PRESIDENT CARMICHAEL’S FAILURE TO COMMIT: CHALLENGES
OF LEADERSHIP IN THE DESEGREGATION OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

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ABSTRACT

Oliver Cromwell Carmichael, the University of Alabama’s 19th president, was president during a time of controversy. A native of Alabama, President Carmichael was aware that segregation was a deep-rooted tradition in the South, and, having worked in New York, he was aware of the progressive liberal ways of the North.\(^1\) President Carmichael found himself in the middle of these two groups, trying, but unable, to please both. On February 1\(^{st}\), 1956 the University of Alabama admitted its first African American student, Autherine Lucy. Within a week the University dismissed her because riots protesting her enrollment were increasingly violent. This would be the beginning of the University of Alabama becoming the symbol of Southern resistance to integration and defiance of the law.\(^2\)

President Carmichael was a cultured, modern, and highly experienced educator and administrator in the world of higher education, yet he failed as president of the University of Alabama, and more important, he failed at desegregating the university when he was given an opportune chance. This study explored President Carmichael’s career in higher education and the leadership traits he did and did not possess. Using historical and archival research, the purpose of this study was to examine President Carmichael’s personality, relationships, professional behavior, and the context that surrounded his presidency at the University of Alabama in order to better understand the reasons behind the choices he made.


DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Joshua Wever, and my parents, Matthew and Jeanne Green. They have always believed in and supported my determination to achieve my goals.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I came across this dissertation topic in my very first class of my PhD program. This class was History of Higher Education taught by Dr. Wayne Urban. In conversation with the class, Dr. Urban just happened to bring up President Carmichael and the first African American student to ever enroll at the University of Alabama, Autherine Lucy. Ever since he mentioned them on that first day of class I knew I wanted my dissertation to center around both Carmichael and Lucy and the failed desegregation of the University of Alabama.

Dr. Wayne Urban played a large role in getting me started on this topic and fostering my passion for historical writing. His constant encouragement and faith in my abilities got me through my first year of the PhD program. He then introduced me to Dr. Philo Hutcheson, my dissertation chair. Dr. Hutcheson has supported me through this process for four years, and I am forever grateful for his mentorship and guidance. His honesty, availability, and wisdom were cherished and valued. I also want to thank my committee members, Dr. Pruitt, Dr. Bagley, Dr. Holley, and Dr. Mobley, for their influence on this work. Their contributions were helpful and thoughtful over the course of this dissertation.

There are several fellow doctoral classmates that I would not have been able to get through this experience without. Larry Faulkner assisted me in the historical dissertation writing process and was readily available through email whenever I needed advice. Jessica Harrison and Megan Welborn, who have become my dear friends, were supporters and confidents from the beginning. I would especially like to thank my dearest classmate, my husband, Joshua Wever. He
was and is my biggest fan. Going through this program with him has been a journey and experience that not many married couples get to go through. I cannot imagine having done it without him. His unwavering support and love are extraordinary. I am also appreciative of our two little chihuahua study buddies, Finn and Moose.

Last, I want to thank my parents and siblings for always supporting this long journey I have taken them on! They constantly checked in and cheered on each little victory. Whether it was an A on a paper, a conference presentation, or passing comprehensive finals, they cheered on each moment as if they were monumental moments. It’s amazing what a difference a supportive family can make.
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Oliver Cromwell Carmichael was a Southern moderate who served as president of the University of Alabama during a time where the entire South was in conflict with the 1954 and 1955 U.S. Supreme Court decisions in *Brown v. Board*, one of the legal cornerstones of the Civil Rights Movement. A native of Alabama, President Carmichael was aware that segregation was a deep-rooted tradition in the South, and having worked in the state of New York for many years, he was aware of the somewhat progressive liberal ways of the North.\(^1\) President Carmichael found himself in the middle of these two groups, trying, but unable, to please both.

In 1954 and 1955, when the Supreme Court ruled that desegregation of public schools was unconstitutional and to proceed with desegregation “with all deliberate speed,” a new and important context for racism and segregation in the South was set. The University of Alabama was soon faced with controversy over the first African American student, Autherine Lucy, and her plans to attend the University of Alabama in February of 1956. Would the University follow the Supreme Court ruling or would the University defy it?

Oliver Cromwell Carmichael, as the president and face of the university, was at the center of the controversy. When controversies happen under a university president’s watch, whether the president has control over the situation or not, they are the person everyone blames. The president often takes the fall for decisions and actions taken by the university administration.

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President Carmichael had all eyes on him, waiting to see which move he would make and which side he would take.

President Carmichael’s leadership and his failures at the University of Alabama specifically have never been studied in-depth. There have been several books and articles written about the attempted desegregation of the University of Alabama in 1956. President Carmichael’s role in the attempted desegregation is mentioned, but in totality there has never been an examination of his leadership and the impact it had on his career and the University of Alabama.

President Carmichael’s story is a significant one for it explains partially why the University of Alabama remained desegregated until 1963, instead of desegregating in 1956 when it had the opportunity. It is also a significant example of how and why some presidents in the South failed at desegregating their university in the 1950s and 1960s. President Carmichael’s actions and decisions as a university president can also provide insight into how university presidents today often have to make a swift, yet well thought-out, reaction to unexpected controversial moments. In these moments, usually the entire university and surrounding public citizens are waiting and watching to see what the president says or does. The president faces a large of amount of pressure in these situations and their actions can have grave impact on their career and the future and reputation of the university.

President Carmichael’s failure as president of the University of Alabama has remained somewhat of a mystery. His failure boils down to this question: How could a man, with so much experience, a man that was known as one of the greatest educators and administrators the state of Alabama had ever produced, fail at the job he had waited half his life for? One Tuscaloosa news article described the situation as “there was a break in segregation in 1956, a three-day interlude
which sparked rioting that threatened the life of the University’s first black student and aborted
the presidency of one of the greatest men to head the institution.”

Through examining President Carmichael’s personality, life experiences, the context of
his presidency and his leadership style, while comparing that to other university presidents in the
South at the time, I hope to gain a better understanding of how and why he addressed the
controversial issues facing the University of Alabama. From President Carmichael’s story, we
can take these lessons and translate them to how presidents could or should handle controversies
that they face today.

**Methodology**

The methodology for this dissertation was historical research. This study was largely
conducted through the examination of the Oliver Cromwell Carmichael Papers in the W.S. Hoole
Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama. The following types of primary
sources were examined: newspapers, professional letters, personal letters, court documents,
records of public speeches. When using historical methods to develop a research study, it is
important to be aware of and recognize the issues that make analyzing and interpreting historical
documents challenging. In the book *Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods*, Bucheli
and Wadhwani describe these issues pertaining to the interpretation and analysis of historical
sources as:

First, sources are not direct observations of action, and certainly do not provide
comprehensive or controlled evidence on the subject under consideration. Second,
sources are typically fragments or incomplete accounts that were produced by authors
with personal or institutional perspectives that may not be readily apparent. And third,

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3 Oliver Cromwell Carmichael Papers, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, University of Alabama Libraries.
sources from the past may have been produced in cultural or social contexts very
different from our own that need to be taken into account in their interpretation.

The authors then offer two solutions to the previous mentioned issues: “a triangulation of various
sources to reduce bias and increase confidence in the robustness of the research results; and an
iterative process (often referred to as the “hermeneutic circle”), which situates texts within their
historical contexts and in relation to other texts.”

One of the purposes of using the hermeneutic circle is to attempt to develop an objective
viewpoint of the text that is being interpreted, rather than a subjective viewpoint. In order to
obtain an objective viewpoint, one must consider the individual parts of the text, how the parts
inform the whole text, and how the parts and the whole are situated within a specific context.
The “circle” part of the “hermeneutic circle” is referring to the process of going back and forth
between interpreting the whole text (as parts) and the context the text is situated in (the whole).

The two solutions to overcome the challenges of interpreting historical text offered by Bucheli
and Wadhwani are ones that I attempted to implement throughout this entire research study.

Once a thorough examination of President Carmichael’s story was completed using only
historical sources from the archives, that archival evidence was then used to determine what
caused Carmichael to fail as president of the University of Alabama. I then turned to secondary
sources, which were published works that also looked into President Carmichael’s experiences to
see if my findings and conclusions matched up with the conclusions drawn from the secondary
sources. The secondary sources that were used consisted of journal articles and published books.

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4 Marcelo Bucheli & R. Daniel Wadhwani, Organizations in Time: History, Theory, Methods

2018).
Once the secondary sources were reviewed, I then went back to the primary sources in the archives to fill in any gaps or missing pieces I discovered within the secondary sources. While secondary sources are useful, they can often leave out certain pieces of history as well as include a layer of interpretation or analysis. Primary sources serve as direct first-hand account of historical events. However, sometimes even within primary sources certain pieces of history are left out. For example, one of the presidential reports from Carmichael’s presidency and the presidential report from the year following the end of his presidency at the University of Alabama were not found within the W. S. Hoole Special Collections Library where all of the other presidential reports were found.

From all of these sources combined, conclusions were drawn about President Carmichael’s leadership style. His leadership style was then compared to accounts of other Southern university presidents and was examined through various leadership theories. By comparing Carmichael’s leadership and his experiences to other Southern University presidents it can be seen that he was not the only president in a very similar and difficult situation while being faced with working with, or under, a group of people that were stuck in their ways and unwilling to budge. It can also be seen what Carmichael possibly could have or should have done as a leader to better the situation.

Throughout this entire process of analyzing and interpreting the text I made an effort to be aware of any biases or subjectivity that I may have brought to my interpretations. By attempting to be aware of my biases and the subjective interpretation that may result from that, I was able to better see when I was not viewing something objectively. I was consistently and constantly checking and evaluating my personal biases and purposefully doing my best to set
them aside when conducting and analyzing this research. However, it is impossible to rid one’s self of all biases completely.

**Literature**

One of the most well-known published works that has been written about Oliver Cromwell Carmichael in some depth is the book *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama* by Culpepper E. Clark. This book gave a detailed account of two major events in the University of Alabama’s history: The first African American student to enroll at the University of Alabama in 1956, Autherine Lucy, and Governor Wallace’s infamous 1963 stand at Foster Auditorium in an attempt to keep two African American students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, from enrolling at the University of Alabama.  

In the first half of Clark’s book, Autherine Lucy’s attempt to enroll, and stay enrolled, at the University of Alabama was documented in detail. The author provided a background of the people who had key roles in this situation, including the University of Alabama Administration. One of these key people that the author examined is of course President Carmichael. A brief background of President Carmichael’s experiences and reputation before becoming the president is laid out as well his relationship with Board of Trustees members, especially the leader and chairman of the Board of Trustees, Hill Ferguson. Clark goes on to explain President Carmichael’s leadership style and how he handled the issue of desegregation at the University of Alabama. Clark displayed both sensitivity to President Carmichael and Southern moderates in leadership roles, as he noted they faced extreme pressure and resistance from groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the network of the White supremacist Citizens’ Councils across the state, while

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also portraying President Carmichael and other Southern moderates as leaders who lacked
courage and conviction to stand up and make a change.\textsuperscript{7}

B. J. Hollars has also presented a detailed account of the happenings in 1956 and 1963 at
the University of Alabama in his book titled \textit{Opening the Doors: The Desegregation of the
University of Alabama and the Fight for Civil Rights in Tuscaloosa}. Hollars provided a detailed
account of both events, much like Clark did, but Hollars’ main goal was to also examine the
personal stories from citizens of Tuscaloosa who were alive during the 1956 and 1963 events.
His other main goal was to focus on the civil rights movement happening within Tuscaloosa at
the time.\textsuperscript{8} Hollars’ book provides important context to the events that happened at the University
of Alabama.

While much of the findings in this study greatly align with Clark’s and Hollars’ findings,
this study filled in some holes about Oliver Carmichael that Clark and Hollars were unable to
incorporate into their books, simply because President Carmichael was not their sole focus.
Clark’s book, Hollars’ book, and this study all relied heavily on information from the W.S.
Hoole Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama. How this historical information
from the archives was used, analyzed, and interpreted is what made these works different and
unique.

In the historical biography, \textit{Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University} by
Paul Keith Conkin & Henry Lee Swint, a detailed history of Vanderbilt University from 1854 to
1982 was provided to the reader. During the years of 1935 to 1946 Carmichael played key roles


\textsuperscript{8} B. J. Hollars, \textit{Opening the Doors: The Desegregation of the University of Alabama and the
at Vanderbilt University, as he served as the Dean of the Graduate School and the Senior College and then as Vanderbilt University’s third chancellor. Carmichael’s accomplishments, failures, and personality traits while serving Vanderbilt University were well documented in this book and set the stage for Carmichael’s future endeavors at the University of Alabama. This book was an excellent resource in an attempt to understand who President Carmichael was as an individual and a leader, as understanding someone’s past is crucial to understanding their future choices. Much like Clark and Hollars, Conkin and Swint’s focus was not solely Oliver Carmichael, but instead he was just a small piece of their larger body of work. This study attempted to focus on mainly President Carmichael and how his personal experiences and choices shaped or did not shape the University of Alabama’s history in regard to segregation and desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s.

Within this study I also examined an in-depth comparison of President Carmichael’s leadership style and handling of desegregation to that of other Southern university presidents during the same time period. These Southern university presidents also had to handle similar situations in regard to race. I compared President Carmichael’s experience in failing to desegregate the University of Alabama to other Southern presidents’ experiences in desegregating their institution in order to determine what qualities or aspects did or did not make a university president in the South successful at desegregating their university.

The main piece of work that I used, and that proved very helpful in this comparison, is Melissa Kean’s *Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt*. Kean provided an in-depth look into how each of the presidents of these

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five private universities in the South handled the impending push for desegregation by the government, Northerners, students, and faculty while also balancing the strong desire for continued segregation by the majority of the people in the South. From this book I focused on President Hollis Edens from Duke University and Chancellor Harvie Branscomb from Vanderbilt University.\(^\text{10}\)

I also examined and compared President Carmichael’s tenure and leadership style to that of another leader of a similar institution in the South. That person was Chancellor John Williams from the University of Mississippi. Chancellor Williams served as chancellor for twenty-one years, from 1947 to 1968. Chancellor Williams was present when James Meredith, an African American student, was admitted to the University of Mississippi and when controversy ensued shortly after. Chancellor Williams held a pivotal position during this crisis.

Chancellor Williams actions and experiences serve as a good comparison to President Carmichael’s choices during the integration crisis.\(^\text{11}\) The book *Making Haste Slowly*, by David Sansing, described the troubling times of desegregation of higher education in the state of Mississippi. The author discussed how the board of trustees at higher education institutions across the state were bound so much by history and heritage that they felt the need to resist the 1954 *Brown v. Board* resolution put forth by the United States Supreme Court. They were all wholly unprepared for the many changes that they would soon be forced to give in to. College presidents of that time were essentially too timid towards the board of trustees. This nervousness caused the presidents to have to accept the changes they were faced with. When it came to


\(^{11}\) J. D. Williams Collection (MUM00538). Archives and Special Collections, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.
Chancellor John Williams of the University of Mississippi, the author stated that it was not his leadership style that impacted desegregation at the University of Mississippi, but instead it was the political influence.\textsuperscript{12}

It is important to compare President Carmichael’s experiences with that of other Southern university presidents of the same time period so that we can fully understand the context that presidential leaders in the South were operating within. Comparing President Carmichael to other Southern university presidents will also help to illuminate the success and failures of certain leadership traits. If we only look at President Carmichael’s experiences, it would be hard to make judgements and conclusions on President Carmichael’s leadership style as well as what leadership traits led to a successful presidency.

**Leadership Theories**

Last, I examined several leadership theories regarding university presidency and related them back to President Carmichael’s leadership style and the leadership style of the other noted university presidents. This study focused on individual context rather than organizational context, which is why individual leadership qualities are important to examine. The leadership style of Oliver Cromwell Carmichael and university presidents in general was one of the overarching focuses of this study as it helps to understand how Carmichael’s leadership style affected his failures and successes in the three and a half years he spent as the University of Alabama president. President Carmichael was seen as lacking in the attribute of leadership, mainly, and possibly only, during his time at the University of Alabama.

Birnbaum stated in his overview of leadership theories of college and university presidents that “studying leadership in colleges and universities is even more difficult than in

many other settings because of the dual control systems, conflicts between professional and administrative authority, unclear goals, and other properties unique to normative, professional organizations.” Birnbaum also stated that colleges and universities are professional organizations that are loosely coupled systems in which managers with limited authority provide support for relatively autonomous specialists, making leadership in higher education a different experience than in more traditional business industries. A more traditional business industry is likely to be more formalized and tightly coupled. In these business industries effective control can be maintained by setting detailed rules, but in higher education behaviors are governed by informal rules with unclear contingencies. In addition, higher education is subject to external influences and control, such as from the government, that may impose certain rules that must be followed. Because of these unique circumstances in higher education, leadership tactics are unique and therefore important to analyze and understand.

While essentially any leadership theory could be applied to this case, there are certain leadership theories in particular that illuminate President Carmichael’s leadership style. The first theory is the theory of transformational leadership, originally initiated by James M. Burns and Bernard M. Bass. This theory is a central and influential leadership theory in education administration. A transformational leader is described as having a charismatic quality that inspires and motivates those they lead, and in return they get enhanced followership and performance from those who work with them. 

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\text{15 Izhak Berkovich, "School Leaders and Transformational Leadership Theory: Time to Part Ways?" Journal of Educational Administration, 54 no. 5 (2016): 609-622.}
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One of President Carmichael’s greatest strengths as a leader in higher education was his charismatic personality. He was so charismatic and likeable that it has been said those qualities were what often got him advances in his career. It was also those qualities that carried him through the job opportunities he was offered. However, being a charismatic leader failed him at the University of Alabama. This study examined how the theory of transformational leadership applies to President Carmichael as well as how it lends to being a successful university president during times of controversy and turmoil.

