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January 2004

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Racial Terror & the Attempt to Stop the Desegregation of Lamar State College of Technology

A presentation to the Beaumont History Conference, January 10, 2004

The desegregation of Lamar State College of Technology in Beaumont was marked by racial terror. The clash at Lamar climaxed a protracted antidiscrimination campaign that developed during the Second World War, escalated in 1949 when Lamar grew from a locally supported junior college to a state-supported senior college, and turned into a court battle in the wake of the victorious 1950 Supreme Court decision in *Sweatt* v. *Painter* which opened certain graduate and professional school programs at the University of Texas to African Americans. While in the book *Advancing Democracy* my focus is on documenting Lamar's desegregation and situating the Beaumont-based struggle for access and equity in higher education in a larger statewide and national context, in today's presentation I will discuss one particular aspect in greater detail. Following the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, racial terror was deployed in response to efforts to desegregate postsecondary institutions in various parts of Texas. Terrorist activity and mob violence was successful in blocking efforts in Kilgore and Texarkana, as well as in stemming the organization of lawsuits in other areas, particularly in East Texas. Beaumont, however, was a different story altogether.

Following the Spindletop discovery, as historian Joe Pratt has well-documented, industrial capitalists introduced a mode of production that began to adapt preexisting productive relations and transform them into a distinctive set of social relations that redefined Southeast Texas as a petrochemical refining region. The process of adaptation and transformation was a fluid and contested process from the very beginning. At the heart of the social side of this process was crucial nexus of ideas and practices about race, place, gender, and socioeconomic class concerns. Interestingly, Lamar from its creation in 1923 as South Park Junior College, the

second junior college established in the state, was a sort of weather vane blowing in the wind pointing out the direction of the winds of change and a barometer gauging the resistance for and against the status quo. In one remarkable statement, South Park's first president Louis R. Pietzsch, in a speech before the Kiwanis club in June 1923, linked together the establishment of the new college, the oil industry's boom, the weakness of labor in the area, and the Beaumont branch of the Ku Klux Klan as the secret source of the city's outstanding success. "Beaumont has gained fame from its Spindletop oil field, from its open shop association, from its Ku Klux Klan, and," he said the city "is about to gain more fame because of its new junior college at South Park." Although by the end of the 1920s the Klan's fame turned to shame, the under-lying motif of violent resistance to radical change especially as it concerned the emancipation of black workers from their status as a super-oppressed and exploited strata of the working class remained in force. Moreover, throughout the 1920s and well into the 1950s, the owners and managers of the Golden Triangle's petrochemical industries continued to deploy violence, economic coercion, and some of the most brutal tactics imaginable to break strikes and break the back of the union's that, albeit in the form of segregated locals, fought for increases in wages, benefits, and quality of the working conditions. Of course, black workers also had to fight both company leadership and white workers to end discrimination in wages and job assignments as Ernest Starks Obadele points out in his recent studies. I want to note here that a detailed examination of how the violence used against the labor movement in Southeast Texas is related to the violence used against the civil rights movement in particular and black worker's oppositional culture in general is an area more than ripe for study. Diane McWhorter, whose book *Carry Me Home* won the Pulitzer prize for history last year revealed profoundly significant connections between Bull Connors and the Klansmen who bombed the 16th Street Baptist Church killing four little girls

among many other acts of racial terror and violence against the black freedom struggle in Tuscaloosa and Birmingham with the owners and managers of capital who had for decades hired terrorists to disrupt and destroy unionists in the steel and coal industries. McWhorter had a unique position from which to document this connection as a granddaughter of one of the most prominent capitalists in the area and disarmingly charming journalist with full southern belle training. Her work holds out great promise that somehow, someday we might pierce the veil of secrecy and peer inside the ugly face of race and class domination at its most economically privileged and powerful center in other locations such as Beaumont. The story I have to offer today is told from the vantage point of black and white working class sources, and official sources like the press, court papers, Board of Regents papers, and the archives of Lamar's president at the time of formal desegregation. I long for a Diane McWhorter to pop up in Southeast Texas and tell all.[i]

Black Beaumonter's Struggle for Access & Equity

While the rapid industrialization of Southeast Texas and the G. I. Bill helped to spark a tremendous increase in Lamar's enrollment figures, black veterans of World War II that returned home found extremely limited opportunities for postsecondary education or vocational training. The only institution beyond high school open for blacks, a business school, had a poor reputation and district officials sought to close it. A group of black leaders calling themselves the Negro Goodwill Council had protested to Governor Beauford Jester about the dismal educational inequality in the city and the exclusion of blacks from Lamar State College. In 1947, when a bill appeared in the legislature to change Lamar into a state-supported senior college, the council attempted to block its passage. The group's protest actions resulted in immediate action by John Gray, Lamar's president. He promised the council separate facilities, and a year later, a black

branch of Lamar called Jefferson Junior College opened with evening classes held at Charlton-Pollard High School. Dr. Harvey Johnson, principal of the black high school, welcomed the creation of a black junior college.[ii]

