Desegregation and Assassination:

Political Turmoil in Dallas During the 50s and 60s

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• Early growth of Dallas
• Rapid expansion of neighborhoods reflecting segregation patterns
• Access of minorities to public schools and early civil rights efforts
• Federal Courts vs. Dallas ISD
• Dallas politics pre-assassination
Desegregation and Assassination

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Three Forks of the Trinity River

- Dallas Myth—Geographic location provided it with no reason for being.
- In 1690 Alonso de Leon, a Mexican-born officer of the Spanish crown, bestowed its name: *La Santisma Trinidad*.
- Dallas founder John Neeley Bryan chose location because of crossing ford at limestone embankments.

Annexation leads to Segregation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
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<td>29.4</td>
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Figure 19. Dallas's African American population.

Source: Graff, *The Dallas Myth*
Historic Ethnic Neighborhoods

- White Rock Freedmen's Town
- Bear Creek Freedmen's Town
- Elm Thicket Freedmen's Town
- Sam Tarver's Love Field segregated neighborhood in 1971
- West Dallas/Cement City
- Frogtown/Little Jerusalem/ Little Mexico
- Oak Cliff Freedmen’s Town/ 10th St. Historical District
- Alpha Freedmen’s Town
- The Cedars/Park Row
- Small North Texas towns typically had one segregated neighborhood for Blacks “across the tracks,” often in unattractive parcels but close enough for service workers to get to work
- Little Egypt Freedmen’s Town
- North Dallas/Freedmen’s Town/State-Douglas Historical District/Stringtown/Deep Ellum
- South Dallas/Exline/Bonton
- Joppa Freedmen’s Town

Mixed Neighborhoods

- Deep Ellum
  By the 1920s, hosted blues/jazz musicians such as hosting the likes of Blind Lemon Jefferson, Robert Johnson, Huddie "Lead Belly" Ledbetter, and Bessie Smith at clubs such as The Harlem and The Palace.
Little Jerusalem/Little Mexico

According to DISD-published history book, 25 nationalities are represented in this picture.

Cumberland School – Melting Pot School

Opened in 1889

According to DISD-published history book, 25 nationalities are represented in this picture.
New Jewish Neighborhoods

The Cedars circa 1890s to 1920s

1957 Temple Emanu-el, Northwest Highway at Hillcrest on Caruth farmland

South Boulevard/ Park Row circa 1910 to 1940

West Dallas and Cement City

By 1948 blacks, Mexican Americans, and poor whites numbered 25,000 in West Dallas. Due to the lack of proper water and sewage services, diseases were prevalent. "West Dallas accounted for 50 percent of the city’s typhus cases, 60 percent of the tuberculosis, and 30 percent of the polio" (Phillips, 2006, p. 125).
Desegregation and Assassination

Jim Crow and segregation of schools/neighborhoods/all public accommodations

First Housing at Cement City, 1907

1981 photo of RSR Corp. lead smelter plant, which poisoned West Dallas air and soil from 1934 to 1984
January 5, 1963, over 2,500 people attended Dr. King’s speech at the Music Hall in Fair Park. Outside of the Music Hall, bomb scares threatened to disrupt Dr. King’s speech and around 200 pro-segregationists protested with signs and chants accusing Dr. King of communism and of inciting violence. The leader of the protests, Jimmy Robinson, would later set fire to a cross outside of Holocaust survivor Jack Oran’s home just weeks after the event. Robinson is arrested and later released with a $10 fine.
Oct. 24, 1923, Dallas dentist Hiram Wesley Evans, Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, drew 160,000 Klan members from across state and country and inducted more than 5,000 men and women in front of audience of 25,000.

The Hall of Negro Life was officially dedicated on Juneteenth 1936 as one of the exhibit buildings at the Texas Centennial Exposition at Fair Park.

Colored Neighborhoods Developed in 1940s
South Dallas bombings 1929-1951

Juanita Craft in correspondence to NAACP said the bombing stopped on Crozier Street when “the Widow Sharpe” ran from her home firing a gun at a speeding getaway car after an explosion. Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 2006

Source: Bonton + Ideal documentary https://vimeo.com/133303503

1951 Blue Ribbon Grand Jury Investigation
Hamilton Park: 1950s city-supported planned neighborhood

Opened in 1954. By 1961 Hamilton Park had 741 homes, 3 churches, a school, a shopping center and a public park.

