Critical Education

A Portrait of Black Leadership during Racial School Segregation

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to paint a portrait of an African American public school administrator, capturing the essence of his leadership style and educational philosophy during extremely challenging circumstances. This portrait reveals the many creative ways that this administrator handled discipline, secured resources, and ultimately impacted the lives of many students in his district. This research is important in light of the fact that schools across the nation are returning to segregation and an increase in Black superintendents is concomitant with this increase in predominately Black urban school districts. Much can be learned from examining this portrait as administrators find themselves presiding over districts with historically underserved children from low-income families.

Introduction

The literature on Black educational leadership in the United States has focused primarily on Black teachers (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perkins, 1989) and Black principals (Loder, 2005; Morris, 2008; Tillman 2004a) with very little attention to Black superintendents (Alston, 2005; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Horsford, 2010; Hunter & Donohoo, 2005; Jackson, 1995; Moody, 1971; Scott, 1980, 1983). Scott (1980) speaks of this absence from our attention and states, "Black superintendents operated in almost total obscurity until they became heads of large urban systems…. Even though blacks served in superintendencies before the late sixties, the education profession was either unaware of or ignored their existence (p. 42)." Horsford (2010) contends that the limited research on Black school superintendents leaves a void in our understanding of Black leadership practices from a "system-wide perspective that includes interpersonal and institutional relationships (p. 63)." It is also void of Black superintendent leadership in the context of the Black community. Historically, Black educators, including superintendents were expected to be role models for their students but also for the Black community in general (Randolph, 2004; Scott, 1980, 1990; Dantley, 2005; Tillman, 2004b). Black educational leaders and others in the Black community were usually on the front lines in efforts to address inequities in the education of Black children (Hunter & Donohoo, 2005). It is the structural and cultural aspects internal and external to the Black community that underlie the historical processes from which Black leadership arises.

Research examining racial school segregation, and particularly Black leadership, prior to and subsequent to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision has typically involved schools and school systems in the southern region of the country and/or in large urban centers (Scott, 1980; Randolph, 2004). However, the case presented in this paper involves an all-Black and small segregated school district just north of the Mason Dixon line. Focus is given to the African American superintendent who provided leadership to this Ohio valley district throughout the 1960s. The authors specifically examine how Dr. Willis Holloway operated within and affected a racialized and unjust system that created and maintained the Lincoln Heights, Ohio School District.[1]

Little is known and even less has been written about this Black superintendent of this small all-Black school district, yet much can be learned today from examining his successes and approach to challenges. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is to paint a portrait of an African American public school administrator contributing to the literature on Black superintendency, illuminating untold stories of practice and perseverance. The means by which this Black Superintendent came to his leadership position is examined, as well as various aspects of this superintendent's leadership, including his involvement with the faculty and student body within his district and with the community at large. Although desegregation was late to arrive in Lincoln Heights, it ultimately did occur as a result of the 1970 merger of this Black school district with a neighboring, predominately White district. The historical account and biographical sketch aims to provide insights into the past and to inform the future. Lessons learned by a Black superintendent

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[1] Willis Holloway granted permission to use his given name for any research reports that evolved from the interviews used in this paper. Therefore, the real names of the community and the high school were also used. In addition, Holloway was given an early draft of the paper, which included all of the interview data contained here.

during segregation of the 1960s could be instructive to administrators who find themselves running segregated and impoverished districts in the 21st century. In fact, the increase in resegregation that results in economically poor Black schools and the impact on district leaders makes the current research most relevant. While the audience of this paper consists primarily of the African American leaders now presiding over racially segregated school population, the authors believe that White school superintendents and others of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, who find themselves in racially marginalized and impoverished districts, can benefit from the lessons presented here.

Resegregation

Research by Orfield, Eaton and The Harvard Project on School Desegregation (1996), found that the phenomenon of resegregation has been occurring in cities across the nation. As such, Orfield, et al. (1996) state, "Four decades after the civil rights revolution began with the Supreme Court's unanimous 1954 school desegregation decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court reversed itself in the 1990s authorizing school districts to return to segregated and unequal public schools (p. 1)." Resegregation in large urban areas has created school districts with high minority enrollments that typically serve low-income communities. Orfield et al. (1996) further explain,

> Living under anti-desegregation rhetoric and loosening desegregation standards … school districts have adopted policies based on "separate but equal" philosophies. Such pledge to do what *Brown* said could not be done—provide equality within segregated schools. Some have tried new and fashionable approaches that focused less and less on desegregation and incorrectly view segregation and its accompanying concentration of poverty as irrelevant to educational quality. (p. 5)

> National data show that most segregated African American and Latino schools are dominated by poor children but that 96 percent of white schools have middle-class majorities. The extremely strong relationship between racial segregation and concentrated poverty in the nation's schools is a key reason for the educational differences between segregated and integrated schools. (p. 53)

As urban segregated schools with predominately African American or minority enrollments have increased, so has the number of Black superintendents presiding over the respective districts. In the decades prior to the Supreme Court rulings mentioned above, Scott (1980) surveyed 21 Black superintendents and his findings validate this concomitant increase in predominately Black school districts and the Black superintendents that preside over them. Moreover, these Black school districts are more likely to report problems related to educational achievement as indicated by Orfield et al. (1996). Scott (1980) explains:

> The twenty-one superintendents reported to predominantly black and male school boards: 16 boards had a black majority and 19 had a male majority. In 16 school systems, blacks constituted a majority of the community's population…. In all but two systems, black students constituted the overwhelming majority of the population. Deficiency in reading achievement was a severe problem in all but two of the twenty-one systems. (p. 45-46)

Overall, researchers contend that there is a strong connection between high poverty, high minority (segregated) schools and low achievement and performance. The reports by Black

superintendents to Black boards, as outlined by Scott (1980) substantiate the existence of these connections. Reading deficiency (literacy/illiteracy) in all but two of the districts is significant – and it seems that these were the only two districts that did not serve a majority Black population.

Orfield et al. (1996) study the achievement of low-income minority students and middle-class White students in the Chicago area and find the former to be significantly deficient by comparison. (p. 65) Concerning other large metropolitan areas, they conclude:

> The same relationships among race, community wealth, and achievement hold in other large urban communities, suggesting that these relationships are systemic and structural….The national consistency of these patterns can be seen in the National Assessment of Education Progress findings, which show only 19 percent of disadvantaged urban seventeen year olds had 'adept' reading skills in 1984, compared to 50 to 55 percent in advantaged suburban communities. The concentration of minority and low-income students in low-performing schools creates a vicious cycle of failure, as these students have little exposure to the culture of achievement that characterizes many suburban schools. (p. 66)

Theoretical Framework

In his classic text, Burns (1978) proposed that transformational leadership includes two essential elements: It is relational, and it deals with producing real change. He explains, "Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). The purpose of this engagement with followers, Burns tells us, is to bring about change. In fact, in his estimation, the ultimate test of transformational leadership is the realization of intended, actual change in people's lives, attitudes, behaviors, and in their institutions. This implies that there is collective purpose that comes together to create unity in leader-follower relationships. Transformational leadership, a conceptual model that had originated in studies of political and corporate leadership, appeared better suited to the needs of schools as they evolved in the era of restructuring (Kleine-Kracht, 1993) and has been identified as an exemplary leadership model for school superintendence (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Leithwood, 1995).

Though transformational leadership was considered groundbreaking over a span of the past three decades (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994a), more recent work criticizes its over-emphasis on the leader, and scholars have offered in-depth analysis that further explore the reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers (Dantley, 2003; Rost, 1991; Yukl, 1999).

Yukl (1999) points out that transformational leadership stresses that it is the *leader* who moves *followers* to do exceptional things. By focusing primarily on the leader, Yukl believed that Burns failed to give proper attention to reciprocal influence. Rost (1991) maintained that transformational leadership does not explore what he calls transformation of active people. For Rost, leadership and followership is a process that involves only those active in organizations. "Passive people are rarely transformed by ordinary human processes (as cited in Dantley 2003, p. 4)." Dantley (2003) argued that Burns' transformational leadership and Rost's critique as perceived from a critical perspective yields a patriarchal underpinning and fail "to take the ideas of transformative leadership to a level where radical change can take place…it is assumed ─the leader is more skillful in evaluating followers' motives, anticipating their responses to an initiative, and estimating their power bases (p. 4)." As a result, transformational leadership maintains a sense of superiority in relationship to followers.

