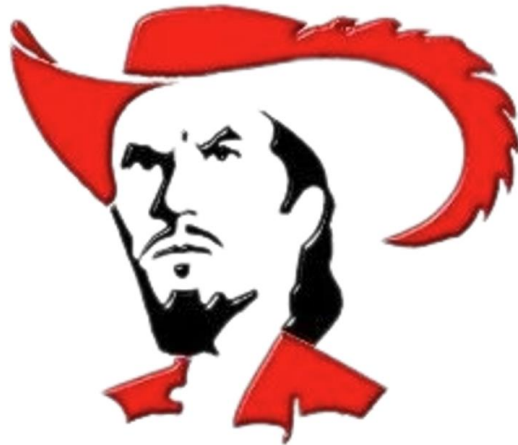


**Freedom of Choice Students
Chatham High School**



Anderson, Ella Wease	Davis, Janice	Jone, Jean Carolyn	Tanner, Clarissa
Bennett, Hugh Cary	Fitzgerald, Andrew	Jones, Clarice	Tarpley, Alfrita
Bennett, Isabel	Fitzgerald, Clifton	Jones, Evangeline	Taylor, James
Bennett, Phillip	Fitzgerald, Elizabeth	Jones, Gloria	Taylor, Phyllis
Bowman, Lindell	Fitzgerald, Irene	Jones, Windell	Taylor, Stanley
Bradner, Wayde	Fitzgerald, John	Logan, Johnny	Thomas, Edward
Brown, Jay	Fitzgerald, Lillie	Logan, Robert	Word, Sammy
Berger, Joyce	Fitzgerald, Martha	Lovelace, Charles R.	Wharton, Carolyn
Carter, David Lewis	Fitzgerald, Velma	Lovelace, Danetta	White, Cornelius
Carter, Cecelia	Fitzgerald, Wayne	Lovelace, Daniel	White, Jack
Carter, David	Fitzgerald, Willie	Lovelace, Julia	Wilson, Charles
Carter, Edward	Galloway, Elbert	Luck, Walter	Witcher, Dolly
Carter, Glenn	Gee, Jacqueline	Marr, Patricia	Witcher, Juanita
Carter, Gloria	Guy, Nancy	Oneal, Janice	Witcher, Mike
Carter, Henry	Guy, Teresa	Price, Annie	Witcher, Randolph
Carter, Jewel	Harris, Carol	Price, Moses	Womack, Deborah
Carter, Paul	Harris, Carroll	Robertson, Ernest	Womack, Larry
Carter, Sammy	Harris, Coleman	Robinson, Betty	Womack, Ruby
Coleman, Myra	Harris, Wilfred	Robinson, Edith Marie	Wright, James
Coles, Arkie May	Henry, Dottie	Robinson, Nancy	Wright, Jimmy Lewis
Craft, Alfonsa	Hightower, Willie	Robinson, Patrice	
Craft, Cynthia	Hodnett, Juliet	Shelton, Michael	Teacher Fred Fowler
Craft, Walter	Hodnett, Marilyn	Shelton, Wanda Fay	
Davis, Carol	Hurt, Thomas	Skates, David	
Davis, Eva	Jackson, Wanda	Smith, Dinah	

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL - FEBRUARY 17, 2024 - 1:30 PM

SELECTIONS

SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION

WELCOME

MRS. MARGIE RICHARDSON

PRAYER

REV. RAYMOND RAMSEY

PASTOR, GREATER MT. PARISH BAPTIST CHURCH

GREETINGS

DR. MARK JONES

SUPERINTENDENT PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

**STATEMENT
OF PURPOSE**

MR. MICHAEL BROWN

FREEDOM OF CHOICE COMMITTEE

**MOMENTS OF
REFLECTION**

MRS. JANICE OVERBY, FORMER WORLD LANGUAGE TEACHER, CHS

MR. FREDDERICK FOWLER, FORMER TEACHER, CHS

MR. PAUL CARTER, FREEDOM OF CHOICE STUDENT

SELECTIONS

SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION

SPEAKERS

EVANGELIST RANDOLPH WITCHER

MRS. CLARISSA KNIGHT

SELECTIONS

SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION

UNVEILING OF PLAQUE - LOBBY

FUNDING PROVIDED BY DANVILLE REGIONAL FOUNDATION

FREEDOM OF CHOICE STUDENTS

CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL - FEBRUARY 17, 2024 - 1:30 PM