DID Timeline for Desegregation

- May 17, 1954 – U.S. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren delivers the unanimous ruling in the landmark civil rights case Brown v. Board of Education, which found that the state-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the 14th amendment and was therefore unconstitutional.
- Sept. 1954 – Dallas ISD Superintendent W.T. White declares that the Supreme Court opinion “was one of philosophy and policy and not a directive” and states that, “In Texas, the [state]Constitution prescribes segregation.”
- Sept. 6, 1961 – 18 Black students enter white-only schools in Dallas ISD, the beginning of a Stair-Step Plan to desegregation and a response to an order of the Fifth Circuit Court to desegregate.

Published by DISD in 2021 to mark 50th anniversary of first schools desegregated 1961
Dallas advertising executive Sam Bloom had a large budget. Spent much effort to recruit Cronkite, “the most trusted man in America,” even seeking influence of JFK.

Fall 1960, Dallas Citizens Council became involved and appointed a human relations commission with seven black leaders and seven white leaders to head off violence and lead integration across city. The biracial committee considered various public relations methods. They sought to affect public opinion through a “peer system,” recruiting today what we call thought leaders within various white civic groups.

Dallas at the Crossroads -1961 Citizens Council film

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmjNx8dEC-8
Flashback Aug. 27 – Sept. 15, 1956
Mansfield TX

Wed., Sept. 6, 1961

• Identity of schools was kept secret.
• Only 18 black children were enrolled.
• Dallas Police had 101 men on duty. Each school had a detective inside and a command post in case of trouble.
• Previous Sunday, more than 75 percent of city’s ministers made pleas for non-violence.
• Tuesday night, TV stations aired the DCC film “Dallas at the Crossroads.”
• Much back-patting occurred.
DISD Timeline for Desegregation

• 1967 – Dallas ISD declares Dallas schools desegregated, although many schools, in reality [about 60 percent in 1966], remain segregated.

• Oct. 6, 1970 – Parent Sam Tasby files a lawsuit against Dallas ISD, saying that the district still operated a segregated school system prohibited under Brown v. Board of Education.

• July 1971 – Federal Judge William “Mac” Taylor rules that “a dual system” still exists and orders Dallas ISD to come up with a new plan to desegregate schools. The plan is published on July 23, 1971.

Sam Tasby Lawsuit

In summer, 1970 Sam Tasby filed a class-action suit in a Dallas federal court demanding his two sons be accepted in a nearby “white school” near his Arlington Park home in northwest Dallas. No school busing was available to take his children to their assigned West Dallas schools.
White flight changes DISD growth plans

Changing neighborhood trends in the 60s and 70 affected by the flight of whites to the suburbs: in 1970 the Dallas school district was 58% white, 34% black and 8% Mexican American. Seven years later whites numbered only 35%.

When federal judge Barefoot Sanders dismissed the Tasby case in 2003, Dallas ISD had an entirely different demographic makeup — 6 percent white, 31 percent black and 61 percent Hispanic, compared to the respective 54-36-10 percent makeup in 1971. Oak Cliff Advocate 7/2011
DISD Timeline for Desegregation

• 1970s-1980s – Despite the order, court action and litigation continue, with other parties, including the NAACP, joining in.

• August 1983 – The Dallas ISD school board ends its fight against court-ordered desegregation after the Fifth Circuit upholds a third desegregation plan by Judge Barefoot Sanders.

• April 30, 1984 – The Fifth Circuit upholds Judge Barefoot Sanders’s order creating court-monitored Education Centers in Black neighborhoods. The Education Centers later become known as the South and West Dallas Learning Centers.

• 2003 – Judge Sanders’ oversight ends when he declares the district desegregated, 49 years after Brown v. Board of Education.