Such a perception, Dantley (2003) argues, perpetuates relations of power inherent in traditional hierarchal and bureaucratic contexts. For this reason, a critical perspective to transformational leadership is needed as a means to deconstruct relations of power and allow for creative and substantive change. Allen (1997) contends that it is the assumptions behind the theories that need to be addressed. Allen (1997) states that:

> …leadership models are based on traditional assumptions that ignore the processes that give meaning to the concept itself. In essence, the ways of knowing have been restricted to a priori assumptions…differences in interpretation of a vague concept such as leadership can be attributed to the assumptions that underlie an ethnocentric paradigm. What is missing from traditional models of leadership is the understanding of the processes prior to "the doing" of leadership or "the outcomes" of leadership. (p. 64)

Critical examination of traditional leadership challenges approaches that reflect and reify particular assumptions embedded in classical Eurocentric notions and meaning of leadership. One key assumption made by critical theorists in education is that society conceals suffering and oppression (Cappers, 1993). Consequently, some scholars (Dantley, 2003; Dyson, 1996; Walters and Smith, 1999; West, 1999) call for studies of leadership that not only question the silent assumptions about oppression, but also give voice to what West (1999) refers to as "race-transcending prophets" who serve as critics of the injustices that threaten the struggle for an alternative to "societal absurdity and insanity (p. 428)." When race-transcending prophets operate from a point of opposition to existing hierarchies of power, by implication, they acknowledge those who suffer from socially induced misery (Dantley, 2003; Dyson, 1996; Walters and Smith, 1999; West, 1999). Dyson (1996) aligns with West's (1999) idea and suggests that instead of being described as—race-transcending, should instead be depicted as—race-transforming leaders. Walters and Smith (1999) suggest that "the nature of black leadership …would appear to conform to the description of transforming leaders (p. 236)." Regardless, by its very nature, as noted by Walters and Smith (1999) "the concept of Black leadership, considering the socio-economic status of the community it reflects, must by definition be change-oriented as it confronts the dominant culture, because Black leaders must secure the resources and necessities that regulate the achievement of the vision of ultimate inclusion (p. 236)." As Dantley (2005) states:

> perhaps the answer to leadership changes lies in African American culture…and one possible feature of the African American culture, the application of *personal spirituality* (italics not in original) to community issues of social change and social justice, may provide a direction for educational leadership. (p. 65)

Dantley (2005) defined spirituality as it relates to *self-identity and community* from which we make meaning and understanding of our world. By connecting the social and cultural aspects of community, we better understand the processes by which Black leadership emerge. Dantley (2003) goes on to suggest that spirituality is the nexus of inspiration, motivation, and meaning making in the lives of Black Americans. (Dantley 2003) agrees with West's (1999) philosophy of combative spirituality, that undergirds the agency of African Americans' resistance and connect the two as part of the frame through which a transformative educational leadership is built. Dantley (2003) further states that spirituality is the essence of human experience and that this unseen force connects Black Americans to a greater power than themselves: "the element of critique and deconstruction of undemocratic power relations is blended with spiritual reflection grounded in an African American sense of moralism, prophetic resistance and hope (p. 5)". The

prophetic, then, is socially transformative because it is critical, subversive, and ultimately, hopeful. In this sense, transformative leaders from a critical perspective understand that who writes the agenda is just as important as what is on the agenda. Inherent in Critical Spirituality is the understanding of "liberatory praxis" (Dantley, 2003, p. 16) and social action must therefore be "located within an agenda designed to bring radical change, equity, and democracy in the lives of those with whom they are engaged (p. 16)." Three prophetic practices borrowed from West (1988) are central to the concept of Critical Spirituality for Dantley: deep-seated moralism, an inescapable opportunism, and an aggressive pessimism.

This paper employs what Dantley (2003) calls a *Critical Spirituality* perspective, as an extension of the transformational paradigm (Burns 1978), that emphasizes how "notions of leadership can be broadened through the infusion of two radical perspectives, namely critical theory and prophetic African American spirituality" (Dantley, 2003, p. 6). Critical Spirituality produces a useful framework for analysis of Black superintendent leadership. As noted by Dantley (2003) "adding critical spirituality to the discourse makes the language of transformative leadership much more palatable to those who have been marginalized and disenfranchised by mechanism of American schools (p. 16)." However, in this paper, we include and make more explicit *self-identity and community* as part of our analysis. It is within this context that we present untold stories of a Black superintendent's leadership during racial school segregation demonstrating how Critical Spirituality and the use of portraiture illuminate practices of deep-seated moralism, an escapable opportunism, and an aggressive pessimism embedded in the history of racial segregation of the Black community while transcending structural barriers and creating better school environments during challenging times.

Methodology

In describing the lessons learned in having her portrait painted or sketched by different artists using very different styles, Lightfoot (1983) ultimately concludes:

> … Portraits capture essence: the spirit, tempo, and movement…. That portraits tell you about parts of yourself about which you are unaware, or to which you haven't attended. That portraits reflect a compelling paradox, of a moment in time and of timelessness. That portraits make the subjects feel 'seen' in a way they have never felt seen before, fully attended to, wrapped up in an empathetic gaze. That an essential ingredient of creating a portrait is the process of human interaction. (p. 5)

The portrait painted in this case aims to capture the essence of the subject's leadership and educational philosophy during extremely challenging circumstances. In that the tenure period of this Black superintendent spanned a decade of racial segregation in a northern public school system, it is at once a 'moment in time' and representative of the seeming 'timelessness' of racial discrimination and oppression in US society. Because little has been written about Black superintendents in general, this textual portrait aims to bring the subject out of obscurity in order to be 'seen' through the eyes of an empathetic author/artist whose research interests are mired in the history of segregation in a particular region in the Ohio Valley. Furthermore, the interview process of data collection which relies solely on human interaction, allowed the interviewer/artist to 'fully attend to' the subject as the perspectives, insights, and stories from the latter spilled forth onto the canvas.

Little information is available on portraiture in educational research (Chapman 2005a). Portraiture is a method of inquiry unlike traditional forms of research methods. Hackman (2002) states,

> Portraiture stands apart from the more traditional research methods because it makes the researcher's biases and experiences explicit, in essence becoming a lens through which the researcher processes and analyses data collected throughout the study…. Portraiture differs from traditional forms of qualitative research because the investigator's voice purposely is woven into the written document called a portrait as a result of the researcher's interactions with the actors in the research setting. (p. 52)[2]

Rather than seeking to develop a complete picture of the background of the interviewee's views, as is done in the life history approach, portraiture seeks to bring out the voice of the interviewee by focusing on context, relationship, emergent themes and the aesthetic whole in the responses. As Chapman (2007) reminds us "in portraiture, our ability to provoke readers, participants, and ourselves into reevaluating our respective points of view is a small but meaningful form of social justice (p. 159)." The final portraits provide an easy topic of conversation as well, allowing potential readers or viewers of the portrait to learn more about and perhaps even participate in the tradition created by the stories (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). It is in this same vein that I (the first author and interviewer) approach this work (see endnote 2).

The Portrait

Dr. Willis Holloway was interviewed at his current home in Lincoln Heights, Ohio. The interview was taped using an audio recorder and interview notes were taken. The interview began by asking Dr. Holloway about his background, including where he was born and educated. Holloway deftly wove a narrative of his history and experiences as teacher, principal, and superintendent in Lincoln Heights Public Schools as he responded to my specific questions.