Black integrationists, however, gave no support to the power holders' belated attempt to equalize Jim Crow facilities, and soon after the *Sweatt* decision they made plans to kill Jim Crow at Lamar Tech. They fired their first salvo in 1952. In January, James Briscoe, a native Beaumonter and graduate of Charlton-Pollard High School, applied to Lamar. Briscoe's parents were laborers and members of the Beaumont chapter of the NAACP. They courageously supported their son's effort to prove that qualified blacks desired to attend the school and avoid the inconvenience of studying long distances from home. Briscoe, a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta since 1950, at the urging of his parents and the Beaumont NAACP, agreed to participate in the test case.[iii]

Initially, Lamar accepted Briscoe. The admissions office did not recognize from his application that he was a student at a black college in Atlanta. The school notified him that on the basis of his transcript from Morehouse, he was qualified to enroll for the spring term of 1951. On January 29, Briscoe went to Lamar with his acceptance letter in hand to register for classes. Aaron Jefferson, a grocer, charter member of the Beaumont NAACP, and a distributor and local writer for *The Informer*, accompanied Briscoe to witness the historic moment. Lamar's acting president G. A. Wimberly met with Briscoe and explained that a mistake had been made and suggested he apply to TSUN. State law, he said, created Lamar for whites only.[iv]

Briscoe prodded the NAACP for action on his case even as his parents faced economic pressure from their white employers, as well as social pressure from their black neighbors who demanded that they back off. Archie Price, Sr., both the pastor of West Tabernacle Baptist

Church where the Briscoes attended and principal of Hebert High School, opposed desegregation of the college. He warned the Briscoes that they would lose their jobs if they persisted, and with six children to support, they would be ruined. The prediction of the prominent preacher-teacher came true when the employers of Briscoe's father fired him over the race issue. Many of the Briscoe's neighbors also put pressure on the family, insisting on the premature nature of their attack on segregation and warning that white rioting as the city had experienced in 1943 would ensue. Some even ended all association with the family. At that point, key local NAACP leaders supported Briscoe's decision to relent and not file a lawsuit. They reasoned that they had gotten the attention of members of the white political economic elite and should try to allow biracial negotiations to produce the final victory.[v]

The Beaumont Chamber of Commerce organized the sixty-member United Racial Council (URC), with a white chairman and an executive committee composed of three whites and three blacks. The URC shifted focus away from the desegregation of the college onto city parks and recreational facilities. Dr. Ed Sprott, leader of the local NAACP, deemed the biracial group little more than a learning experience: "For their first act, they picked two parks without swimming pools for desegregation, got the council's approval and also that of the 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 URC never met again."[vi]

The impossibility of a negotiated path to desegregation of Beaumont's public accommodations and institutions became clear to black activists in the course of a suit, *Fayson* v.

Beard, to open the city's golf course and park facilities. With a victory in that case in 1955, as well as in court-ordered actions in higher education from UT in 1950 to Midwestern, TWC, and NTSC, after 1954, Sprott, Octave Hebert, and other branch leaders returned to the NAACP's method of direct attack and successfully recruited seven black students to seek admission to Lamar. In the summer of 1955, two 1948 Beaumont graduates, Martin High's Versie Jackson, who went on to attend Texas Southern for a year, and Charlton-Pollard's Henry Cooper, Jr., who had studied three years at TSU, led the group. The branch's education committee then wrote Lamar president Floren Lee McDonald and encouraged him to correct the "ser[i]ous injustice" of restricting attendance on the basis of "race." In reply, Lamar's regents granted the committee a hearing at its 23 August 1955 meeting.[vii]

News that the regents had plans to take up "the problem" of admitting black students quickly set off white resistance. On August 19, a group of forty-seven whites, mainly workers at Magnolia Petroleum Company and residents of South Park, a heavily working class neighborhood with a reputation for hostility toward black residents in the area, signed a letter opposing any attempt to desegregate Lamar. Addressed to the regents, it stated: "We, many of whom are students at Lamar Tech, and all citizens of Jefferson County Texas, do hereby appeal to you to rule against any integration of the white and colored races at Lamar State College of Technology. We believe in equal but separate educational facilities and we think that the NAACP is trying to usurp the power of the state of Texas." Their appeal mixed the idea of racial hierarchy and separation with the old state's rights argument.[viii]

