

Junior Scholastic

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School Problem

Four Negro girls went to first grade classes last week in two New Orleans, La., schools that were almost empty of pupils. The schools had previously served white pupils only. A Federal judge had ordered the four Negroes to be admitted to the schools. Nearly all the white parents kept their children home.

The background of the story is this:

Most U.S. Negroes are descended from African slaves brought to America more than 150 years ago. The great majority of them worked on plantations in the South before the Civil War. As a result of that war the slaves were freed. Since then large numbers of Negroes have moved to northern and western cities, but the largest number of American Negroes still live in the South.

After the Civil War the Southern states, and some states in other parts of the country, passed laws requiring segregation. This meant the separation of the white and Negro races in such public places as restaurants, hotels, railroads and buses, parks, schools. In 1896 the Supreme Court upheld these laws. But it required that Negroes be given equally good

public places for their own use.

In 1954 this "separate but equal" decision was changed. The Supreme Court ruled that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. (The Supreme Court also ruled against segregation in other public places.) Federal courts were ordered to see that "a prompt and reasonable start" was made to end school segregation. No time limit was set.

In 1954 seventeen states and the District of Columbia had segregated schools. The District of Columbia and several states promptly ended this segregation. School districts in other states admitted some Negroes to schools that had formerly been all-white. About six per cent of the three million Negro boys and girls in Southern public schools are now attending classes with whites.

Four states with large Negro populations have not started to comply with the Supreme Court decision.

These states are Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

In Louisiana a Federal judge ordered the schools in New Orleans to admit four Negroes to the first grade. They were taken to school by U.S. marshals (law enforcement officers of Federal courts).

Although the children were not physically harmed, riots broke out on their first days at school. Meanwhile the state legislature passed new laws aimed at preventing Negroes from going to white schools in Louisiana.

The New Orleans school board then appealed to the Federal court for a delay. The board asked that segregated schools continue until settlement was reached in the dispute between the state legislature and the Federal Government. Up to our presstime the court had not given its decision on the request for delay in ending segregation.