The artist/researcher and the subject of this portrait of leadership were acquainted prior to this work. I[3] grew up in the Lincoln Heights community although I did not attend the public schools during Holloway's tenure as teacher, principal, or superintendent. This fact is mentioned only because it influenced the dynamics of the interview. Because there were issues, events, people, families, and histories known to us both, little explanation was warranted when they surfaced during the interview. In addition, I believe that because both Dr. Holloway and I feel a strong connection to the community of Lincoln Heights and its people, there was also a connection, perhaps unique in this academic endeavor, between the interviewer and the respondent. This connection accounted for the 'empathetic gaze' from which I saw Willis

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[2] In sections of this paper, a singular form of author/artist is used as well as other sections are written in the first person singular. In these cases, reference is to the first author/artist or sections are written in the voice of the first author who conducted the interview with Holloway and who lived and grew-up in the Lincoln Heights, Ohio community. This is in line with portraiture methodology as Hackman (2002) confirms in this quote. The second author, on the other hand, contributed significantly and overwhelmingly to the development of the theoretical frameworks and the interpretation and analysis of the data.

[3] See footnote 2.

Holloway as we engaged in this human interaction sometimes referred to as qualitative research. Thus, the interview took on a less formal tone and was more conversational than the typical question/answer format. Dr. Holloway offered a great deal of information and insights during this four-hour exchange.

The Backdrop

In the year 2011, Wabash Avenue in Lincoln Heights, Ohio appears on the surface to be a typical working class U. S. neighborhood. Small brick, frame, or block houses line either side of the street with a few larger ranch styles interspersed among them. Overall, the street has a neat appearance with well-manicured lawns and well-maintained properties. Levels of employment range widely and include some retired households. Employed residents fill a variety of occupations and include skilled laborers, service workers, educators and other professionals. What is not typical about this neighborhood is its racial and ethnic homogeneity. This is not to say that there are not many streets in the U. S. occupied predominately by households of European ancestry. What makes Wabash a somewhat unique U. S. working class neighborhood is the fact that most if not all its occupants are African American. Moreover, Wabash is only one of many streets in the Black village of Lincoln Heights, Ohio. Of course, not all Lincoln Heights' neighborhoods were created equal, with some having substandard beginnings and others falling into serious disrepair. However, Wabash Avenue has not changed much since the 1950s with the possible exception that the street was extended and more houses erected on former wooded properties. I am very familiar with the Lincoln Heights community in general and Wabash Avenue in particular for I spent all of my childhood years in the former and many of them on the latter. In fact, my father built many of Wabash houses now occupied by our friends and former neighbors. Dr. Willis Holloway is a resident of Lincoln Heights and the interview that informs this paper took place at his Wabash Avenue residence.

Though some aspects of Lincoln Heights, like Wabash Avenue, have remained the same through the years, the village in general has a complex history and has undergone radical changes as it struggled to survive in a racially hostile society. Unlike many Black streets, neighborhoods, or communities, Lincoln Heights was not, nor were any of its streets, the result of the phenomenon of 'White flight'. Because the land that comprises this village was never inhabited by Whites, there was no reason for flight as a result of the steady encroachment of Blacks. However, the community did come into existence because of various racist policies that prevented Blacks from purchasing land in other sections of the greater Cincinnati area. (For a comprehensive history of the creation of Lincoln Heights, see Taylor, 1979, 1993). In the early 1900s, Black families began to purchase land in the upper Mill Creek valley—one of the few options open to them at the time. Because of racial discrimination in employment and wage earnings, many of these families were economically poor and could only afford to erect the most modest of structures. Some houses were little more than shanties and for many years the community had no paved streets or sidewalks. Therefore the 21st century village of Lincoln Heights looks quite different than its Black subdivision predecessors.

Lincoln Heights is located in the upper Mill Creek Valley of the Greater Cincinnati Metropolitan area in Hamilton County Ohio. It continues to be surrounded on all its borders by villages and communities, the majority of which have predominantly White populations. In fact, several of the adjacent villages are quite wealthy by comparison. Because of a lack of significant industry and corresponding tax base, the Lincoln Heights village as a whole is considered economically poor. However, progress is evident if one is comparing the current state of the

village with its meager 20th century beginnings. Paved streets and sidewalks are now commonplace and taken for granted. There are numerous small businesses such as family-run grocery stores, restaurants, and bars and taverns. In addition, a fast food restaurant is now found on the edges of the community. The village is approximately .9 square miles and, relative to its size, it supports a great many churches within its borders. Some areas of Lincoln Heights are more depressed than others but are no longer representative of the entire community. There are streets that have a reputation for supporting drug and other illegal activities and are generally considered unsafe, but this is the exception rather than the rule. Despite the negative press and attention given to the community when a crime occurs in its borders, and it has increased significantly over the last few years, overall Lincoln Heights is inhabited by hard working U. S. citizens, many of whom find employment outside the community.

The racial climate and political context that this superintendent operated in is important in that they both influenced his rise to the position, his willingness to assume the responsibilities, and the ways in which he defined his role. As the author/artist of this portrait of leadership, I am fully aware of the fact that this work will only provide the reader/viewer with a glimpse into the complex nature of this man, for as Lightfoot points out, "artists must not view the subject as object, but as a person of myriad dimensions (p. 6)."

The Student: Self -Identity and Community

Prophetic leadership as defined by Dantley (2003) and West (1999) suggests that a person represents something larger than himself or herself. Further, prophetic leadership has accompanying expectations that the views and actions of that the leader will represent that very entity that she or he serves. Therefore, a superintendent is expected to represent the views and values of the community he/she serves as well as serve as a role model for their students but also for the Black community in general (Scott, 1980, 1990). Holloway's connection to the Lincoln Heights' community began even before his birth and, as he chronicles his elementary, high school, and college years, it is evident how this same community impacted his identity development. This process that transpired during his student years set the stage for the types of transformative and prophetic leadership roles he would assume in the future.

Willis Holloway was born within Cincinnati city limits according to his birth certificate, but his family had moved to the Lincoln Heights area many years earlier. He states, "My grandfather was one of the early settlers of Lincoln Heights--mud streets and all--so I grew up out here, obviously. I went to what was then called South Woodlawn School"

South Woodlawn Elementary is important to the background and experiences of Holloway and is central to the history of schooling for Lincoln Heights' children. Woodlawn was and is a community that shares its southern border with Lincoln Heights' northern boundary. Prior to events that occurred in the 1950s, Lincoln Heights School District was nonexistent and the Woodlawn School District encompassed sections of the community/village of Lincoln Heights (see Leigh, 1997; 2005). Woodlawn maintained racially segregated schools and the South Woodlawn Elementary School that Holloway attended was located within the border of Lincoln Heights and served the majority of the community's African American children.

Again, prior to 1954 there was no high school in Lincoln Heights, therefore students were allowed to attend schools in neighboring Hamilton County school districts or the Cincinnati City School District. The villages of Lockland, Glendale and Wyoming all shared borders with Lincoln Heights and their respective school districts included high schools. At the time that Holloway

reached high school age, Lockland maintained two distinct high school facilities that were primarily segregated by race. Lockland Wayne High School served the African American population. Both Glendale and Wyoming were wealthy White communities that maintained one high school within each of its district borders. (Hamilton County Board of Education, 1950) Other high schools within the Cincinnati city district, such as Hughes, Taft, Central and Walnut Hills, had various levels of minority enrollments and offered additional options for Lincoln Heights' students. Holloway recalls his high school experience:

> I attended Lockland Wayne where most of the graduates from Lincoln Heights Elementary [South Woodlawn Elementary] went. That was in an era when the state paid tuition for school districts that had no high schools. The young people could go to any one of the neighboring high schools, and the state paid the tuition. There were a few kids who went to Glendale… Wyoming didn't take too many—but maybe one or two got into Wyoming… some went to Hughes, I can remember that…. But anyway, the state paid the tuition-- and of course that changed. From there I graduated from high school.

Holloway continued at several colleges and his early pursuits were largely facilitated by the sports scholarships he was awarded. He initially began his college career at St. Xavier in New Orleans, which is a historically Black institution. During his sophomore year, at the encouragement of friends already attending Philander Smith College and after being offered a basketball scholarship there, which was based upon his high school performance at Lockland Wayne High School, he transferred to that Methodist school in Little Rock, Arkansas. Holloway graduated from Philander Smith in 1954 and goes on to describe his educational journey into the field of teaching and educational administration.

