" Several of the leaders protesting desegregation, themselves lower-middle class, showed resentment against Beaumonters of higher class. Thus, there is a class, as well as a color cleavage, in the city.

### **Procedural Note**

Before leaving for Beaumont, I prepared by sending for and reading both Beaumont newspapers, plus others from Houston and Dallas, and the Negro newspapers (Houston and New Orleans). Thus I knew roughly "who did what" before leaving, and was able to write certain persons asking for interview time. I was also able to build my key questions and find the big gaps in important information I would need to get. I also sought and received a long letter from a sociologist at Lamar Tech, giving details and more non-institutional data missing from the press. Thus I knew before leaving, the eight or ten key persons I wanted to see. I arrived Thursday at about 7:00 p.m. and spent the evening with the sociologist, getting further information and filling in gaps. From Friday morning until early Sunday afternoon (at which time I had to depart) I interviewed people: I got data from 69 persons. Of the 15 or so I interviewed at length, only one kept me waiting more than a minute or two; most people were keen to tell their story. I used the exploratory interview "funnel" technique, such as starting with "Well, tell me what happened out at the college"—and probed from there. I took notes as they talked, explaining that I didn't wish to get various people confused one with an other. One question which seemed clear even before I arrived was, "Why did so few people, especially the business and professional people, protest?"—I asked this question of everyone after they had outlined their story. This, I think, helped narrow down my quest and focused the discussion. I asked every question I wished to, with one or two exceptions, and nobody ever flinched, although there was some evasion. I think this is important with respect to interviewing people on controversial issues where reprisals might ensue: i.e., "if in doubt, ask the question." On returning home, I was able to obtain some additional needed data by mail.

### **Race Relations, Recent and Historical**

Most Beaumonters will say that good race relations have existed in their city. What they mean is that traditional racial etiquette has been maintained fairly well. The following data will illustrate:

In June of 1943 a white woman reported that she had been raped by a Negro. Mobs of whites, mostly shipyard workers, stormed Negro sections, burning and destroying property and beating Negroes. The Negroes fought back, and one white and one Negro were killed. Beaumont police were unable to contain the mob, and some 2,000 state guardsmen were called to stem the violence, which they did after some 24 hours. The militia stopped all incoming cars—many of which were full of armed whites from the environs. It was estimated that some 2,500 Negroes left town. A doctor's examination of the woman showed no evidence of assault, and no Negro was ever apprehended in the matter. An NAACP official told me that a subsequent court hearing revealed that the woman had lied, and that the rape report had been "planted." He also said that white businessmen apologized to the Negroes and paid all damages. The wartime influx of transient whites and Negroes is said to have predisposed the event. Ten days later, the Detroit riots took place. Today, people say the 1943 riot is well remembered as a ghastly thing—a memory which possibly inhibits a recurrence.

After the state legislature in 1950 approved Lamar as a four-year college, Negroes asked county officials for equal facilities. The latter brought two former army barracks to a small plot of land, hired a few Negro "professors" (some of whom were high school graduates) and called it the Negro "branch" of Lamar Tech. This action eventually led to the August 30 decision in Federal court.

About three years ago, the Chamber of Commerce organized and sponsored a United Racial Council, composed of some 60 members. The chairman was white, and three members of the executive committee were white and three were Negro. For their first act, they picked two parks without swimming pools for desegregation, got the council's approval and also that of city authorities. Two days after issuance of the Mayor's proclamation, the authorities reversed their stand. Considerable protest had arisen, including threats like "Blood will flow down the valley." Negro leaders, recognizing that if the top echelons of both groups could not work together, their only recourse had to be in the courts. Legal action was taken, and the same two parts have been desegregated, without serious incident. The URC never met again.

Otherwise, "the glass plate" dominates race relations in Beaumont, with little communication between the two groups. There was no planning whatsoever for desegregation at Lamar Tech after the August 30 court order, nor any training of the police for handling interracial matters (there are about three Negro policemen, but they may not arrest whites).

#### SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS

On or about August 30, 1956, Judge Cecil ruled in Federal District Court that Lamar Tech must admit Negro students. During the summer some five crosses of various sizes were burned on the campus, but available information lays these incidents to juvenile pranks.

Registration started on September 17. Twenty-six Negroes registered, roughly 10 in academic day school, 7 in academic night school and the rest in vocational training. Most of these students were still in school as of the field study (October 18-21). Classes started Monday, September 24, and were never seriously upset by the protest.