The second leadership theory that informed this study was one by Arthur M. Cohen. Cohen’s theory speaks to what the leaders of higher education institutions should do in order to successfully desegregate. He argued that the leaders who were approaching this unfamiliar situation of desegregation must have been clear and decisive in the early policy and practice in the desegregation process. Cohen examined the factors of a successful desegregation process based on educational institutions who were able to do so effectively, even though each institution’s overall plan to desegregate may have varied. He argued that there were three common principles in all of the cases in which the transition to a desegregated institution was achieved smoothly. In all of these institutional cases the choice to transition to desegregation was also made voluntarily. The three principles followed were: the school boards made it clear their intent to desegregate, the intent to desegregate was made known to all people who were directly connected with the institution, and all of the institution’s personnel were willing to work toward the goals set for desegregation.16 This study illuminated how President Carmichael was anything

but clear and decisive towards the desegregation process as well as other actions he failed to do while he was president at the University of Alabama.

Last, President Carmichael’s leadership skills will be examined through the lens of Camelia Băeșu’s and Ruxandra Bejinaru’s five broad competency areas of leadership related to successful implementation of change: Creating the case for change, creating structural change, engaging other, implementing and sustaining changes, facilitating and developing capability. This study will examine what the role of the leader is when it comes to implementing a major change. In a study completed by Băeșu and Bejinaru, leadership approaches in regard to organizational change were examined and the authors stated, “Inside the organization, leaders must be promoters of change. Leaders have the power to influence others and motivate them in order to achieve certain goals.”17 They also explained that with change comes resistance. It is human instinct to want to immediately resist change, especially radical changes. It is the leader’s job to overcome this resistance.

This was President Carmichael’s greatest challenge while president at the University of Alabama. He was faced with the challenge of overcoming the massive resistance to a radical change. Băeșu and Bejinaru explained how people react differently to radical versus incremental changes: “Some changes, like incremental changes are easier accepted and implemented as these are gradually and informally applied. In time people get used to this kind of changes and become a routine, unlike radical changes. In contrast, radical changes are much more difficult to be accepted and resistance is stronger.”18 This led to the examination of whether or not President

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18 Ibid.
Carmichael was capable of turning a radical change into an incremental one in order to lower the extreme resistance he was facing; the radical change being desegregation of the University of Alabama and the incremental change being gradualism. With gradualism, the university would have still desegregated but at a pace and quantity that would have made it more likely to succeed given the extreme resistance towards desegregation.

I drew upon these leadership theories to gain a better understanding of not only President Carmichael’s leadership style at the University of Alabama and why this leadership style failed him, but also to determine what leadership style would have made him and other presidents successful during the 1950s and 1960s when desegregation was hard fought by so many in higher education in the South.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized chronologically over a seventy-five-year time span, beginning with Oliver Cromwell Carmichael’s birth in 1891 and ending with his death in 1966. The first chapter details aspects of President Carmichael’s life, from 1891-1953, before he took on the role of president at the University of Alabama. This chapter focuses on his educational endeavors and his professional positions leading up to the presidency. The second chapter covers President Carmichael’s experiences and accomplishments during his time as the University of Alabama president from the year he started, 1953, through right before Autherine Lucy was admitted to the University in 1956. This chapter will illuminate what he did for the University and the plans that he had but never got to fulfill.

The third chapter discusses Autherine Lucy’s battle for admittance to the University of Alabama, beginning in 1952. This chapter explains Autherine Lucy’s background, her decision to enroll in the University of Alabama, and the legal battle she had to go through in order to gain
that admittance. This chapter also introduces Atherine Lucy’s friend, Pollie Ann Meyers, who is responsible for encouraging Atherine Lucy to enroll at a university that was segregated.

Chapter four will then pick up with Atherine Lucy’s admittance in 1956. This chapter will detail what she and the university administration went through during this time. It will include a detailed account of the decision to suspend and then expel her from the University, as well as President Carmichael’s decision to resign.

Chapter five will compare President Carmichael’s experiences in handling desegregation and race issues on his campus to those of other university presidents in the South during the same time period. This chapter will focus on Hollis Edens of Duke University, Chancellor Harvey Branscomb of Vanderbilt University, and Chancellor John Williams of the University of Mississippi. It will also look in to each of their relationships with their own board of trustees. In addition, this chapter will explore the relationship between the University of Alabama Board of Trustees and President Carmichael and the effects that relationship had on President Carmichael’s decision-making process. This chapter will focus particularly on one Board of Trustees member, Hill Ferguson, and the impact he had on the University’s actions to prevent desegregation.

Chapter six will examine leadership theories as they pertain to higher education leadership. President Carmichael’s leadership traits and actions will be examined through the lens of these theories to better understand the leadership qualities that he lacked, or the ones that he possessed, that made him unsuccessful at desegregating the University of Alabama. The conclusion, chapter seven, will summarize the findings of this study, as well as discuss the lessons we can learn from this study in regard to serving as the president of a university during a time of controversy and turmoil.
CHAPTER I: OLIVER CROMWELL CARMICHAEL
BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PRESIDENCY, 1891-1953

Life Before College & University Administration

Oliver Cromwell Carmichael was born on October 3, 1891 in a small central Alabama town located approximately 60 miles from Birmingham, AL and 120 miles from Tuscaloosa, AL. The town of Goodwater, Alabama had a population of under 600 people at the time of Carmichael’s birth. Carmichael was one of ten children born to Daniel Monroe Carmichael (1848-1928) and Amanda Delight Carmichael (Lessley) (1858-1945).\(^1\) He came from what would be a very successful family, as the majority of his nine siblings would end up earning doctorates in medicine, theology, or education.

Most notably known was his eldest brother Robert Daniel Carmichael (1879-1967), who earned his doctorate in mathematics from Princeton University. Robert Carmichael was a professor, dean, and author and was most well-known for his work on the theory of relativity and for discovering the first of a certain kind of a number now known as a “Carmichael number.”\(^2\) Surprisingly though, Oliver Carmichael was not one of the Carmichael children who earned a doctorate, but he would still eventually be known as one of the greatest and ablest educators the State of Alabama had ever produced. Carmichael began his higher education path in 1907 at


\(^2\) Ibid.
Alabama Presbyterian College. This was a small college located in Anniston, AL, which was not far from Carmichael’s home, with an enrollment of around 60 students at the time. The college opened its doors in 1905 and closed them shortly afterward in 1918.\(^3\)

Carmichael was able to transfer after two years and finish his undergraduate studies at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. He graduated from the University of Alabama in 1911 where he excelled in social sciences, public speaking, and modern languages.\(^4\) Immediately after graduation, he was offered a teaching fellowship at the University of Alabama, and he taught German and French. The university extended his fellowship a year so that he could pursue a master’s degree. While working on his Master of Arts degree, he landed a job as a professor of languages at the Florence Normal School in Florence, AL, which is now known as the University of North Alabama. In 1912, Carmichael became the University of Alabama’s third Rhodes Scholar.\(^5\) A Rhodes scholarship is widely known as one of the most prestigious international fellowships to this day. Since 1903, only 7,500 students have been chosen for this fellowship and it holds a competitive acceptance rate at .7%. The fact that Carmichael was chosen for this fellowship shows that he had high academic achievements, good character standing, and a desire to serve others since a young age.\(^6\)

In 1913, Carmichael left the South and began his journey overseas. Over the next eight years, Carmichael would gain a wide array of experiences as well many connections, as he was


\(^4\) Paul Keith Conkin & Henry Lee Swint, Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 357.

\(^5\) Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 24.

very well liked and made friends easily. His first stop overseas was Oxford, England to fulfill his Rhodes Scholar commitment at Oxford University. There he studied psychology, philosophy, and anthropology and would later complete a Bachelor of Science degree in Anthropology in 1917.

As World War I erupted during his time at Oxford University, opportunities outside of school presented themselves. Carmichael volunteered for Herbert Hoover’s Belgium Relief Commission for a year where he worked behind enemy lines in Antwerp. Carmichael played a large role in smuggling a famous letter written by Belgian church official Cardinal Mericier back to England. This letter was vital in countering German propaganda. Carmichael left the Commission in 1915 with a close friend in Herbert Hoover. Carmichael’s next overseas experience was joining the British Army YMCA in 1915, which took him to India and East Africa. During this time, he added Swahili and Urdu to his list of language proficiencies, which already included seven other languages: German, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Latin, and Greek. In 1917 he headed back to the United States for a short period of time.

Back in the States, he signed up for officer’s training with the United States Army as the U.S. had entered in to World War I. In order to do this, he gave up the Charlotte Elizabeth Proctor fellowship at Princeton University. This fellowship was established in 1912 in the Princeton Graduate School and recognizes outstanding performance and professional promise of students. After signing up for Army officer training at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, Carmichael was sent to Camp Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina where he met his future wife, Ruth Mae

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7 Conkin & Swint, *Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University*, 357.

8 Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 24.

Crabtree of Atlanta, Georgia. They married shortly after on July 13, 1918. After Columbia, South Carolina, Carmichael was assigned to intelligence work in France just two weeks after getting married. He was assigned to intelligence work because of his extraordinary language proficiency. He ended up in the Swiss frontier, otherwise known as the Swiss border, and then eventually landed in Verdun, France.\(^{10}\)

Following his time served in France, Carmichael was discharged out of the service in Fort Dix, New Jersey, with a wealth of experiences and a good amount of education, especially for someone from a small town in Alabama. However, Carmichael found himself without an earned doctorate and now looking for work in education. He reapplied for the Princeton fellowship, but married people were unfortunately not eligible.\(^{11}\) He accepted various appointments in the Birmingham area high schools where he taught Spanish and French, and even served as a high school principal until 1922.

**Alabama State College for Women**

The next job Carmichael landed was Dean and Assistant to the president at Alabama State College for Women, now known as the University of Montevallo.\(^ {12}\) During this time he made one last effort to complete graduate work at Princeton, but the college he worked at would not grant him leave to do so.\(^{13}\) Over the next two years he quickly proved his many capabilities, including curriculum reform and gaining state funding. Carmichael spearheaded the University of Montevallo’s “Million Dollar Drive”, which was a campaign intended to increase capital

\(^{10}\) Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 24-25.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 25.

\(^{12}\) Conkin & Swint, *Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University*, 357.

\(^{13}\) Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 25.
improvement funding from the state. Ramsay Hall was built in 1925 from these funds and the building still stands today on the University of Montevallo campus.\textsuperscript{14} Carmichael’s achievements were acknowledged as he was ultimately selected as president of the college in 1926.\textsuperscript{15} While president of the University of Montevallo, Carmichael voiced his opinions about the future of higher education. At an address before the members of Phi Kappa Phi, and honorary scholarship fraternity, President Carmichael stated:

A veritable revolution is going on in higher education today. Both from within and without college circles, the practices, methods, and products of the American college are being severely questioned and criticized. . . . Higher education in America today is at a crossroads- the changes which are soon to take place will spell either its success or its failure. . . . The college of the future will place greater emphasis on development of thinking and intellectual power and less emphasis on mastery of mere facts. There is today too much investigation and reading with too little thinking.\textsuperscript{16}

President Carmichael went on to say was that “colleges in the future will place greater emphasis on the social sciences and field of intimate human relations.”\textsuperscript{17} He strongly believed that the social sciences are the foundation of the entire social structure. He believed that our highly-developed scientific civilization can only be saved with a proper understanding of the social sciences, and therefore students must have a firm grasp on understanding the social sciences while in college.\textsuperscript{18}

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\textsuperscript{14} University of Montevallo Admissions. “Real Estate: Ramsay Hall” Wordpress.com.\textsuperscript{15} Conkin & Swint, Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University, 357.\textsuperscript{16} “Alabama College President Predicts Many Changes in Education System.” Auburn Newspaper, 1934.\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.\end{flushright}
President Carmichael was called to other positions while he was at the University of Montevallo, such as the president of Winthrop College in South Carolina, which was also known as the State College for Women. While President Carmichael contemplated taking the position, he ultimately decided to stay in Alabama to help repair “the present education situation, the need of which has been so strongly presented.”¹⁹ Newspapers across the state of Alabama reported the news with great joy that President Carmichael was going to stay in Alabama and at the University of Montevallo a while longer. One Shelby County newspaper reported that while “the offer to go to South Carolina as president of the State College for Women was a most flattering one and a distinct compliment to Alabama’s distinguished leader,”²⁰ Carmichael belongs to the state of Alabama and Alabama needs him.

The paper noted his positive qualities that Alabama benefits so much from: “He is not only extraordinarily well trained, he is not only a very successful educator- he has an integrity of spirit and a depth of personality which have won him universal admiration.”²¹ There is no doubt that President Carmichael had been successful as a leader in higher education up until this point. While this was still a great achievement, President Carmichael had bigger aspirations than being president of a small undistinguished college in Alabama. President Carmichael’s reputation, knowledge, and personal qualities would lead to those bigger aspirations becoming a reality nine years later.

**Vanderbilt University**

**Appointments**

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²⁰ “Dr. Carmichael To Stay.” *Shelby County Reporter*, 1934.

²¹ Ibid.
President Carmichael was very well liked and known in the Alabama and Southern community. Although he had his sights set on becoming the next the University of Alabama president after George Denny, he could not turn down his next job offer. It was difficult to leave the University of Montevallo because not only did the community admire him, but also staying within the state of Alabama and serving Alabamians would make the transition to the University of Alabama presidency more likely.\textsuperscript{22} Carmichael had little experience that would justify him being qualified for the position of dean or chancellor at a large research university, but it was his reputation among Southern educators, personal qualities, knowledge on higher education issues, expertise in educational philosophy, and public speaking abilities that led Vanderbilt University to hire him as a dean in 1935.\textsuperscript{23} The current chancellor recognized Carmichael’s work on regional and national education committees and he thought favorably of him.\textsuperscript{24} Adding to the appeal of the Vanderbilt position, Carmichael’s hiring committee, emphasized the likelihood that he would soon ascend into the role of chancellor of Vanderbilt University. Having him serve as Dean of the Graduate School and the Senior College first was also part of a hiring strategy put in place by the then current chancellor of Vanderbilt University, James Hampton Kirkland.

Chancellor Kirkland had served as chancellor for forty-two years when his committee hired Carmichael as Dean of the Graduate School and the Senior College. Kirkland was undoubtedly the most influential leader of Vanderbilt University, and he and the Board of Trustees knew that it would be difficult to find someone who could fill Kirkland’s shoes. In order to hopefully have a smooth transition from Kirkland’s many years of leadership to the next

\textsuperscript{22} Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 26.

\textsuperscript{23} Conkin & Swint, Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University, 357.

\textsuperscript{24} Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 26.
chancellor, they wanted to first hire his successor in an administrative role. Chancellor Kirkland and the Board of Trustees hoped this would be a beneficial and strategic move for both the University and the successor himself. By giving the successor time to prove himself, learn the lay of land, and build relationships with the Board of Trustees and faculty members, they were optimistic that the successor would feel comfortable and prepared to take on the chancellorship. At the same time, if the successor proved to not be capable of taking on the chancellorship during his time served as dean the administration could avoid a disastrous decision and decide to not make him chancellor.  

Carmichael won over every member of the committee on educational policy. Even one member who had been unsure of him eventually decided that Carmichael was the ablest educator in the state of Alabama. His charm, political savviness, and administrative skills made him the type of candidate that Vanderbilt University was looking for. President Carmichael took a cut in salary and knew how high pressure it would be if he was the heir to Chancellor Kirkland, but he also knew that the risk was worth the reward. If he became chancellor of Vanderbilt University his career would be advancing in the way and direction he had always intended for. After wearing the title of Dean for one year, he was promoted to vice-chancellor as a way for the university to keep him from taking another desirable job offer. The reasoning behind his promotion was, in 1936, the University of Alabama offered Carmichael the job of university president. Knowing that there was a high chance Carmichael could take this job offer, as it had been his longstanding career goal, the Board of Trustees quickly changed his title to vice-

\[25\] Ibid., 356-357.

\[26\] Ibid., 358.
chancellor to further show Carmichael that he would be the next chancellor after Kirkland
retired.

The Board of Trustees and Chancellor Kirkland did end up staying true to their intentions
and named Carmichael, at the age of forty-six, the third chancellor of Vanderbilt University, and
he served from 1937 to 1946. When Carmichael was hired at Vanderbilt University he was
coming in to the college at an ideal time. The nation-wide depression had nearly ended, and even
though the economy was still slow, Vanderbilt University had already adjusted to the change by
1936. Enrollment levels were high, and faculty and administrators had the desire to start new
programs and begin planning for the future.27

Curriculum Reform

One of Carmichael’s first missions as a new dean in the Fall of 1935 was to tackle the
much needed and wanted curriculum reform for the new Senior College. The Senior College
consisted of undergraduates in their final two years of college. Dean Carmichael had past
experience with curriculum reform at his previous college and he often spoke and wrote about
the importance of having liberal arts courses included in the required courses. Dean Carmichael
quickly put together two committees, one for the Junior College and one for the Senior College,
to do some needed research on curriculum. This opportunity was not only a chance to make
some needed changes, but it was also a chance for Dean Carmichael to prove that he was capable
of being the chancellor in the future.28 After the two committees did extensive research, such as
surveying colleges all across the country, they put together a committee report with a proposed
plan. Some of the proposed changes included a minimum of sixty hours in a field of

27 Ibid., 382.

28 Ibid., 391-392.
concentration with twenty of those allowed to be in a related field and adding a required senior-level integrative course in the student’s major.

This proposed plan was first met with doubt and question by the faculty members. Chancellor Kirkland received a large amount of complaints and this made him nervous for Dean Carmichael. He was afraid it would jeopardize a smooth transition into chancellorship. Because of this Chancellor Kirkland felt the need to step in on the curriculum debate as a way to protect Dean Carmichael, and that is exactly what he did.