A few days later, at 1:30 the morning of the regents' meeting on the "Lamar Negro Issue," a night watchman discovered a blazing fifteen-by-eight-foot cross laid out on the ground leaving an imprint burned into the grass south of the main entrance to the campus. Proceeding

with the business at hand, the regents voted to deny admission to the seven black students. The regents declared that the state legislature created the school in 1949 for "whites only," and for whites only it would remain. They added, that "an unprecedented growth in student population" did not permit Lamar to accommodate any additional student load. The regents pledged to reconsider the matter after it had time to take into future plans the additional student load black admissions might create. The board's delaying tactics left the NAACP no other option but to resort to legal action.[ix]

When *Jackson* v. *McDonald*, as the suit to open the college was styled, came before Judge Lamar Cecil, the students and their lawyers had good reason to expect he would rule in their favor. Cecil, appointed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954 to a newly created judgeship for the Eastern district, had recently opened the city's parks and golf course to blacks, despite virulent white opposition. The Beaumont native, graduated from Rice Institute and the UT School of Law, and made ties to prominent Texas Republicans like former U.S. Representative Ben Guill and multimillionaire oilman H. L. Hunt. The relatively isolated minority party he belonged to shaped the views he held, and through it came his political debts. For his federal appointment he owed nothing to the socially conservative Democrats he lived among. Also, Cecil had never held a state or local judgeship or political office prior to his appointment. Such characteristics put him among federal judges of the moderate-to-integrationist type.[x]

Cecil did not hide his opinion on the desegregation issue from either side in the Lamar lawsuit. He wanted the regents and the students to reach an agreement and release him from having to issue a court order. On 14 March 1956, local NAACP attorneys Elmo Willard and Theodore Johns, and Southwest regional counsel Tate, filed a complaint on behalf of the

students. The attorney general's office filed its answer to the plaintiff's charges on April 5, and offered no new defense whatsoever. Shepperd himself argued that Lamar's statutory language established it for whites only. Also, the college was overcrowded and had made no plans for a sudden influx of Negroes. If the judge forced Lamar to admit blacks, he warned, as Price Daniel had six years before in the *Sweatt* case, of gloom and doom: "It is not well for turmoil and discontent to be aroused in a community nor between the races residing there by a too hasty forcing of a claimed right of two puppets dangled before this court by the operators of a national racial organization." Taking a dig at Marshall and NAACP leadership, Shepperd added that "a liberty of choice in this regard should not be abolished just to appease the inordinate desires of those officers in certain negro organizations to chalk up a record of 'victories.'"[xi] Judge Cecil was openly "critical" of the state's answer. In May, the NAACP offered to drop its suit and agree that the students would waive enrollment in the summer session if the college would voluntarily desegregate in September. Lamar's board knew it had lost but refused this settlement. Instead, it asked the attorney general's office to get Cecil to render his decision as early as possible.[xii]

On 30 July 1956, Lamar's Jim Crow admissions policy received its death blow. After brief testimony from Versie Jackson and Lamar's president, Cecil took only a few minutes before announcing his decision that qualified blacks had a right to become students at Lamar. He stated that the "separate but equal" doctrine was no longer in effect "whether we like it or not," and that he would "follow the Supreme Court" as long as he sat on the federal bench. Lamar officials, however, still refused to accept that the unconstitutionality of its "white youth" only provision. They sought a stay of execution of Cecil's order, citing the need for time to solve local implementation problems. Although blacks had already enrolled, on September 25, Shepperd's

office filed both a notice of appeal and a motion for Cecil's judgment to be suspended pending Fifth Circuit appellate court action.[xiii]

The regents' deep-seated and publicly stated belief in segregation, their legal efforts, and delaying tactics did not deter white extremists but may have encouraged their activities. On August 1, six "hooded figures" at 9:00 p.m., set ablaze a twelve-foot-tall gasoline-soaked wooden cross. Police Chief Jim Mulligan suspected that Lamar students erected the flaming cross. On August 11, police found two more crosses burning in the vicinity of Lamar, one near the Baptist Student Center, and blamed them on "youthful pranksters." At the same time less youthful white militants unleashed a campaign of terrorism against local black activists. Attorneys Theodore Johns and Elmo Willard, for example, received death threats and suffered damage to their offices. Other NAACP members also encountered cross-burnings, bombings, and shootings into their homes.