The first evidence of clear protest manifested itself that Monday. Two well-known, lower-middle class women appeared on the campus, one to present her petition of protest to Dr. McDonald, the college president, and the other with some friends to carry signs protesting desegregation. The president took the protest under advisement, saying that he too was against the desegregation. Women carrying placards and signs continued to march all week, some men joining them at night. The top number this first week was about 25. This was peaceful picketing. Resentment was, however, building between pickets, and faculty and students. During the week the state filed notice it would appeal the Federal court decision. On Saturday a meeting was held, at which Beaumonters were urged to form a White Citizens Council. The women who led the protest were present, and volunteers were sought to continue picketing. A Beaumont lawyer addressed the group (the only lawyer, incidentally, to publicly protest desegregation).

During the first week the Beaumont newspapers, a jointly-owned morning and evening paper, mentioned the registration by Negroes and the women carrying placards, but "buried" these items under such headlines as "Classes Begin at Lamar Tech," or headlines giving total enrollment figures. For instance, on September 21 appears the

entry "among the students were five Negro girls"—treated as newsworthy but not sensational. The early picketing was dismissed with such notes as on September 25: "Approximately 25 women appeared on the college campus yesterday bearing placards reading 'Let's Keep Our Schools White, Integration Out!, Where's Your Fighting Spirit, and Come and Join Us!'" The paper had in 1954 expressed regret over the Supreme Court school decision.

Violence, intimidation and threats erupted in the second week, starting October 1. For three and one-half days the campus was in considerable turmoil. President McDonald posted anti-loitering signs, citing state law, for the pickets to see. The greatest disorders occurred at night, when men joined the pickets. Up to 75 persons manned all 11 entrances, "were all over the campus," but never entered classrooms and rarely entered buildings. Feelings ran high.

Exactly how much violence occurred is difficult to know, but certain events were published in the press and reported in interviews. The most overt mayhem took place Wednesday, when a white man pulled a Negro student (age 17) from his car and started beating and kicking him. One taxi bearing Negro students was said to have been pushed into a ditch, and bottles were thrown at taxis carrying Negro students, and windows cracked.

Pickets also used intimidations and threats, and attempted to recruit white students to "take care of the niggers." Cars were stopped at campus entrances, whether driven by Negro or white. When a Negro lawyer attending night school was stopped and ordered to leave his car, a picket was quoted in the press as saying, "Get out of here and stay out if you want to stay alive." The lawyer called to an Episcopal clergyman to witness the incident. The picket then said to the lawyer, "You're going to need a priest if you don't get out of here and stay out."

Several students told me that pickets urged them to beat up the Negroes, adding that they would see the students were not punished. White students and faculty were jeered by pickets, and their cars stopped, in the belief that they were smuggling Negro students into the school. Parents of white students told President McDonald that they wanted their children protected. One car-pool load of faculty members stopped for a traffic light, and a picket shouted at them, "We'll get your salary—we know you want the niggers in schools with you."

Who were the pickets? They were led by several women, mostly of the lower-middle class. These leaders are all active in or sympathetic to the Citizens Council. They are intensely anti-Negro, showed in interviews an authoritarian syndrome and expressed extremely conservative old-south ideologies. The 25 or so other women were probably friends and neighbors. The men, however, were drawn mostly from the industrial working class. The police chief recited to me the police records of two men who picketed. One student said that she saw two pickets going about barefoot. There were no reports that juveniles did any more than harmless milling.

Students and observers agreed that the pickets displayed bad manners. White girl undergraduates were greeted with such remarks as, "You'll be carrying nigger babies next." The forcible intimidation of Negroes, the stopping of cars, and the overtures suggesting the students take a hand in the violence boomeranged. While many students approved the goals of the protest, few supported the means employed. Only two students were reported to have joined the pickets. Most of the others were repelled by them.

Resentment against the increasingly non-peaceful nature of the picketing was

first brought to official attention October 1, when two Negro students and two Negro lawyers went to the mayor asking protection for their associates. On Thursday morning the *Enterprise* ran a long leading editorial, asking, "Who is running our city—the legally constituted authorities or a handful of the fringe of the citizenry." Later that morning President McDonald called upon the editor and the mayor—and perhaps other influential citizens. It was agreed that the police would be ordered to stop the picketing just after the end of lunch period (lunch hour being deemed dangerous because of the number of students free at the time). At 1:15 p.m. the police acted, ordering pickets from the campus. At about 5:00 p.m., police arrested two men and a woman.