After several meetings and dealing with faculty backlash, Chancellor Kirkland had enough and took the curriculum issue to the Executive Committee of the Board in order to veto the faculty. He presented the Executive Committees decision to the faculty on May 4 and by the next semester the curriculum changes were in place. In a sense, Chancellor Kirkland “took one for the team” by taking on the curriculum war that Dean Carmichael started. While Dean Carmichael still lost the support from some faculty, it was not enough to affect his place at Vanderbilt University or their future plans for him.

Faculty Research

When Carmichael came in as Dean of the Graduate School at Vanderbilt University, his main focus was increasing and emphasizing research among the faculty. This would also require making research accessible through extra funding. He had goals to increase the number of quality Ph.D. programs and to solicit research grants from the General Education Board, which was established by John D. Rockefeller in 1903. Chancellor Carmichael was able to secure funding in the amount of $30,000 from the General Education Board by 1940. In addition to

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29 Ibid., 397-398.
that, he secured a $40,000 commitment from Vanderbilt University’s own budget to go towards faculty research.

This funding allowed him to start the Institute of Research Training, which had a special emphasis on his two beloved topics public and business administration. By this time Chancellor Carmichael had made it possible for about half of the College’s faculty to participate in research.\(^{30}\) Chancellor Carmichael not only increased the research efforts at Vanderbilt University, but his efforts also led to an in-house avenue to publish faculty research. In 1940, the Vanderbilt University Press was created. This was only the 5th university press in existence in the Southeast and it still exists to this day. The Press was what Chancellor Carmichael considered one of his greatest achievements while at Vanderbilt University.

**Fundraising**

Chancellor Carmichael was a skilled fundraiser and spent much of his time on trips to New York and Washington where he negotiated successfully with the new generation of foundation directors at the time. He was able to make his way through the foundation circuit and even conducted consultative work for foundations and government agencies.\(^{31}\) All of this networking was one of Chancellor Carmichael’s strong suits and it provided him with a wealth of important contacts and acquaintances, including John D. Rockefeller Jr.\(^{32}\) These contacts would prove valuable to Chancellor Carmichael in the near future by opening more career doors.

In June of 1938, Vanderbilt University was bestowed a large amount of money from Frederick W. Vanderbilt. When he died, he left Vanderbilt University a 15% share in his total

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 382-383.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 405.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 405-444.
Chancellor Carmichael devised an extensive blueprint for what he thought would make a dominating university in the South. However, this plan was quickly stalled by the looming conflict of WWII. Despite the hardships of the impending war, and with his legacy as Chancellor on the line, Carmichael came up with the $9 million from the following sources: the $5.25 million from the Vanderbilt University gift, another $250,000 gift left to them in a will, $2 million from the new fee system in the hospital, and $1.6 million that he proposed the new joint library would yield. He declared his goals met in 1945.

Controversial Issues

Chancellor Carmichael faced not just financial and curriculum reform issues, but he also had to face how his students, faculty, and staff reacted to issues regarding racial equality during his time as chancellor. One instance that happened at Vanderbilt University showed both Chancellor Carmichael’s relationship with the Board of Trustees and the authority they had over the chancellor when dealing with race issues.

In January 1943, during the series of events known as Religious Emphasis Week, in which several guest speakers were invited to lead discussions and lectures on campus, the two organizers, Henry Hart, the campus chaplain, and professor Herman C. Newman from Vanderbilt University, decided to book speakers that would challenge campus on issues of racial equality and the role of labor unions. The speakers that were asked to lead discussions and lectures on

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33 Ibid., 405.
34 Ibid., 423.
campus were mostly from the socially radical side of Christianity. It was clear that these speakers were asked to join in on the Religious Emphasis Week to lead discussions and challenge Vanderbilt University students on both race relations and labor management relations. Not surprisingly, this decision brought conflict to the people of Vanderbilt University, specifically ideological conflict involving race. Soon after the events of the week concluded, a group of angered Vanderbilt University student leaders started a petition and garnered over 300 signatures from other students. One of the student leaders, Ann Stahlman, was the daughter of Board of Trustee member, James Stahlman. Ann protested the events of the week directly to Chancellor Carmichael. The things cited in their petition are indicative of the state of thinking of many White people in the South during the time. In their petition they protested the following features of the Religious Emphasis Week failure to consult a representative student group in selecting speakers, the questionable philosophical views of certain speakers who confused students, a confusion harmful to students and damaging to the nation and to the national welfare; an inadequate representation of the “conservative view-point held by the great majority of Vanderbilt students”; the promotion of “disturbing social and economic questions” of an inflammatory nature in the name of religion, and particularly racial and capital -labor issues; and the use of an ostensibly religious awakening to propagandize the views of “a radical minority” on campus and to suggest to outsiders such views represented opinions of Vanderbilt students and faculty.35

The petition requests were published in multiple public news sources, including the Hustler, the Nashville Banner, and the Tennessean. Not only was the story publicized locally, but

it was also aired across the country. This was undoubtedly an embarrassment to the university and the Board of Trustees that needed to be handled as soon as possible. The way Chancellor Carmichael responded to such a nation-wide known school controversy is telling of how he handled the much larger nation-wide controversy at the University of Alabama in the future. Chancellor Carmichael quickly lost control over the Vanderbilt University situation and the Board of Trustees directly took over an internal campus issue.\textsuperscript{36}

One of the more influential people on the Board of Trustees, James Stahlman, was directly involved due to the fact that both of his daughters were involved in the events and gave him their own detailed account of all that happened during the Religious Emphasis Week and the petition that followed. Stahlman strongly urged Chancellor Carmichael to take control over the situation, stating that Vanderbilt University students need not be subjected to confusion regarding the race issue and the doctrines of labor organizations tainted by Communism. He also let Chancellor Carmichael know that the race issue was going to be coming to a showdown soon enough, so perhaps he wanted to shield Vanderbilt University and its students from it as long as possible.\textsuperscript{37}

Stahlman proceeded to tell Chancellor Carmichael that he should launch an investigation of the situation and to monitor all campus programs from then on out to prevent this from happening again. Stahlman did not want Vanderbilt University to be a sounding board for radicalism. Chancellor Carmichael was also receiving a large amount of pressure from one of the Board of Trustees members, Fitzgerald Hall, whom strongly shared the same views at Stahlman.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 427.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
Both Stahlman and Hall wanted to remove Hart from his position on campus. As Carmichael had in the past, and as he would in the future, he bent with the wind and did what the Board of Trustees told him to do whether he agreed with it or not.

In Chancellor Carmichael’s report on the Religious Emphasis Week, he cited the event as not well balanced and not as favored by the student body as he would have preferred. He promised that such inappropriate controversial issues would not happen again on campus. One aspect that Chancellor Carmichael did stand up to the Board of Trustees on was the firing of chaplain Hart. He was able to convince the Board of Trustees of a one-year extension of his position so that he would not lose his eligibility for retirement.

Chancellor Carmichael was eventually ordered to launch a full investigation of the events and that he did. At the end of the investigation Chancellor Carmichael announced the termination of Hart and Hart’s position but was at least able to still keep Hart employed on paid leave until he was eligible for retirement. He also announced that the formerly independent Student Christian Association on campus would now be overseen by the committee on student life and interest, which ultimately eliminated any independent religious voice on campus.

Carmichael’s Relationship with the Board of Trustees

It is important to note here Chancellor Carmichael’s relationship with the Board of Trustees at Vanderbilt University and also the influence of individual Board members as it explains his decisions to give in to many of their requests. Chancellor Carmichael’s relationship with the Board of Trustees also explains much of his leadership style and personality. Chancellor

38 Ibid., 427-428.
39 Ibid., 428.
40 Ibid., 429.
Carmichael had a harmonious relationship with the Board of Trustees, but never gained control over it as he was just not there long enough. Even for Kirkland, it took him until 1914, halfway through his chancellorship, to gain dominance over the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees was more involved in university affairs than before under Carmichael’s chancellorship and it appears as though he never gained quite the same respect that the Board had for Chancellor Kirkland.41

Chancellor Carmichael never wielded power in a dictatorial way and when it came to his goals, he lacked precision and a clear direction. However, this lack of precision made him a better politician, mediator, reconciler, and trimmer.42 His speeches may have lacked a direct expression, but they sounded good and audiences responded well to him.43 Chancellor Carmichael was simply likeable, and he knew how to use that likeability so that he would not have to pick sides or give away his exact plans. He even found a way to never truly give away his exact ideals or opinions. This would prove to both benefit him and not benefit him throughout his career.

The Board of Trustees was weary of working with or trusting a clever politician like Chancellor Carmichael. He was more likely to consult the Board of Trustees and even negotiate with them, much like he did with Hart’s termination date. The Board of Trustees was more used to Chancellor Kirkland’s style of communication, which leaned toward guidance and education. Chancellor Carmichael would often alter his language or policies depending on the situation in order to keep harmony with the Board of Trustees. As a result of Chancellor Carmichael’s style,

41 Ibid., 404.
42 Ibid., 403.
43 Ibid.
the Board of Trustees dealt with a less predictable and more open and tentative policy-making process.\textsuperscript{44}

Throughout this study the power and control one person can have over the Board of Trustees at a southern university will be examined. The Board of Trustees at Vanderbilt University, like the University of Alabama, had one member who was a long-standing supporter of Vanderbilt University and a long-standing member of the Board of Trustees. James Stahlman at Vanderbilt University seemed to have more control over the Board of Trustees as each year went on. One can see this during Carmichael’s time as chancellor, but it becomes even more apparent with Chancellor Carmichael’s successor, Harvey Branscomb. Stahlman’s influence over the Board of Trustees, specifically in regard to race relations, will be discussed in-depth within a later section of this study.

The End of Carmichael’s Chancellorship

In July 1945, Chancellor Carmichael made a visit to Michigan to discuss a new job opportunity. Chancellor Carmichael was offered a position to be the head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and one month later he made his decision to leave his position as chancellor of Vanderbilt University and head to New York. He announced his decision in September of 1945 and planned on leaving in early 1946.\textsuperscript{45} The Board of Trustees was actually surprised and unhappy about this announcement.

On February 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1946 Chancellor Carmichael submitted his final report to the Board of Trustees. In his final report he listed the many accomplishments for which he felt he was responsible during his nine years as chancellor. Some of these accomplishments included

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 404-405.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 440.
curriculum reform, growth in graduate education, starting a program in fine arts, helping complete the plan and implementation of a Joint University Library with Peabody, Scarritt, and the YMCA, the Nashville School of Social Work, the University Press, and of course for the $9 million in endowment gifts that occurred during his time.\textsuperscript{46}

Based on all of the things that Chancellor Carmichael listed that had been accomplished or were in the making at Vanderbilt University at the time of his departure, one would get the impression that the university was in an excellent position for growth and success. However, Chancellor Carmichael’s successor, Harvey Branscomb from Duke University, did not see the state of the University that way at all. In fact, Chancellor Branscomb was appalled at the state the university was in when he took over. Chancellor Branscomb wrote in a memoir at one point that Vanderbilt University was filled with deteriorating property, unimpressive facilities, low faculty salaries, and was not a pacesetter for the South any longer. Carmichael did leave the university with little debt and that Chancellor Branscomb could not deny.\textsuperscript{47}

While Chancellor Branscomb had a list of problems that Vanderbilt University was dealing with, he did admit that these problems were not unique to Vanderbilt University and that most universities in the South dealt with these problems.\textsuperscript{48} Therefore, one cannot say that Carmichael was a poor chancellor, as Vanderbilt University’s problems were common ones, but perhaps he just was not exceptional enough to overcome these problems. Chancellor Branscomb, though, would spend the next sixteen years trying to make Vanderbilt University one of the great universities of the South. He would indeed come much closer to doing this than Carmichael.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 444.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
did. This study will later explain just how different the leadership styles were between Chancellor Carmichael and Chancellor Branscomb.

**Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching**

In 1946, Carmichael left Vanderbilt University on a good note and with kind feelings as he embarked on yet another distinguished position as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. This position was appealing to Carmichael because there he would have more flexibility to experiment with the ideas he had for higher education, such as encouraging programs in American Studies, promoting scholarship in international relations, approximating the European model for graduate education, and stressing the teaching values that mirrored the Victorian standards of his youth.⁴⁹

**Publications**

During his time as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Carmichael produced and published several pieces on education. These pieces give great insight into his hopes and goals for education as well as his knowledge and dedication within the field. In a paper he published in 1951, titled "Some Educational Dilemmas", Carmichael surveys current issues within education so that solutions may be made, or so that the issues are at least brought to the attention of those working within education.⁵⁰

The first problem within higher education that Carmichael wrote about had to do with depth versus breadth of scholarship. It is no surprise that Carmichael focused on curriculum reform as that had always been one of his greater interests and strong suits. Carmichael pointed

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⁴⁹ Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 26.

out that the use and spread of general education, or a core curriculum, had caused the depth of knowledge in specialized areas to suffer. The lack of a depth of knowledge caused students in graduate education to not be fully prepared in their field of choice. He also described though how the focus on a specialization in a field has caused a lack of breadth of understanding as well, specifically a lack of focus on moral philosophy. Without a focus on moral philosophy students were prevented from piecing together fragments of knowledge in order to see the bigger picture and in order to see the meaning of life.\(^{51}\)

The second problem Carmichael addressed dealt with the discovery versus the dissemination of knowledge. In other words, he is addressing the issue of the professor balancing their focus on research and teaching. When Carmichael wrote about this issue in 1951, he claimed that professors were far more focused on disseminating information (teaching) rather than discovery of information (research).\(^{52}\) Carmichael’s point is that in 1951 there is a notion that only the master scholar is capable of research and ordinary people can only teach. This sentiment prevented a large number of scholars from engaging in research. This point falls under an objective he worked on while at Vanderbilt University, which is the importance of making research accessible through funding. He also touches on the need to find a balance between research and teaching so that when a scholar does become engaged in research their teaching doesn’t suffer.\(^{53}\)

The third issue Carmichael addressed dealt with finding the balance between teaching with objectivity while also teaching students to produce their own sound sense of values. One

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 628-629.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 629-632.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 630-631.
part of this argument that Carmichael discussed directly related to his own sense of values and decision-making process based on those values. This study will discuss this topic more during Carmichael’s presidency at the University of Alabama. In his paper Carmichael states:

students are taught to withhold judgment until all the facts are in. Conclusions based on incomplete evidence are likely to be false; hence, the caveat - beware of making hasty decisions. But all the evidence is rarely ever at hand. All through life decisions must be made and action taken before complete knowledge of a situation can be acquired. The effective citizen must be more than a spectator in life's conflicts. He must take sides, must frequently act before it is clear what all the facts are or what the outcome will be.\textsuperscript{54}

Carmichael was able to recognize the importance of aiding youth in being to take a side during a conflict and to make a decision in a timely manner while in the middle of a crisis.

The fourth problem in higher education that he addressed is the argument about the purpose of education. Carmichael believed the main purpose of higher education is to learn for the sake of learning. Carmichael argued that “Too little emphasis in modern times is placed on the goal of ‘truth for truth's sake’ in both teaching and research. Frequently, the result is limited horizons, short-range objectives and restricted achievement. Pursuit of truth for its own sake is essential to fundamental discovery.”\textsuperscript{55}

Carmichael also stated, “In a complex and rapidly changing society, an inquiring, alert, and active mind is the first requisite for coping with the endless variety of problems which arise.”\textsuperscript{56} Carmichael advised that this kind of mind would be the first thing to help a person cope with problems that arise in society. One would assume that since Carmichael is yearning for this

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 632.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 635.
kind of mind to be produced in the college youth that he himself would have an inquiring, alert, and active mind.

One of the last issues Carmichael discussed continues to be one of the main topics of discussion in higher education, and that is the relationship and dynamic between the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees when it comes to making university and policy decisions. Carmichael argued that when the faculty has little say in university matters then the entire university suffers:

Thus, the faculty which is responsible for educational results has little to say about policy. Those who make the budget largely determine the emphasis and, in the long run, the educational direction of the institution. No adequate channel of communication between the faculty and the administration for the interchange of ideas on policy has been developed. It is not clear whether it is lack of interest on the part of the faculty or the desire of the administration to keep control in its hands that is the more responsible for this situation. Whatever the cause, the effect on the educational enterprise is the same. It suffers.\textsuperscript{57}

The nature of the issues that Carmichael discussed in this paper shows how in tune he was with higher education. All of the issues he discussed are still pertinent issues in higher education today. Some of them have improved greatly and some will undoubtedly always exist in higher education. It is clear that Carmichael was dedicated to improving the field of higher education and thus explains why he was so successful so quickly.

While president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Oliver Carmichael also published a book in addition to numerous articles. His book, \textit{The Changing Role of Higher Education}, is based on Carmichael’s thirty years of experience in education. The purpose of the book was to indicate certain basic trends in higher education. For this book he draws upon other publications he has had in the past. The first few chapters principally serve as a

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
history of the evolution and growth of higher education. The four main features of this history are: the growth in college population, increase in support for higher education, radical changes in curriculum and objective, and an emphasis on research. He then focuses on these four features and attempts to predict the future of higher education. The future of higher education can be summarized as:

an expansion in enrollment, in capital outlay, and in operating costs, in the variety and number of course offerings, and in support for investigations and research. . . . the function of higher education is interpreted more and more in terms of social need. . . . it is a dynamic agency seeking to understand modern society, to interpret it, and to assist in the solution of its problems. In that atmosphere it is undertaking to prepare youth for a responsible part of the world tomorrow. The goal is worthy. It has by no means been reached. It will be progressively realized in the decade ahead.\textsuperscript{58}

Carmichael’s predictions for the future are thorough. The rest of his book mirrors much of the previous paper discussed. He states the problems facing higher education and what needs to be done to fix these problems. It is likely that when Carmichael would take the presidency of the University of Alabama he was ready to start putting many of these thoughts into practice, especially since he had not been at a university for the previous seven years.

