

# WHAT THREE SOUTHERN GOVERNORS SAY ABOUT MIXING SCHOOLS

Three Southern Governors study the Supreme Court's rulings against racial segregation and come up with these conclusions:

• Two Governors—Frank G. Clement of Tennessee and LeRoy Collins of Florida—say that the Court's terms can be met legally without arbitrarily compelling whites and Negroes to sit in the same classroom.

• Those Governors accept the Court's decision as law and warn against open defiance.

• Governor Marvin Griffin of Georgia says, "No matter what any court may rule," there will be no end of segregation in his State.

You get all of these views, in the Governors' own words, in the texts of speeches that are presented here.

## CLEMENT: LET THE PEOPLE CHOOSE THEIR SCHOOLS

Following are excerpts from a special message by Governor Frank G. Clement to the General Assembly of Tennessee, on Jan. 9, 1957:

I am not so concerned with what extremists on either side think of what I shall say here today—nor those out-of-Staters of both races who come into our midst stirring up trouble and strife, where none existed, in order to further their own gains. I shall not attempt to please them.

But I am greatly concerned about what our God-fearing, law-abiding citizens think—the farm families who put their children on school buses in the early dawn not to see them again until dark; the thousands of factory workers trying to educate their children, trusting them to the care of our good teachers; the doctors, lawyers, merchants—yes, all of our good citizens. I am tremendously concerned with your thinking and your problems and it is to you, our loyal, peace-loving, God-fearing citizens—through your representatives whom you have sent here to Capitol Hill—that I address my message.

In the course of human history, many peoples and many nations have risen to positions of eminence only to fall, to decay, or to be destroyed. More often than not, the source of their disaster has come from within and not from without. They have carried within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. They have been unable to resolve their own internal conflicts.

We in America face today within our country a crisis which can lead to our destruction. For if we cannot—as Americans, regardless of race or color—live in peace and harmony, as a united people, our disunity may well destroy us. How can we be trusted with the peace of the world if we cannot keep peace among ourselves?

Yet scarcely a day passes without some incident of racial violence. Men in the fullness of their hatred and fear, heedless of consequences, urge us on to further extremes of distrust, oppression and violence.

The relations of the races has been termed the greatest problem confronting responsible officials and citizens of Tennessee today, but I say to you that it is much more than that: It is our greatest opportunity.

We could render no greater service to our State, to our

nation and to posterity than to show that we as Tennesseans, as Southerners, as Americans, white and Negro, can adjust our problems and work and live in peace and harmony.

We cannot render that service through impassioned denunciation.

We cannot render it through the use of force.

We cannot render it by hiding behind a screen of generalities.

We cannot render it by attempting to deceive ourselves and our people.

We must face the facts as they are.

We must let reason, not passion, be our guide.

We must be ever mindful of those great religious and political principles which are our most precious heritage.

Our nation has not become the international champion of all history because we were the largest in area, which we are not; or the most populous in the world, which we are not; or the most richly endowed, which we are.

We have been blessed by God, respected by our fellow man, and have become prosperous because we have, in the broadest sense of the word, proclaimed our desire to be right—"one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

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The victory of Northern arms abolished the institution of slavery but it did not solve the problem of race relations.

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We must face the problems of today in the light of the past.

We must accept the fact that no law, no judicial decree can erase 300 years of history.

But in our recognition of the existence of different grounds for white and Negro, we must not overlook the fact that the Negro is equal to the white in the eyes of the law and in the sight of God.

He is an American citizen, even as the white.

He pays taxes, even as the white.

He serves in our armed forces in defense of our country, even as the white.

He is entitled to equality of opportunity.

When the Negro reads the Declaration of Independence,

## Clement: "The Court did not take over the public schools"

When he hears our leaders speak of the rights of man, he knows that he is a man, he knows that he is an American, and he will never be content to be treated as anything else. Whether we like it or not, the Negro will never willingly accept an assigned place in society if that place is set in shame and degradation.