Pickets marched peacefully for a few days the following week, until they were pulled off by a Citizens Council official from Kilgore. The latter judged picketing to be an unwise tactic, and promised action from the Council. A meeting was held October 17, attended by a crowd estimated at some 750 persons. It reportedly was an emotional affair, typical of such meetings. The Beaumont WCC at this writing claims 5,000 paid-up members, but a newspaper inquiry put the figure at only 500—including several policemen. A large painted sign at WCC headquarters reads, interestingly, "Why kill the goose that laid the golden egg? Segregate and educate."

On Sunday, November 11, an annual youth rally of the fashionable St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church brought together youth from Port Arthur, Orange, and other points. Eleven of those attending were Negroes; and Negroes had attended this event for some years past. At about 7:00 p.m. large bricks and stones crashed through the church windows. Several persons saw three or four men run into a wooded area. During the week church members had received telephone calls protesting the integrated meeting: such protests had never been made before. In the following day's paper the WCC condemned the action.

### **Roles of Community Leaders**

Local leaders did not act decisively until Thursday, October 4. This was the day after the most serious outbreak. When they acted, they acted together and in the same direction. The value they appealed to was not desegregation, but law and order.

*Mayor.* The mayor, as chief titular authority, is the man who finally instructed the police to stop non-peaceful picketing. He is of Greek extraction and belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church, and is reported, on good authority, to recognize his own minority status. Furthermore, he is young (about 38) and quite possibly ambitious, perhaps not only in political life but in connection with his insurance and real estate business. He gave me the impression of being fairly smart and very energetic, and quite interested in the city and its progress. In the primary elections last spring (1956) there were five candidates, and he received the bulk of the Negro vote (this was told to me by an opponent and also by a supporter).

What influenced him to stop the disorder? Several people called on him that week. The college president invited him to the campus, and he saw the situation for himself. Also, a delegation of Negroes asked protection for Negro students (can we not surmise they might have reminded him of their backing at the polls?). Likewise, a delegation of labor leaders met with the mayor; in our interview he said he told them he'd heard that they might be joining the pickets. They denied this story, and agreed that violent picketing should go. The mayor spoke to the city manager—a person who remains in the background of this dispute. The city council met Tuesday morning, calling in the

chief of police for a report, and also the sheriff and assistant chief. They told the chief to get some aid from the highway patrol (the college fronts on the state highway to Port Arthur). Finally, of course, we can assume that the mayor read the editorial Thursday morning—an editorial he admits was directly challenging to his authority.

One more note about the mayor. He (rather courageously) criticized the police for winking at disorder. He also told me that the sheriff actually went hunting—out of town—during the crucial period. And he had nothing good to say about the two Texas Rangers who stood around; this may relate to his feelings toward the governor.

*Chief of Police.* One of the first things he told me was that “not a man on the force wants niggers in this college.” He feels that it is coming, however, and he criticized the white man who pulled the Negro student out of his car and kicked him. He sees himself as a good Methodist, but told me he would quit the church for good “if they let one nigger through the front door.” When the mayor told him to stop the disorder, however, it was stopped.

*College President.* It was the president’s visit with the editor and the mayor, on Thursday morning, that precipitated the mayor’s “stop” order to the police. During the days preceding, the president, while keeping school running, had been collecting grievances placed against the pickets from students, parents and faculty. These he showed the mayor. In his public statement, the president said he did not favor integration. We must accept his word, while speculating that it might have had some tactical quality to avoid reprisals. The president told me, too, that he thought the Negroes as a group were not yet ready for integration. He was raised in South Dakota and has lived in Texas for 22 years. He maintained internal order on the campus at all times. I asked him if he now felt surprised that no unpleasant internal incidents had occurred. He said that he had indeed expected some. He spoke to several downtown groups during October, apparently to interpret quietly the college’s position to community leaders. Several letters to the editor praising the mayor, police, etc., may have been stimulated by this mediation.