Carmichael also wrote a shorter piece titled “Crisis in Education- Opportunity or Disaster?” which discussed two more major crises in the world of education that concern both higher education and elementary and secondary schools. The problem facing higher education was that of quality instruction given the changing student body. After World War I approximately four-hundred thousand veterans had entered the classroom, and the quality of instruction had to be appropriate for both veterans and the traditional student of a younger age.

He then spoke about the number of highly qualified teachers that had lessened since the war, as well as the number of teachers overall.\(^\text{59}\)

Throughout the rest of the piece Carmichael stood up for teachers in America. He stated that they lack recognition in the form of being held in high esteem and prestige from the local community as well as in compensation. The last reason he gave for the lack of people wanting to enter into the profession of teaching was the scrutiny they received from the community about their personal beliefs: “Many a teacher in a small community has lost her position because of engaging in some innocent pastime which was not approved by the more conservative citizens of the community. Others have suffered a similar fate because they took a stand on local issues which ran counter to the views of those who had the power of appointment.”\(^\text{60}\)

Carmichael did not know when he wrote this that he too would be facing scrutiny from the more conservative citizens of not just his community, but the entire country. Carmichael would face scrutiny to the highest degree for failing to take a stance on a local issue. Not only do educators face scrutiny when they take a stance counter to that of the people in power, as Carmichael stated in his article, but they also face scrutiny when they do not take a stance at all.

To many people, not taking a stance at all is equivalent to taking one that runs counter to their beliefs, because either way, the person does not have beliefs that align with their beliefs. If one is going to face scrutiny either way, then they might as well take the scrutiny while voicing their opinion and beliefs instead of going down without having a voice at all. This article shows


\(^{60}\) Ibid.
that Carmichael was aware of the pressure educators face when it comes to taking a stance on controversial issues.

One of Carmichael’s publications during his time as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is especially significant to this study, as it is titled “What Makes a Good College President.”61 In this paper Carmichael discussed the other constituents that a president must work with and how they can affect the presidency:

Any one of a half dozen groups with which the president must work more or less closely can upset his administration: the trustees, the faculty, the students, the alumni, the local community, the denominational leaders in church-supported colleges, or the politicians in state-supported institutions. The case histories of presidential changes in American colleges and universities record the downfall of many, good men who failed to get along with one or another of these groups.62

Carmichael understood the pressure a university president faces to please all constituents or to face the consequences of not pleasing certain constituents. He indicated that the length of time a president spends in office is not reflective of their qualifications, but instead it is reflective of their ability to get along with people.63 Carmichael was not only aware of this, but he acted on it during his presidency at Alabama State College for Women and at Vanderbilt University and it proved to be effective.

Other qualities that he states a president must have are patience, tolerance, and flexibility. He tells a story to further illuminate what kind of person would be successful in this position:

A distinguished woman educator once twitted a college president (a man) about the fact that so few women held the exalted position of president, suggesting that the men kept these positions for themselves. In response he intimated that his colleague had quite

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62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., 683.
missed the point, for, he said, ‘Women are not frequently chosen for the post because they can't be pushed around.’64

This sentiment proved true for Carmichael, as he had the ability to bend and maneuver depending on his audience and what he thought they wanted to hear, and therefore was always on the winning side.

Carmichael also addressed the extreme public scrutiny that a president must endure: “For some unaccountable reason the average college or university is thought of in terms of its president. It is often described as the lengthened shadow of the man who administers it.”65 The president can be criticized from all sides, hence why a president must be savvy with their words, something that Carmichael had always been good at. Carmichael expanded on the skills he believes a president must have:

The college president needs a large measure of tact, a real liking for people, an ability to appreciate the other fellow's point of view and a ready adaptability to people and to situations. Cynicism or indifference are not assets. Friendliness, ability to reach a decision, to say no pleasantly but firmly, and the capacity to feel a deep interest in all phases of the university's work and in those who direct it are useful qualities. Thorough-going sincerity, honesty, alertness, and courage are the foundations of success.66

There are a few characteristics that Carmichael mentioned that one can say he actually greatly lacked. Based on Carmichael’s experiences at Vanderbilt University, one can posit that Carmichael lacked honesty, courage, and the ability to reach a decision. This will be examined deeper in a later part of this study.

Carmichael did speak to one thing that a president absolutely must have, and one that we can confidently say is a quality that Carmichael had. While being a curriculum expert or

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 686.
66 Ibid., 685-686.
experienced counselor and teacher are helpful qualities to have in the role of presidency, they are not absolutely essential. Carmichael stated:

What is absolutely fundamental is that he shall have a deep and abiding interest in education, a sense of its function in society, and an understanding of the factors that are requisite to a sound program. . . . The first essential, then, of an effective college or university president is a sound philosophy of education, a sincere, definite and continuing interest in its advancement, and some knowledge of institutional structure and organization.67

It is evident that Carmichael had a passion for the advancement of higher education that was unparalleled. One can not only see this in his numerous publications, but it is also clear based on career trajectory. He took on difficult roles and took on many roles because he knew they would lend to having greater impact on educational changes and advancements. He even took on a role that was a step down in his career trajectory. The role of the University of Alabama presidency would pay him less money than his presidency of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, but he took the job solely because he wanted to serve his home state in a greater educational capacity than he ever had before.

Despite all of the challenges and pressures that come with being a college or university president, Carmichael still spoke highly of it and looks upon the role as a great privilege and honor:

Perhaps this is why so few positions in American life are more intriguing or more satisfying than the college presidency, despite its hazards and its handicaps. To work with scholars and ambitious youth, to share in their plans and ambitions, to identify one-self with the spirit of an institution of great potentialities, and to give one's self utterly to the advancement of its interests, that is the high privilege of the college president.68

67 Ibid., 684.
68 Ibid., 686-687.
Therefore, it is not surprising that despite the challenges of presidency that Carmichael still wanted to take on the role. Carmichael’s passion and dedication about higher education also opened up several doors while he was president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Carmichael’s knowledge was valued by many and he would not turn down the chance to use that knowledge to make a change.

**Temporary Commission on the Need for a State University**

Carmichael was frequently widening his social universe while living in New York. This was a skill of Carmichael’s that always seemed to pay off when it came to advancing his career. His friendship with New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey was partly what landed him the roles of the vice-chairman of the Temporary Commission on the Need for a State University (1946–1948) and the first chairman of the Board of Trustees for the New York State University System (SUNY), which was officially formed in 1948. An Alabama newspaper reported on Carmichael being selected to plan a new public New York State University System. Carmichael would be the chairman of 15 temporary trustees who would each serve a six-year term. The task of the committee would be to create a state university system with medical, dental and graduate schools, multiple undergraduate universities and a few two-year community colleges. The committee would be all volunteers, so Carmichael and the other members would not be paid for their service to the state of New York. The state of New York was taking steps to develop a higher standard for its education system at the college and university level. Carmichael would continue to be the head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching while being on the commission.

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Before being appointed as the first chairman of the Board of Trustees for the New York State University System, Carmichael was called upon by the governor to be a part of a commission which would study and report on the educational needs of New York. On February 4th, 1946 the Governor of the State of New York, Thomas E. Dewey, sent a proposal to the Legislature asking the creation of a commission to study the needs to the New York system in higher education. In this proposal he included the need for a state university, including professional schools, in order to equalize the opportunity for education for people all across the state. The Legislature agrees and passed an Act which created The Temporary Commission on the Need for a State University. The duty of the commission was to examine the need for a state university and make appropriate recommendations.\textsuperscript{71}

In his role with the commission we see Carmichael’s first public comments on the issue of desegregation. The commission was formed with Owen D. Young as the chairman and Oliver C. Carmichael as the vice-chairman. As the vice-chairman, Carmichael was appointed his own committee within the commission. The committee was charged with defining the broad areas that needed to be examined. Authorization was given to Carmichael to secure a director of studies and a research staff. The committee began its study in October 1946, and eventually developed all of its data into four staff studies. The four staff studies were titles as follows: “Matching Needs and Facilities in Higher Education”, “Education for Health Services”, “Costs and Financing of Higher Education”, and “Inequality of Opportunity in Higher Education: A Study of Minority Group and Related Barriers to College Admission”.\textsuperscript{72} The topic of the fourth study is

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 6.
one of interest, because it is related to Carmichael’s beliefs and attitudes towards desegregation considering that he did approve and support this study.

The “Foreword” of this study notes at the end that the “views expressed in this volume are those of the authors; the Commission assumes no responsibility for them.”\(^73\) However, the author of the study was one of the staff members of the Commission, David S. Berkowitz, and the study was put forth by Carmichael’s committee, which was designated by the Commission. Right after this statement claiming no responsibility of the Commission, in the “Acknowledgments” section of this study, it states Carmichael’s exact involvement in the study: “Oliver C. Carmichael, Vice-Chairman, and Arthur H. Schwartz, Counsel, gave advice in the planning of these studies, read the manuscript in preliminary form and made many cogent suggestions.”\(^74\) One could assume that the Vice-Chairman of the Commission would not approve of and have involvement in such a study if he did not find the topic of importance. It is also worth noting that Carmichael’s committee only chose to produce four studies. This further shows the importance Carmichael saw in the topic of minority groups and their access to education if he was willing to dedicate one out of only four of their studies to it.

A section of this study examined the post-high school education of African American students and it addressed the lack of support and facilities to support a college education for these students in New York. The study clearly states that race and religion should not be a factor, or even known at all, for college admission. It states that without this information, there is less likely to be discriminatory practices on account of creed or color.\(^75\) The study also noted that in

\(^{73}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 73.
the state of New York in 1948, the Education Law 3201 stated “No person shall be refused admission into or be excluded from any public school in the state of New York on account of race, creed, color, or national origin.”

Carmichael gave advice in the planning of the study, read the preliminary form, and made suggestions. The study shows that Carmichael had knowledge of the lack of educational opportunities for African American students and the need to fix these inequalities. The study also shows that discriminatory practices were still very much alive in the North just as they were in the South, and that Carmichael had been made aware of these practices. However, he still never addressed this subject in any of his individual pieces and he would not do so until after his time as president of the University of Alabama.

**President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education**

On July 13, 1946, President Truman established a commission to examine the condition of higher education in the United States. The commission was chaired by George Zook and the rest of the commission members were mainly leaders in academia. Oliver C. Carmichael was one of the appointed commission members. The commission was sparked by the nationwide concern of overcrowded campus due to an influx of college students, mostly due to the veterans who benefited from the 1944 G.I. Bill of Rights. Higher education was not keeping pace with the growing number of college students in regard to resources, facilities, and the increase in diversity of the student body. President Truman also charged the Commission with finding ways the government could be more involved in higher education so that educational opportunities could be expanded to all eligible young people.  

76 Ibid., 177.

The commission conducted research for a year which resulted in a six-volume report. Of the six volumes, volume two is of interest to this study on Carmichael. The information provided in volume two shows that Carmichael and the entire commission were advanced in their way of thinking for the time period they were living in. In volume 2, titled “Equalizing and Expanding Individual Opportunity”, the commission examined the changing student body in higher education. They found that the most outstanding example of barriers to equal opportunity of education was the disadvantages suffered by African American citizens.  

The commission notes that despite some advances made in eliminating racial inequality, there are still great differences in the opportunities afforded to African American citizens and those afforded to White citizens. The commission also notes that segregation is still in effect in 17 states, and that just because the law might say that a state must also provide equal educational advantages to African American citizens, this does not mean that the state actually follows the “equal” part. Segregation usually directly correlates with discrimination. Therefore, when a state still has segregated facilities, more likely than not, the facilities and opportunities provided to the African American citizens are of much lower quality.

The commission even goes as far as to say that segregation also hurts the education of White citizens. When a state is doubling their buildings, equipment, and teaching personnel then neither side can get the high-quality education they would get if all resources were put towards one educational system. The Commission makes note of the quota system, and how when schools maintain a selective quota system for admissions, the chance to learn and become more

78 Ibid., 32.
79 Ibid., 34.
useful citizens is denied to certain minorities, particularly African American and Jewish citizens. They believe this quota system is purely un-American:

The quota system denies the basic American belief that intelligence and ability are present in all ethnic groups, those men of all religious and racial origins should have equal opportunity to fit themselves for contributing to the common life. . . . Moreover, since the quota system is never applied to all groups in the Nation’s population, but only to certain ones, we are forced to conclude that the arguments advanced to justify it are nothing more than rationalizations to cover either convenience or the disposition to discriminate. 80

The statements offered by the Commission are powerful and said with confidence and sincerity. The Commission outright says that segregation must be eliminated in the education system: “it is imperative that it extend its benefit to all on equal terms. It must renounce the practices of discrimination and segregation. . . .” 81 These are not common words heard during this time period and it is hard to imagine any of the members of the Commission being on board with this report if they did not fully agree. Therefore, this may certainly give insight in to Carmichael’s views on desegregation and that those views are leaning more towards supporting desegregation rather than segregation.

19th President of the University of Alabama

In May of 1953, when Carmichael was selected as the 19th president of the University of Alabama, he was a cultured, modern, and highly experienced educator and administrator in the world of higher education. Newspapers across the North and South sung his praises. In the Montgomery Advertiser, an article called President Carmichael “one of the real educators and scholars of the South, and what he says is always worth hearing. . . . Vanderbilt’s famous

80 Ibid., 35.
81 Ibid., 38.
leader.” Another newspaper article titled “A Top Flight Man For Our University” from the Tuscaloosa Newspaper praised all of Carmichael’s qualities and rejoiced his decision to take on the presidency of the University of Alabama:

Put the yardstick of qualities desired for a university president on the qualifications or such a job possessed by Dr. O. C. Carmichael and you find that he measures up admirably to a top-flight man for the position. There is no person who has all the qualities all persons would like to see in a president for our University. . . . We are fortunate to have a man of his stature coming back home to assume the presidency of a great state university whose future he can make even greater.

The article goes on to list out nine qualities that he brings to the table, as well as addresses his age. This article states that many were worried about bringing in an older president for it means they would likely not serve for a long time. This article reassures people that Carmichael’s age of sixty-two will still give him eight years to serve and it will be well worth it due to his experience and reputation. Unfortunately, Carmichael would only end up serving for a mere three and a half years.

At the age of sixty-one the job Carmichael had envisioned since his thirties was now his. In 1952, the University of Alabama asked Carmichael to be its 19th president. Carmichael was elected as president of the University of Alabama by the Board of Trustees in an informal meeting. Carmichael received a unanimous vote by the Board. At first, Carmichael actually declined the offer to be president of the University, as he did not feel he was done with his work at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. However, within the year

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82 “Thoughts for Graduates-and Others.” The Montgomery Advertiser.


84 Ibid.
Carmichael had changed his mind and let the University Board of Trustees know that he would accept the offer to be president of the University of Alabama.\(^{85}\)

Even though this was a lesser job compared to the Chancellor of Vanderbilt and president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which meant he would have to take a pay cut, Carmichael said, “I want to repay my debt to the state for bringing me up.” He even refused to take a pay increase from the current university president’s salary, which was $15,000 annually.\(^{86}\) In a letter to one of his New York acquaintances he wrote, “I am looking forward to getting back to my native state and to my Alma Mater to see if I can be of some use there.”\(^{87}\) Carmichael was also quoted saying in several newspaper articles how much he was looking forward to coming back to his home state of Alabama. Carmichael was quoted saying “It is with very great pleasure that I come back to my native state and my alma mater. I am delighted at the prospects of coming back to Alabama.”\(^{88}\)

One of the University of Alabama Board of Trustees members, Gordon D. Palmer, called Carmichael a man who sees possibilities for an outstanding University with which he can have enormous influence on. He also saw Carmichael as having enormous influence on the entire region and state. Palmer had kept in touch with Carmichael over the years and stated that he has always had a lively interest in the state and success of the University of Alabama. Carmichael

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\(^{85}\) Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 26.

\(^{86}\) Norman Bassett. "New Bama President as Tops For Caps: Dr. Carmichael ‘Delighted’ to Come Home to Alabama; Long-Time Aid to U-A Told." *Tuscaloosa News*, May 3, 1953.

\(^{87}\) Oliver Carmichael to F.D. Patterson, 20 August 1953, Box 14, Oliver Cromwell Carmichael Papers, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, University of Alabama Libraries. (hereafter cited as Carmichael Papers, UAL)

\(^{88}\) Norman Bassett. "New Bama President as Tops For Caps: Dr. Carmichael ‘Delighted’ to Come Home to Alabama; Long-Time Aid to U-A Told." *Tuscaloosa News*, May 3, 1953.
even helped with faculty recruitment several times. Palmer and Carmichael talked about University matters while Carmichael was in New York on several occasions. Palmer called him “a fine individual, ranks very high in the educational world and is a capable executive.” He also pointed out that a man who knew and understood the condition of the state of Alabama and the University as Carmichael did would have an advantage over any other presidential candidate.\(^8\) Carmichael was personally invested in being the president of the University of Alabama.

