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## Letter to the Editor

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Letter to the Editor, *Newark Evening News* (September 20, 1956) p. 20:3

“What Readers Have to Say—Defense of Segregation Evokes Sharp Rebukes from Two—High Court Assailed by Another”

Sir-I read H. Berkeley's letter in the New Sept. 8, favoring segregation, and I thought I might suggest certain weaknesses in his arguments to point out why I favor integration in the public schools:

1. Mr. Berkely says: “Since there is a great deal of friction between opposites (different races), it therefore stands to reason that if you separate them, there will be less friction.”

Friction between races is not inevitable. It exists because of lack of understanding of traditions and customs, because of feelings of superiority, and because of fear. What makes people different? Heredity and separate cultures are the factors; and if we assume that the Negro is as innately intelligent and capable as the white person (always assumed in public but probably rarely in private) ignorance of the separate cultures must be the key to the friction. Negroes were slaves of American whites, and although later freed were still felt to be inferior. Throughout the years, they were kept apart in education, amusement, employment, housing and transportation. As a result, today's Southern Negro is said to be “basically different from the white person.” Still looked upon as inferior by the whited Southerner, he is represented as foe of “white culture.” Continued segregation has bred these feelings of superiority, fear and hate, which in turn have evoked demands for more segregation. But only through desegregation and coming into contact with one's fellow man will those feelings disappear. While a student at South Side, I watched friction give way to mutual respect.

2. Mr. Berkely: “This system (segregation) worked excellently. Racial trouble was at a minimum.” Segregation in the South has been far from excellent. Racial hatred has been ever-present [*Negro Lynchings 1883-1932....*]. The Negro has been treated unfairly in Southern courts (*Powell v. Alabama*, *Scottsboro case*) he has been tricked and illegally deprived of the vote and left out of party elections (*Guinn v. US*, *Smith v. Allwright*); and he had been denied proper housing, equal school facilities, and job opportunities.
3. Mr Berkely: “The Southern Negro was better behaved and made far greater advances toward economic equality.” Does Mr. Berkeley equate being better behaved with accepting quietly the position of inferior and being fearful of rising up in and anger against unfair treatment? And if advancement were to be found in the South, why did thousands of Negroes migrate into Northern cities? It has been in the North that Negro wages have risen and job opportunities in transportation, government, the ranks of skilled labor, management have opened.

Basis of Court's Ruling

4. Mr. Berkeley: “However, in 1954, the Supreme Court in a decision based not on law but on sociology books, made its foolish and illogical decision (decision banning enforced segregation in public schools).”

In the case in point, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court, in declaring that segregation reduces the incentive to learn, answered affirmatively the following question: “Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?” It is erroneous to contend that this decision was based on sociological factors and not on law; for law is not in a vacuum, but is based on the actions and

behavior of men in society. The Laws of Contracts and Torts serve as evidence that law is based on sociological factors.

5. Mr. Berkeley: "We must realize that integration will fail simply because people don't want to integrate."

Many are opposed to integration. After all, they were born and reared in a segregated system and have been told and retold about the evils inherent in the other race, and were sure that they had seen those evils for themselves. But I am confident those people, especially the young, through education and by working side by side with Negroes, will learn to understand the viciousness of segregation and a double standard of citizenship.

To conclude, integration in public schools is necessary to remove the lack of understanding and fear brought about by being kept separated. Integration is necessary to give to the Negro a certain dignity that he deserves, and to give him assurance of equal educational opportunities. Segregation breeds hatred, fear and continued segregation—this is the vital point. Mutual respect, realization of actual inherent abilities can only be achieved by working and learning side by side.