

A Guide to the Research Materials Regarding Decision to Replace Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg, VA, 1938-1971

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A Collection in the Thomas Balch Library M 073, OMB 012

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Descriptive Summary

Collection number

M 073, OMB 012

Language

English

Abstract

This collection contains extensive material about Frederick Douglass Elementary School in Leesburg, Virginia, but its scope goes far beyond this one school to questions of equality of educational opportunities in Loudoun County. The collection begins with correspondence concerning segregation and inequality in the public schools, proceeds to reactions to decisions requiring racial integration in the schools, and ends with five folders of materials concerning the construction of Douglass Elementary School.

Creator

Loudoun County Public Schools

Repository

Thomas Balch Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection open for research.

Use Restrictions

No physical characteristics affect use of this material.

Acquisition Information

Loudoun County Public Schools

Processing Information

Rebecca K. Ottinger, 26 March 2012

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Accruals

2010.0285, 2010.0307

Alternative Form Available

None

Adjunct Descriptive Data

Separated Material

None

Related Material

Kimberly A. Snyder. *Phase I Archeological Investigations of the +/- 9.28 Acre Douglass Support Center Property, Leesburg, VA*. Gainesville, VA: Thunderbird Archeology, 2010. V REF 975.528 SNY; Evelyn D. Causey and Julia Claypool. *Desegregation in Loudoun County Public Schools, 1954-1970*. Washington, DC: History Matters, 2010. V REF 379.263 CAU

Bibliography

Desegregation in Loudoun County Public Schools, 1954-1970

Howard-O'Brien, Sara. Land Management Supervisor, Loudoun County Public Schools, Department of Planning and Legislative Services, personal communication, Rebecca Ottinger, 23 March 2012.

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Phase I Archeological Investigations of the +/- 9.28 Acre Douglass Support Center Property, Leesburg, VA

Other Finding Aid

None

Technical Requirements

None

Historical Information

The Frederick Douglass Elementary School (hereinafter Douglass Elementary) building in Leesburg, Virginia, was constructed in 1958 as a segregated school and continued to be used as an elementary school for African American students until 1968. Although the US Supreme Court ruled in 1958 that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, Loudoun County's schools, operating on a "freedom of choice" plan, continued to be largely segregated. In 1967 the US District Court ordered Loudoun County to use geographical attendance zones to determine pupil placement and required the county to integrate school faculty, staff, and buses by the 1968 school year. From 1968 to 1982 Douglass Elementary was a racially integrated elementary school, following which (1982-2001) the building was used for pre-school, Head Start, and special education classes as well as a warehouse facility and support staff location. After that time it was no longer used for classes, serving instead as space for various school board offices. When Loudoun County Public Schools began to explore the desirability of demolishing the Douglass Elementary building and constructing a new elementary school on that site, an archeological study and a study of the school's history and architectural significance were undertaken. Loudoun County Public Schools engaged Thunderbird Archeology and History Matters, LLC to prepare a Phase I archaeological investigation and a historical review of the school for the purpose of preserving the history and commemorating the original school as a part of the new school.

Two firms completed two reports, both of which are cataloged and available in Thomas Balch Library's general collection. *Phase I Archeological Investigations of the +/- 9.28 Acre Douglass Support Center Property, Leesburg, VA*, dated 2010, by Kimberly A. Snyder of Thunderbird Archeology concluded the building was not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and could be demolished and replaced. The report by History Matters, LLC, dated April 30, 2010, titled *Desegregation in Loudoun County Public Schools, 1954-1970*, documented the school's history in the context of state and national decisions regarding integration. This study expanded into an investigation of the issues and concerns of the African American community in Loudoun County beginning in the 1930s, not only in regard to Douglass Elementary School, but to equality of educational facilities and experiences of black students, racial segregation in the public school system, and concerns about the equal treatment of African American teachers in the system.

Upon completion of the research, Loudoun County Public Schools contacted the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library. A number of concerned citizens opposed the demolition of the school, citing the building's historical significance to the African American community. In response to this concern, Loudoun County Public Schools and the Black History Committee embarked on a joint project to preserve the history and establish a permanent exhibit of the former school in the new school.

Scope and Content

This collection contains extensive material about Frederick Douglass Elementary School in Leesburg, Virginia, but its scope goes far beyond this one school to questions of equality of educational opportunities in Loudoun County. The collection retains the order in which it was received by the library. It begins with correspondence concerning segregation and inequality in the public schools, proceeds to reactions to decisions requiring racial integration in the schools, and ends with five folders of materials concerning the construction of Douglass Elementary School.

The collection contains extensive copies of minutes of Loudoun County School Board as they relate to concerns of equality and racial segregation of students and teachers. These minutes cover numerous School Board meetings from 1938 to 1971. Also included are letters, petitions, and newspaper articles regarding conditions in African American schools, inequality of salaries between African American and white teachers, and other concerns of the African American community in regard to public education. Many items document reactions to the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* on May 17, 1954.

There is also an extensive file of information containing legal and construction specifications (1957-1958), beginning with the purchase of land and architectural renderings to furnishing and final inspection of the original Douglass Elementary.

Arrangement

Folder

Contents List

Box 1

Folder 1: Lists of teachers and students at Douglass Elementary School, 1957-1969

Folder 2: Minutes of Loudoun County School Board, 1938-1944

Folder 3: Minutes of Loudoun County School Board, 1944-1951

Folder 4: Minutes of Loudoun County School Board, 1951-1956

Folder 5: Minutes of Loudoun County School Board, 1956-1963

Folder 6: Minutes of Loudoun County School Board, 1964-1971

Container OMB 012 (box)

Folder 1: Architectural drawings for Douglass Elementary School and correspondence, 1957

Folder 2: Architectural drawings and specifications concerning furniture and fixtures of Douglass Elementary School building, 1958

Folder 3: Construction materials for Douglass Elementary School, correspondence and bills, 1957-1958

Folder 4: Final inspections of Douglass Elementary School building, correspondence, 1958-1959

Folder 5: Letters, petitions, newspaper articles regarding inequality of segregated schools in Loudoun County; Deed for property on which to build Douglass High School in Leesburg, VA and correspondence regarding this gift, 1940-1953

Folder 6: Loudoun County Institute for Colored Teachers, 1921; 1927-1932

Folder 7: Reactions to the decision of the US Supreme Court in Brown vs. The Board of Education, 1955-1956

Folder 8: Shared experiences of the faculty of Douglass High School, "A Brief History of Loudoun County Schools" from Annual Report of LCPS, 2001-2002

Folder 9: Topographical survey and correspondence concerning construction of Douglass Elementary School building, 1956-1957