



Image: The 21 teachers who lost their positions for their refusal to comply with the anti-NAACP oath standing in front of the Ellore Training School in Ellore, South Carolina, on May 15, 1956. This photograph appeared in *Jet* magazine on June 7, 1956. (Image courtesy of photographer Cecil Williams, Cecil Williams Civil Rights Museum, Orangeburg, South Carolina.)

## ARTICLE BY CANDACE CUNNINGHAM HIGHLIGHTS ACTIVISM BY BLACK TEACHERS IN THE 1950S

THE ARTICLE IS TITLED  
"HELL IS POPPING HERE  
IN SOUTH CAROLINA:  
ORANGEBURG COUNTY  
BLACK TEACHERS AND  
THEIR COMMUNITY IN  
THE IMMEDIATE POST-  
BROWN ERA."

Candace Cunningham's (assistant professor of history) most recent article is titled "Hell Is Popping Here in South Carolina: Orangeburg County Black Teachers and Their Community in the Immediate Post-Brown Era." The article, which was published by Cambridge University Press in the *History of Education Quarterly*, takes a look at activism among Black Teachers in the 1950s.

In the years immediately following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, segregationists used legal and extralegal efforts to prevent school desegregation. In South Carolina, where the state legislature had been hard at work coming up with preventative measures years before *Brown*, the legislature created the anti-NAACP oath in 1956.

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Cunningham is an Assistant Professor of History. Her research is on the 20th century African American experience with a special emphasis on civil rights, education, gender and the South. She enjoys working on collaborative public history projects and guiding students through digital history projects. She is currently working on a manuscript about the role of Black schoolteachers in the civil rights movement.

This was an effort to target Black school teachers, and the organization which had been at the helm of the legal efforts to end racial segregation. Teachers across the state lost their positions. But it was the dismissal of 21 teachers at the same school in the small town of Elloree that captured the attention of the NAACP and the imagination of Black media outlets.

This article focuses on the years following *Brown*, when South Carolina's Black and White communities went head-to-head in the battle over White supremacy versus expanded civil rights. The desegregation movement spotlighted Black teachers' activism – activism that mirrored what was happening in their community. This largely unknown episode demonstrates that Black teachers were willing to serve not only as behind-the-scenes supporters in the equal education struggle but as frontline activists.

"Ultimately, what this research proves is that public education has a long history of being politicized. Historically, public education has been a space on which people in power could map contemporary social anxieties. Within that framework, public schoolteachers became easy targets. So, school desegregation was about so much more than simply where children went to school. It was also about whether or not the children who came out of these schools could expect to enter a society that guaranteed them equal rights."

- Candace Cunningham

The article is open-source and available here:

[tinyurl.com/HellisPoppingHere](https://tinyurl.com/HellisPoppingHere)

Podcast about the article here:

[buzzsprout.com/1794766/8851596](https://buzzsprout.com/1794766/8851596)

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