Frances Lightfoot, who ran for mayor of Beaumont in 1956 and got the most votes in the first election and lost the runoff by a narrow margin, represented the mood in Southeast Texas of white hatred against blacks, especially those who advocated racial equality. "We don't like . . . the mulatto NAACP leader in town" she told an undercover agent of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in speaking of Ed Sprott. "He's got a mansion on the outskirts of niggertown," she added; "somebody has tossed rocks at his windows. He may be leaving town." The year of Lamar's desegregation, 1956, represented a watershed event for East Texas, but it occurred at no small cost.[xiv]

On September 18, a "committee" endorsing the "continued segregation of the races" met with McDonald and submitted a statement urging officials to "not permit Negroes to enroll in Lamar Tech for the September, 1956 term." Led by Charles Howell, future president of the

Beaumont Citizens' Council, the group asked the board to deny black admission pending the resolution of the appeal of Judge Cecil's decision and to maintain segregation even in defiance of the federal court order. As evidence that such a policy would be in step with the desires of most Texans, the committee pointed to the "overwhelming vote" in July's Democratic Primary for a referendum opposing the "mixing of the races in any tax-supported school." McDonald replied that the college was doing everything it could to uphold segregation. After his meeting with the group, he wrote regent W. R. Smith and informed him of "a little effort on the part of out-siders [sic] to interfere, but up to now I have everything under good control."[xv]

Massive white resistance to desegregation lacked organization and leadership with a clear-minded, strategic sense of the battle. Politically unsophisticated, the race militants engaged half-heartedly in relatively passive activities such as visiting college officials and opinion-makers, gathering signatures on petitions, and writing letters. Their impulse tended toward violent resistance. They wished to drive terror into the hearts of blacks and thereby elicit the cooperation of white power holders. Walking the border between violent and massive resistance tactics and doing neither fully, the opponents of desegregation reduced their effectiveness. A few days after Howell's group met with McDonald, another group appeared to protest the "integration of the races" at Lamar and had a petition with 160 signatures, mostly of people from the small, all-white town of Vidor, about ten miles east of the campus. On September 25, the second day of classes, Vidorian Eleanor Parker gave the petition to McDonald. It ended with an ominous warning: "Please remember what happened in our city back in 1943." The petition of the Vidor citizens, who apparently had no problem claiming Beaumont as "our city," represented a none too subtle threat that an attempt to end segregation at the college would ignite a bloody riot.[xvi]

Lamar's governing board did not support violent resistance to desegregation, but it also did nothing to discourage massive resistance. W. R. Smith explained in a letter to another board member: "I am not sure whether we should or not consider the possibility of violence such as occurred at the University of Alabama. I am aware of the bloody riots between the two races. While I am absolutely opposed to violence in any form, I would hate to be a party to anything that might bring it about." Smith gave as a rationale for going slowly that "if we proceed with too much speed we may do just this. The possibility of such trouble may require us to be a little more deliberate than otherwise." His reading of the Alabama episode, however, may not have been accurate or truthful.[xvii]

Once the board understood the federal courts would demand an immediate end to segregation at the college, it still refused to prepare whites for the inevitable. It chose instead to continue to present itself as fighting what more than a dozen senior and junior colleges in Texas had already done. If it had spent more time trying to prepare the region for desegregation, Lamar officials might have stemmed some of the turbulence that marred the college's transition to desegregation.[xviii]

Official figures released on October 1, in the second week of school, revealed that a total of twenty-six blacks had been accepted in various departments of the college as part of a record enrollment of 5,455 students. Lamar's first black students included Harriot Anderson, Freddie Mae Bell, Betty Jean Booker, Alfred Briscoe, III, Mattie Lee Cobb, Lonnie Flanagan, Winona Frank, Edward Frank, Jr., Versie Jackson, Alice Jefferson, Theodore Johns, Jr., Herbert Joseph, Lillie Mae Joseph, Lexsee Nixon, Jr., Alvin Randolph, Lillian M. Rhodes, Jimmie Rice, Elnora Riggs, Robert Sampia, Clarence Sams, Hazel Thibodeaux, Vara Vincent, and Adam Wade. Most of them had attended college before and a few with official connections to the NAACP (like

Johns), entered the college merely to make certain that the legal victory had not been in vain.[xix] As black students entered Lamar, the massive resistance movement desperately tried to create a lawless, riotous condition. McDonald requested the help of the Sheriff and the Chief of Police in averting "any un-necessary [sic] incidents." He also met with student leaders and won their support for peaceful desegregation of the college. The president's organization of a united front of faculty, staff, and students helped keep white extremism from gaining a foothold on the campus once the semester began.[xx]

The first day of class pickets appeared in front of most of the eleven gates that allowed entrance to the campus. Picketers also came and removed black students from classrooms and caused the police to remove others as a precautionary measure. The picketers were abusive and quickly alienated the majority of the faculty and student body. Unable to attract enough support to close the campus or keep out all of the black students, the picketers became openly hostile, insulting and jeering whites who entered the campus. History professor Ralph Wooster recalled how they referred to him and his colleagues as "scabs," and threw things at one staff member who escorted a black student onto the campus. The picketers, he remembered, "seemed by their appearance to be lower-white middle class, because they were not very well clad; in fact . . . one of the ladies didn't even have shoes on. These were real hillbilly types."[xxi]