We in Tennessee have not been unmindful of the historical difference in the Negro and of his right to equal treatment. Nowhere has our concern to recognize both these facts been better exemplified than in our public-school system.

In recognition of the historical difference between the races, Tennessee has required that separate schools be maintained. In recognition of the Negro's right to equal treatment, we have tried as best we could to make Negro schools equal to the white. Both have excellent schools and, unfortunately, both have schools which leave much to be desired. The pay schedules are the same for Negro teachers as for whites. The school transportation program and the free text-book program are the same for Negroes as for whites. State school funds are distributed without discrimination for the children of both races. The great Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University is comparable to the institutions maintained for the whites.

We have based our public-school system on the concept that, as a matter of constitutional law, the separate-but-equal schools open to the Negro afforded them the equal protection of the laws guaranteed all citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The Supreme Court of the United States in the 1896 case of Plessy vs. Ferguson had expressly approved that principle.

In recent years, however, some have minimized the problems involved and have contended that any system of compulsory segregation on the basis of race denies to the segregated group the equal protection of the laws. Thus, they say that compulsory segregation is unconstitutional.

In the 1954 case of Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, the United States Supreme Court handed down its opinion holding statutes compelling segregation of the races

to be unconstitutional. Recognizing the sweeping effect of its opinion, the Court called for additional arguments before entering its final decree. Finally, on May 31, 1955, the Court entered its decree.

No decision rendered by any Court has ever produced a greater storm of controversy.

A careful analysis of what the Court actually did say in that case is essential to the development of any workable solution to our difficulties.

The Court held that statutes compelling segregation in the public schools on the basis of race were unconstitutional. It held that no State could, in the operation of its public schools, discriminate against persons on account of their race. The Court did not purport to take over the administration of the public schools. It expressly left that administration where it has always been, in the hands of the local school officials. It did not purport to require the States to mix arbitrarily persons of different races in the schools. It did not deprive individual parents and children of their rights of voluntarily choosing the schools they wish to attend.

The Fourteenth Amendment is a limitation on the powers of the States, not a limitation on the freedom of individuals.

At the time of that decision, the statutes of Tennessee, as of 16 other States, required segregation of the races in the public schools. The validity of the Tennessee statutes was tested before the Supreme Court of Tennessee only last October. On the basis of the decision of the United States Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of Tennessee held that the Tennessee statutes compelling segregation were unconstitutional. All three federal district courts in Tennessee, presided over by Tennesseans, have held likewise.

Whether we condemn these decisions or praise them, whether they were right or wrong, we must face the fact that the highest courts of our nation and of our State have held that any statutes compelling segregation of the races in the public schools is unconstitutional.

We must recognize that any school system we may develop



GOVERNOR CLEMENT  
OF TENNESSEE

"We must develop a new legal foundation for our schools"



GOVERNOR COLLINS  
OF FLORIDA

"It will do us no good what-  
ever to defy the Court"



Wide World Photos

GOVERNOR GRIFFIN  
OF GEORGIA

"As long as I am Governor, there  
will be no breakdown in segregation"

## ... Griffin: "We are going to protect our citizens in Georgia"

account—give us assurance that there will be no integration in our public schools so long as such is not wise in the light of the social, economic and health facts of life as they exist in the various localities of our State.

Because of these laws and because of conditions in communities throughout Florida, I continue to say that our traditions and customs of segregation in the public schools can be expected to prevail for the foreseeable future.

I shall do everything in my power to see that these laws are carried out, just as I have taken the oath today to enforce all the laws of Florida.

Attitudes become increasingly important as we deal with the whole field of segregation, including those types of it outside the public schools. And we should admit that our attitude generally in the past has been obstructive all along the line.

We must be constructive and practical. White and colored citizens alike must see wrong on their side as well as right. Our strength to support the right is weakened if we arbitrarily refuse to admit the wrong.