> I then went to the University of Arkansas on a Ford scholarship. That is significant because it was a special kind of a scholarship wherein they were conducting a study to determine how to develop the best teachers. Traditionally, people who went to school for majors in education had a major in a subject area and a minor in education—professional courses. However, this study was designed to take people who did not have that background-- who graduated from undergraduate school without that background-- and give them the professional courses as graduate students. I had a double major when I graduated, psychology, of all things, and physical education. I received my master's degree through that process. I received a master's in education and from there I entered teaching here at Lincoln Heights. Ultimately in 1975 I got my doctorate in education administration. That is the educational background and the path that I have woven. I have been to many schools including the University of Cincinnati and Miami University. You name it.

The School: Separate and Unequal

Prior to Lincoln Heights separating into its own school district, most of its elementary children went to South Woodlawn elementary school. This all-Black school was in the boundaries of the Lincoln Heights community but was part of the Woodlawn School District. Holloway gives his perspective on how Lincoln Heights was excluded from the Woodlawn District and how Lincoln Heights itself became an autonomous school district (also see Leigh, 1997; 2005). Though many of these events occurred while Dr. Holloway was at Philander Smith College, he relates the facts with authority. He specifically recalls how a Lincoln Heights resident who was on the

Woodlawn School Board was duped into agreeing to the creation of the Lincoln Heights district, separate and independent of the Woodlawn district. This Black board member, in turn, convinced other Lincoln Heights' residents that such a move was in the best interest of the community.

> There were always one or two Black representatives on the [Woodlawn School] Board--it was mostly White. That is when he was sold a bill of goods and he got one or two other people to sell a bill of goods. And let's face it… in a community like Lincoln Heights—it is a little bit better now but not a whole lot better--you just do not have a lot of politically active people; politically conscious and savvy people…. It was just a sell. It was a sell put on to say, 'gee this makes you powerful. You run your own thing.'

The Woodlawn Board of Education asked the county board to redraw its district lines making its district lines contiguous with Woodlawn's village lines. At the same time that this request was granted, which in essence excluded Lincoln Heights' children from the Woodlawn district, the county board created the Lincoln Heights School District. What made this isolation even more egregious was the fact that it also involved exclusion from a school consolidation effort that was being initiated at the same time. This consolidation would ultimately include eight of Lincoln Heights' predominately White and some of its most wealthy neighbors in the valley. Woodlawn was one of those neighbors and now that they were rid of the Black Lincoln Heights students, one might surmise that only then were they welcomed into this future consolidation. To make matters worse, it was also during this time that Lincoln Heights was incorporated but denied the industrial property on which many of its citizens dwelt. This same property was later annexed to one of Lincoln Heights' wealthy neighbors and member of the aforementioned consolidation, leaving Lincoln Heights with a racially segregated school district and no tax base. (For a detailed description and analysis of the creation of these districts, see Leigh, 2005). Moreover, the end result was the creation of this segregated and isolated Black school district that influenced and was in turn influenced by the subject of this portrait.

The Teacher; Principal; Superintendent

Black superintendents saw themselves as community leaders and felt that their success or failure affected opportunities for the communities they served (Tillman & Cochran 2000). The method in which Holloway moved into the position of Superintendent was far less formal than one might expect. In addition, his concerns about the education of poor Black children motivated him to accept a job, which for many reasons promised some overwhelming challenges. His methods of recruiting administrative and teaching staff may also have seemed unorthodox to some but these methods were also framed by his philosophy and goals as an educator in an economically depressed community.

While still studying at the University of Arkansas, Holloway received a call from a friend asking him to return to the Lincoln Heights community and accept a teaching position in its public school. It was explained to Holloway that his friend had actually accepted this same job but had subsequently been offered another teaching position within the Cincinnati Public School District for a significant increase in salary. The friend would be released from the contract with Lincoln Heights and free to go to the Cincinnati district only if he could find a replacement. He was asking Holloway to be that replacement. So in the fall of 1954 Willis Holloway returned to Lincoln Heights, Ohio and began his career as a seventh and eighth grade health and physical education teacher.

Holloway taught in Lincoln Heights Elementary School from 1954 until 1960. This elementary school that included kindergarten through eighth grades was the only public school in the community until the opening of a new high school in September of 1958. Two years after its opening Holloway was named principal of Lincoln Heights High School. The very next year he was named superintendent of the district. In relating the sequence of events that led to this appointment, Holloway recalls that the superintendent had recently been fired but did not know or recall the reasons for his predecessor's dismissal. At that time Lincoln Heights' schools were in the county system and under county jurisdiction. The county board of education had no one in mind to replace the fired superintendent. Holloway already had a superintendent certificate and believed that he had some advocates on the board. However he was nevertheless surprised by the turn of events.

> How I became superintendent is a strange but interesting story…. I casually walked into the building one day-- I have forgotten what I was going down there for-- and a fellow met me coming out of the door. He said, "Congratulations." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "You're the superintendent." I said, "Oh, you're kidding. What are you talking about?" They had appointed me superintendent and that is how I became the superintendent. That was in 1961. I stayed there until I went to Cincinnati Public Schools in 1970.

According to Dantley (2003), spirituality is the nexus of inspiration, motivation, and meaning making in our lives. As such, it did not take long for me to be introduced to the meaning and significance of spirituality in Holloway's life. Actually Holloway was both the high school principal and the superintendent of the district for one year while he sought a replacement for the former position. Though he was advised against accepting the superintendency, Holloway indicates that he viewed the offer as an opportunity to actualize a dream and to answer a higher calling.

> People advised me not to accept the superintendency. "This thing will kill you", they said, and gave me all the reasons why I should not take it. Well I guess it was a dream; a small dream. I just felt that I knew the community well enough and had enough training that I could deal with the internal body politics without being killed by it. I won't get into personalities, but the way the [Lincoln Heights School] board functioned, particularly, was a dog fight itself. I just felt that I could deal with it. It is like they say you get a call from God, so I decided to take it in spite of the way I came into it. I did not apply for it but it was given to me and I decided to take it.

The roles played by Black superintendents in segregated schools and communities were crucial. The Black superintendent had the autonomy to hire the principal and within the school, "(T)he principal held the authority to hire teachers in line with his vision and fire those who did not conform" (Walker, 2000, p. 275)" Holloway explains how he recruited and hired the principal for the elementary school, Ernest J. Ector, and the principal for the high school, Eddie L. Starr.[4]

> I immediately went out and did something that professionally they recommend you don't do most of the time. That is, looking for what I thought were people that

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[4] These individuals, Starr and Ector, also granted permission to use their names for any research reports when I obtained related interview data on a related project (see Leigh, 2005).

could team with me to do what had to be done. And it turned out to be very close friends of mine. A person like Mr. Ector, who lives next door; we grew up together but he wasn't in education. He was a science major… he worked in the health department. Mr. Starr worked for the Domestic Relations judge and I went down and said, 'Hey I need a good man'. He did have a social studies background—and he was a good man because I initially brought him in as a social studies teacher. And you can get certificates--temporary and you work to get them permanent. [I said,] 'I need a good man, you are a good person to do the kind of things we have to do' … and convinced him. And he too, of course being local and having some of the same feelings that I have… we had strong feelings about it… so here is an opportunity to do something about it. So I talked him into leaving that job and coming up here. I named him high school principal after I could give up one of those jobs.

Spirituality is the essence of human experience and this unseen force connects Black Americans to a greater power than themselves. This feeling of a higher calling or as Holloway himself stated, 'a call from God' connects directly to African American, prophetic, and critical spiritualism, which Dantley (2003) and others describe. Not to be described as religiosity but a reflection of something greater than oneself spurred on by 'spirit-filled resistance' (p. 5) to injustices present in this poor community and school. His recruitment of like-minded individuals, who happened to be neighbors and friends, demonstrated that he was responding to African American spiritualism in that it "cajoles us to engage in community with others (p. 6)."

Critical spiritualism brings with it a call to moralism, resistance, and hope (p. 5). Holloway set out to recruit fellow administrators and transformative leaders with those characteristics to team with him to affect change and as he stated, "to do what had to be done." In my role as 'artist' and my relationship, empathy, and connection with the subject, Willis Holloway, I was and remain convinced through these interactions that he was engaging critical African American spirituality as defined in this paper and that he and his colleagues went far beyond just making good leadership decisions. They were on a mission to effect change and to serve the students and the community at large.