Into the second week of the semester the Beaumont hillbillies, as McDonald put it, "got pretty rough." Picketers began making an attempt to stop everyone who entered the campus parking lots or driveways. The president reacted by having signs posted at all entrances prohibiting "loafing," but police officers and two Texas Rangers he "quietly arranged" to come to Lamar refused to enforce the law banning loiterers from campus property. Consequently, a number of serious incidents took place. The picketers, McDonald reported in a newsletter his

office circulated during the crisis, "beat up one negro while a police officer stood idly by. This happened on one of my parking lots. They broke a taxi cab's window as it delivered a negro student and later the negro driver was found to have a pistol in his car." Noting the biased and unprofessional policing of the campus, McDonald observed that "by Thursday it was obvious that the law enforcement agencies were not going to discontinue the insulting of any teachers and students, and I decided that public opinion was sufficiently crystalized [sic] in my behalf to go on the offensive. The Editors of the Beaumont papers agreed to help me and I blasted away at the lack of law and order in Beaumont in front page headlines." The negative publicity, he averred, "brought the Mayor over to my side and he called in the Police Chief and told him to clear the pickets from the area. At 1:00 p.m. on Thursday the police drove about 50 picketers from our eleven entrances to the campus, arresting one. At 6:00 the pickets were back and the police again drove them from the campus, arresting three including Mrs. A. W. Lightfoot, one of the ring leaders."[xxii]

On Friday, October 5, the day after the arrests, Lamar operated without pickets for the first time since classes had started. That night, however, crosses were burned on both the Lamar campus and in front of City Hall. Mayor Cokinos received numerous death threats and had to have twenty-four hour police protection after bombs were exploded at the church he attended and, in an apparent mistake, at the house directly behind his. Attorneys Johns and Willard, Ed Sprott, Octave Herbert, and other NAACP leaders also experienced acts of terrorism.[xxiii] That next week the picketing at Lamar resumed and continued peacefully for a week. On October 15, however, Mrs. H. T. Mercer of Vidor informed the media that her group had chosen permanently to end the picketing in order to concentrate on the organizing of a rally in Beaumont's Sportatorium that ACCT President Basil Masters would keynote. Finally admitting defeat,

Mercer revealed the strategy behind the picket movement in a statement to the *Beaumont Journal*: "Our one and only purpose in picketing Lamar Tech . . . was to show public disapproval and aversion to having negroes [sic] forced into our all-white schools, which is against the laws of Texas, the laws of God, and the laws of personal morality and personal freedom. When we dared voice our protest to Dr. McDonald, and our picketing of the college, we had faint hopes that the people of Beaumont, or a portion of its white population, would become conscious of their white blood and the danger threatening their children (and mine), and awaken to what was happening." Mercer's statement also indicates a mood of resignation that whites had become less vigilant in defense of white supremacy.[xxiv]

The council rally drew a crowd of over six hundred, many of whom paid one dollar to become a member of the new Beaumont Citizens' Council. Not one of the women who led the picket movement at Lamar won election to any of the group's twenty leadership positions. Only men, many of them the husbands of these women, took office.[xxv]

The demise of segregation at Lamar involved not only a racial conflict, but also a "class cleavage." In 1956, "the falling common whites," in Beaumont's factories, refineries, and shipyards, reacted to what they saw as an attack on their economic status and the erosion of the social contract that guaranteed for all classes of whites their incontrovertible superiority over blacks. Bourgeois whites, like the Lamar regents, also loathed the assault on "Southern customs" that *Jackson* v. *McDonald* posed, but for their class, the imperative goal of law and order, forced them to permit a revision of the region's social relations. Both bourgeois and working-class whites, however, feared that racially mixed education would lead to miscegenation. Frances Lightfoot explained the attitude of many Southeast Texas whites when she said, "We like 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." When she parroted Masters' and warned that "if the white race doesn't rise up, we'll have a nation of mongrels in two generations," she spoke not only for many white "working folks," but possibly for bankers like John Gray, lawyers like W. R. Smith and J. B. Morris, and businessmen like Otho Plummer. In her view "cafe society" whites, the "froth" of the city, deeply opposed desegregation but were spineless. The regents fought it in the courtroom, but for Lightfoot, when a critical sector of Beaumont's affluent whites refused to help foment a crisis in which Shivers would authorize Texas Rangers to remove black students from Lamar as a public safety measure, their reluctance to take part in massive resistance amounted to a betrayal and a refusal to "take a stand." She explained to Breed: "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. [Lightfoot], 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.'" Lightfoot resented upper-class white reluctance to openly fight to preserve Jim Crow. Her comments and role demand greater scrutiny.[xxvi]