*Newspaper Editor.* There are two jointly-owned papers, dominated by the morning *Enterprise*. Any estimate of the leadership picture must not overlook the fact that the first strong voice against the violence appeared Thursday morning (i.e., was written on Wednesday) as the lead *Enterprise* editorial. That both the mayor and the college president went to the editor’s office may be significant as to the power structure. It is true that during this period the college president was building his case, and the mayor was conferring, but the president-mayor meeting did not occur until after the editorial appeared. I did not get to see the editor (I received two letters from him discussing my questions), but spoke to several newsmen. Talking with them reinforced my feeling that the paper is both an editorial leader and a purveyor of good, objective news stories that avoid inflammatory overtones. I must add here that the First National Bank is serving as owner of the paper, since the death of the former owner.

*The Power Elite.* Who else influenced Beaumont? From power theory, as in Floyd Hunter’s *Community Power Structure*, we would expect some influencing of the formal and official leaders by certain key top-level men behind the scenes. I could find nothing on this aspect. I asked almost everyone questions such as Hunter’s “Who is the ‘biggest’ man in town?”; or “Who might the editor or the mayor have consulted with before acting?”, etc. I got some “old family” names, some undeniably important men, and names of exclusive clubs, but no more. An informant told me he had heard “some big

wheels were getting upset” during the second week. I would not be surprised if the mayor or editor had in truth sought advice from someone, but such a “quickie” study has scant hope of securing such data. I can only surmise that the old families, and old and new rice, cattle, oil, shipbuilding and real estate interests can and do hold power. Perhaps power leaders did not *have* to contact the officials; the latter, acting as “agents” for power, would simply anticipate the interests of power in keeping law and order. It does seem that organized labor, although rather strong numerically, has not reached the power level.

*Churches.* The churches were not prominent in the affair. I spoke to several ministers, and there was some criticism of large groups like the Baptists for crusading against dancing and movies while human rights were being attacked. I heard almost nothing about the Catholics in Beaumont—the very group which, interestingly enough, stands in the forefront for desegregation in southern Louisiana. It is possible that the characterization of these churches as “inching gradualists” is correct. An Episcopalian minister wrote a long letter to the paper, calling for love and understanding and criticizing picket violence, the only such letter to appear. He told me, when I asked about reaction, that several members of his congregation (business-class) told him they liked it, but that one elderly woman chided him as a turncoat—the only criticism he met! (Since this report was first published, I have been informed that several churchmen were conducting *informal* discussions with their members about the Christian view of race relations.)

### SOME “PUBLIC OPINION”

I walked along about six blocks, in four different parts of the North and South end (lower and lower-middle class), questioning people sitting on porches or gardening, and I rang some doorbells. I asked them to tell me how they felt about the desegregation at the college. I did not identify myself, just “I’m doing a study and I’d like your help.” Briefly, here is how they replied:

Think desegregation all right .....	2
Mixed feelings, troubled, perhaps desegregation is justifiable .....	2
Keep segregation .....	7
Refused to answer .....	2
Could not speak English .....	1
Flustered, didn’t know what to say .....	1

—  
15

Obviously, this is no representative sample, no poll, and the data are only a humble start. It would be safe to conclude, however, that many of the citizens of Beaumont would be content to keep segregation—especially in view of other evidence from community leaders. It is also significant, however, that we have a *range* of opinion. The two who approved of desegregation seemed “fed up” with the matter: the Negroes aren’t so bad; they work and study together all right in the North without intermarrying; the South is clinging too long to its prejudices; and besides, it’s coming so let’s get it done with. With regard to intermarriage, it may be significant in terms of *mass* opinion that five of the 11 who spoke gave this as a reason for keeping segregation. One who was troubled and one who was favorable (both women) gave the Christian position as a count against segregation. One segregationist said integration was coming, but “they” might mess it up and he kept his gun handy for the niggers! A man who was painting a mail box (classified as having mixed feelings) is worth quoting in more detail:

Well, being raised in the South a man naturally feels they should keep separate. I don't mean to discriminate against the niggers; their schools should be as good as ours. I was down in Arizona the last three years, and they're really mixed down there.

(How did you like it?) Oh, I didn't have any trouble. You know my boy had a nigger teacher, and he said he was the best teacher he ever had; this guy had the knack of knowing just how to handle the kids. He had two nigger teachers. (Where was this?) One was in Tuscon, and the other was in Bisbee.

(Well do you feel any different since having this experience and your son's experience in school?) Well, you know the people down here are too much against it. But the federal government is gonna let it come.

Some people, you know, say it's dangerous because they'll start marrying together. That's happened down around Arizona, and you don't know what people are half the time down there—half breed or not. It's not so bad, I guess, and the Mexicans work just as good as we do.