Discipline and Leadership

Dr. Holloway expressed strong feelings about discipline and described several scenarios that represented the philosophy he employed as the superintendent of a district during years of racial segregation. Holloway did not believe in expelling students from school. He contends that the only way to reach students with behavioral problems is to keep them in school in order to exert the proper influence and encourage behavioral change. However, inappropriate behaviors were punished and school expulsion was seldom the consequence students opted for. Holloway believes that he may not have had such flexibility were it not for the fact that his district was segregated and isolated from the general school population in the Cincinnati and Hamilton County area.

> …I was the superintendent of schools for ten years, I'm not talking about the assistant in Cincinnati[5], and I never expelled a pupil, never, because it defeats the whole purpose of education. Now that didn't mean I didn't punish them. And what I discovered was, when faced with the hard realities and options, they invariably accepted my punishment versus expulsion. Because expulsion is lethal. You're dead. And once you get expelled, very, very few percentages…come back to school after being put out for a year…you fall behind…. I'm proud of that because I've lived long enough and I've seen some of those young people now who are grown and who have children and how they survived, and I feel really good about it. Now I punished them and did some very creative and, what people thought at times, crazy things or tactics but I could do that because I was in this poor community, you might say. I had lots of latitude.

Holloway also engaged the help of other students in order to distribute disciplinary oversight and student leadership responsibilities. He describes how he used the student council to identify an offending student in the following scenario and the creative punishment offered the student in lieu of school expulsion.

> …even though there was a principal and I did not allow the principal to have student council, as superintendent, I had student council. I explained to them…that… I wanted to teach them true leadership. I didn't want to teach them Roberts Rules of Order. 'And I will do it by calling upon you and expecting you to make some hard decisions. This is what leaders have to do if you're going to be a good leader. So if you don't want to do that then you don't want to be on this council, even though you have been voted by your peers. Because I need you to help me.' …I was saying, look if something happens to a child in this school, I need to know about it within a period of an hour. If you're not willing to do that then you're never going to make a good leader.

As superintendent, Dr. Holloway attended most of the sports events and he and the high school principal policed the stands and were on the outlook for inappropriate language or behaviors.

> I was always concerned about fights breaking out at basketball games if we weren't winning. Because it's kind of an unfortunate, instinctive reaction that happens among people, but particularly poor people. So I was on guard for that all the time. But nevertheless, on this particular occasion, one of our kids hit the photographer— he was the key photographer for that [opposing] school—and he hit him. We had lost the game; that …was the precipitating issue. This was after the game.

Initially, Dr. Holloway did not know the identity of the offending student in this case but by the next morning the student's name was revealed by Holloway's student council. He was able to devise a punishment that would satisfy the principal of the other school without expelling his student.

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[5] After Holloway was superintendent of Lincoln Heights schools and the school merged with another district, he went to Cincinnati Public schools as assistant superintendent. He does not include the latter years in his experience as superintendent.

The night before I had gotten this call from the principal at [the opposing school]… naturally complaining and expressing dismay…. I talked to him and I said, 'sir, (and I did this several times) I need you to help me help a child. The child is in trouble, not a bad child, but a child that did something bad. And we can help him because I don't want to expel him. And I'm going to give him an alternative but you have to help me.' Anyway, I told him what it was. I said, 'pick the right time of day but I want you to call an assembly. Whether it's at the end of the day, whether it's at noon, you pick the right time of day and the day and I'll be up there with this boy. And he's going to have to stand in that little circle out there, in that gym full of circles, and apologize not only for himself but for his fellow students and for his community… his school and his community for that act. And he has a certain amount of time, and if he doesn't fill that time vacuum, which means he is saying something substantive, then he's gone.' He did that…. and it not only impressed the students, it impressed the kid. That was harder. See he would have rationalized expulsion as they do corporal punishment. You can rationalize it. [They will think], 'I've done my thing, now you can't say anything to me, because you've hit me, you shot your wad.' What I wanted to do was to put something on his mind and he never forgot it. And years after that, I'd see that kid and he'd talk about how hard that was. Sure it was hard. I've forgotten what age he was then, he may have been sixteen… seventeen. But that's hard. But the first thing I did, I took him in my office and convinced him, 'Hey these are your options and you can take this other option [expulsion] but you're committing suicide. My conscience is clear because I don't want you to do it [take expulsion] but you can't get away with this kind of behavior. Because it just doesn't work in society.'

At another time, Holloway was again monitoring student behaviors at a sporting event. A Lincoln Heights team was playing a Wyoming team. Wyoming was a neighboring community that was comprised of primarily wealthy families of White, European American ancestry. The racial tension and competitive rivalry that existed again caused Holloway to fear the outbreak of fights and other physical altercations. This time he was disappointed by the leadership of his student council.

We had a basketball game playing Wyoming. Game was tight… people were packed to the edge of the floor… referee trying to get people off the floor… You didn't know who was going to win. I said, 'Oh my God, Lord let us win because I don't know what will happen if we don't beat Wyoming, because that's a big thing, beating Wyoming because Wyoming is Wyoming.'… I'm walking around trying to keep kids in order and I run across the student council president in the bleacher sort of away from me so I had to walk up. He didn't see me coming up from the sidelines. He was threatening violence—this is the president of the student council—he was threatening violence. He's got a bunch of other kids around him. I reached up through the stands, grabbed him in the collar, yanked him down into the stands… 'Boy' I said, 'do you know what you could start here tonight.'

Holloway realizes that this was extreme behavior on his part but contends that it was warranted in light of what could have happened if the student's language had remained unchecked. In essence, he felt that he was preventing a racial riot of sorts. He also noted that had he not been superintendent of a segregated all-Black district, his behavior toward this student may not have been tolerated.

You can't do that in certain other situations. While it sounds awful coming from a trained administrator, it was the right thing to do at the right time. Because the next day when I called [the student] in to talk to him, he understood that there was a lot at stake. 'I apologize for having grabbed you but you were going off and you were going to set a lot of other folk off. And if you can do it, they think they can do it. Next thing you know, we've got a riot on our hands.'

These scenarios reflecting how Holloway dealt with leadership and discipline also reflect characteristics of a transformative leader who is ultimately concerned with positive engagement of students in their school experiences. Typically transformative leaders engage followers, and in this case students, in the leadership and decision-making processes. Clearly, in this educational environment a hierarchical structure necessarily remained for the superintendent and the students but the latter were nevertheless given voice and some influence over their school experiences. In addition, student-leaders were given some responsibility for reporting problems in the school so that they could be addressed. Holloway defined for students what good leadership is and employed them to help him in bettering the school environment. Holloway's engagement of students in leadership roles, and more importantly with problem-solving is congruent with Freire's (1972) notions of liberatory pedagogy. In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire advocates for the engagement of educators and students together in challenging and resisting oppressive, unjust, inequitable school environments. Holloway made it clear to students, particularly his student council leaders that the race-infused and volatile situations they faced were brought on by racism and prejudices. The student-leader who was harshly admonished in the stands of the basketball game was later conferred with from more of a leader-to-leader rather than a leader-to-student perspective.

When transformative leadership is broadened to include critical theory and the prophetic spirituality of West (1999) to yield what Dantley (2003) coined as Critical Spirituality, this merger brings with it certain prophetic practices. One of these prophetic practices is referred to as 'deep-seated moralism' (Dantley, 2003, p. 9). This practice includes a strict code concerning what is right, wrong and equitable, which Holloway reflects not only in how he holds an unjust system accountable for less than desirable school experiences for minority children but how he holds students accountable for their inappropriate behaviors while meting out equitable punishments that match the offenses. Holloway is less concerned about the same or equal treatment of every infraction but is very concerned with equitable treatment that is sensitive to individual needs of students and the ramifications that their actions and his reactions will have upon students' futures. This concern for equity over equality and the compulsion to 'right wrongs' is at the core of social justice scholarship and practice. The morphing of transformative leadership into Critical Spirituality, with its prophetic practices, puts another face on social justice praxis as demonstrated by this Black superintendent. His reluctance to expel students and thus further isolating offenders also speaks to this deep-seated moralism as well as the goals of social justice pedagogy. Further, this prophetic practice leads one to seek to rid schools of unfair practices and inequities, propose policies and procedures that are fair and just, and oppose power relationships that are dehumanizing and that further marginalize students and leave them on the periphery (p. 10). The above scenarios make it apparent that Holloway was reflective in his decision-making at the time and is pleased with many outcomes as he reflects back on those challenging situations.