Amid such violent, torn and confused conditions on campus and across the city, Lamar's black students tried to attend classes. Lonnie Flanagan's determination to enter the college met a severe test. At about 9:00 a.m. on October 4, Flanagan crouched down out of sight in the backseat of his stepfather's taxicab, while Clarence Mason, a forty-two year old driver for Flanagan Taxi Company, drove in a circle near Lamar's rear entrance, until a propitious moment arose for Flanagan to run from the car through Lamar's rear gates to his class. Flanagan had successfully used this method the day before, but now he encountered sentries on the back gates. Passing near an entrance, Tom W. Sanford, a thirty-eight year old Beaumont fence salesman, ran

out in front of the cab and motioned to Mason to stop the car. Mason slowed down and then tried to speed away when Sanford yelled to other picketers, "He's got a nigger in the back." Sanford dropped his placard, leaned into the car, and made a grab for the steering wheel trying to stop the car. As Mason dragged Sanford the distance of a "city block," he drew his pistol and pointed it at the white man's head. Sanford still refused to let go of the car. He later said, "I told him to go ahead and shoot, but he didn't. He started beating my hands with the gun." Mason finally stopped the car when a police vehicle with two of the fifty officers that patrolled the campus pulled in front of his car. The officers quickly took Mason, Flanagan, and Sanford away from the scene to police headquarters for questioning. Ranger Captain Johnny Klevenhagen kept Mason for special interrogation. The police released Flanagan from jail after he gave them a statement. His brother, Mansfield Flanagan, a twenty-one year old cab driver, had his rear window smashed after dropping off a black student minutes before the incident with Sanford. Police did not charge any of the white picketers for destroying Flanagan's window, and the picketers did not press charges against him for allegedly "nearly hitting" two of their ranks.[xxvii] In another brush with violence, Alvin Randolph recalled driving along Port Arthur Road in front of Lamar's main entrance and seeing several white female picketers chasing Lillie Mae Joseph into the road. She avoided a stoning, beating, or worse, only because Randolph stopped his car for her and drove her to safety.[xxviii] Such racial terror was part of a complex set of public narratives and meta-narratives of race, social control, a certain imagined South, and gender. The history of Beaumont must grapple with the roots and the repercussions of this terror. Its genealogy and a basic conceptual narrative that articulates the key political and infrapolitical meanings of terrorism to life in the region must be written. Such a project is not about guilt, it is about guts—honoring the people who had the guts to defy terror to advance democracy.

NOTES

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i. On the development of Lamar, see Ray Asbury, *The South Park Story* (Fort Worth: Evans Press, 1972), 41-42; and C. Robert Kemble, "Lamar in Perspective," *Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*, 19 (Nov. 1983): 24, 32. On the connection between Lamar and white supremacy, see Thomas E. Kroutter, "The Ku Klux Klan in Jefferson County, Texas, 1921-1924" (M.A. thesis, Lamar University, 1972), 160; and for the Louis R. Pietzch quotation, see "Kiwanis Hears about College," *Beaumont Journal*, 23 June 1923.

ii. See Nancy Dailey, "History of the Beaumont, Texas Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1918-1970" (M.A. thesis, Lamar University, 1971), 46; Robert B. Lee, "Black Schools Here Date Back More Than 100 Years," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 9 November 1980; and "Efforts Pushed to Continue Operation of Negro College Now Part of Lamar Setup," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 10 August 1951.

iii. Kirkland C. Jones, "Writer Enumerates LU's Black History," *University Press*, Lamar University Sixtieth Anniversary Supplement, 16 September 1983, p. 29. Also, Charlton-Pollard's principal, Harvey Johnson, wrote a confidential letter to John Gray in support of Briscoe's application to Lamar, see Lola Johnson interview. Edna Briscoe interviewed by author, 3 August 1989, tape in author's possession.

iv. "Negro Refused Admittance to Lamar College," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 30 January 1951. Michael L. Gillette, "The NAACP in Texas, 1937-1957," (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1984), 237, erroneously states that Briscoe's application occurred in 1952.

v. Charles E. Sherman to Thurgood Marshall, 26 March 1952, Texas v. NAACP Papers; and Mrs. T. C. Brackeen to James R. Briscoe, 1 March 1952; both in Texas v. NAACP Papers. See also Briscoe interview.

vi. Edward Sprott quoted in Warren Breed, *Beaumont, Texas: College Desegregation without Popular Support*, Field Reports on Desegregation in the South (New York: B'nai B'rith, 1957[?]), 5. The legal action he spoke of was an NAACP lawsuit to open the city's golf course and other park facilities to blacks, *Fayson* v. *Beard*, embarked upon in 1954. The case came before Judge Lamar Cecil of the U.S. District Court of the Fifth Circuit on 7 September 1955. His ruling that Booker T. Fayson and all members of his race had to be granted "the free and unrestricted use and enjoyment of Central and Tyrrell Parks in the City of Beaumont," buoyed the local NAACP branch's confidence in suing for the desegregation of Lamar.

