Racism in Public Education

This week we are pleased to be joined by Ann Williams Wedaman and Linda Ferdig-Riley. Ms. Wedaman was a member of the student body at Central High School, Little Rock Arkansas when it was desegregated with the aid of federal troops in 1957. She was recognized in 2016 as an “unsung hero” by the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes for befriending Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Black students who came to be known as the Little Rock Nine. Linda Ferdig-Riley is a retired educator and administrator who worked for over 30 years in the San Jose Unified School District, where minority enrollment is 76% of the student body. Beginning in the 1970's the school district faced a desegregation suit that ultimately was appealed to the Supreme Court. Ms. Ferdig-Riley was recognized with the Martin Luther King Award for her advocacy of Black students.

Class Assignment

Both assignments relate to specific school districts, but with broad-ranging implications for all districts:


In addition, if you have time, please read the following reference to gain vital information about how “racial inequity is baked into the nation’s education system:


Goal for Class

The goal for the class is to learn about the history of racism in the public education system as well as desegregate efforts following the Supreme Court ruling in the 1954 Brown v Board of Education.
**Action Items**

- Please read this short piece and go to “Be Part of the Solution” and sign the petition or start a conversation or consider one of the other suggestions here. “How Systemic Racism Infiltrates Education.” [https://www.benjerry.com/whats-new/2017/11/systemic-racism-education](https://www.benjerry.com/whats-new/2017/11/systemic-racism-education)


- At our class on October 9th, Elise Packard mentioned tutoring in our local school. She indicated that we could volunteer by contacting saroybl@sfps.k12.nm.us or lgheffron@gmail.com.

**Additional Resources**


**Books about the Little Rock Crisis**


• *Crisis at Central High: Little Rock 1957-58*. Elizabeth Hucaby. Louisiana State University Press. 1980. *Author was assistant principal at LRCHS during the Crisis.*


• *Breaking the Silence: Little Rock’s Women’s Emergency Committee to Open our Schools. 1958-1963*. Sara Alderman Murphy. University of Arkansas Press. 1997. *Author was a member of the WEC, an organization formed to reopen the four Little Rock high schools after their closures in 1958.*