Securing Resources

Walters and Smith (1999) illuminate the connection between Black leadership, social justice and social change, and securing resources. They claim the Black leaders serving poor communities must by definition be change-oriented as these communities confront the dominant culture, because Black leaders "must secure the resources and necessities that regulate the achievement of the vision of ultimate inclusion (p. 236)." An economically poor school district situated in an economically poor community presented Dr. Holloway with many challenges when trying to make quality education accessible to Lincoln Heights students. One could argue that his means of procuring resources were as creative as his means of applying discipline. As fate would have it, Dr. Holloway developed a long-term friendship with an administrator at a very wealthy private school in Cincinnati. This administrator served as an important benefactor to Lincoln Heights students in many ways. Holloway tells of how providence seemed to have a hand in the two educational leaders coming together.

> I was lucky enough to develop the only rich friend I've ever had—I call him friend because we worked together later on—who was the headmaster of [a private school]. I met him accidentally…we were trying to build a football field right in behind the [Lincoln Heights] school and somehow it had gotten into the paper and gotten some publicity. We used to play [this private school] in basketball…. One morning I got a call from my office, 'there is a man down here to see you.'… I said, 'okay, tell him I'll be down.' So I go downstairs, he wasn't downstairs, he was out in the field. So I walked out there. And he was dressed about like I'm dressed [in a sweat suit]. You never would have thought he was worth what he was worth by the way he was dressed…. He told me who he was. He said, 'I understand you're trying to build a football field and that you need some lights.' At that time those lights were going to cost thirty-five thousand dollars. He said, 'I'll give you twenty-five if you can raise ten.' I said, 'I will raise ten. I'll take you up on that in a hurry', but I'm wondering who is this guy. I'm thinking, partially, 'He's pulling my leg but I'll go along with it, what the heck.' So as we walked back towards the building he said, 'My lawyer will call you in the morning.' Again, I said, 'Okay.' I laughed about it with some people.

Although Dr. Holloway did not quite believe that he would receive such a call, a lawyer did indeed telephone him the following day. The lawyer offered, on behalf of Holloway's new benefactor, mining stock valued at the amount agreed upon by the two administrators who had just met on a Lincoln Heights' field the previous day.

> I just took that offer then and ran around this community saying, I've got a man that's going to give 'x' and we've got to raise ten thousand dollars. Anyway we raised the matching funds to get those lights. We sort of became friends after that. This …multi-millionaire family… lived in Indian Hills but they had a business office down in the Carew Tower [in downtown Cincinnati] on the forty-fifth floor…. For a long time I served on their scholarship foundation. They gave a lot of money to kids for scholarships. I liked the way they ran that because every summer at their house in Indian Hills, they would invite the people who had gotten scholarships to a picnic to meet with the new incumbents so that they could share what their first year in school was like. I really enjoyed working with them.

This situation may have caused Holloway some initial discomfort in that he was faced with an inequitable situation, which demanded dependence on the benevolence of outsiders. Holloway's reality was that he was not only serving an economically poor community but was also surrounded by wealthier White suburbs, which would eventually merge their smaller school districts into one that had decidedly more resources. These discrepancies before and, even more so, after the merger were apparent to everyone, including students. Therefore, asking for or accepting help from one who might be viewed as an oppressor could create a quandary for the Black superintendent. Other Black leaders have accepted the reality of such circumstances and dismissed discomfort for the benefit of their constituencies, just as Holloway did. Dantley (2003) refers to the response to such a quandary as 'inescapable opportunism'. This prophetic practice of inescapable opportunism is one that Black leaders are forced to employ in order to challenge, resist, and overcome unjust circumstances. Dantley (2003) goes on to explain that unequal opportunities and access to goods and services in a capitalistic society leave African Americans, particularly, no choice but to engage in opportunistic practices that they may disdain in order to survive. It involves getting what you need through various means in order to achieve some quality of life, which includes access to quality education (pp. 11-13).

Many Lincoln Heights students benefited from Dr. Holloway's friendship and work with this wealthy Indian Hills family described above because many were recipients of college scholarships from the family's foundation. This was only one example of ways that Holloway obtained resources for his students, many of whom were from low-income families and were attending severely under-funded schools. However, he was nevertheless very aware of the limited resources available at Lincoln Heights schools and expressed his philosophy concerning the schools' abilities to provide a quality education.

Philosophy of Education and Diversity

Although Willis Holloway was concerned and very much aware of the various political, social and economic factors that served to limit the quality of education afforded the children in his district, he nevertheless believed that Lincoln Heights' schools had something to offer that wealthier more elite schools did not. Not all Lincoln Heights' students were of high academic ability and neither were they all of low academic ability. Dr. Holloway contends that a quality education is one that exposes students to a population that is diverse in various aspects and is not limited to seeking diversity in ethnicity. Holloway's four children attended Lincoln Heights schools in spite of the fact that they had opportunities to go elsewhere.

Because of his relationship with the wealthy benefactor mentioned previously, his eldest child had the opportunity to attend the economically rich and elite school over which this benefactor was headmaster. The majority of the students in the benefactor's school were high achieving children from middle-class and upper-class families of European American descent. The school was attempting to recruit students of minority status, such as African Americans, who were also academically high achieving. Holloway recalls, "… they were constantly lobbying, at that time, to bring quality ethnic students in. First of all, it didn't look good if you didn't have a few". Rather than transferring from Lincoln Heights, Holloway's son, with his encouragement, enrolled in summer classes at the benefactor's school. Holloway explained his reasoning,

> I said, you will learn more math if you go out there, no question about it. You'll probably have a better command of the English language if you go out there, no question about it. These are all desirable things. But I think, as a parent, it is far

more important for you to be a balanced person than to be an expert… or to be extremely talented in something, unless it is a creative kind of thing… an art… [something] you pursue …really early. But it pays no dividends to know more math than you're going to use or any of those other basic things that you learn in basic school. But it pays great dividends to be able to do enough math to hold your own in any reasonable context but better than that, to learn how to deal with all segments of the country and the world. Now we've got a lot of kids in Lincoln Heights who don't get their homework… don't do their work. You may be sitting right next to one. But the test is, can you get yours even though this guy next to you is not getting his. And on top of that, he's going to try to influence you.… This is called peer pressure. You run it. If he runs it, you've lost. You run it. (This is the lesson I want you to learn. My daughter named it 'the Holloway thing'.) Now anything that you do, you be prepared to live with the consequences because you ran it; not because somebody else frightened you, talked you into any of those things. And that's what you will learn. Now if you get past that and through that, when you get to that point when you have to compete, you will be a better person. Thank God it worked out well for me but I held to that.

Holloway was also concerned about the products of other schools, such as the elite school mentioned above, that not only lack diversity in terms of ethnicity but whose student bodies are economically and academically homogeneous as well. These graduates, according to Holloway, go on to become community, corporate, or political leaders whose sensitivity to people unlike themselves is limited by their exposure during their school years.

He [the benefactor] and I used to debate education all the time and I used to tell him, you need to close this school and bring them and put these kids [from the private school] over here with these other kids [at Lincoln Heights]. I said you've got these rich kids out here going to school together and they're not learning anything about life and yet they're going to be controlling everything. We used to have those kinds of conversations.

Holloway went on to explain,

I didn't view that as the highest level of education, still don't. Still don't. There are a few people who are going to be rocket scientists and who in becoming rocket scientists may be very narrow in their thought pattern. But I am of the opinion that you can't hold those people back anyway, those who are of that nature and that interest. For the majority, what you find are a lot of people who have been isolated and have not learned to deal with other folk appropriately and who become leaders in situations, who make value judgments that are lethal because of limitations of experience. Who take a very condescending attitude into some of those jobs, particularly political type jobs and other kinds of jobs. And I don't think that's a quality education.