\(^8\) Ibid.
CHAPTER II: OLIVER CROMWELL CARMICHAEL,
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PRESIDENT,
1953-1957

Anticipation of Carmichael’s Arrival at the University of Alabama

In 1953, the University of Alabama community and the whole state of Alabama welcomed Carmichael with open arms. The Board of Trustees, the faculty, and leaders around the state were confident that he would be able to do for Alabama what he apparently did for Vanderbilt and for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. They knew he had a vision for the University of Alabama, and he was treated as a local hero returning home. Carmichael was known as one of the country’s best educators and he was willing to return home to top off what already was a very accomplished career in higher education.¹ A *Time* magazine article wrote “When Oliver Cromwell Carmichael took over the presidency of the University of Alabama in 1953, the post was to have been the climax of a distinguished educational career. . . . For Alabama, it was something of a coup to get a man of such a reputation.”²

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Board of Trustees for the New York State University System were sad to see Carmichael depart for the University of Alabama, as Carmichael seemed to leave a good impression on most everyone he worked with. He developed strong relationships wherever he went, and he maintained those relationships


throughout his career. A *New York Times* article regarding his departure, shows how valued he was at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

Dr. Oliver C. Carmichael’s resignation as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, to become president of the University of Alabama next fall, means that New York will be losing a highly useful citizen. . . . Dr. Carmichael will be returning to the task of strengthening still further the school and university resources of the South. . . . The loss to the foundation, which he has led since 1946 through numerous studies and activities contributing to educational advance is evident. But beyond that, Dr. Carmichael has been a constructive and energetic force in many community affairs. We shall miss his inspiring leadership here, but are grateful for having had him on loan from the South for a few years.³

Carmichael’s positive reputation and stature were further shown in other newspapers across the country, including the Manchester (N. H.) *Union Leader*, a very right-wing newspaper. This paper praised Carmichael’s final report as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, where Carmichael noted that our higher education system was not producing enough people in science and technology fields who also had a strong grounding in philosophy and other cultures. The Manchester Union Leader commented on his paper:

This newspaper is pleased to see President Carmichael take a viewpoint it has long held; namely that many of the mistakes of this age, both in national and international leadership, have come because there are too many specialists, too many scientists, too many very able men in very narrow fields of learning and science . . . If the colleges will turn toward Dr. Carmichael’s viewpoint, we will produce wiser leaders for a better future.⁴

The *Atlanta Constitution* also published a large spread on Carmichael after he was appointed president of the University of Alabama. Carmichael himself said in an interview with the *Atlanta Constitution*, “We need educators as presidents of our universities. We need men

³ Ibid.

who have devoted their lives to students, faculties and education.”5 The writer of the article in the Atlanta Constitution went on to say:

Increasingly, American colleges and universities are choosing presidents from lawyers, businessmen, publicists, ministers, army officers, politicians- men from every profession except educators. But are there teachers and educators, I asked, who can deal with money, buildings, publicity, alumni, legislators? Dr. Carmichael is positive there are such men. In the faculties of most universities there is a man or two, both scholar and administrator, who could guide a university in its search for buildings and endowment.6

It was quite clear from how the faculty, students, and the state leaders responded with all positivity to Carmichael’s appointment that they saw him as the educator that could do all of these things. When he started, Carmichael anticipated the surge of post-war baby-boom children who would be flooding the state’s colleges and universities. He had a plan for what the state and the University of Alabama would do to accommodate them in the most efficient way possible. He also quickly launched a self-study of the University. This self-study included the University of Alabama’s present situation, its potential, and the role he believed it should fill in the state of Alabama.7 Many Alabamians quickly saw him as the “great president who would lead UA to greatness.”8 Carmichael’s self-study would never be fulfilled and the promise he brought to Alabama would never be realized.

Carmichael’s Arrival and First Dealings with the

Atherine Lucy & Pollie Myers Case

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
President Carmichael arrived at the University of Alabama in the fall of 1953. As far as the timing of the Pollie Myers and Autherine Lucy case, the Board of Trustees had already hired the law firm of Burr, McKamy, Moore and Tate to handle the case a month before President Carmichael arrived. The firm prepared a brief for President Carmichael, at the request of the Board of Trustees, so that he may be caught up on the entire Myers and Lucy situation.

The document was written on October 22, 1953 and its main argument in the Lucy et al. v. Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama case was that the “University was an arm of the State of Alabama and under Section 14 of the Constitution, was not subject to suit.” They continue to say that Judge Grooms had given the matter consideration but decided that in his opinion the suit was against the Board of Trustees as a public corporation, so he therefore dismissed the complaint. The document said they hope to ultimately “dismiss the case and if no other proceedings are taken by the plaintiffs, the present suit will be over with. . . . However, in view of the court’s granting the plaintiffs the right to amend . . . we expect an amendment making the Board of Trustees parties’ defendant in their individual capacities rather than as a body corporate.”

At the time, the Board of Trustees and its leader, Hill Ferguson, were not sure of President Carmichael’s views towards desegregation. Ferguson tried to find out what President Carmichael’s views were, before he even took office, in July of 1953. Ferguson was also likely eager to start pressuring and persuading the president so that he could maintain his control over the race question. Hill Ferguson was aware of President Carmichael’s connections and

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9 B. Burr, D. K. McKamy, F. H. Moore, & G. Tate to Oliver C. Carmichael, 22 October 1953, Box 14, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

10 Ibid.

11 Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 29.
participation with the big foundations, such as his seat on the Advisory Committee of the Ford Foundation’s Fund for the Advancement of Education. Because of this, he was wary of President Carmichael’s viewpoints.

A meeting was being organized by the Fund for the Development of Education to discuss segregation. Governor Gordon Persons of Alabama, newly elected in 1952, had received a warning from Governor Byrnes of South Carolina of the dangers of a Southern university participating in such meeting, especially before the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board* ruling. Governor Persons shared this with Ferguson, and therefore Ferguson wrote to President Carmichael to inform him of all of this. That same day President Carmichael did indeed receive an invitation from the Fund to attend this meeting.\(^\text{12}\)

The invitation informed him of the report that would be discussed at the meeting. The report was Harry Ashmore’s study on biracial education in the South, titled *The Negro and the Schools*. This report provided a look into the South’s unequal education system.\(^\text{13}\) President Carmichael declined attendance to the meeting but did read the report. He wrote to the Fund and informed them that he was sure Governor Byrnes would find no objection to their approach if he read the report carefully. He also told them though that he would not be surprised if Governor Byrnes still would not want this report out in the public until after the Supreme Court gave their decision.\(^\text{14}\) From this response, one would think President Carmichael was open to

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., p. 30.


\(^\text{14}\) Ibid.
desegregation, or at least that think he definitely did not desperately want to prevent it from happening.

However, President Carmichael did not want to attend a meeting where the sensitive topic was being discussed, especially since the Board of Trustees clearly did not want him to engage in it. This would be the first of many times where the president did his best to avoid the race issue or gave an unclear view of his thoughts towards desegregation. What he did do was make clear his willingness to not fight for desegregation in order to please the Board of Trustees. This may have been a personal choice or a savvy business choice. Considering the context at hand, it may have been the only choice President Carmichael had if he wanted to remain president at the University of Alabama and remain in good graces with the majority of the important stakeholders and citizens of the state of Alabama. These would be tough waters to navigate during the next three years that Carmichael was president of the University of Alabama.

President Carmichael’s Presidential Reports

at The University of Alabama, 1954-1956

President Carmichael submitted a report of the operations to the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama each year that he was president. In each of these reports he gave a general summary of the operations that occurred that academic year as well as reports from each individual division within the University, such as the College of Education and the Extension Division. These reports give great insight in to what President Carmichael and his administration accomplished each academic year. Since there is little else reported on what President Carmichael actually did accomplish in his three and a half years as president in other

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sources, these reports remain the main source of information for his accomplishments at the University of Alabama. It should be noted that only the presidential reports from President Carmichael for the academic years of 1954-1955, 1955-1956 and 1956-1957 were on file in the W. S. Hoole Special Collections Library. The reports from his first academic year as president, 1953-1954, and the year after his last academic year as president, 1957-1958, are missing from this analysis.

Report of the President, 1954-1955

President Carmichael first noted in his 1954-1955 report that the most significant new development of the year was faculty and administrators turning their attention towards the problems that may come with the expected increase in enrollment to hit the University of Alabama in the near future. A lot of time had been consumed with the anticipated needs of staff, housing, laboratory and library materials, counseling services, recreation and extra-curricular facilities, and financial support. Much of this planning was being done through the framework of the Study and Planning Program, which was announced in the previous presidential report.16

This Program was funded by a grant of $150,000 from the Carnegie Corporation. The Program had been in place for around seven months and President Carmichael expected it would continue for another two to three years. Essentially, the Study and Planning Program was a self-survey to study the University as a whole, and then create plans based on the positive and negative findings. The plans would establish ways to continue what was already working for the University and to improve what was not working for the University. The Program was operated

through a system of committees made up of faculty members as well as student input where appropriate.\textsuperscript{17}

President Carmichael noted that a piece of this Program was to allow for committee members to travel to other universities and for experts in certain areas to visit the University of Alabama and provide feedback. Committee members had already visited twenty-one institutions. One of the main accomplishments of this Program so far, even though it was still in the beginning stages at the time, was the re-establishment of the University Council, which had not functioned for years. The University Council was established and re-organized so that faculty and administrators could have opportunities to help the president carry out the mission of the University of Alabama, such as making recommendations on policies.\textsuperscript{18} It was clear from his report that President Carmichael was quite proud of this decision and accomplishment. The equivalent to this today at the University of Alabama would be the Faculty Senate, which even still includes the participation of students.

There were two other noteworthy aspects of the Program. The first one was the broad range of topics the Program was examining, including the quality of teaching at the University, education for women, conditions of faculty and staff employment, and opportunities for high-achieving students.\textsuperscript{19} All of these areas being examined would surely improve the overall quality of the University. This Program was a step forward towards increasing the excellence of the University of Alabama, and it was something that President Carmichael could surely nurture and

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
expand upon under his administration. This was something positive that President Carmichael’s administration could be remembered for.

President Carmichael was also very proud of the number of faculty and staff who were invested in this Program. Nearly forty committees, 733 faculty and staff, and around 5,000 hours had been invested in the Program. This showed how many people at the University were invested in its success and were willing to put in the extra hours every week to improve the institution. If President Carmichael surely felt the need and the pressure to keep up this motivation and enthusiasm, stating: “This large-scale and enthusiastic involvement of the faculty in the process of self-survey would make the Program worthwhile quite apart from its practical accomplishments.”

Faculty members echoed this sentiment as one of them said, “The Study and Planning Program has already paid for itself.”

The next section of the 1954-1955 presidential report describes in detail the state of enrollment for the past academic year. Most notably out of these numbers is the total enrollment increase by 6.5 percent from the previous year and less than half of the student body was women, and 81 percent of the student body was Alabama residents. By far, the colleges with the most students enrolled in it were the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Commerce and Business administration. President Carmichael also gives an overview of the budget, which for the 1954-55 academic year was over seven million dollars. An entire page of the report is given to an overview of the buildings on campus in regard to their detailed construction and timeline plans.

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
President Carmichael then goes on to discuss what he states as “the most significant event in the year covered by this annual report.”23 This would be the work done towards the Medical Center, such as the Special Survey Committee and the submission of their report in August of 1954 and the development of a master plan for the medical center. President Carmichael mainly mentioned the requests and uses for funding that have been put in place. He stated that the funds they have are not adequate to make the necessary improvements for the Medical Center. Therefore, he submitted a request to the governor for “the earmarking of $200,000 per year in tax revenue in order to float $4,000,000 in bonds for the capital needs of the Medical Center.”24 President Carmichael also set in motion plans to develop the buildings of the Medical Center. He made it clear in this report that the needs of the Medical Center are of high priority to him and his administration as he even stated that, “several of the needs of the Medical Center are so pressing that it would be difficult to assign priorities among them.”25 President Carmichael was set on the Medical Center being a priority.

President Carmichael also made sure to address the issue of a lack of qualified professors and that the University deserved. The University of Alabama had fallen further behind comparable institutions in salary levels and it had to increase freshmen and sophomore class sizes due to not having enough faculty members on staff. He also mentioned the lack of adequately trained public school teachers and how this number drops every year. President Carmichael wanted the University to utilize its resources and become a resource to the state of Alabama by producing more qualified teachers at the institution and by providing educational

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.
programs to current public school teachers. In President Carmichael’s annual reports as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching from 1946 to 1953, he consistently advocated that teachers should be exalted and their salaries increased so that the nation does not do permanent damage on the amount of skilled and qualified teachers in the country.

From the time that he took on the role as president of the University, Carmichael consistently foresaw, and spoke about, a jump in the University’s enrollment over the coming years. In the 1954-1955 academic year the student enrollment was 7,500 and President Carmichael predicted the enrollment would be 10,000 by 1960 and 14,200 by 1965. He stated at the Alabama Education Association convention that a thorough study indicated these numbers. He added though that a problem confronting this growth of students would be finding enough teachers to teach them. President Carmichael was a firm believer that if the country did not start rewarding and paying teachers properly for their service than there will be a major shortage of qualified teachers.

One aspect that is evident from this presidential report is the fact that President Carmichael was not afraid to be direct and make detailed requests to the Board of Trustees, at least for issues other than segregation. For example, when he knew the University needed more qualified faculty he wrote: “The number of such people needs to be increased substantially, as soon as possible.” When President Carmichael knew the University needed more scholarships

26 Ibid.


29 Ibid.
and fellowships for the graduate students he wrote: “There is a need for more scholarships with increased stipends for first year graduate students. We have at present time only 20 such scholarships and the stipend is only $500. . . .We need at least ten more fellowships. . . the fellowship stipend should be increased from $1200 to at least $1500.” President Carmichael also knew how to make the Board of Trustees pay attention to these demands, instead of just ignoring them, by framing them within the context of needing these requests to be met in order to compete with, and be better than, other comparable institutions: “In the past several years many excellent students to whom we awarded scholarships declined them because other institutions offered them more remunerative scholarships. . . . to be able to compete with institutions in our own area for the most capable students.”

Overall, the presidential report on the operations of the University of Alabama for the academic year 1954-1955 gives an overview of the general state of the University at the time as well as its needs. The report also gives insight in to which aspects of the operations of the University President Carmichael valued the most based on which ones he emphasized the most within the report. President Carmichael was very clear in his report and went directly to the point when it came to the University’s needs. It appears as though President Carmichael had a good grasp on what he wanted for the University and from the Board of Trustees in order to continue to grow and improve the University of Alabama.

Report of the President, 1955-1956

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
In the 1955-1956 Presidential Report, President Carmichael starts the report differently did than he did the year before. One might assume that what the president chooses to start his report to the Board of Trustees with was likely the most important fact that he wanted the Board to see. In the 1955-1956 report, President Carmichael jumped right into talking about the enrollment numbers for the academic year: “The enrollment during the regular session, extending from September 1955 through May 27, 1956 was 8485. This represent an increase of 12.8 per cent over the enrollment last year (7501).”

President Carmichael then went on to break down the different aspects of the enrollment, such as gender and in-state students, to show even further how every area has had an increase of at least nine percent when compared to the previous academic year. President Carmichael wanted to be certain that the Board of Trustees was very aware of the increasing enrollment and that this increase in enrollment would only continue. The exact numbers would hopefully draw their attention to addressing the needs that come with increased enrollment in a short amount of time.

President Carmichael also presented the operating budgeting in a way that would draw the attention of the Board of Trustees. He first wrote out the operating budget in a simple sentence form, but then he presented it a second time in a different way. He used a chart to present the numbers, but the smart part about how he did this was he lined it up next to the previous year’s operating budget, line by line, to clearly show the large differences in numbers from one year to the next. The operating budget for the 1955-1956 academic year was nearly two million dollars more than the operating budget for the 1954-1955 academic year.

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33 Ibid.
presenting the information in this way may not seem important, sometimes how the information is presented makes all the difference in who pays attention to it and how seriously they take it. President Carmichael usually knew how to be savvy with his words and that shows in his presidential reports.

When presenting the financial support that the University received from outside donors, President Carmichael made sure to note that the gifts, grant-in-aid, and scholarship awards were from 219 different individuals and businesses. He noted this in a way to show the Board of Trustees how many people were invested in the success of the University of Alabama: “This evidence of wide-spread interest and confidence in the University program and its staff is as important as is the total amount of money contributed.” President Carmichael appeared to be trying to show the Board of Trustees that if this many people have confidence in the University to the point where they are investing their own money, then the University needs to keep pushing forward and making changes towards success so as to not let the donors down.

The Board of Trustees surely cared about the number of donations it received each year. President Carmichael knew how to emphasize what the Board of Trustees found important, while also using that information to get his points across and the needs of the University were met by the Board. President Carmichael was aware that he could not do anything without the support and approval of the Board of Trustees, so pleasing them and finding ways to make them care was likely on President Carmichael’s mind in all of his dealing with the Board.

In this presidential report, as well as the previous one, President Carmichael mentions the completion of several buildings and the start of construction of others. The constant construction on buildings is always a good sign of a university that is striving to be better and one that is

34 Ibid.
doing somewhat well financially. Buildings being worked on and completed for the 1954-1955 academic year included the Music and Speech Building, an addition to the Union Building, two air-conditioned men’s dormitories, Harris Hall and Manly Hall were renovated, and the paved parking areas and seventy student apartments for married students were added. President Carmichael saw importance in the state of campus facilities.

Faculty and staff salaries were increased this academic year from the last. President Carmichael said that not only were substantial salary increases put in to effect, but also because of this the morale of the faculty and staff was greatly improved. President Carmichael was trying to make the Board of Trustees see how it was worth rewarding people for their efforts because it would improve the overall state of well-being of everyone who works on campus. When people feel like they are being rewarded for their hard work then they are likely to continue to work hard. Once again, President Carmichael made sure to compare the University of Alabama to its competing institutions in order to justify how much they are paying their instructors by stating that the majority of competing institutions were paying their beginning instructors well above the assumed minimum because they were in such high demand.