But you never can tell. You might get fooled. The farther down the line you go, maybe three or four generations, one kid may turn up as black as the ace of spades. I read a case like that not more'n two-three years ago.

(So how do you feel about desegregation here?) Oh, it don't bother me none; whatever public opinion says, I'll go along. (Man was 40, upper lower class, had four children.)

A final note on "public opinion": last summer Texas voted 4 to 1 against integration. In Beaumont the vote was 7 to 1.

*Letters to the Editor.* A check of two weeks' issues of the Beaumont *Enterprise* shows the following distribution of letters to the editor over the Lamar case: For segregation, 6; sympathetic to principles of integration, 2; for law and order, 7; for equal rights, 7; against "authoritarian" methods of city official, 2; praising police work, 1. Several appeared to be by Negroes.

One of the pro-segregation letters can be taken as the extreme viewpoint allowable by the paper; it spoke of "a sea of black faces" in a local food store, "where diseased people are free to dip their filthy hands," etc. The editors saw fit to print at least two strong rejoinders to this blast, arguing that Negroes are cooks, nurses, etc., in white homes.

Comparing these letters to cross-sectional interviews is difficult, not only for the small number of cases but because letters express only a portion of one's sentiments. We may tentatively say that the paper was quite liberal in its selection (if any) of letters to print, and that some individuals were not afraid to take a moderate stand in public—a crucial weakness in Deep South communities. Certainly, opinion here is *not* a monolithic entity.

*Reasons for Protesting Desegregation.* The attitudes of southern segregationists have become well-known; briefly, they see the Negro as inferior; they resent "outside" pressure, e.g., suspecting that "Communists" wrote the Supreme Court decision; and they want to keep "the old south," including white supremacy, and they talk about "blood" and intermarriage. The appended interview with Mrs. A. will illustrate these views.

## **Students and the Campus Community**

I asked 31 white students how they personally felt about the desegregation at their college. I had no questionnaire, just let them talk. The interviews took from two to ten minutes, and there were no refusals. I have gone over my notes, and have made a rough coding of their replies. I picked four categories:

	Number
1. Favor desegregation at college. ....	4
2. Negroes have same rights we do, should have educational opportunity, if they can qualify for college. ....	12
3. Indifferent, not for or against. ....	10
4. Don't like it, somewhat bitter. ....	5
	—
	31

These figures should not be taken too seriously, but they probably are suggestive. They concern desegregation, not opinions about the pickets. The first four students were not enthusiastic "integrators," but were clear that segregation on the campus was wrong and should be abolished. The next 12 respondents voiced, in the main, one or more rather impersonal "classic" arguments such as the Negroes pay taxes too, and if qualified, should be permitted to register; this is a democratic country with fair play for all; Negroes fight for their country just like we do; segregation provides the Communists with good propaganda; and segregation is un-Christian. The "indifferents" didn't say much, and were probably not among the better students. Of the five "bitter" youths, only two seemed vindictive and emotionally angered. Girls were markedly more favorable than boys. Changes of attitude since experiencing Negroes as fellow students? I tried to probe for this, and I think three or four evidenced a positive change from observing the desegregated campus, just as Dr. McDonald did. In most cases when I asked about their parents' feelings, they reported parents more conservative. Several parents were reported as "anxious" over their children. One girl explained, "You see, my parents were raised in the South." I said, "Well, where were you raised?" She stared a moment and replied, "Here, but—well, I guess things are different now."

Monday night, after the picketing threatened to get rough, several students, including one of the top elected student leaders, wrote a petition. It began circulating the following morning. By mid-afternoon it had some 400 signatures, at which time the leaders showed it to the president. He asked that they call a halt, which they did. The petition read, in part:

"We protest the present picketing of our college campus by the members of the White Citizens Council and sundry peoples . . . we further protest sundry peoples who have approached various members of our student body suggesting that we ourselves start a riot to oust students from this college with mention that 'all bills will be paid' with 'something extra thrown in.'"

It should be noted that the pickets were not yet technically members of the Citizens Council; the charge was probably based on WCC pamphlets circulated by the pickets, originating for the most part in Mississippi.