Holloway further explains his philosophy of education and what he thinks constitutes a quality education.

Our educational system is pretty much like the country. It is a competitive system that is based on me being better than you. And everything is based on that, grading system and you name it. I'm a firm believer in cooperative learning, because

everybody's better off. The outstanding student is better off because that student becomes the teacher early in a situation where there are others who are not as capable.

Oddly enough, although Dr. Holloway held these views intensely and passionately, he realized that students were being grouped into homogeneous ability classrooms within his district schools. After giving a speech locally, concerning the drawbacks of such groupings at the school or even district levels, he came to the conclusion that he was condoning the same type of separation at the classroom level within Lincoln Heights' schools. As a result of this realization, Holloway conducted a study that would validate his commitment to cooperative learning and heterogeneous ability groupings. Again Holloway believes that the fact that he was superintendent of an isolated district allowed him the flexibility to conduct an educational experiment.

> I did a study on my own, again which I did not bother to publish.... I was running the school system and it gave me freedom. [The study] proved my point....

> The issue was heterogeneous versus homogeneous grouping.... I said, 'when I separate kids or allow kids to be separated that way, that's what I'm doing.' They're separating... what's the difference.... That is what I had been taught in universities. So I decided, 'I've got to do something about that, just for my own mental professional health'... I had just read [a book by] a guy named Glaser. He wrote a lot about education; he was a psychiatrist out in California. I liked his thoughts and I used his thoughts as a backdrop.

Holloway did not involve the entire faculty/staff in his experiment but had chosen a select group of teachers from each of the 2 through 6 grade levels. The selected teachers were asked to participate in the experiment but Dr. Holloway made it clear that their participation was not mandatory. At that time each grade level had an average of five to six sections, with each section representing a certain ability level within the corresponding grade level. The student body was reportedly aware of which homogeneous sections contained the academically high performing students and which were comprised of the low performing students. Holloway's plan was to form a heterogeneous grouping at each grade level that was comprised of three types of students.

> There are going to be those kids who are the best academic students—[they] learn to read fast or [their] math classes are better... There are going to be some kids who appear to be mechanically oriented. And then you have the kids--you can call them ruffians, you can call them what you want to--but they are physically better, they outrun everybody, they play football, they run over everybody. Now what happens is, if you leave these kids to their own volition, they will do the same thing to each other in every situation. That is to say the physical group won't pick a kid over here because he can't hit ball... 'No, I don't want him on my team.' So he doesn't get to play ball if it's left to them. Same thing turned out to be with the middle group because we had bought a lot of audio/visual equipment using … federal money-- federal dollars. And these kids became our specialists at grade level, in handling all that equipment; setting it up, teaching others how to use it, taking care of it; because they were good at it and they liked to do it. They then taught these other kids how to do that.

This was Holloway's brand of cooperative learning. Students were teaching other students in the areas in which they excelled. These students were made to understand that if they truly possessed expertise in an area then they should be able to teach others. Moreover, students were challenged to reflect on how it feels to be at the bottom of any group. Students found the feelings to be the same whether they were at the bottom of a group academically, mechanically, or physically.

> If you're doing good, proper cooperative learning, you reduce if not eliminate those feelings. Because everybody has an opportunity to be in every one of those roles. And you get evaluated on how well you play the role that you're best in.

Holloway found his program to be successful and attributed much of the success to the intrinsic motivation found in cooperative, heterogeneous learning groups. He found that students are motivated when they are engaged in activities that interest them and at which they excel. He contends that students that are academically low-achieving, more often than not, lack motivation. Students that performed poorly in traditional classrooms, often revealed academic skills in less traditional but more motivating environments.

> The problem is, kids who don't do well aren't motivated. Because these same kids go and do other things that are very academic in nature. I used to use automobiles as an example…. What they could do with a manual and a motor would blow your mind …. and tell you all those parts…. Schools in general focus on kids who are motivated and are threatened by kids who are not motivated, and help turn them into behavior problems so that they become self-fulfilling prophesies.

I asked Dr. Holloway about the lack of diversity in his schools and the fact that Lincoln Heights' students had no experience interacting or competing with White students. He responded in contending that some competitive situations are harmful and again pointed out the importance of cooperative learning environments.

> Competition can be provided in many ways. One of the analogies that I have historically used… is boxing. If you weigh a hundred pounds and I put you in the ring with another woman that weighs two hundred pounds, chances are you are going to get your brains beaten out… You can call it competition if you want to but it is lethal and it is detrimental. So cooperation is something much more important than competition. You can learn to be competitive much easier and faster than you can learn to be cooperative. It's difficult to be cooperative. So what I'm saying is that, I'm not opposed to people competing, particularly in an indigenous community. We had enough good students, quality students, who set a good enough pace.

Holloway went on to explain that the students who performed well academically at Lincoln Heights schools were in a sense protected. While these students were given opportunity to share their knowledge with others, there was an effort made to keep the curriculum challenging for them and to shield them from undue demands on their time and energies. He felt that both low-achieving and high-achieving students could be harmed by overly aggressive or uneven competition and therefore would not suffer from a lack of exposure to the competitive classroom environments found in both segregated and desegregated schools. To Holloway, cooperative learning was the key to success for all students.

These instances demonstrate how Holloway was at once positive and aggressively pessimistic in his pursuit of a quality and meaningful education for students in his district and classrooms. Dantley (2003) describes this third dimension of prophetic practices as aggressive pessimism and emphasizes that Black transformative leaders have adapted to living in the duality of the positive and negative. He explains, "They are fully cognizant of the present but somehow foresee the present as only a temporary condition. In fact, overcoming the present with the vision of an enhanced future is a challenge willingly faced by a transformative leader (p. 13)." In the face of seemingly insurmountable inequities, Holloway chose to change what he could. He created what he believed to be a more meaningful and effective learning environments for his students.

Final Touches

Willis Holloway's superintendency of the Lincoln Heights' schools ended when this Black school district merged with the predominately White Princeton School District. Interestingly enough, Holloway was one of the key figures that was instrumental in bringing the merger about, while knowing that desegregation would end his tenure over the segregated district (see Leigh, 2003; 2005). Although Holloway was proud of the many accomplishments of the Lincoln Heights' administration, faculty, and staff, the worsening impact of the district's economic distress caused him to conclude that a merger would best serve the interests of the Lincoln Heights' students. Holloway demonstrated what Scott (1980) so eloquently stated:

> Black consciousness and professionalism are not incompatible…. Professionalism enjoins a commitment to the inauguration of systems of education in which all students are accorded equitable opportunities to attain a quality education. Professionalism is the revelation of a defensible philosophical foundation undergirding programmatic thrusts and administrative actions. Professionals must oppose those policies, practices, and programs that are detrimental to any group of students. (p. 52)

What Holloway wanted was a quality education for the children in his district and over the years he had strived to provide such with limited resources. His Black consciousness and commitment to Lincoln Heights fueled his desire to make a difference in the lives of those residing in this economically impoverished community and he utilized many creative means for accomplishing his goals. In the end, his professionalism, Critical Spiritualism, and deep-seated moralism prompted him to lead the crusade to dismantle the district when it became apparent that a merger would provide more equitable opportunities to the Lincoln Heights' students. In the early years of his tenure, the district was able to attract and retain well-qualified African American teachers. However, in later years when more opportunities opened for Black teachers in desegregated districts offering higher salaries, Lincoln Heights began to lose ground.

