

Freedom of Choice Students
Gretna High School



Barbour, Wallace

James, Cynthia

Kelly, Tyrone

Miller, Gloria Jean

Robertson, Brenda

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

GRETNA HIGH SCHOOL - FEBRUARY 3, 2024 - 9:30 AM

SELECTION	SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION
WELCOME	REV. RAYMOND RAMSEY GREATER MT. PARISH BAPTIST CHURCH
PRAYER	REV. LARRY PATTERSON PASTOR, MT. AIRY BAPTIST CHURCH
GREETINGS	DR. MARK JONES, SUPERINTENDENT PITTSYLVANIA CO. SCHOOLS
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE	MR. MICHAEL BROWN
MOMENT OF REFLECTIONS	MR. AUBREY MYERS MR. RALIEGH JAMES
SELECTION	SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION
SPEAKERS	MS. RICHETTA AKERS MRS. GLORIA JEAN BURKE MS. BRENDA ROBERTSON FULLER
SELECTION	SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION

UNVEILING OF PLAQUE - LOBBY

FUNDING PROVIDED BY: DANVILLE REGIONAL FOUNDATION

FREEDOM OF CHOICE STUDENTS OF FREEDOM OF CHOICE
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BARBOUR, WALLACE

JAMES, CYNTHIA

KELLY, TYRONE

MILLER, GLORIA JEAN

ROBERTSON, BRENDA



Gloria Jean (Miller) Burke

What is your name and age? Gloria Jean (Miller) Burke

Where did you grow up? Town of Gretna, VA

Which school did you attend? Gretna High School

When? 1967-68 through 1969-70

What was your experience with the integration in the schools?

The first two months were hell. When walking the hall to the cafeteria, you heard a student say I smell a gar. Another student responded you mean cigar. The first student responded no I mean a Nigar. This was not heard by a teacher or an administrator. You wanted to fight but a Black friend, Brenda Robertson, stopped you. Another time in an English Class during a discussion in the class, a white male student made a statement that infuriated you. You slapped him. After some scuffling, the teacher stopped the fight. She made the male student apologize later. The boys harassed her more than the girls and the teachers weren't much better, especially her Algebra II Teacher. This teacher gave Jean a 0 on every assignment. Her parents eventually confronted the school system with the problem. Jean was receiving tutoring from Mrs. Hagwood, a math teacher at Northside. Jean had to go to summer school after her first year at Gretna high to get her math caught up. After her first year, she had no major problem with teachers. Student behavior improved after the first two months. The History teacher addressed black students as Niggra. It was very close to the "N" Word.

If you were a part of "Freedom of Choice", why did you choose to attend a white school? During the 1966-67 school year, Mr. Spellman informed Jean, some of her friends and their parents about Freedom of Choice. So, she and Brenda Roberson went to Gretna in the fall of 1967. One black student, Wallace Barbour was already enrolled at Gretna. All things considered, Jean believes that it was to her benefit to have gone to Gretna under Freedom of Choice. She studied more because she had competition. She was always an Honor Roll Student at Northside and about half of the time at Gretna.

Reginald Rice

Name and Age: Reginald Rice-56

Where did you grow up? Gretna

Which school did you attend? Gretna

When? Gretna 69-69 during Freedom of Choice.
69-73 during total integration. Graduated in 73.

Experiences/ Situations: Another Black student with Reginald was Tyronne Kelly. Both made the Baseball Team at Gretna during the 68-69 season which was still during Freedom of Choice. During a game with Tunstall, a white player from Gretna made racial statements to a Tunstall Player. None of the coaches didn't do or say anything. Reggie started to do something but changed his mind. He quit the team shortly after that. Reggie's father, who taught at Northside, dropped Reggie at the Crossroads Restaurant and Reggie walked the renaming distance to school which was approximately half a mile. Sometimes, when walking back to the Crossroads in the afternoon, White students on the bus would throw cans at him. After integration, there was a fight in the boy's bathroom almost every day. There were no serious injuries. Things settled down considerably after a month in school.

Why did you attend a white school? Reggie's father told him that he was going to Gretna High. Reggie was given a very short notice by his father. Reggie did not like that he was being sent to Gretna High because he had to leave most of his friends that he had been with at Mt. Airy Elementary School. Reggie was mad and didn't want to discuss it because he knew that there was nothing to say.