

Freedom of Choice Students
Dan River High School



Adams, Deborah	Ferguson, Connie	Gunn, Charlie	Saunders, Angela
Adams, Debra	Ferguson, Cynthia	Gunn, Faye	Saunders, Augusta
Adams, Harry	Ferguson, Frederick	Gunn, Nancy	Saunders, Michael
Anderson, Reuben	Ferguson, Gwendolyn	Gunn, Sandra	Saunders, Olin
Beavers, Edwina	Ferguson, Jerry	Hardy, Zelle	Saunders, Russell
Beavers, Shirley	Ferguson, Kenneth	Harper, Wayne	Saunders, Stanley
Bennett, Yvonne	Ferguson, Lawrence	Howard, Gwendolyn	Stokes, Jackie
Brooks, Marilyn	Ferguson, Sharon	Hunt, Gayle	Terry, Donald
Carter, Teresa	Ferguson, Sheila	Hunt, James	Terry, Helena
Colton, Sylvia	Ferguson, Sylvia	Hunt, Odessa	Terry, Larry
Culley, Diane	Ferguson, Vanessa	Jones, Harry	Terry, Margie
Culley, Tora	Fitzgerald, Delores	Logan, David	Thomas, James
Davis, Isabella	Foster, Carroll	Luck, Mark	Thomas, Percy
Davis, John	Foster, Duane	Mays, Patricia	Wilson, Avicia
Davis, Lavoris	Foster, Janet	Mclaughlin, Donald	Wilson, Carolyn
Davis, Rachel	Fuller, Connie	Motley, Deborah	Wilson, Daniel
Deering, Arlene	Fuller, Valerie	Osborne, Aquilla	Wilson, Margie
Deering, Yvonne	Garland, Dennis	Osborne, Deborah	Woltz, Edna
Fallen, Curtis	Garland, Larry	Pritchett, Bonnie	Womack, Emily
Fallen, Debra	Giggetts, Laverne	Reed, Rita	Wood, Harrison
Fallen, Howard	Giggetts, Warren	Richardson, Paul	Wood, Phyllis
Fallen, Michael	Glass, Ira	Rone, Elaine	Wood, Sylvania
Fallen, Sterling	Glass, Margie	Rone, Harvey	
Ferguson, Cheryl	Glass, Romeo	Rone, Janet	

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

DAN RIVER HIGH SCHOOL - FEBRUARY 17, 2024 - 9:30AM

SELECTIONS	SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION
WELCOME	MINISTER GAYLE H. BREAKLEY, FREEDOM OF CHOICE STUDENT
PRAYER	REVEREND PERCY PASS, PASTOR LAUREL GROVE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
GREETINGS	DR. MARK JONES SUPERINTENDENT PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE	MR. MICHAEL BROWN FREEDOM OF CHOICE COMMITTEE
MOMENTS OF REFLECTION	MRS. MILDRED HUNT, FREEDOM OF CHOICE PARENT MS. RUTH CHANEY, FORMER BUSINESS TEACHER, DRHS MRS. DORIS BOLTON, FORMER MATH TEACHER, DRHS MRS. DOROTHY NEALS, FORMER HISTORY TEACHER, DRHS
SELECTIONS	SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION
SPEAKERS	MRS. SANDRA G. CAREY, FREEDOM OF CHOICE STUDENT MR. STAN SAUNDERS, FREEDOM OF CHOICE STUDENT
SELECTION	SOUTHSIDE REGION CELEBRATION

UNVEILING OF PLAQUE - LOBBY

FUNDING PROVIDED BY DANVILLE REGIONAL FOUNDATION

FREEDOM OF CHOICE STUDENTS

DAN RIVER HIGH SCHOOL - FEBRUARY 17, 2024 - 9:30AM

ADAMS, DEBORAH
ADAMS, DEBRA
ADAMS, HARRY
ANDERSON, REUBEN
BEAVERS, EDWINA
BEAVERS, SHIRLEY
BENNETT, YVONNE
BROOKS, MARILYN
CARTER, TERESA
COLTON, SYLVIA
CULLEY, DIANE
CULLEY, TORA
DAVIS, ISABELLA
DAVIS, JOHN
DAVIS, LAVORIS
DAVIS, RACHEL
DEERING, ARLENE
DEERING, YVONNE
FALLEN, CURTIS
FALLEN, DEBRA
FALLEN, HOWARD
FALLEN, MICHAEL
FALLEN, STERLING
FERGUSON, CHERYL
FERGUSON, CONNIE
FERGUSON, CYNTHIA
FERGUSON, FREDERICK
FERGUSON, GWENDOLYN
FERGUSON, JERRY
FERGUSON, KENNETH
FERGUSON, LAWRENCE
FERGUSON, SHARON