I am convinced, for example, that the average white citizen does not object to nonsegregated seating in buses—any more than he objects to riding the same elevators with Negroes or patronizing the same stores. He does resent some of the methods being used to achieve certain ends. Boycotts, ultimatums and peremptory demands can never achieve what persuasion, peaceful petitions and normal judicial procedures can do for the Negro race.

We can find wise solutions, I believe, if the white citizens will face up to the fact that the Negro does not now have equal opportunities; that he is morally and legally entitled to progress more rapidly, and that a full, good-faith effort should be made forthwith to help him move forward in the improvement of all his standards.

The Negro also must contribute by his own attitude. In the first place, he should realize that he must merit and deserve whatever place he achieves in a community. He should strive to be wanted. He should strive to avoid being resented.

To be practical about it, compulsion and ignorant interference by those without a background for understanding now only generate resistance, resistance develops hate, and this defeats the Negro's own purpose. Mutual respect and confidence on the part of both races are essential.

It is folly for anyone to expect judicial dictation to compel social adjustments. The hearts and minds of people are not changed by the mere declaration of a principle. Despite the

Court's great power, the hearts and minds of the people are beyond its reach and control.

And I speak not of hearts and minds filled with a sense of racial superiority or prejudice, as some would believe. These are not the attitudes of most of us.

We are, however, dealing with emotions traceable to issues of such depth that they produced a war within the lives of some still living. We are dealing with social habits which have endured in the daily lives of millions. We are dealing with the realities of economic handicaps which, in the aftermath of war, were made even more difficult for us to overcome.

As I see it, we must side with truth even though now we may share her wretched crust. History requires that we not stand aside, cowardlike, waiting for the multitude to make virtue of our position.

The cause is with us now. It requires leadership now, not only from me as Governor but also from you as citizens.

Those who say we are incapable of this do not know the Southerners I know nor the South I love. . . .

The next four years will involve for Florida transitions in many fields. We must clear out roadblocks; we must do substantial remodeling to prepare for the limitless years ahead.

There must be change, and change usually comes hard. It takes tedious, often misunderstood, work. Change is always resisted by those who do not understand and by those who stand to lose special advantages they have long enjoyed. The true reasons for resistance are often cleverly camouflaged and obscured.

We may not achieve everything we seek, because my ambitions for Florida are not tailored by assurance of what can be accomplished on the first try.

But a fight for right is never lost.

We must catch the spirit of the third verse of Lowell's hymn:

"New occasions teach new duties;  
"Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
"They must upward still, and onward,  
"Who would keep abreast of Truth."

This is the call of history—a history which grows impatient. Ours is the generation in which great decisions can no longer be passed to the next. We have a State to build—a South to save—a nation to convince—and a God to serve.

## GRIFFIN: GEORGIA WILL "MAINTAIN TRADITIONS"

Following is full text of the section on segregation from the annual message of Governor Marvin Griffin to the General Assembly of Georgia, Jan. 15, 1957:

More than two and a half years have passed since the United States Supreme Court in its decision of May 17, 1954, sought to usurp from State and local governments the administration of school affairs.

The effect of this unconstitutional and unlawful decree has not been felt in Georgia as yet.

That fact is no mere accident.

The determined and co-operative efforts of a dedicated people, a steadfast General Assembly and an administration committed unequivocally toward preservation of our cherished institutions—all of these, working in concert, have stemmed the tide,

Never before in our history has it been so necessary for our people to work in complete unity to present a solid front to the threats that assail us from many sides.

No matter what any court may rule, the Constitution of the United States and the crystallized public sentiment of an overwhelming majority of the people remain "the law of the land."

We are going to protect both our white and colored citizens in Georgia from mob violence, abuse and unbridled intimidation from whatever source it may come.

We are going to do this by maintaining Georgia's sacred heritages and traditions.

Marvin Griffin long ago took his stand.

As long as I am your Governor, there will be no breakdown in the pattern of segregation in this State. (END)