In November of 1955, President Carmichael was able to continue his work and service to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching just two years after leaving his role as president of the Foundation. He was elected as chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As chairman of the Board of Trustees, President Carmichael could continue to address the major problems that faced all of higher education in the United States. The Foundation provided a forum where it can give undivided

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
attention to the greatest and broadest questions confronting higher education. President Carmichael would have to travel to New York occasionally in order to preside over the Board of Trustees’ meetings.37

One of the aspects of higher education that President Carmichael wanted to bring attention to was the importance of teaching the humanities. President Carmichael was very passionate about the humanities and their importance and place within a university. In an address to the Birmingham Kiwanis Club in 1954, President Carmichael addressed the topic of the arts and sciences having an important place within higher education:

The recent thinking that arts and science in colleges and universities are on their way out, is wrong. Signs are apparent all over the country that there will be a return to the basic studies, which deal with traditions and our heritage, social currents and cross-currents. So the University, with its technical, vocational and professional services, still has at its heart the basic studies which in years ahead will increasingly enable our society to cope with problems of today and tomorrow.38

President Carmichael spoke about this topic of the humanities versus technical and professional knowledge several times during both his presidency of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and for the University of Alabama. He was a firm believer that without the humanities students would be missing the fundamental tools to cope with any problems in society that they may face in the future.

President Carmichael believed students should have a spirit of wanting to learn and be able to understand more than what was written in the textbooks. He believed the result of an institution that supported that belief would be students who have developed a sense of moral


38 “In address to Kiwanis- U of A’s Dr. Carmichael says arts, sciences ‘coming back’.” The Birmingham News, May 19, 1954.
responsibility and insight into society. He also believed that all students should have a spirit of appreciation and consideration for different viewpoints among students, faculty, staff, and administration. Unfortunately, he would find out that when it came to the issues surrounding segregation and desegregation that appreciation of different viewpoints would be hard to find among the people of the University of Alabama.\textsuperscript{39}

In the entirety of this presidential report, which covered the academic year in which Autherine Lucy enrolled at the University of Alabama, President Carmichael only made one small mention about what happened in the middle of the academic year. In regard to the 125\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of the University of Alabama President Carmichael said “Although attention was diverted from the beginning of the anniversary year by the segregation issue, the celebration has now gotten under way under the direction of a university-wide committee. Many special events are occurring. . . and extraordinary efforts are being made to publicize and interpret the institution from these programs.”\textsuperscript{40} The only time Lucy and the segregation issue was mentioned in the report was when President Carmichael was portrayed it as an event that got in the way of anniversary celebrations.

It is quite possible that President Carmichael mentioned the segregation issue in this part of the report strategically, because he mentioned right after it that great efforts will be put towards publicizing the 125\textsuperscript{th} anniversary to the point that people will associate the institution with the anniversary programs. This could be interpreted as President Carmichael letting the Board of Trustees know that he planned to make the anniversary events as public as possible so

\textsuperscript{39} “Carmichael Urges Students to Thirst for Knowledge.” The Tuscaloosa News, September 23, 1954.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
that they will overshadow, or make people forget about, what the university was being publicized
for earlier that year. President Carmichael saw no reason to revive such a controversial situation.

President Carmichael even chose to dedicate an entire separate section of the report to the
developments of the Study and Planning Program but could not dedicate more than half a
sentence to what happened to Autherine Lucy and the segregation issue at hand. Perhaps by the
time President Carmichael was writing his last presidential report he had given up on trying to
work on the segregation issue with the Board of Trustees, especially since at that point he likely
already knew he was going to announce his resignation. President Carmichael was never one to
voluntarily bring up the segregation issue at the University of Alabama if it was not necessary, so
it is not surprising that he did not bring it up in one the last reports he wrote for the University of
Alabama.

The Board of Trustees minutes from spring 1956 suggest Lucy’s arrival was a larger
source of consternation. In the Board of Trustees meeting held on March 12, 1956, a discussion
was held about taking disciplinary action on an undergraduate Alabama student, Leonard R.
Wilson, for his unwarranted actions on February 3rd, 4th, and 6th and in the weeks following
because Wilson did not agree with Autherine Lucy, or any African American student, being on
campus. Wilson was the student leader of the mobs on campus.41 The minutes report from this
meeting state that it was President Carmichael who established a special investigating committee
and presented the reports from that committee to the Board of Trustees. Based on the reports
from the committee, the Board of Trustees unanimously voted to permanently expel the student.

The Board called the student’s conduct “outrageous” and stated that his conduct and
charges “represent far more than the mere exercise of his right freely to debate the question of

41 Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 64-65.
segregation.”\textsuperscript{42} It is not only shocking that the Board of Trustees agreed to listen to President Carmichael’s request and also give him the result that he wanted, but they also decided to publicly announce through news media the permanent expulsion of Wilson: “because of the wide publicity given to the notions and charges of Leonard R. Wilson, the University of Alabama makes an exception to its policy of not announcing disciplinary action taken against a student and that this resolution be made public through appropriate news media.”\textsuperscript{43} This was likely one of the few times during his presidency that President Carmichael could convince the Board of Trustees to do the right thing in regard to the segregation issue.

From the information found within these presidential reports it can be concluded that President Carmichael as a president did not accomplish anything truly out of the ordinary. What he did in his short three and a half years at the University of Alabama allowed the University to maintain and advance its status amongst competing institutions. It does not appear that he was able to achieve any substantial changes, and perhaps this was due to the short amount of time he was there. He certainly was not there long enough to develop the lasting positive reputation that his successor, Frank Rose, was able to achieve. The events surrounding the attempt by Autherine Licy to desegregate the University of Alabama proved to be what defined Carmichael’s presidency.

\textsuperscript{42} Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama, 12 March 1956, Box 16, Oliver Cromwell Carmichael Papers, W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library, The University of Alabama Libraries.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
CHAPTER III:.AUTHERINE LUCY’S BATTLE FOR ADMITTANCE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, 1952-1956

The Decision to Attend the University of Alabama

As early as 1952, two African American women, Atherine Juanita Lucy and Pollie Anne Myers, were trying to gain admission to the University of Alabama but were repeatedly refused.¹ They did not know it at the time, but by 1956 their attempts to enroll at the University of Alabama would lead to one of their names being known and heard around the country. Atherine Lucy would eventually be admitted to the University of Alabama, and her name would cause both anger and sympathy towards the fight for equal educational opportunities for African American citizens. Either way, it caused nearly everyone to pay attention to a civil rights cause that would soon be a movement.

Both Atherine Lucy and Pollie Myers were students at Miles Memorial College in Birmingham when they met. They quickly became close friends, even though they were opposites in many ways. Myers was much more outgoing than Lucy, as Lucy was actually quite a shy individual. Both women were born and raised in the state of Alabama and made the decision to attend college in Alabama. Atherine Lucy had already completed two years of college at Selma University when she arrived at Miles College. She attended Selma University to study to be a teacher but was unable to get a teaching job upon graduation. By the time she

graduated in 1949 the state of Alabama was no longer accepting two-year degrees to teach full-time.²

Atherine Lucy and Pollie Myers finished their coursework at Miles College in 1949. While waiting to get a teaching job, Myers had a different proposition for Lucy: she wanted them to attend to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. It is not surprising that it was Myers who initiated this bold move. Myers was a leader and she also had strong reasoning behind her decision. She had served as president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council and it was there that she became influenced and inspired by the NAACP secretary and editor of the Birmingham World, Emory Jackson. Jackson used his position with the newspaper and NAACP to bring awareness of the future to the African American community and to fight for integrated education in Alabama. Jackson was a fearless leader and someone that Myers looked up to.³

Jackson gave Myers the title of society editor at the newspaper, but she had no formal journalism training. Wanting to please Jackson, Myers looked into going to school for journalism, but none of the African American colleges in the state had a journalism program. Myers came up with an alternative solution and gained the help and support from the regional director of the NAACP, Ruby Hurley. It was Hurley who suggested that Myers get a friend to go with her to the University of Alabama, which sparked Myers into asking Lucy.⁴

Before even applying, both Myers and Hurley knew she and Lucy would need legal support, and that is where Arthur Davis Shores entered into the picture. Practicing law since


³ Ibid., 15-17.

⁴ Ibid., 17.
1937 and having been a principal at a Bessemer, Alabama high school for ten years, Shores was at the forefront of wanting and trying to end segregation in Alabama. Hurley ended up telling Shores about Myers decision to apply to the University of Alabama. Shores was on board and felt confident about the endeavor. He knew the law was on his side and he felt that desegregating the University of Alabama would be way less of a challenge than tackling African American voting rights.⁵

Shores was already thinking of ways that they could be prepared for the resistance they would meet. He knew that others would find it suspicious that the women were backed by the NAACP and that it would lessen the sincerity of their applications. Therefore, a small lie was agreed upon by all parties. Instead of letting people know that the two women had Shores as their lawyer before they even applied, they would tell people that Pollie Myers and Autherine Lucy submitted their applications on their own on September 4th, and that they did not contact Shores until after they were denied admission.⁶ Shores must have known at the time that Myers and Lucy would surely be denied during their first attempt at applying, and indeed they were.

**The Legal Environment in the United States**

It is crucial to understand the legal context in which Autherine Lucy and Pollie Meyers were operating within and how that context came to be that way. The NAACP’s fight for equality began around 1930 when Charles H. Houston of Howard Law School took on the specific task of fighting segregation within education. In 1934 Houston became the first head of the NAACP legal department. His assistant at the time was Thurgood Marshall, who would later

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⁵ Ibid., 17-18.

⁶ Ibid., 18.
become a key figure in the NAACP legal department in the fight to end inequalities in education as chief counsel and head of Legal Defense and Educational Fund by 1939.

The first task was to capitalize on the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896, which ruled public facilities and services, such as education and educational buildings, could be separate for White and African American people as long as the accommodations were substantially equal. Of course, accommodations and services were separate and anything but equal, especially in the South that Atherine Lucy and Pollie Myers lived in.

The schools for White children in the Jim Crow era always received more money than the schools for African American children, and when a town, such as rural towns where most African American citizens lived, did not have enough money to build and service two separate schools, then the law let them just have one school. Only White children were allowed to attend the one school. This was one of many exceptions to the separate but equal ruling. It was completely unconstitutional and went against the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. There were not nearly as many public schools for African American children and most of them left school after the fourth grade, or they only went to school two to three months out of the year because of cotton-growing season.\(^7\)

The NAACP hoped to use the separate but equal ruling to its benefit though. They hoped that by forcing states to provide two separate facilities and accommodations that had to actually be equal in quality, that the states would find this to be too expensive and then therefore

hopefully encourage them to put money into and integrate just one facility and services instead.\textsuperscript{8} Basically the NAACP was going to try to enforce a judicial decision that had not been truly followed the last forty years since it went in to place. In 1936, Thurgood Marshall and Charles Houston had their first major opportunity to do this.

An aspiring law student, Donald Murray, applied to the University of Maryland to study law. In order to keep the African American student out, the University of Maryland offered to pay his out-of-state tuition at a different institution, just as long as it was not its institution. His rejection letter even stated that they were not going to admit him because of his race. They believed they were following the law by offering to pay for him to study elsewhere. Murray and the oldest African American fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, brought this case to the Maryland Court of Appeals. Thurgood Marshall would represent him.\textsuperscript{9}

Thurgood Marshall and Charles Houston argued that the state of Maryland had failed to provide a separate but equal education for Murray as stated by the Fourteenth Amendment and the circuit court ordered that the president of Maryland, Raymond Pearson, admit Murray to the law school. This case would be known as \textit{Murray v. Pearson}. The University of Maryland appealed the circuit judges ruling, but when the case reached the Maryland Court of Appeals it agreed with lower court ruling.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{8} Culpepper E. Clark, \textit{The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8-9.


\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
The separate but equal ruling would be challenged repeatedly in similar cases to *Murray v. Pearson*. In 1951 the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case was filed. Linda Brown had attended an all-African American school in Topeka, Kansas, but when her father attempted to enroll her in summer school at an all-White school near home he was denied. The *Brown v. Board* case served as an umbrella for several other similar cases arguing for equality in education in the years following. On May 17, 1954 the Supreme Court would strike down the separate but equal doctrine and end public school segregation.\(^{11}\) By May of 1955, the Justices “empowered the district courts to order desegregation wherever plaintiffs demonstrated the presence of laws, policies, and customs that promoted segregation,” and ordered that the process of segregation be “carried out with all deliberate speed.”\(^ {12}\) The Autherine Lucy and Pollie Myers case was happening right in the midst of all of this and it would be of grave public interest.

**The Climate at the University of Alabama**

In 1946, the president of the University of Alabama, Raymond Ross Paty, was departing for the University of Georgia. Paty believed that the African American demands for equality should be met within the boundaries of segregation. He had an idea that may have made the transition to desegregation a little bit smoother if it ever stood a chance of coming to fruition. He believed in the idea of gradualism. He thought that African Americans could be educated on campus by admitting them to select graduate programs. He did, however, still want the African American students to be segregated from the White students. Perhaps if there had already been African American students on campus, then the transition into desegregation may not have come as such a shock and with such immense opposition as it eventually did. His memorandum on this

\(^{11}\) Ibid.

\(^{12}\) Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 11.
idea never came to fruition though, for in 1943 is was still more of a change than Southern Whites were willing to accept.  

There were several key people who had control at the University of Alabama during the late 1940s. Ralph Adams, the Dean of Administration and later the acting president after President Paty left in 1947, was starkly against letting African American students be admitted to the University of Alabama. Since he was in charge of admissions, he therefore had the power to reject every African American applicant. Adams did not try to hide that fact that he would deny people based on race either and he would even directly write that in his written replies to applications.  

Adams also involved the Board of Trustees in his quest to deny all African American Applicants. When one African American student from Talladega College applied, he asked one of the Board of Trustees members, Brewer Dixon, to look in to it. Dixon declared that this applicant must have been applying in order to make an example out of the University of Alabama and their segregation ways and not because the applicant actually wanted to attend. He believed that the student must have known their Law School was for White students only, so there could be no other reason they were applying than to fulfill a plan to make the University of Alabama a test case for segregation.  

As time went on the University of Alabama would receive applicants who were very knowledgeable about Brown v. Board and would therefore be persistent in their application for admittance. One applicant in particular made Adams very nervous. Because of this Adams was

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13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 12.

15 Ibid.
desperate to hear some legal advice that was in his favor. In 1946, Captain Nathaniel S. Colley applied to the University of Alabama Law School and he knew exactly what his rights were. He declared that he would not accept a grant-in-aid to attend a law school elsewhere as a solution nor would he be forced to attend a low-quality law school. He stated that it was his right to attend the University of Alabama and that the Federal Courts would surely agree given the success of other similar legal cases at the time.\textsuperscript{16}

Dean Adams quickly reached out to several different people in order to find out what he could say to Colley in order to get him to stop trying to be admitted. He received advice from the Regents Office of the University System of Georgia, who essentially said its solution was to delay as long as possible with all plausible appeals to the courts and try to acquire adequate separate facilities in the meantime. Dean Adams also reached out to several people within the Alabama State Bar Association. He was told that it was unlikely that the Supreme Court would favor Alabama’s laws in this matter and that the student would most likely get a court order demanding he be admitted should he take his case to court.\textsuperscript{17}

Dean Adams was so desperate to find a different solution other than admitting Colley that he even proposed a plan to change legislation. The proposed change would allow African American law students who went to law school in another state to not be required to take the bar exam in order to admitted to the bar in Alabama. He believed that since this was a privilege that the University of Alabama law students already had that it would strengthen his notion that they

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 12-13.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 13.
were providing substantially equal opportunities when offering to pay for their tuition to attend a law school out of state.\textsuperscript{18}

Once again, Adams sought legal advice on this matter and once again he did not get the answer he was looking for. He was told that these standards would still not meet the Supreme Court’s rulings and the NAACP would never accept this change as an acceptable solution. Colley ended up attending and graduating from Yale University’s law school instead and later became a leader in the NAACP.\textsuperscript{19}

Alabama’s legal community continued to advise the University of Alabama that it was senseless and useless to continue to resist the admittance of African American students. However, the University of Alabama administration would not budge on its policies and beliefs. The University of Alabama’s next president, John Gallallee, also did not help in the matter as he too was blatantly against the desegregation of the University. When asked about admitting African American students to the professional programs he said doing so would bring a disturbing reaction from the people of Alabama. He knew all of the changes that would come with desegregation, such as housing and social functions, and hoped they would not have to deal with it.\textsuperscript{20}

While the majority of the administration who had power were very against desegregation, the student body had mixed opinions. A student survey in 1948 was administered to the students of the University of Alabama and the results were published in the \textit{New York Times}. The results showed some significant, and perhaps surprising, findings. Half of the respondents said they

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 13-14.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 14-15.
would not object to African American students being admitted to the undergraduate school. However, over half of the students who were in favor of that also said they would prefer they be admitted with some form of internal segregation. Despite the racial climate at the University of Alabama, Pollie Myers and Autherine Lucy were still determined to apply and hopefully be admitted.

**The Application Process**

Pollie Myers and Atherine Lucy mailed their inquiries about attending the University of Alabama on September 4, 1952. On September 5 they received application forms from the University of Alabama. It was clear that the administration at the University of Alabama had no idea that both women were African American yet, especially when they received a letter from the Dean of Women a few days later informing them of the housing and dining amenities they would receive if they chose to attend the University of Alabama. She requested that they send a deposit of five dollars each to reserve a spot for their housing and Myers and Lucy did just that. The University went as far as assigning them their specific dormitory after receiving their deposit.21

Even more surprisingly than getting their specific dormitory assignment, they also each received a letter from the current president, President Gallalee, welcoming them to the campus. President Gallalee, as stated earlier, was not in agreement with admitting African American students to the University of Alabama, and therefore, it was clear he and the dean of admissions were unaware of Pollie Myers’ and Atherine Lucy’s race. It was not until the dean of admissions, William Adams, received their full application that he realized they were African American. Both women at this point were sure they would be attending the University of Alabama, and Lucy even resigned from her current job. On September 19, 1952, Dean Adams

21 Ibid., 19.
went to President Gallalee to inform him that he mistakenly had led two African American students to believe that they would be accepted to the University.22

President Gallalee did not seem concerned as they had gone this long without admitting, or being forced to admit, any African American students, so surely this case would be no different. Little did he know in that moment that this case would be very different. President Gallalee contacted a White Judge Clarence Allgood who had connections to the African American legal community. President Gallalee hoped that he would be persuasive in getting the legal community to convince the two women to no longer apply to the University. Not in a rush to do so, Judge Allgood agreed that he would talk with Arthur Shores, whom he happened to know and worked with in the past within the bankruptcy realm.23

While President Gallalee waited for Judge Allgood to speak with Shores, Pollie Myers and Aurtherine Lucy made plans to come to the admissions office in person on September 20. Right before the women arrived at the admissions office, President Gallalee instructed Dean Adams to return the women’s five-dollar deposits in cash. It is possible that he hoped by returning their deposit in cash in person right away it would help persuade the women to leave this incident in the past and just move on. The two women would do no such thing, nor would they even accept the cash return.