ANDERSON, ELLA WEASE
BENNETT, HUGH CARY
BENNETT, ISABEL
BENNETT, PHILLIP
BOWMAN, LINDELL
BRADNER, WAYDE
BROWN, JAY
BERGER, JOYCE
CARTER, DAVID LEWIS
CARTER, CECELIA
CARTER, DAVID
CARTER, EDWARD
CARTER, GLENN
CARTER, GLORIA
CARTER, HENRY
CARTER, JEWEL
CARTER, PAUL
CARTER, SAMMY
COLEMAN, MYRA
COLES, ARKIE MAY
CRAFT, ALFONSA
CRAFT, CYNTHIA
CRAFT, WALTER
DAVIS, CAROL
DAVIS, EVA
DAVIS, JANICE
FITZGERALD, ANDREW
FITZGERALD, CLIFTON
FITZGERALD, ELIZABETH
FITZGERALD, IRENE
FITZGERALD, JOHN

FITZGERALD, LILLIE
FITZGERALD, MARTHA
FITZGERALD, VELMA
FITZGERALD, WAYNE
FITZGERALD, WILLIE
GALLOWAY, ELBERT
GEE, JACQUELINE
GUY, NANCY
GUY, TERESA
HARRIS, CAROL
HARRIS, CARROLL
HARRIS, COLEMAN
HARRIS, WILFRED
HENRY, DOTTIE
HIGHTOWER, WILLIE
HODNETT, JULIET
HODNETT, MARILYN
HURT, THOMAS
JACKSON, WANDA
JONE, JEAN CAROLYN
JONES, CLARICE
JONES, EVANGELINE
JONES, GLORIA
JONES, WINDELL
LOGAN, JOHNNY
LOGAN, ROBERT
LOVELACE, CHARLES ROOSEVELT
LOVELACE, DANETTA
LOVELACE, DANIEL
LOVELACE, JULIA
LUCK, WALTER
MARR, PATRICIA
ONEAL, JANICE
PRICE, ANNIE

PRICE, MOSES
ROBERTSON, ERNEST
ROBINSON, BETTY
ROBINSON, EDITH
ROBINSON, EDITH MARIE
ROBINSON, NANCY
ROBINSON, PATRICE
SHELTON, MICHAEL
SHELTON, WANDA FAY
SKATES, DAVID
SMITH, DINAH
TANNER, CLARISSA
TARPLEY, ALFRITA
TAYLOR, JAMES
TAYLOR, PHYLLIS
TAYLOR, STANLEY
THOMAS, EDWARD
WORD, SAMMY
WHARTON, CAROLYN
WHITE, CORNELIUS
WHITE, JACK
WILSON, CHARLES
WITCHER, DOLLY
WITCHER, JUANITA
WITCHER, MIKE
WITCHER, RANDOLPH
WOMACK, DEBORAH
WOMACK, LARRY
WOMACK, RUBY
WRIGHT, JAMES
WRIGHT, JIMMY LEWIS



Randolph Scott Witcher

What is your name and age? Randolph Scott Witcher- 72

Where did you grow up? Woodlawn in Chatham, VA

Which school did you attend? When? I attended Chatham High School from the Fall of 1966 until Spring of 1970.

What was your experience with the integration in the schools? My experiences were mixed. We went to their school. Some white students liked and accepted it and some didn't. After the first year, most students accepted it. Blacks greatly improved the extra curricular activities at Chatham. This included athletics, Chorus, band and other activities. There were some negative incidents but I tried to ignore them.