vii. Juanita Jackson and Jean Wallace, *A Directory of Black Businesses, Churches, Clubs, and Organizations in Beaumont, Texas* (Beaumont Public Library, 1981), n.p., in author's possession; Theodore Johns interviewed by author, 16 June 1989, tape in author's possession; and "Seven Negroes Apply for Admission to Lamar Tech," *Beaumont Journal*, 28 July, 1955. "Lamar Negro Issue Is Left Up to Regents," *Beaumont Journal*, 1 August, 1955. By the time Tate actually filed the suit only two students actually became plaintiffs: Versie Jackson and James Anthony Cormier.

viii. Letter from L. F. Chester, et al, to Lamar Board of Regents, 19 August 1955, McDonald Papers, John and Mary Gray Library, Lamar University (Beaumont, Texas). Magnolia Refinery welders, clerks, office managers, and other workers comprise the majority of list of names attached to this letter. The first signer, however, L. F. Chester, was an attorney for First Federal Savings and Loan.

ix. "Lamar Tech Hasn't Room for Negroes, Regents Announce," *Baytown Sun*, 24 August 1955; and "Desegregation Foes Suspected: Cross Discovered Blazing on Campus at Lamar Tech," *Beaumont Journal*, 23 August 1955. A week after the cross-burning at Lamar, Klansters would fire up a cross at North Texas State College. It is interesting to wonder whether the two incidents were related in any way. Quotations are from Board of Regents, *Resolution*, Lamar State College of Technology, 23 August 1955. For the enabling legislation that created Lamar as "a co-educational institution of higher learning for the white youth of this State," see "Lamar State College of Technology: Chapter 403: H. B. No. 52," in *General and Special Laws of the State of Texas* (Acts 1949, 51st Legislature), 751-54. The "white youth" clause was not repealed until 1971.

x. Mary Cecil, telephone interview with author, 14 July 1989. See also, Major T. Bell, "Lamar Cecil—The Days that Were His," *Texas Gulf Historical and Biographical Record*, 12 (Nov. 1972): 24. For a study that describes the characteristics of federal judges based on a quantitative study of the judicial behavior of twenty-eight districts in eleven states of the traditional South from May 1954 to October 1962, see Kenneth N. Vines, "Federal District Judges and Race Relations Cases in the South," *Journal of Politics* 26 (1964): 337-57. The pioneer work along this line is Jack W. Peltason, *Fifty-Eight Lonely Men: Southern Federal Court Judges and School Desegregation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961).

xi. From "Defendants' Reply to Complaint," *Jackson* v. *McDonald*, quoted in Dailey, "History of the Beaumont, Texas Chapter of the NAACP," 61. On John Ben Shepperd's "pepper and salt" idea, see "Legal Action," *SSN*, May 1956, p. 12.

xii. Jim Krupnick, "Negro Admission to Lamar is Upheld," *Beaumont Journal*, 30 July 1956; "Lamar Tech Appeal on Negroes Dismissed," *Beaumont Journal*, 21 May 1957. Letter from J. B. Morris to Horace Wimberly, McDonald Papers. In "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel," May 1956, NAACP Papers; the lawyer expressed himself as surprised to find present at a pre-trial hearing before Cecil on May 4, "some two-hundred-odd high school and college students with teachers and. . . the entire Board of Regents of the college." He reported that "as a public demonstration for the benefit of the audience," the judge had Theodore Johns, Elmo Willard, and himself argue the merits of his case. However, in rebuttal, the state-paid lawyers for "the defendants completely avoided the fact issues and went off on a wild goose chase in the field of irrelevance and pure viciousness."

xiii. Quotations from Krupnick, "Negro Admission." For a summary of Cecil's ruling, see "Report of U. Simpson Tate, Regional Counsel," June and July 1956, NAACP Papers; on the state's appeal, see "State Will File Lamar Tech Appeal on Negroes," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 26 September 1956. Lamar officials' insistence that every legal effort step be taken to maintain segregation must ultimately be taken as reflective of their desire to state to themselves, to a few bourgeois class observers, and to posterity, that they fully opposed desegregation. On a legal level their case and subsequent appeals had no merit at all, did not delay the process, and had no appreciable influence on their white working-class compatriots who had no use for symbolic gestures or statements for the record. See "Move to Suspend Integration at Lamar Denied," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 30 October 1956, on Judge Cecil's refusal of a motion to suspend execution of his order. On the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals' 21 May 1957, affirmance of Cecil's desegregation order, see "Lamar Is a Major Force in Economy," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 11 June 1989.