FERGUSON, SHEILA
FERGUSON, SYLVIA
FERGUSON, VANESSA
FITZGERALD, DELORES
FOSTER, CARROLL
FOSTER, DUANE
FOSTER, JANET
FULLER, CONNIE
FULLER, VALERIE
GARLAND, DENNIS
GARLAND, LARRY
GIGGETTS, LAVERNE
GIGGETTS, WARREN
GLASS, IRA
GLASS, MARGIE
GLASS, ROMEO
GUNN, CHARLIE
GUNN, FAYE
GUNN, NANCY
GUNN, SANDRA
HARDY, ZELLE
HARPER, WAYNE
HOWARD, GWENDOLYN
HUNT, GAYLE
HUNT, JAMES
HUNT, ODESSA
JONES, HARRY
LOGAN, DAVID

LUCK, MARK
MAYS, PATRICIA
MCLAUGHLIN, DONALD
MOTLEY, DEBORAH
OSBORNE, AQUILLA
OSBORNE, DEBORAH
PRITCHETT, BONNIE
REED, RITA
RICHARDSON, PAUL
RONE, ELAINE
RONE, HARVEY
RONE, JANET
SAUNDERS, ANGELA
SAUNDERS, AUGUSTA
SAUNDERS, MICHAEL
SAUNDERS, OLIN
SAUNDERS, RUSSELL
SAUNDERS, STANLEY
STOKES, JACKIE
TERRY, DONALD
TERRY, HELENA
TERRY, LARRY
TERRY, MARGIE
THOMAS, JAMES
THOMAS, PERCY
WILSON, AVICIA
WILSON, CAROLYN
WILSON, DANIEL
WILSON, MARGIE
WOLTZ, EDNA
WOMACK, EMILY
WOOD, HARRISON
WOOD, PHYLLIS
WOOD, SYLVANIA



Bonnie D. Pritchett

What is your name? **Bonnie D. Pritchett**

Where did you grow up? **I grew up in Ringgold, VA**

Which school did you attend? **I attended Dan River High School**

What was your experiences with the integration of the school? **[See Below]**

What was your most challenging aspects? **[See Below]**

My experience with regards to high school integration, began in 1967, ironically at Kentuck Elementary School located in Ringgold, Virginia. The guidance counselor from the nearby high school sent information to all seventh graders asking us where we wanted to attend high school in September as an eighth grader.

This “profoundly life altering letter”, as I now reflect back, stated that I had the opportunity to become one of the “Freedom of Choice” students, prior to what would evolve into school system wide integration. I took the information home to my parents for discussion. My guidance counselor took our seventh-grade classes to Southside High School which was an all-black school. After visiting Southside High School and seeing the overpowering structure of the school building and its debilitating condition, I was afraid to go to the eighth grade at Southside High School. [As I reflect on it now, I think it may have been not just my perception of Southside High School, but a combination of feelings which a seventh grader experiences with the transition to high school). I went home and told my parents that day and let them know, I wanted to attend Dan River High School. We had some discussion over it. Ultimately, we decided that I would begin my high school journey as an 8- grader, in fall of 1967 at Dan River High School. This decision required my parents’ written consent.

The 60’s as a decade, was a notable time of change in America, in Virginia and even in Pittsylvania County. We were in the midst of a socially conscious period in which Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King’s Civil Rights Movement was a critical backdrop for social justice, integration and an end to separate but equal, particularly in our school systems.

When September 1967 came, and it was time to go to Dan River High School, I caught the bus in front of my house. [My bus driver lived at the far end of my dead-end street on a farm.] During my first week at Dan River High School [DRHS], I discovered there were two other black students attending DRHS. Within the same week, school officials rerouted the bus route so that all three of the black students could ride the same bus. Memorably, we three had to share the same seat each day. I would, as a benefit of living on the same road as the bus driver, and getting on the bus first in the mornings, get the seat we all three would share. In the afternoon, however, it was a different story. The white kids would take our seats and we would have to stand each day. The bus driver would put on brakes and our books would fall to the floor and once we reached down to pick them up the white kids would kick them to the front or back of the bus. We three couldn’t lean against a seat because the white students verbalized that they were afraid to touch us. This was a daily ride from hell, the same behaviors initiated by the same brothers and whomever chose to join in, on any given day. Certainly, being a “Freedom of Choice” student, didn’t include freedom of choice for school bus seats.