It is not certain what was said between all parties on that day in the admissions office, but in the transcript of record from Pollie Myers’ and Aurtherine Lucy’s court appeal later on, Myers stated that Dean Adams said “an error has been made” when the women arrived in the office. Myers then asked if it was due to their transcripts not being received yet, and Adams replied with

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.
“No it isn’t that, it is just that we can’t accept you.”

Myers then stated that she asked him if the reasoning was their skin color and Dean Adams asked them if they had applied to Alabama State or Tuskegee. In addition, Myers claimed that Dean Adams said the Alabama law prohibited their enrollment at the University of Alabama. Not only were both Pollie Myers and Autherine Lucy in the room, but they also brought Reverend J.L. Ware with them in case a dispute like this did happen. However, Dean Adams denied having said an error had been made or that the laws of Alabama prohibited their admittance.

In the W. S. Hoole Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama a document can be found titled “Suggested Reply to Autherine J. Lucy”. This document does not include a date but at the top left corner of the page it says “William F. Adams, Dean of Admissions and Records” so it appears that it was Dean Adams who wrote this document. In the suggested reply it includes:

Your application was denied on September 20, 1952 due to the fact that you did not meet the qualifications for advanced study in the indicated field of study and due to the fact that you had not been consistent in your application and in your letter . . . you have failed to give full information on your previous education. It has always been the policy of the University of Alabama to deny admission to, or to suspend, students who do not give full information on application. . . . The check sent in your name by Arthur D. Shores is enclosed.

Dean Admissions probably wrote this statement soon after Autherine Lucy and Pollie Meyers left his office on September 20, 1956. He knew he needed to come up with a different reason for denying admission other than race or color. Even though the women were accepted at first, the

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24 Transcript of Record, United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, William F Adams, Appellant vs. Autherine J. Lucy and Polly Anne Myers, Apelles, p. 121.

25 Ibid.

26 Suggested Reply to Autherine J. Lucy, The University of Alabama Office of Admissions and Record, by William F. Adams, Box 14, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
University of Alabama was now back tracking and saying that their applications are actually incomplete. What was not a problem before their race was realized, all of the sudden became a problem once their race was realized.

**The Appeal and Trial**

Pollie Myers and Atherine Lucy appealed the decision of the University of Alabama to deny their admittance and eventually brought the case to court with their lawyer, Arthur Shores. However, there would be years of waiting before that happened. Shores first appealed on September 24, 1952 that President Gallalee must intervene and grant the women admission to the University of Alabama. Shores took this appeal up to the Governor of Alabama, Gordon Persons.\(^{27}\) He sent over a copy of the case to Thurgood Marshall in December of 1952 in order to keep him updated.

Shores wrote Marshall again in February of 1953 to inform him of Governor Persons’ decision to turn the appeal over to the University of Alabama Board of Trustees to deliberate. Marshall advised Shores to wait to file a suit until they heard what the Board of Trustees’ official decision was on the off-chance that they decided to admit the two women without further legal action ensuing. Shores agreed to wait and gave Governor Persons until June 10, 1953 to deliver a decision. In the midst of all of this the University of Alabama was going through a change of leadership. President Gallalee would resign after a five-year tenure and be replaced by Oliver Cromwell Carmichael in the spring of 1953.\(^{28}\)

On June 6\(^{th}\), 1953 the Board of Trustees secretary relayed the Board’s decision on the Atherine Lucy and Pollie Myers matter to Arthur Shores. The Board of Trustees decided to wait

\(^{27}\) Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 20.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 38.
to decide on admitting Lucy and Myers pending a Supreme Court ruling following litigation. The Board of Trustees gave one last effort to try to convince the two women to give up and apply to Alabama State College or Tuskegee instead of the University of Alabama. Shores informed Marshall of the Board’s decision and they prepared a final complaint for Court. Shores and the two women would not accept defeat and they filed the final complaint on July 3, 1953.\textsuperscript{29}

They would now have to wait for an unknown period time, but they and others, such as Emory Jackson, were hopeful that their court case would be dealt with the same way similar ones had. If the Court followed the same procedures, then it should result in Autherine Lucy and Pollie Myers attending the University of Alabama.\textsuperscript{30} During their waiting period Shores tried to feel out what kind of possible support he could get from White leadership in the state of Alabama. While receiving some words of affirmation, Shores soon realized that was all he was going to get. The White leadership in Alabama was never going to give more than behind-the-scenes support when it came to the controversial topic of desegregation. They simply could not be relied upon to provide meaningful support at that point in time.

In August the case was handed over to a new judge, Harland Hobart Grooms. Judge Grooms informed Shores and the NAACP that they could not lodge a complaint against the state of Alabama as that was against the state’s constitution. He gave the NAACP two weeks to change the defendant on their complaint. Much to Shores’ dismay, the NAACP did not want to change the defendant on their complaint. Instead they wanted to appeal Judge Grooms’ request. They wanted to test their right to sue a state agency on the grounds of pursuit of constitutional rights.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 38-39.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 20-23.
This ended up being a poor decision at that moment in time as the appeal was denied by the Fifth Circuit and they lost eight more months on Atherine Lucy and Pollie Myers’ case. It would be another year after those lost eight months before the case went to court. The NAACP and Shores decided to name Dean Adams, the person who told the two girls when they came to campus to discuss their admittance in 1952 that “an error has been made” as the defendant. After a total of two years and nine months of waiting, Judge Grooms finally ordered their case for a hearing, which was to be held on June 29, 1954.

The timing of their case ended up being beneficial, as a massive change regarding segregation was on the horizon. In May 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. However, there seemed to be no sense of urgency from the Court to carry out desegregation and Southerners did not appear to be worried about them following with their ruling.

It was not until a year later, May of 1955, that the Supreme Court delivered an implementation decree, and this was when the panic set in for White segregationists. Panic set in because the Supreme Court not only ordered that the district courts must order desegregation wherever segregation was present amongst the laws, policies, and people, but they also ordered that this be carried out with all deliberate speed. Pollie Myers’ and Atherine Lucy’s case was now of immense public interest and Arthur Shores was preparing to test the decree set forth by the Supreme Court. Their case was the first of its kind since the decree was put forth, and therefore the results represented what would likely to happen to all similar university

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31 Ibid., 20.
32 Ibid., 19, 40.
33 Ibid., 41.
desegregation cases from then on. The trial for their case was officially set for June 29, 1955, less than a month after the Supreme Court decree implementation.\textsuperscript{34}

On the same day that Judge Grooms announced the trial date, a member of the University of Alabama Board of Trustees wanted to investigate the two women to hopefully uncover something from their past that would justify denial of admittance. That Board of Trustees member was Hill Ferguson, who will be examined in depth later in this study as his role and power had a large part to do with the longstanding segregation of the University of Alabama. In a letter to Carmichael on June 10, 1955 Ferguson wrote, “I called Fred Bodaker of the Bodaker Detective Agency, telling him the present place of residence, marital status, credit rating, and other such data, which might be pertinent. He said he would be glad to undertake such an investigation, on a basic charge of $25.00 per day.”\textsuperscript{35} Unfortunately, President Carmichael agreed to this.

During the trial Arthur Shores called ten witnesses, five of them represented the University of Alabama and five of them represented the plaintiffs. Pollie Myers and Autherine Lucy were two of the latter five people. Andrew Thomas, the litigator representing the University of Alabama, focused on the motives on Myers and Lucy, trying to prove that their motives were not genuine but instead were based on the NAACP’s objectives. However, the judge ordered that the University of Alabama could not deny admission to Meyers and Lucy

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Hill Ferguson to Oliver C. Carmichael, Steiner, & Palmer, 10 June 1955, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
solely based on their race and color.\textsuperscript{36} Two days later the judge ordered that the relief extended to Myers and Lucy should also be extended to all similarly situated citizens.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{The Second Round of Applications}

Pollie Myers and Autherine Lucy made plans to apply to the University of Alabama again for the Spring semester of 1956. They would have enrolled for the Fall semester of 1955, but Hill Ferguson was doing everything he possibly could to stall the desegregation of the University of Alabama. Ferguson’s drastic measures to keep his university White are a large part of why the University of Alabama stayed segregated for so many years and will be discussed in a later chapter of this study.

The University of Alabama ended up appealing Judge Grooms’ injunction to the Fifth Circuit court and the Board of Trustees was relieved that Judge Grooms decided to stay his injunction until the appeal decision came back. This bought the University of Alabama some time. Shores did his best to reverse the stay of the injunction so that the women could still enroll for the Fall semester, but he was not successful. Four days after the deadline for Fall registration, October 10, 1955, the Supreme Court reinstated Judge Grooms’ injunction. However, since the deadline for registration had passed, there was no way the University of Alabama would make an exception for the two women, even though this had been a flexible policy for other students in the past.\textsuperscript{38} The earliest Autherine Lucy and Pollie Myers could now enroll at the University of Alabama would be the Spring semester of 1956.


\textsuperscript{37} Clark, \textit{The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama}, 42-44.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 47.
That December of 1955 the Montgomery Bus Boycott officially started. All of the African American citizens of Montgomery, Alabama would boycott the buses until they could sit anywhere on the bus, and not just the back. The most well-known person from this movement is Rosa Parks, who was arrested on December 1, 1955 because she refused to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus, so a White man could sit in the same row as her original seat. Following her arrest, a group of ministers and civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. met to discuss and plan a bus boycott. The boycott was a success and it lasted for months, despite the efforts of White citizens trying to end it. When they could not force an end to the boycott, violence began to ensue in January 1956, including King’s home in Montgomery being bombed.39

This was the racial climate in Alabama when Pollie Myers and Autherine Lucy were planning on being the first African American students to enroll at the University of Alabama and Hill Ferguson was still going to do everything he could to stop them. On January 9, 1956 Ferguson called a meeting of the Board of Trustees, which he said was at the urgent request of President Carmichael. President Carmichael felt uneasy about how to prepare for what was to come because he knew he could not do anything without the Board of Trustees’ approval first. They were to meet again on January 21 and were to stay as long as needed until they figured out what they were going to do about Myers’ and Lucy’s applications.40

When Ferguson called for an investigation back in June of 1955 on the two women’s past, they were able to find something on Myers that they could use for denial of admission. The


40 Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 54.
Board of Trustees agreed that they would deny her admission due to the fact that her conduct and marital record did not meet the admission standards of the University of Alabama, referring to Myers getting pregnant before she was married. These grounds of lack of moral character had been used before to deny admission to White students, so the University of Alabama was protected from being accused of rejecting her based on race.41 Atherine Lucy’s application would still go forward to get approval from the Board of Trustees. These decisions were still awaiting final and formal Board of Trustees approval when the two women visited campus on January 26, 1956 to make some arrangements for their course registration.

On their campus visit, during which they were accompanied by Arthur Shores and Emory Jackson, Pollie Myers and Atherine Lucy met with Dean Adams. Dean Adams acted like he had no idea that Myers was going to be denied admission and that they were hoping to find something on Lucy as well. He went over transfer credits, fees, and room assignments with the women.42 While he made no definite plans and presented mostly generalities to them, the women still would have no reason to believe that they would both not be enrolling for classes for the Spring semester, especially after an in-person visit with head of admissions. After three years of fighting to attend the University of Alabama, they would still be disappointed with the final result.

President Carmichael in the meantime was avoiding the situation. When he had a meeting with deans, department chairs, and administrators a few days after meeting with the Board of Trustees to discuss Pollie Myers and Atherine Lucy’s applications, he made no mention at all to

41 Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama, 29 January 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

42 Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 54.
them about the University of Alabama’s plans for desegregation, but instead they talked about football and a policy on student absences. The next few days President Carmichael stayed focused on any business that was not related to desegregation, such as research funding and addressing the effects of tax bills on education.\(^\text{43}\)

For such a large movement that was about to happen and that would change the University of Alabama forever, one would expect this to be the first thing that the president would be discussing with the rest of the people who ran the University of Alabama. President Carmichael, however, was unlike Hill Ferguson who had a strong stance against desegregation and was not afraid to voice his opinions on it any chance he could get. It appeared as though President Carmichael was unsure of how he felt. For him, it was easier to avoid the topic as much as he could unless absolutely necessary.

Registration for courses in the Spring was set to be on February 1. The Board of Trustees had their final meeting on the Sunday before, January 29. The Board of Trustees voted and officially decided to deny admission to Pollie Myers. The Board of Trustees did vote, however, to let Autherine Lucy attend the University of Alabama. All but one member of the Board of Trustees voted for Lucy’s admittance, and that lone person was Hill Ferguson.\(^\text{44}\) Ferguson had been a member of the Board of Trustees since 1919 and he had a lot of power and influence over the University of Alabama. He also made it markedly evident that he was against desegregation. The Board of Trustees informed Lucy and Myers of their decision on January 30, the day before registration for their courses.

\(^{43}\) Ibid. 55.

\(^{44}\) Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama, 29 January 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
The Board of Trustees certainly hoped that Atherine Lucy would decide to not attend the University of Alabama since her friend could no longer attend with her. They were wrong. On February 1st, 1956, the University of Alabama admitted its first African American student, Atherine Lucy, and on February 3rd she attended her first class. President Carmichael wrote to a close friend from New York, Alvin C. Eurich, on February 2, 1956 about Lucy’s acceptance and said “I shall be writing you soon in some detail about our situation here. We have finally accepted one of the Negro applicants who enrolled yesterday. The sentiment in the University community is temperate but in the larger community of Tuscaloosa we have had manifestations of intemperateness which has concerned us greatly.” Carmichael’s wording in this letter lends towards him supporting the admittance of Lucy, but he is worried about others in the community not supporting her admittance and what might come from that.

President Carmichael anticipated before Atherine Lucy attended her first class on campus that the Tuscaloosa community was not happy about the decision to obey the court ruling and admit her as a student, and from this letter it is clear he was nervous about serious violence potentially occurring. President Carmichael was right about his fears, but the situation would erupt in a far worse way than he could have ever imagined. This would be the beginning of the University of Alabama becoming a powerful symbol of Southern resistance to desegregation and defiance of the law. 

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45 Oliver C. Carmichael to Alvin C. Eurich, 02 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL

CHAPTER IV: Autherine Lucy’s Suspension and Expulsion, 1956-1957

Autherine Lucy’s first day of class at the University of Alabama was set to be Friday February 3, 1956. While Lucy saw this day as her first day of attending classes at a university she had waited so long to attend, it was much more significant and controversial than that to almost everyone else in the state and the country. Her first day of class at Alabama would result in the region clashing with the authority of the courts and the law. Lucy’s attendance at the University of Alabama would forever be remembered as a significant moment in Civil Rights history.

Autherine Lucy’s first day of attending classes went smoothly and a few students even sat next to her and gave her words of encouragement. It was after Lucy went home, however, that the ugly events began to unfold. What started as a group of students gathered together on University Boulevard soon turned into a mob marching to the president’s mansion. They called for President Carmichael to come out. Mrs. Carmichael finally came out on the balcony and told them he was not home, so they finally left. The mob eventually made its way downtown shouting “hey ho, Autherine has got to go.” The police arrived on the scene and scared off some of the students. After a fifteen-minute speech by one of the crowd leaders, the students eventually went back to campus.\(^{47}\)

\(^{47}\) Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 60-65.
The next night, on Saturday after Lucy’s second day of class, the mobs got worse. Another crowd formed under Denny Chimes, and this time men from the town joined the students as they watched a cross burn and yelled, “Keep ‘Bama white.” The crowd proceeded again to the lawn of the president’s mansion and this time President Carmichael was home. He came outside and tried to talk to the crowd to calm them down, but they would not listen. They threw firecrackers, rocks, and eggs at the mansion and then proceeded downtown. A Tuscaloosa newspaper recalled the scene as:

Saturday night the sound and the fury began, after a basketball game, when a crowd marched to the lawn of the President’s Mansion, calling for President Oliver C. Carmichael, Trustee Emeritus John Caddell of Decatur recalled. Carmichael tried to address the crowd, but did not succeed. Rocks and eggs were thrown at the mansion, and Mrs. Carmichael was hit.48

Photographers were able to capture the scene this time and those images were seen across the nation. The mob proceeded downtown and gathered around the flagpole that used to be at the intersection of Greensboro Avenue and University Boulevard where they proceeded to listen to segregationist rhetoric.49

The mob, which was now close to fourteen hundred people, then went back to President Carmichael’s mansion. He came out again and urged them to “uphold the traditions of this great University.” What President Carmichael said would be used against him in the coming weeks, for segregationists believed that one of the traditions of the University of Alabama was its all-white population. While looking down at the mob that night, President Carmichael realized that much of the crowd was not college students, but instead high school students and workers from


49 Ibid.
There were newspaper accounts of Klansmen rolling into town from all across the South. Other outsiders included rubber workers from around the city. They all entered Tuscaloosa in order to protect their White supremacy from one African American woman enrolling in the state University. It will never be known how much of the crowd was students and how much of it was outsiders, but it is clear that the University of Alabama students participated in that mob, as well as outsiders who wanted to fight against desegregation.