> There were a couple of dynamics that were insurmountable. One of them was maintaining a core staff because as Cincinnati [City School District] became more and more integrated, and its policy changed and they were hiring more and more Black teachers, basically all we were doing was filtering teachers through us to Cincinnati. I used to tease … the superintendent down there I would say, 'you've got to send me a stipend for training your teachers.' We'd get a lot of applications particularly from southern states… at that time school districts were not integrating as fast and they were not hiring Black teachers. We got a lot of applicants from Black colleges and had a pretty good choice. But they would move right on to

Cincinnati because they would get 'x' number of thousands of dollars more…. There was no way to stop that bleeding without some economic source that was stable. And like I said, this community has no place to grow and there is a limit to how much taxes you can ask…. I don't think we ever had a tax levy turned down. We only ran them when they were absolutely necessary and it was always for bare minimum subsistence. But the big problem… is most of your monies in a school district go in labor costs; let's face it, it's labor intensive. And that was getting worse and worse. Common sense said to me, that at some point you have got to realize you are doing the kids an injustice…. I was an idealist and wanted to make something happen and did a few things that I'm proud of; they kind of hang with your memory and make you think it was worthwhile. But common sense prevailed at the point where you say, 'well look this thing is getting so bad that it's just not fair to the kids.'

Dr. Holloway had the opportunity to work within the Princeton School District after the merger but he chose to accept a position as assistant superintendent in the Cincinnati City School District. He was still driven by the desire to provide opportunities for children from low-income families and many Cincinnati schools had high enrollments of such students.

I chose to go to Cincinnati [City School District] because my interest was in the kind of young people that were being left behind in cities as families migrated out to the suburbs. Princeton, of course, historically has been a middle class district…. I felt I would be more comfortable working with those [low-income] kids because I felt like I was a natural advocate.

Holloway did not hesitate to share his world view and his educational philosophy with the Cincinnati Board of Education during the interview in which he was being considered for the position.

I shared with them the changing demographics, which were obvious if you paid that much attention to it. But the Black/White ratio was changing fast and the district was moving more towards fifty-fifty…. 'You need a person like me because one thing I will do instinctively is tell you the truth. Now you may not agree with me, but I'm going to tell you the truth. And the truth means that the superintendent, whoever it happens to be, or the board may not like it all the time. But it will be an honest truth in terms of how you deal with this new emerging district differently than how you dealt with the old district. Because the old district was dealt with very typically as school districts have been operating in this country for that matter. That is to say, at the policy making level you had basically White, middle class people making policy decisions and had little or no understanding of the emerging and growing number of poor kids, and how to treat them. So they treat them like the treat the other kids. That does not work.' I just stated that simply and short enough. There are a few [economically poor students] that get through but it kills off an awful lot…. To me that means that the ratio does not work. In other words, there are a few people who get by and they brag about the fact that, 'well I did it.' But at the time they do not think about all the folk who died along the way, even though that few made it. So I said, 'you know, I'm going to tell you. I'm not going to let you make policy and I'm sitting there being the highest paid Black and say

nothing. I may not have enough votes to change it… I will be a voice in the wilderness.' To my surprise, they offered me the job

Willis Holloway held that position from 1970 until his retirement. He and his wife still reside in Lincoln Heights on Wabash Avenue in the community where it all began. The portrait of leadership of this Black superintendent whose spirituality was shaped by his personal commitment, Black consciousness, and professionalism during segregation and, in a lesser sense desegregation, significantly influences the texture, hue, and tone of the painting. As school districts return to racially segregated schools as described by Orfield et al. (1996), and administrators find themselves presiding over districts with historically underserved children from low-income families, much can be learned from examining this portrait.

Conclusion

Black superintendents of U. S. public school districts are more likely to learn from Holloway's experiences if they are currently faced with similar challenges and serve similar communities and student bodies. As Scott (1980) stated, as the number of large, urban districts with high minority enrollments increased so did the number of Black superintendents, who would preside over them. These districts came about partially as a result of the resegregation trends that occurred even after the 1955 *Brown II* desegregation order and as a result of the 1990s Supreme Court decisions, as described by Orfield, et al. (1996). In 2003, Pedro Noguera speaks more to continued segregation and states, "… the limitations of *Brown* are glaring and obvious: Nearly 50 years after the Court's decree, large numbers of schools throughout the United States remain segregated, not only on the basis of race, but also on the basis of class…. Segregation remains because in many parts of the United States *Brown* was never fully implemented (p. 153)." Still, the assumption is that the children, communities, and the school districts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have commonalities with those Holloway affected.

Unfortunately, even in the year 2011, children in our nation's poor urban schools typically receive low-quality and often inadequate educational experiences and, as a consequence, continue to have unequal access to educational opportunities. Further, U.S. urban schools typically have high enrollments of historically underserved groups (i.e. African Americans, Latinos/as, and Native Americans) and children from economically poor families. Meir (1995) states, "Until recently we were hardly surprised (nor were we concerned) that the socioeconomic and educational history of a family was overwhelmingly the best predictor of school success—more statistically reliable than any test devised (p. 10)." Other educators and scholars who study in this area concur and further contend that the type and quality of education that children receive corresponds closely to their future socio-economic status (Corbett, Wilson & Williams, 2002; Noguera, 2003). Meir (1995) goes on to state:

> …the social class of the students has been and continue to be the single most significant factor in determining how a school works and the intellectual values it promotes. The higher the student body's economic status, the meatier the curriculum, the more open-ended the discussion, the less rote the pedagogy, the more respectful the tone, the more rigorous the expectation, the greater the staff autonomy. (p. 97)

These are the same challenges Holloway faced during his tenure as superintendent in the 1960s and the predicted outcomes he was fighting against. His portrait reflects that he strove to maintain high expectations for his students, promote engaging pedagogies and relevant curricula,

demand appropriate and respectful behaviors, regardless of contrary predictions based on the low social class of his student bodies.

Today's Black superintendents can thus learn specific lessons from Holloway's experiences. This portrait reflects Holloway's commitment to economically poor students and the communities he served. He reveals the importance of connecting to his students and shares his efforts to meet their needs in terms of academic or behavioral interventions. Holloway's passion for keeping students in school and his pride in the fact that he never expelled students deserves special attention. This characteristic is relevant in today's times when urban schools face challenges of high drop-outs and expulsions. Viewing expulsions initiated by school administrators as 'death' to the students may give pause and inspire today's superintendents to create ways to hold students responsible for their actions while keeping them in schools. Keeping students in school and realizing the ramifications of expulsions was one example of Holloway's commitment to putting students' interests first.

His appreciation of the diversity of abilities among the student body was another way in which he was concerned with student needs and interests. His commitment to cooperative learning and other similar pedagogies that draw on the strengths and abilities of all students is congruent with similar pedagogies proposed by progressive educators (i.e. Darling-Hammond, 2001) to combat the rote learning and low expectations prevalent in today's overcrowded and underfunded urban schools. As we hopefully move away from standardized teaching to prepare low-income students, particularly, for standardized testing, today's school administrators can be inspired by Holloway's insights decades ago.

Holloway's ability to obtain resources for an economically poor school with the ultimate aim of benefiting students is also a skill needed in many of our twenty-first century, overcrowded, and underfunded urban schools. Perhaps the one last act that Holloway carried out in the interest of the students at Lincoln Heights was to push for the merger of the district he had presided over in full knowledge that he would be giving up his position. Implied in his action to give up his position as superintendent is in part what Dantley (2003, p. 16) called "liberatory praxis" and described by West (1999) as race-transcending prophets, who lead in opposition to existing dominant hierarchies of power—and lead in the best interests of those they serve.

Holloway's narrative was created by means of portraiture methodology and presented using Critical Spirituality as a theoretical perspective and lens. The authors believe that Black superintendents serving urban schools today can engage this perspective to make meaning of their efforts to achieve transformative leadership and affect change in an inequitable and unjust educational system. Holloway's portrait and narrative reflected the prophetic practices of deep-seated moralism, inescapable opportunism, and aggressive pessimism as described by Dantley (2003) and West (1999), as he reflected upon his own identity development and his connection to community. He also held out hope for a system that was clearly broken. Noguera (2003) expresses a need for hope in today's schools and states: "Rather than being regarded as hopelessly unfixable, urban public schools, particularly those that serve poor children, must be seen for what they are: the last and most enduring remnant of social safety net for poor children in the United States (p. 7)." Perhaps Black superintendents can also hold out hope, which is essential to African American, prophetic, and critical spirituality, while facing similar challenges in educating the nation's most underserved children. Finally, the authors would like to again point out that leaders of varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, including White superintendents, who find themselves in racially marginalized and impoverished districts, can benefit from the lessons presented here.

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