What has been the Negro-white student relationship? By all odds the whites have accepted the Negroes as fellow students, and have probably bent over backward to be pleasant. Several cases were cited in which a student, after a few days of stiffness, would sit next to a Negro in his classroom. A girl volunteered, after some days of indirection, to be a Negro girl's lab partner. Several students told me that they and others had gone out of their way to speak to Negro students and make them feel less out of place. Four music majors asked a professor if it would be all right to include a Negro music major in their car pool; they were given a "you're on your own" answer.

I saw two Negroes on the campus in my three hours there. One was waited on like anyone else in the book shop. The other was a girl, whom I interviewed. She said her car had been stopped one night and she had been frightened, but she stepped on the gas and came through to the campus. The following days, she said, "15 or 16" students had

come and apologized to her. Others, students and faculty, had spoken to her giving encouragement, telling her to "stick to your guns, we're for you." Her classmates, she said, went out of their way to be pleasant to her. "It's a challenge to us and I suppose to them," she said, "to work and try to surpass each other." All of this took place while she was standing at the entrance to the library, with white students strolling in and out. I had to wonder if all the Negro students were so firm, and so strongly motivated.

Did any white students leave school in protest? I heard of two cases. One was in an English course. At the first lecture, a white student remained seated, visibly angered. The instructor went over, and the student said he could not stand Negroes in his classroom. The instructor said, "That's just fine." The student never returned. The second student was in a shop course, and about 50 years old. He told his instructor he was "just too old to start going to school with niggers," and walked out, rather sadly. There were apparently no deeper resentments among the students than this, and certainly no parent-sponsored symbolic walkouts.

The faculty, for its part, also seemed to accept the Negroes as students. A few, as one would expect, were a bit more outspoken than the rest, but not one was publicly identified as playing a role. President McDonald had told his faculty, at a regular meeting, that all students were to be handled alike, except that seating and lab patterns should not be forced. A special effort was made to launch the desegregation judiciously by selecting certain able professors as orientation advisers for groups containing Negroes.

Two off-campus chaplains were quietly active—a Methodist and an Episcopalian. The Episcopalian told me that he defined his role as simply being visible—to students, police, and pickets. He refrained from lecturing or prompting students. When I inquired if they asked his counsel, he replied that they seemed to know beforehand how he felt. He had, in a sermon some time earlier, claimed wholehearted agreement with the Supreme Court decision, a position also publicly stated by his bishop.

## **The Negro Side**

I spoke to only two Negroes, one a student. The other informant, however, was head of the local NAACP chapter. Speaking probably as a spokesman, one remark he made was that "all the scared Negroes left town during the race riot" (1943). He also announced, after telling me about the failure of the United Racial Council, "Let's not kid ourselves. The lines are drawn. The courts are our big hope." He did indicate, however, that the lines were not solid, that some whites had spoken to him informally, urging him to "sue the hell out of them (city authorities)."

Negroes undoubtedly have some influence in the community. The present mayor will not forget the big vote they gave him. A delegation during the second week of the picketing urged him to act to protect Negro students. Furthermore, several letters printed in the papers seemed to have come from the Negro community. A final datum may be suggested by a news article about Lamar, appearing in the Louisiana edition of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a Negro weekly (October 13, p. 2): "Fed up by the obstructionist tactics of white would-be mobsters, local Negroes here fought 'fire with fire' and forced their way through picket lines . . . Taxicab driver Clarence Mason could be credited with the new turn of events . . . took the butt end of his pistol and delivered a sound thrashing to one Tom W. Sanford, a white picket . . ." True, this is an out-of-town paper glorifying local race heroes, as always, but the *tone* is striking, at least in the South: in a Negro-white relationship, the Negro is hailed as the aggressor!

## Summary

1. Not one Beaumont white person—with the possible exception of a student—declared publicly in favor of desegregation at Lamar. Not even from “Southern liberal” ranks. Despite this, desegregation took place, and in a city 29 per cent Negro. (Interesting theoretical problems of “public opinion” in a democratic society, vis-a-vis institutional authority, are implicit here.) A study by Robert T. Bower of American University showed that a sampling of 24 per cent of the people of Washington, D. C., in 1954, thought the Supreme Court decision on integration was “good.” Only 10 per cent more thought it was “good qualified” or “neutral.” Yet desegregation was accomplished with more than three-fifths of “public opinion” against it.

