

# **Little Rock School District Central High School Desegregation Timeline**



## **1959**

11 January – District Judge John E. Miller, following the mandate sent down from the Appeals Court, orders the School Board to move forward in carrying out the court-ordered integration plan and to report back in 30 days on its progress.

14 January – T.J. Raney High School receives accreditation as a Class A school from the state Department of Education. It now is eligible to apply for the state aid that is being withheld from the closed public high schools.

22 January – The Little Rock School Board offers this proposition to the federal court: it will open the high schools on a segregated basis at the start of the second semester on January 26 and submit its own plan of integration by August 15.

4 February – Judge Miller turns down School Board’s request for permission to reopen the high schools on a segregated basis and adds that the board doesn’t need permission to work on a new integration plan.

4 February – The testimony of Superintendent Terrell Powell in federal court shows that 3,665 high school students have been displaced by the high school lockouts: of 2,915 white students, 1,120 are in private schools in Little Rock and Conway, 877 are in other public schools in Arkansas, 275 are attending schools outside Arkansas and 643 are not in school. Of the district’s 750 African-American students, 229 are in public schools in the state, 79 are in school outside the state and 442 are not in school.

6 February – The State Board of Education narrowly decides to pay state aid to T.J. Raney High School under Act 5 of 1958.

26 February – The State Department of Education says it has paid \$187,768 of Little Rock’s withheld state aid to other Arkansas schools who have been educating Little Rock students.

8 March – The federal court enjoins the state from paying out any more of Little Rock’s withheld state aid under Act 5 of 1958.

11 March – Governor Faubus' proposed constitutional amendment (SJR 5), to allow local school districts to abolish their schools by vote to avoid integration, is approved by both houses of the legislature.

22 April – B.T. Shelton, an African-American teacher in Little Rock and a member of the NAACP, files suit in federal court against Act 10 of 1958 and Act 115 of 1959. Act 10 requires teachers to sign affidavits listing all organizational memberships and contributions made in the last five years.

28 April – The Arkansas Supreme Court upholds Act 4 of 1958, the school closing law, by a 4-to-3 margin.

6 May – The School Board splits over the issue of teacher contracts. Half of the members of the board (Ed McKinley, Ben Rowland and Robert Laster), declaring themselves a quorum after the other three board members walk out of the meeting, vote not to renew the contracts of 44 employees, including seven principals. The Classroom Teachers Association immediately calls the action illegal.

7 May – The PTA Council strongly criticizes the firing of the 44 employees and suggests recall proceedings against the three board members. Mass protest meetings spring up at several schools.

9 May – STOP (Stop This Outrageous Purge) is organized by 179 prominent downtown business and civic leaders for the purpose of recalling McKinley, Rowland and Laster.

10 May – Recall petitions against board members Everett Tucker, Ted Lamb and Russell Matson also are in circulation. The Mothers League of Central High takes credit for them. In a statement McKinley says most of the 44 employees fired were integrationists but they can have their jobs back if they'll sign statements that they will uphold "the public policy" of segregation.

26 May – STOP makes a clean sweep in the recall election: Tucker, Lamb and Matson are kept on the board; McKinley, Rowland and Laster are voted off.

11 June – The Pulaski County Board of Education appoints three new Little Rock School Board members to replace those recalled by voters. The new members are state Rep. J.H. Cottrell Jr., contractor Henry Lee Hubbard and insurance company official B. Frank Mackey. The reconstituted board rehires 39 of the 44 employees fired on May 5.

18 June – A three-judge U.S. District Court panel declares the state's 1958 school-closing law unconstitutional. The Board of Directors announces that it will not appeal the decision and will reopen the city's high schools in the fall.

21 July – Baptist High's Board of Directors closes the school after one year, citing a lack of students.

4 August – Officials of privately operated Raney High announce that the school will close because it is out of money.

11 August – Governor Faubus goes on television to discourage overt resistance when the high schools reopen. “I see nothing to be gained tomorrow by disorder and violence,” he says. Instead, he urges viewers to “go to work and elect some officials who will represent you and not betray you.” He emphasizes that he is “not throwing in the sponge.”

12 August – Little Rock’s four high schools open, nearly a month early. Three black students (Effie Jones, Estella Thompson and Elsie Marie Robinson) enroll at Hall. Two of the original Little Rock Nine (Jefferson Thomas and Elizabeth Eckford) enroll at Central. Eckford finds out that she has enough correspondence-school credits for her degree and doesn’t need to continue classes. Another of the original nine students, Carlotta Walls, enrolls at Central later in the month.

Segregationists rally at the State Capitol where Governor Faubus advises them that it is a “dark day” but they should not give up the struggle. The group then marches to Central High School where the police and fire departments break up the mob. Twenty-one people are arrested.

28 August – Two unidentified women throw two tear-gas bombs inside the front door of the district Administration Building while the School Board is meeting on the second floor. There are no injuries.

7 September – Three dynamite blasts shake the city on Labor Day; nobody is hurt. One blast demolishes a city-owned station wagon parked in the driveway of Fire Chief Gann Nalley’s home. Another damages the front of a two-story building housing a construction firm of which Mayor Werner Knoop is vice president. The third detonates at the Little Rock School District Administration Building at Louisiana and 8<sup>th</sup> streets, wrecking an empty office. Nuns from a nearby convent were able to give the FBI a description of the suspects’ car, aiding in the arrests.

9 September – Two Little Rock men (lumber and roofing company owner E.A. Lauderdale and truck driver J.D. Sims) are arrested in the bombings and charged with dynamiting a public building.

10 September – Three more local men are arrested on the same charges. All five defendants are convicted, fined \$500 and sentenced to prison terms of three to five years. Testimony indicates that the mastermind is Lauderdale, an active member of the Capital Citizens Council. Lauderdale’s prison term is commuted by Governor Faubus after a little more than five months.

Sources:

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