Within the first few weeks of being a student at Dan River High School, I encountered discomfort from white males. I was called the “fat black girl”, the “N” word or “gorilla/ape/monkey” daily by the white

guys. Some white girls would call me “fat and black”. When I went to the restroom, some would say negative things and run out the restroom. The males would block the hallway or steps and I would have to go all the way around out of the way to get to class on time. The males would trip me in class if I was going to sharpen my pencil and in the halls. I had a few school mates who “spit” on me especially in my hair on the bus. While waiting in line at the cafeteria they would break in line in front of me. I was hit several times with food. During physical education [PE] class, the girls wouldn’t use the open shower, they pretended to shower by wetting only their arms and legs, but I took a whole shower each day of PE. I was very ashamed of my large black body in a class of all white girls, but I did as the teacher instructed me to do. I had to worry about what I looked like each day in my clothes, my hair, and my self-care skills/hygiene but most of all my self-esteem. My self-esteem was challenged everyday in new ways and old ways. I rarely look back on these times because of their unpleasantness. Occasionally, I wonder, what fate or fortune came to the students who openly taunted me and others like me? Did they become leaders, teachers, criminals? I just wonder. Are they now responsible for our government, our children, etc.?

During the first two years of high school (1967 and 1968), as an 8- and 9- grader, there were less than ten black students attending DRHS. In 1969, all county school’s students were forced into integration. Students had no choice, so students had to attend in their district regardless of the color of their skin. In 1969, when the schools were totally integrated, the incoming blacks had a sit-in for several weeks in which all blacks took part. There is something to be said for the increased numbers of minority students—it meant we had a stronger voice, some perceived power, and an increased sense of security.

There is a positive aspect in my story of integration in the schools. I had a class with a white friend from the community so when I would see her at school this made my day much easier, we walked to classes together and played in the afternoon together. We are still friends today.

The most challenging aspect to my high school experience was the fact that I knew I wanted to go to college, and I had to make sure that the counselor signed me up for the right prep classes to help prepare me. I had to place trust in her and assume she wanted the same for me. I had to stay focused on what was most important to me each day, as I walked the halls going to classes. I knew that my parents couldn’t afford to send me to college, so the guidance counselor helped me to apply for scholarships. I attended the college she said that would be good for me and majored in my chosen field. I attended and majored in Special Education and taught for 35 years until retirement. The college she recommended was great for me. My trust in her was not misplaced.

I thought things would be different when it came to black and white students attending the same school for the same reason-- to get an education. Let me just say, bullying reached its pinnacle during this time each when black children entered this newfound “frontier”. This wasn’t exclusive to Dan River High School or Virginia. This was the scenario throughout America, where in some places, students had to be escorted by police into their new schools. Let us just say, that there were many little Ruby Bridges breaking barriers, in their respective communities, without police escort. Some days were better than others in terms of how I was treated. That fall of 1967 and subsequent years of high school, provided me an invaluable life lesson. I learned quickly and in a very direct way that change is not always on your side regardless of your race. I grew up being around white people due to where my mother and father worked. Learning to balance the negative, positive or indifference for the sake of education and achievement was all a part of integration.

I want to thank my creator for bringing me through it all. This made me a stronger person and to look at life differently. One can only come this far by FAITH!

Manie Edna Briscoe

1. Name: Manie Edna Briscoe
2. I grew up in Ringgold, Va
3. I attended Dan River High School, Sept. 1964-May, 1969
4. My experience with the integration in the school:

I experienced a tremendous amount of racism from the time I boarded the bus, throughout the day at school. The staff was not very engaging and it was quite disappointing. I would never wish that experience on anyone who wanted to get an education.

Over the years, I completely chose to close that experience in my mind. As the years progressed, more African- American students attended the school and this contributed to a more positive environment.

5. The most challenging aspects of my experience was riding the bus, making friends, classroom behaviors and participation in any sports,
6. Positive Experiences: Other African-American students came in the later years