2. The community leaders who felt called upon to express their personal feelings declared against desegregation.

3. The key value which decided the leaders to act was not equal opportunity, but law and order.

4. When leaders did act—perhaps somewhat belatedly—they acted firmly. This includes the college president, the newspaper editor, the mayor and the chief of police. The editor, in particular, assumed leadership. No situation arose in which leaders lost control of their public.

5. Few members of the community took much part in the affair. No already-organized group or bloc—not even a religious group—defined the situation as deserving of its attention. The average Beaumonter is probably satisfied with separate schools, although individual opinions show considerable range.

6. The protest was led by women from the lower-middle class, and pickets came from this and the lower class. Their appeals consisted of familiar white supremacy arguments, emotional in tone.

7. The means taken by the pickets—violence, threats, intimidation and uncouth behavior (against whites as well as Negroes)—boomeranged, resulting in curbing their activities in the name of law and order.

8. The students, while showing a range of views about desegregation, showed less anxiety than their parents and other adults.

9. Some interesting factors present could be demographic ones: the rapid population growth, the fairly high income and industrialization rates (which, however, fall behind those of the “rival” city, Port Arthur); the rather high educational status, and of course, the large number of Negroes and small proportion of Mexicans.

10. The Beaumont case thus may form an interesting contrast to a situation such as the Lucy case in Tuscaloosa.

Two final comments: First, those who have read the manuscript thought that some analysis and interpretation of the data should be appended, perhaps working toward a set of postulates which might predict or at least give insight to a similar situation in the future. It is my feeling that such generalizing should await the study of several past and future reports of this kind, and this paper should merely be one report. Some conclusions are implicit, however, and ideas and suggestions about interpreting the data and suggesting new problems will be welcomed. Second, it is hoped that the incomplete nature of such a “quickie” survey as this will spur others, to be not only

unsatisfied with this kind of reporting, but to arrange better research projects. Such projects obviously should include Negro as well as white researchers. Here again the interest and cooperation of all will be welcomed.

## APPENDIX

### Interview With a Lady Segregationist

What follows is about one-third of an interview with one of the leaders of the protest. I had not written her, just briefly introduced myself and went in and she talked freely. At one point she asked, "What's all this for?" and I said I was interested in the problems and processes involved in desegregation, like many others in various parts of the country. I took notes as she talked, and had to probe but little, as shown. At no point did I indicate disagreement; I would nod, murmur "umhum," or say "that's interesting," etc. The sequence of items is pretty much as recorded; I rearranged a few quotes to keep topics together and to save space. She is about 60, a member of a major Protestant denomination, lower middle class, and has a high school education.

(How do you do, Mrs. A., I'm Dr. Breed from Tulane University, doing a survey on the recent desegregation events here at Lamar Tech. I saw your name in the papers and would like to get your side of the story.) Well, all right, come on in.

Well, you know I protested integration at Tech. First, because it goes against the laws of the sovereign state of Texas. Right there in its charter it says the college will be for white youth only. Second, it goes against the Bible. I've been a Bible teacher for a long time, and the Bible decrees separation in many places. (Note: Most theologians would say, not on the basis of race.) I want to help save the human race from corruption, and the Bible tells it time and time again. Third, mixing simply does not work. Read the article in *U. S. News and World Report* about the conditions in Washington, D. C. That's the only Northern publication which tells facts and figures. (I see. Ummm. Now, would you tell me what happened at the college?)

... Then there's that Professor B. He tried to bring niggers in, too. (Note: false.) We're suspicious of him. Frankly, he's from some eastern school (Note: Northwestern), or even Europe. He's a member of the Jewish race (Note: false), we happen to know that, and that accounts for his actions.

There had been a little violence, I think two niggers were hurt a bit. (Note!) I wrote a protest to Dr. McDonald, blaming the NAACP for this whole thing. But it was suppressed by authority of Lamar College. That's about all I did. I was something of a bystander. I'm strictly anti-federalist. (Did you picket?) I never carried a banner, but I did talk with them. (Note: She was one of the leaders.) We flushed at least one communist. (You did?) This dark woman, who acted so peculiar. I could just tell. (How old was she?) She was in her 30s. We grilled her, and she got upset. (Did this get in the paper?) Of course not. They're too scared, and that paper was so slanted, pro-integration (Note: false). (What were they scared of?) Well, they didn't want a race riot, didn't want to stir the people up. I certainly agree there. (Note power of the belief in law and order!).