xiv. "Blazing Cross Found Burning at Lamar Tech," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 2 August 1956. "At Lamar: Police Eye Students in Cross-Burning," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 2 August 1956. "Burning Crosses Believed Work of Pranksters," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 12 August 1956. Theodore Johns interview. Breed, "College Desegregation," 16, the "note" in parentheses is Breed's. He also used letters in place of names in the interview, but Lightfoot is undoubtedly speaking of Sprott.

xv. Statement submitted by Charles A. Howell to F. L. McDonald and the Board of Regents, 18 September 1956. Letter from F. L. McDonald to W. R. Smith, 18 September 1956. McDonald may have expressed some measure of class bias in calling the members of Howell's group "out-siders." As Howell, Gertrude Carruth, and the two other women that composed the committee all resided in Beaumont, they must have been external to Lamar in that they did not have children attending the college or appeared to not be very educated, urbane, or middle class. On the pro-segregation referendum questions voted on in the July 28 party primary, see "Texans Approve 3 Issues," *SSN*, August 1956, p. 14. Early returns reported the vote as 782,693 for continued school segregation to 227,479 against. The other questions, approving interposition against "federal encroachment on state authority" and strengthening laws against interracial marriages, also won at the polls by a near four-to-one margin. Citizens' Council backer, Longview oilman Robert Cargill's Texas Referendum Committee sponsored the proposals.

xvi. "State Will File Lamar Tech Appeal," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 26 September 1956. Petition to the President and Board of Regents (undated), Lamar State College of Technology, McDonald Papers.

xvii. Letter from W. R. Smith to J. B. Morris, 30 March 1956, McDonald Papers.

xviii. Robert Lasch, "Along the Border," in *With All Deliberate Speed*, ed. by Don Shoemaker (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 61-63; Wallace Westfeldt, "Communities in Strife," also in ibid., 53, noted that advanced warning "does have an affect, but it can be taken either way."

xix. "State Will File Lamar Tech Appeal on Negroes," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 26 September 1956. Sim Myers, "Picketers Escort Negro Students from Lamar," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 2 October 1956; "5,455 Students Register at Lamar for All-Time High," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 2 October 1956. F. L. McDonald, "Progress Report," 6, in McDonald Papers, however, states that twenty-seven blacks had enrolled.

xx. Letter from F. L. McDonald to Sheriff Charley Meyers, 11 September 1956, McDonald Papers.

xxi. For descriptions of the picketers, see Sim Myers, "Picketers Escort Negro Students from Lamar: Three More in Class are Sent Home By Officers," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 2 October 1956; Ralph Wooster, interview with author, 23 June 1989, tape in author's possession; and Breed, "College Desegregation," 5-7.

xxii. F. L. McDonald, "Newsletter from the Office of the President" to the Board of Regents, 5 October 1956, McDonald Papers.

xxiii. "Lamar Tech Quiet as Pickets Observe Mayor Cokinos' Ban," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 6 October 1956; Patrick K. Graves, "Leaders Recall Time of Civil Rights Act," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 2 July 1989; and G. P. Cokinos, Letter to the Editor, *Beaumont Enterprise*, 15 July 1990. On violence against blacks, see "Vandalism at Office of Negro Attorney Probed," *Beaumont Journal*, 9 October 1956; and Johns interview.

xxiv. Quoted from "Statement: Mrs. Mercer Clarifies Picket Role," *Beaumont Journal*, 16 October 1956. See also "Voluntary End of Picketing Comes at Lamar," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 16 October 1956.

xxv. See "Citizens' Council Plans Increase in Membership," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 18 December 1956. Two weeks after the mass meeting, a Beaumont newspaper ran an article which reported that a "considerable number" of Beaumont police officers had joined the council. See "Other Texas Municipalities Forbid such Membership: Beaumont Police Officers and Other City Employes [sic] Join White Citizens Council," *Beaumont Journal*, 25 October 1956.

xxvi. Breed, "College Desegregation," 15-16.

xxvii. Quotations are from Sarah Marstellar, "Violence Erupts at Lamar Tech; Picket is Beaten," *HC*, 4 October 1956. See also "Rangers Patrol at Lamar Tech; Pickets Halt 7," *HC*, 3 October 1956; "Negro Cab Driver and White Picket Held after Rift," *Beaumont Journal*, 4 October 1956; and Cynthia Pommier, "Segregation Is a Thing of the Past," *Beaumont Enterprise*, 17 February 1990.

xxviii. Quotation from Kirkland Jones, "Writer Enumerates LU's Black History," *University Press*, Lamar University Sixtieth Anniversary Supplement, 16 September 1983, 30. See also Alvin Randolph interviewed by author, 22 June 1989, tape in author's possession.