If you were a part of "Freedom of Choice", why did you choose to attend a white school? I chose to go to Chatham High because it was much closer than riding the bus to Northside. It took me an hour to get to Northside and I could be at Chatham High in ten minutes. I brought information home from Northside concerning Freedom of choice. I discussed it with my mother. We decided that I would go to Chatham High along with my younger sister. I had one brother and one sister that stayed at

Clarissa Tanner Knight

During the spring of my seventh grade year my parents made the decision to send me to Chatham High (the recognized white high school) and not Northside High (the recognized African-American High School). I know that this was not an easy decision and my feelings weighed heavily in the final determination. Why? I don't know after all I was a 13 year old child who depended on my parents for my very existence. Several other students who were close friends decided to attend the "white" school too.

As I remember there was no fear nor overwhelming anxiety. We felt the same apprehension that all eighth graders feel as they enter high school at thirteen years of age. Is this the right outfit? Does my hair look ok? Should I take a book bag? What about lunch, buy or carry? Will I get to my classes on time? What if I get lost?

As the day began, and my parents allowed me to ride the bus, excitement overwhelmed me. After all I had never ridden a school bus. There were several of us African Americans who rode the bus and loaded at the same spot. If the White students felt any animosity they did not show it.

As the year progressed we began to miss our friends. After all our social lives included those students who decided to attend the "black school". We joined the band at Chatham High, we joined choir, and those of us who were athletic played sports. I was fortunate because I played the piano and became the pianist for the choir. The students admired my ability and so did their parents. It was easy for me. However it was not easy for all. We missed the spirit filled athletic competitions at Northside. Boyfriends and girlfriends attended Northside High School. The week-ends were spent with our friends from Northside High School. We attended church with those same friends. However our culture was under attack and there was nothing we could do about it. Sure the "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" era was ushered in and we all wore afros and dashikis. I guess in our immature and feeble minds this helps us believe that we were not intimidated and had a grasp on our history. My grandmother always said "stupid is as stupid does." There is no other word for us but stupid. We thought that symbols made us superior.

The questions were asked and still remain today, why did you go to Chatham High? Do you think you got a better education? Did it prepare you better than Northside for the next level? Are you glad you made that decision? Would you do it again? Have you remained friends with any of your white counterparts from Chatham High?

Once those "Freedom of Choice" students became juniors, total integration was the law. There was significant resentment. The African-American students did not want to be at Chatham High and the White students did not want them to be there. For the first time we, "the freedom of choice" kids had a substantial chance at becoming leaders. We coveted the roles of class officers, SCA officers, Homecoming representatives, Miss Chatham High, editor of the school newspaper and the school year book. For the first time I felt and understood racism. I was not a threat during ("freedom of choice years"). Even though I thought I had the white support, I did not but once I received support from my African-American community along with several in the white community my white classmates were frozen in fear. The term used to describe me was token. As a result of the support from both communities I became All-State Choir, Student Body President, Homecoming Representative, Runner up in the Miss Chatham High Pageant, and the lead in two musicals. I must give a tribute to Mr. Hampton Benton who saw in us (the Freedom of Choice) students talent, possibilities, hope, and bright futures. Out of that group we became, social workers, medical techs, ministers, educators and musicians. It has been a wonderful life. I miss Chatham every day.

Juliet Hodnett

What is your name and age? Juliet (None) Hodnett - 71

Where did you grow up? West of Chatham near Grenrock or Huntstown.

Which school did you attend? Chatham High School

When? Fall '67 -Spring of '71

What was your experience with the integration in the schools? She had minor negative experiences but she did not really want to be there because she did not like White Folks because she didn't trust them. She felt that her minor experiences may have been because of the status of her father in Chatham. He was well known and well respected. She remembered one incident where a teacher threw her papers to her. This immediately stopped after a parent -teacher conference. She thinks the world seems more racist now than in '67 when she went to Chatham High under Freedom of Choice.