• When Sanders dismissed the Tasby case in 2003, Dallas ISD had an entirely different demographic makeup — 6 percent white, 31 percent black and 61 percent Hispanic, compared to the respective 54-36-10 percent makeup in 1971.
City politics and social environment 50s & 60s

Backdrop of the Cold War

October 22, 1961, President Kennedy delivered a televised address announcing the discovery of missile installations in Cuba. He would "...regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response..."
Downtown Integration Day – July 26, 1961

Lone protester of segregation protests at downtown five and dime and lunch counter discrimination.

Stanley Marcus was most liberal of DCC members on civil rights, though he delayed until 1961 to integrate his Zodiac restaurant at Neiman-Marcus.

Tells story of meeting he and six other blacks and seven whites were called to. They were informed that all major downtown stores would integrate one coming day.

Oilmen

Ultra-conservative billionaire H. L. Hunt of Dallas signs copies of his self-published paperback novel, Alphonse, in his two daughters' ring in the background. Hunt's novel called for apportioning seats based on income. The bottom 40 percent of wage earners—those who pay no federal income taxes—would receive no seats. Billionaires such as Hunt would receive up to seven votes each, and could purchase more. Photograph by Neil Hamburger, Boise State University of American History, University of Texas at Austin.

Spouses
- Lydia Bunker (m. 1914; died 1955)
- Franke Tye (m. 1925–1941) (bigamy)
- Ruth Ray (m. 1957)

Children
- 15, including Margaret, Caroline, Rose, Nelson Bunker, William Herbert, Lamar, Ray Lee, June, Helen and Swannee Hunt
W.A. Criswell—First Baptist Church

On JFK campaign for presidency:
“The election of a Catholic as president will mean the end of religious liberty in America.”

Speaking at national event on behalf of Southern Baptists:
“Desegregating where we live is the stirring up of our people over a cause that, as of now, is not wisely presented. The people who seek to further this among us are not in sympathy with the great spiritual aims of our churches.”

Bruce Alger

Nov. 4, 1960 “Mink Coat Mob.”
Four days before the election.
That day was also “Nixon Pin Day” in downtown.
Edwin L. Walker 1957-1963 Timeline

- 1957 Little Rock AR High School
- 1961 Resigned under fire from Army and moved to Dallas and formed alliances with anticommmunist radio evangelist Billy James Hargis and H.L Hunt $$$ and local John Birch Society
- Early 1962. Ran last among seven Dem primary candidates for TX governor
- Oct. 1962. Univ of Mississippi riot leader, charged with sedition

Edwin L. Walker Timeline

- March 10, 1963. While Walker was on tour with Hargis, Oswald cased his Turtle Creek home from alley. Two days later Oswald ordered mail-order rifle.
1060-63 Timeline cont’d


- Oct. 24, 1963. Also at auditorium, for “U.N Day,” Adlai Stevenson speaks and on leaving is hit by sign and spat upon. Oswald later claims he was there. Frank McGehee is ejected by police. Sign from catwalk above stage changes “Welcome Adlai” banner to “U.N. is Red Front.”

- Oct. 28, 1963. Oswald attends a small meeting of ACLU at SMU and engages in discussion on whether Birches are by definition antisemitic. He had previously sent a letter to NYC Communist party headquarters to offering to infiltrate ACLU to heighten political friction between left and right.

Adlai Stevenson UN Speech
Oct. 24, 1963
Dealey and Dallas Morning News

“What we needed was a man on horseback to lead this nation, and many people in Texas and the Southwest think that you are riding Caroline’s tricycle.”

Statue of Ted Dealey’s father George B Dealey at Dealey Plaza, the downtown park leading to triple underpass. Was completed in 1940 as a WPA project. Dealey Sr. is today remembered by many as a very vocal opponent of the Dallas Ku Klux Klan in the teens and 20’s.

November 22, 1963
For Further Study

- BigDReads.org has excellent bibliography.
- KERA has well done documentaries on history of Dallas and history of the State Fair.
- Covering much of the same territory as I have is a documentary by Quinn Matthews produced in 2015 where he presents much rarely seen video news footage and photos. Also interviews with Bruce Alger, Wes Wise and others. Qmfilms.com
- The JFK Museum is a great place to visit. On their website they provide links to many of their past programs, including audio interviews with prominent people on Dallas back in the day. So much more available on the Internet, including film documentaries on Bonton, Little Mexico, Deep Ellum.