I'm not against the niggers . . . We've had a fine feeling of race relations here in Beaumont. The niggers are happy to keep to themselves, they don't want this integration any more'n we do. We all blame the NAACP for the trouble. We could have gone on for more than 90 years. We have good colored schools . . . We like the decent element of the nigras (sic). We've been friendly and decent all along. I've brought up several children, and I tell you I know what I'm talking about.

(I'm also trying to find why the bigger professional and business people didn't join the protest.) Oh, our people were from what I'd call the middle income group. All good, fine, hard-working people. Their husbands are craftsmen, laboring men. Their bosses were at home asleep, or at the country club swapping cocktails with the other big shots. (Note: possible class antagonism.)

(The students felt the pickets were not the most responsible people.) Well, all I can say is those kids aren't dry behind the ears. Those poor little white kids . . .

I tell you our pickets stood the insults of the students pretty well. Those students were pretty insulting and rude. Our people were respectful and courteous. (Note: this reverses what many others said.)

The Citizens Council people (Note: from Kilgore) advised us not to enlist the "fringes of society." Well, that cut deep. Some of our people had more money than the editor (Note: of the *Enterprise*) who used those words. You read about the (WCC) meeting the other night? Well, the paper said 600 people were there. I'd bet it was near 1,200! And there were people there from all walks of life. All but the froth. (Froth?) All but what you might call cafe society. People with pliers in their pockets, working folks, school teachers, and I saw one minister, and some of the young people are coming back to see our side. Some prominent people were there. The backbone of America.

(What was decided at the meeting?) Well, we said that if the white race doesn't rise up, we'll have a nation of mongrels in two generations. The NAACP will find a weak place in your city, but if you put up a front you'll show the NAACP you won't permit this.

You should have seen the niggers pouring into town. They welcome all this trouble. They came in air-conditioned Cadillacs . . . their kids ran wild downtown, handling the fruit . . . nigger women in the best stores handling all the coats and dresses. They figured Beaumont was a weak spot. We wrote those store managers.

You take the upper crust—bankers, lawyers, and businessmen. I know them and I have yet to see one of them come out and take a stand. But I'll be downtown and some of them will come up to me and say, "Mrs. A., here's \$10 or \$1, take it and use it, but don't quote me. I can't afford to be in this publicly. We're not fighting the niggers, we just want to keep our customs."

This whole thing isn't of local origin, you know. It's the NAACP. I'll tell you about a group in Port Arthur . . . this white man . . . he's a member of the NAACP. Another one came from the North, to the YWCA nigger branch. She's one of the students at the college. You know (said gleefully) a lot of them have already dropped out (Note: not a lot, a few). They were just plants from the North. There were also some white students from California, put here by the NAACP. (?)

We like the niggers here. We like a nice sweet collie dog, but we don't like 'em in bed with us. We'll help 'em out whenever we can, as white folks have always done

in the South. But just don't let 'em get uppity on us. Dr. C. (WCC leader) tells us: Whenever the Citizens Council comes, the niggers leave town! (Note: logic).

And we don't like that D, the mulatto NAACP leader in town. He's got a mansion (Note: worth around \$30,000) on the outskirts of niggertown . . . Somebody has tossed rocks at his windows. He may be leaving town.

The weakness of this generation is that they don't study the things we used to—civics and classical languages and English literature. "Progressive Education" is bad for them . . . They lump courses now into social science—this one-worldism, that it's better to know about Japan than about your country . . . They're really brainwashing the kids, telling them all the niggers want is an education . . . And this Stevenson, I had to laugh when he said the Supreme Court is the law of the land. That's wrong and he knows it. It's just the interpretation he's talking about. People don't know these facts any more.

And they talk about the Christian religion like it's all the brotherhood of man. They don't realize there are two parts, the soul and the flesh and they're different. When you're in the flesh, it's the practical side you've got to bear in mind, not the same as the spirit. People don't realize this. (?) We've got lots of enemies working from within to destroy our country. The devil is doing it, working of course through men. He turns men against men to creat confusion. But if we leave out the spiritual, we've got nothing left. These people want to set themselves above Christ and God, and the anti-Christ is this One-World ruler—the UN. The UN wants to rule us all. Internationalism is evil. You know God did separate the world once, at the Tower of Babel—he thrust them all apart far and wide. That's God's law.

(Say, I've been here almost two hours. Many thanks for your time, and if I have any more questions I'll call you. You've been most helpful. Goodbye.) Goodbye.