Reason For choosing Freedom of Choice: Parents directed her to go.

Juliet said that she is glad that this research is being done and will be made available to the public.

Henry Lewis Carter

What is your name and age? Henry Lewis Carter - 74

Where did you grow up? Hunts Town Chatham, Virginia

Which school did you attend? When? Chatham High School? 65-66 and 66-67 Graduated

What was your experience with the integration in the schools? His experience was not good. You were the **only black** there his first year. Henry stated that students would throw paper, balls, push him or hit him and then deny it. He was sent to the office by the principal and nothing was done. This continued throughout the school year. Nothing good happened that first year. No students or teachers were friendly or wanted to socialize with him. Henry played in the band for his two years at CHS. There was slightly less harassment the next year with more Black students attending. Approximately twelve Blacks attended CHS his senior year. Henry has attended two class reunions. He last attended one five or six years ago. He doesn't know if the class is still having reunions.

If you were a part of "Freedom of Choice", why did you choose to attend a white school? Henry attended CHS because the law allowed it. He wanted to make sure that integration was going to take place. He hoped by doing that that other Blacks would step up to continue integrating Virginia Schools. Henry's parents and neighbors were against him attending CHS. They still felt that Blacks had their schools and whites had their schools. Henry was informed of Freedom of choice through the news media.

What were some of the most challenging aspects of your experience?

What were some of the positive experiences? Henry stated that he did not have any positive experiences at Chatham.

Dolly Bass

In the fall of 1966, after graduating from Central Elementary School, I was given an opportunity under the "Freedom of Choice Plan" to attend Chatham High School, an all white high school in the town of Chatham, VA.

This was a milestone in my life and an experience I will never forget. I was anxious and excited to be a part of something so surreal.

My experience during this transition was met with discrimination as well as acceptance. At no time was I deterred from continuing my high school education at Chatham High School.

My observation of what I endured my first years at Chatham High School was necessary in order to acknowledge the negative/positive impact of integration. Change is not always easily embraced, but it is necessary if we wish to advance in our society and continue as a human race.

By the fall of 1969, Chatham High School became fully integrated. I am honored to be among the students who contributed towards the advancement and mission of education equality.

Patrice Robinson

My name was Patrice Robinson when I was a student. Now my name is Patrice Robinson Harris. My age is 71.

I grew up in Chatham, VA

I attended Central Elementary School, Northside High School (8th and 10 grades) and Chatham High School (9th, 11th, and 12th grades).

I remember being forced to take an English literature class at Chatham High School in my senior year. Other Black students were also forced to take the English literature class. I remember one Black student tried to change her class to another English class because she said that she was going to go to college and needed a better English class. She was not allowed to change her class. When I got to Norfolk State College I was not allowed to take the beginners freshman English class. I had to take two semesters of remedial English classes because I scored so low on the grammar test; therefore, I did not take regular freshman English until I was a sophomore.

I was part of "Freedom of Choice". I chose to go to a White school because my siblings attended the school, and the Black school bathroom was so dirty that I did not want to go in it. The White school bathroom was clean.

The most challenging aspect of my experience in school was knowing that I was one of the poorest students in the school, whether the school was Black or White. In elementary school I rarely had lunch. In the Black high school, I was allowed to work in the cafeteria, and I got lunch for working. In the White school, I got free lunches.

My positive experiences in the White school were getting free lunches and a clean bathroom. Also, I was allowed to take Home Economics in the White school. My sister and I took the same class, and we cooked food. We would choose recipes that had good ingredients. Also, in the Home Economics class I realized that I was brave. The teacher asked us to write down what we ate for breakfast and dinner each day. At first I was ashamed to write down what I ate, then I decided that I would not lie. I wrote down gravy and a biscuit for breakfast, and beans and a biscuit for dinner.