The following Monday would be a day well-remembered in Alabama history and the start of a battle that President Carmichael was not prepared to fight. Both Lucy and the University of Alabama would reap the whirlwind of social change. President Carmichael and university officials took precautions and extra security measures for Monday by having sixty policemen on campus to monitor any situation. It was reported by news sources that President Carmichael actually requested that Governor James Folsom of Alabama dispatch the National Guard. This request was declined because it was deemed that help would not be needed. Some news sources reported that Governor Folsom was just unwilling to call out the Guard. Unfortunately, that was the wrong choice and the safety measures President Carmichael took, for what he thought would be a controllable situation, were not enough.

When Autherine Lucy arrived at her first class at Smith Hall on Monday morning, she was greeted by a mob of hundreds of people in front of the building. They had formed a mob before the police could get there to stop it. Lucy surprisingly made her way past the mob and entered her class safely. Once Lucy passed the crowd and entered the building, the crowd

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50 Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 67-68.
became agitated and started yelling chants again about getting her off campus. As Lucy was in class, President Carmichael appeared at the scene and urged the crowd to disperse immediately, but once again, his words had no effect on them.

When class was over, Atherine Lucy exited the building out the back where the Dean of Women, Sarah Healy, and Executive Assistant Jeff Bennett, had a car waiting to take her to her next class. They escorted her to the car and drove her to Graves Hall where her next class was.\(^{53}\) The crowd was up to nearly three thousand people now and consisted of people from all over the state, including Ku Klux Klan members. Many observers and even Lucy herself recall from that day that the mob mostly consisted of outsiders and not students.

People in the mob pelted the car that Lucy rode in with gravel and eggs. The groups of people mobbed the car and even shattered the back window with a stone. Some observers recall Healy pushing Lucy to the floor of the car and covering her with her own body.\(^ {54}\) Lucy, Bennett, and Healy finally made their way to Graves Hall. As they exited the car they were again pelted with gravel, eggs, and produce as they rushed to safety into Graves Hall. The spirit of the mob had turned vicious with threats to kill Lucy. After hours of waiting in Graves Hall, Lucy was able to escape through a tunnel in the back of the building that led to the library. A patrol car and patrolmen were waiting for her and they were fortunately able to get her off of the campus and back to Birmingham unharmed.\(^ {55}\)

That evening the Board of Trustees held an emergency meeting to discuss the next steps that were to be taken. In order to protect her life, the board members agreed that the only answer

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\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Ibid.
was to indefinitely suspend Lucy from attending classes. While many people quickly jumped to the conclusion that Lucy’s safety was just an excuse to remove Lucy from the University of Alabama permanently, President Carmichael stated firmly that he only had her safety in mind. In his statement to the University of Alabama faculty and students, he addressed this issue: “The action taken was for her protection and for the protection of other students and staff members. The validity of the statement has been questioned by some students and faculty and by many other people. I declare to you now that this was the sole reason, whatever critics may say.”

Whether or not Hill Ferguson and the other Board of Trustees members used the dangerous mobs as an excuse to remove Lucy because she was African American is unknown. It is likely that Ferguson and the rest of the members of the Board of Trustees used Lucy’s safety as an excuse to remove her from the University of Alabama. It was an easy solution to their long-standing problem of not wanting Lucy to desegregate their University. However, when it comes to President Carmichael it is much less unclear what his true intentions were. From what President Carmichael said in the following days about her suspension, it appears as though he had the ultimate intention of letting her return to campus and that he did just remove her temporarily for her protection.

This decision was heard around the country. It appeared to the majority of the country and the world thought that the University of Alabama had buckled under the pressures of a mob. The University let the mobs dictate their decisions and destroy their integrity. The mood on campus between students and faculty members was mixed. Some students and faculty were

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56 Statement to Faculty and Students of the University of Alabama by President Oliver C. Carmichael, 16 February 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

simply okay with Lucy attending the University while many others were absolutely not okay with it. On her first day of class she got reactions from both ends of the spectrum. Some students greeted with her pleasantries as she passed by them on campus, wishing her luck, while others participated in the mobs throwing gravel and eggs at her. The majority of the students and faculty did not support integration at the University of Alabama. However, the majority of those same people were also upset at how the University handled the situation. They felt as though the University had let the mobs win. They were ashamed and embarrassed at how the events played out. Many campus organizations voiced that they did not agree with the expulsion. They did not agree with the violence that ensued and the mob that got its way. Of course, there were also plenty of people, including the Board of Trustees, who were happy about this decision as they only had to have their University desegregated for a few days. They had delayed following the court ruling, at least for the time being.

Carmichael was soon faced with addressing the segregation issue in a way that would please both the people of the South and the North. In an interview with the New York Herald Tribune President Carmichael assured readers that the solution that the University of Alabama was trying to work out would, at all costs, be based on Autherine Lucy’s return to class and campus. He also noted that “there is no thought in the minds of these authorities of further challenging the girl’s right to attend the University, but two extremely serious questions still

58 Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 62, 72-73.

59 Ibid., p. 80.

present themselves. One is how to protect her and others in the University from future violence if she returns.”

President Carmichael went on to say that they not only needed to prevent future violence if she were to return to the University of Alabama, but they also needed to decide whether a resolution should be made “in opposition to the admission of any more Negro students, or whether it is to be found in some plan providing for a gradual integration of such students over a period of time.” President Carmichael was referring to the act of “gradualism,” which is a term people used to describe the act of letting African American students desegregate the institution slowly, with only a few at a time.

President Carmichael’s interview with the New York Herald Tribune soothed his liberal Northerner friends, who could not understand why President Carmichael had not already integrated the University of Alabama, but when the article reached the deep South, those committed to segregation were even further enraged and anger because of what President Carmichael, their leader, said. It was reported that somebody close to President Carmichael described the president’s dilemma as: “All of his friends in the North couldn’t understand why he wasn’t integrating the University, and the people down here couldn’t understand why he would.” The New York Herald Tribune article was sympathetic to President Carmichael and stated, “Dr. Carmichael described himself as a university president who is in the position of

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

having to deal with the abstract question of racial integration in terms of a concrete incident so serious he feels a lynching was narrowly averted on Monday.”

One of the members of the Board of Trustees, John Caddell, spoke out about the decision and said the decision was made to not restore and preserve segregation, but to achieve an atmosphere that was calm and safe enough for her to return. There is no doubt that it was a dangerous environment for Autherine Lucy to continue to stay in, and her safety could have been increasingly threatened as the weeks went on. President Carmichael described it as “Nothing more stark can occur to me than a student being murdered on this campus.” While all of this may be true, it still does not mean that the Board did not expel her for the purpose of also preserving segregation on its campus.

When it came to making the decision to indefinitely expel Lucy, President Carmichael was uneasy. A quote from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences gave a glimpse into how President Carmichael was emotionally and mentally handling the situation:

All day yesterday their elders paltered and fumbled. O.C. Carmichael sat in his office and twice announced and twice deferred sessions at which he would be compelled to show his beaten and shamed face to the invading press. At the end, poor Carmichael could defer no more; and yesterday afternoon he went before a meeting of the University faculty to explain to them why the Board of Trustees had capitulated and made the mob king of their campus.

From this quote it can be speculated that President Carmichael did not have an easy time making the decision to indefinitely expel Autherine Lucy. He did not want to admit to the press and the public of the decision that was made, almost as if he was ashamed. He probably knew the

65 Ibid.


67 Ibid.
backlash that would be directed at him because of this decision, especially from his friends and past coworkers in the North. This still does not show if President Carmichael wanted her to stay at the University of Alabama or not, or if he just did not want to make a decision that would make people doubt and dislike him.

President Carmichael gave a statement to the faculty members in late February 1956. In this statement he assured them that as far as the students were concerned, the situation was much better than it was on February 6. He did not think any more student demonstrations would occur, although he could not guarantee this, as they now had a better understanding of the seriousness of the events that occurred. He claimed that the students had a different attitude towards the event that occurred since their convocation on February 16. During the convocation held on February 16, 1956, President Carmichael addressed the student body and the faculty about the “recent occurrences that have disturbed all of us.”

The purpose of the formal meeting was to give everyone a detailed factual account of what happened, the implication of the recent events, and to suggest guidelines for the future. President Carmichael started out by making it clear that Autherine Lucy’s court case started a year before he arrived at the University of Alabama, and that it was the Board of Trustees who “sought through all legal means to maintain the historic tradition of segregation which they conscientiously believed to be in the best interests of all concerned.” He then stated that these

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68 Statement to Faculty of the University of Alabama by President Oliver C. Carmichael, February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

69 Statement to Faculty and Students of the University of Alabama Made by President Oliver C. Carmichael, February 16 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
were their personal beliefs, and that those personal beliefs were confirmed by the sentiment throughout the state.\textsuperscript{70}

President Carmichael seemed to be selling the students and faculty that it was not his personal beliefs that led this fight to prevent Autherine Lucy from enrolling at the University of Alabama, but it was all the work of the Board of Trustees. President Carmichael wanted to make it clear that what happened was not his doing, given that he did not identify himself as a believer in segregationist and racist traditions. He proceeded to add that the Board of Trustees “felt that they had an obligation to strive through all legal means to uphold traditions as old as the University itself.”\textsuperscript{71} These statements make it seem like he was also trying to make excuses for, or help the students and faculty to see, why the Board of Trustees made the decisions that they did. President Carmichael chose his words carefully, likely in great part because he did indeed work for and serve the Board of Trustees.

President Carmichael addressed the mobs and how sorely disappointed he was in those events:

In the light of the Board’s decision, which I believed was met with approval of both the faculty and the students, you can scarcely imagine how completely surprised and disappointed I was on the following Friday to find a group of students, later joined by outsiders, demonstrating in protests against the Board’s action. I am aware that it was only a small minority, three or four percent at most, who were active in the demonstrations but many others followed along and gave encouragement to the active minority.\textsuperscript{72}

President Carmichael was again careful with his words because he wanted to stay on the good side of the student body even though he was scolding and reprimanding them. His

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
statement of three or four percent of the mob being students was likely just a guess, but the small percentage probably made the students feel better. It also probably made the students feel better when President Carmichael went on to say that he was convinced that the majority of the student participants were not fully aware of the issues involved and the necessity behind the actions took by the Board.\(^\text{73}\)

It was at this convocation when President Carmichael made the remark that although the reasoning for suspending Atherine Lucy has been questioned by many, he stated the sole reason was to protect Lucy and prevent violence from occurring on campus: “From the experience on Monday, February 6, it was clear to those closest to the scene that a student’s life may have been in serious jeopardy if she had returned to the campus the next day. We had to have time to make the campus safe before she could have been allowed to return.”\(^\text{74}\) President Carmichael stated that after this decision was made, Lucy’s attorney brought the case back to the courts so now they had to wait to see what the courts say on February 29.

President Carmichael seemed to believe that the courts would order that Lucy be allowed to return as a student at the University of Alabama because he asked the faculty and students to cooperate with the court’s decision. He asked the faculty and students to “cooperate in such a manner as to make certain that the University of Alabama will be on the side of law and order.”\(^\text{75}\) In other words, he let them know that when the courts ordered that Lucy be allowed to return that he expected everyone to comply.

\(^{73}\) Ibid.

\(^{74}\) Ibid.

\(^{75}\) Ibid.
The convocation ended with President Carmichael praising the students and faculty, almost as if he was doing so to guilt them in to not letting him down. He stated

Because I believe in you, I have confidence that we shall emerge from the present ordeal triumphant and stronger as an institution than ever before. The University of Alabama has encountered many crises in its 125-year history . . . I have no doubt that this one will also be met and solved. It will require time, patience, wisdom, and good will. I know you will do your part. I shall count on your wholehearted cooperation. 76

This is another example of President Carmichael being very savvy with his words. By telling the faculty and students that he was putting his faith and trust in them to do the right thing, he was hopefully convincing them to obey the court ruling and let desegregation happen at the University of Alabama even if they morally did not agree with it. Unfortunately, though, in this situation it was not the faculty and students of the University of Alabama that President Carmichael needed to convince to act with wisdom and good will. It was the protestors and the Board of Trustees that needed convincing.

In the statement that President Carmichael gave to just the faculty members, he did tell them that while the student situation had gotten much better since the convocation, the threat of outsiders was still a very real concern. He had a report on good authority that citizens from a South Alabama County came armed to campus on Wednesday, February 8, just a few days after the mobs ran Autherine Lucy off campus, to see that Lucy would not attend her classes had she returned to campus.

President Carmichael received a message from a plant near Tuscaloosa saying that the men in the plant were armed and ready if Autherine Lucy should return to campus and they would make sure she did not stay. President Carmichael was also made aware that multiple new White Citizen Councils had formed during the past two weeks across the state due to the Lucy

76 Ibid.
incident. More threats were reported from plants near Tuscaloosa and other communities from
the state and adjoining states, and at least one hardware store in Tuscaloosa had sold out of small
arms ammunition.\textsuperscript{77}

President Carmichael was certain that if they had not removed Autherine Lucy from
classes that “the alternative, since we didn’t have time to prepare for the next day, was a very,
very real danger of serious violence.” He was convinced that they narrowly avoided a lynching.\textsuperscript{78}
President Carmichael made it blatantly clear that he in no way condoned the acts of the mobs. In
the case of the University of Alabama students who participated in the mob violence he said
“Disciplinary action will be taken. . . No university can operate if it allows offenders against
law and order to go unpunished.”\textsuperscript{79}

In a letter written to Professor Pauling from California Institute of Technology on
February 16, 1056, President Carmichael pleaded with Dr. Pauling not to cancel his speaking
commitment at the University of Alabama. In doing this, President Carmichael also presented his
views towards what happened to Autherine Lucy:

I wonder if you could not give us a little more time in which to demonstrate to you as
well as to the country at large that though we are caught in a very bad spot we are
determined that right shall prevail and are making progress. We expect that matters will
be cleared in the next two weeks. No one could disapprove more heartedly than I the
total series of incidents which led to the exclusion of Autherine Lucy from classes at the
University. The only reason for excluding her was to protect life- life endangered not by
students but by outsiders whom we could not control.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{77} Statement to Faculty of the University of Alabama by President Oliver C. Carmichael,
February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.


\textsuperscript{79} Interview with Oliver C. Carmichael, 09 February 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

\textsuperscript{80} Oliver C. Carmichael to Linus Pauling, 16 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
In this letter President Carmichael was stating that desegregation and Atherine Lucy returning to campus was right. Professor Pauling was backing out of his speaking commitment because of what the University of Alabama did to Atherine Lucy, therefore President Carmichael had to be referring to Lucy’s return as “right shall prevail.”

President Carmichael also stated how much he disapproved of what happened to Lucy and that she was only excluded temporarily to protect her life, something that he had stated publicly before. President Carmichael was aware that the whole country had their eyes on him and the University of Alabama. By saying he wanted to prove to them that they were making progress and right should prevail, shows that President Carmichael was possibly more concerned about pleasing the people of the country who are against segregation. In the end though, his concern with pleasing the Board of Trustees would trump everything.

President Carmichael admitted numerous times that the University of Alabama was completely unprepared for the intensity of the situation that took place, especially with the addition of outsiders participating. President Carmichael stated, “We were caught wholly unprepared for what happened. Students, leaders felt that there would be no problem here on campus. We did not anticipate the possibility of outsiders coming in as they did.” However, if he did in fact ask Governor Folsom to dispatch the National Guard, then he would have indeed suspected that grave violence was going to ensue when Lucy arrived on campus again.

Atherine Lucy and her lawyer, Arthur Shores, with the help of the NAACP’s chief counsel Thurgood Marshall, went back to the court to seek readmission to the University of

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\[81\] University News Bureau by Robert S. Bird, 09 February 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

Alabama. On February 9, 1956 Thurgood and Marshall filed a motion on her behalf in the United States District Court, asking that President Carmichael, the Board of Trustees, and other University of Alabama officials be cited for contempt. They accused them of conspiring to defy the previous injunction order of the District Court and intentionally letting the violent mobs happen on campus in order to use them as a reason to not permit Lucy to attend the University of Alabama. Now Lucy’s reinstatement at the University of Alabama was in the hands of the court and a decision would be made on February 29th.

The U.S. district court in Birmingham found that the University of Alabama had not acted in contempt of the Court, but it did order that Lucy be readmitted to the University of Alabama by March 5th, 1956, but the board of trustees had other plans. In a meeting held on that very same day, February 29th, 1956, the board voted to permanently expel Lucy from the University of Alabama on the grounds that she had made “false, defamatory, impertinent and scandalous charges” against them. In an official document of the Board’s decision it notes:

In her said motion, and in press, radio, and television statements by her and her attorneys, the said Autherine J. Lucy charges that the said officials, trustees and others conspired to defy the injunction order of the said Federal Court . . . and that said officials and trustees have intentionally permitted persons to mill about on the campus of the University of Alabama in such a manner as to assimilate an air of riot, disorder and rebellion against the said Autherine J. Lucy . . . the charges made against the said officials and the members of the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama are wholly false, defamatory, impertinent, and scandalous and in court Autherine J. Lucy’s attorneys admitted that they could not prove such charges.

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83 Sellers, *History of the University of Alabama*, 77-80.

84 The University of Alabama, Official Document on Autherine Lucy’s Expulsion, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

85 Ibid.
The document concluded by saying that the University of Alabama could never maintain discipline if the University let a student guilty of the conduct Lucy displayed attend their University, regardless of color or race. The last line in the document stated that Lucy was “hereby permanently expelled from the University of Alabama.” The court would later uphold this permanent expulsion and the University of Alabama would remain segregated until 1963 when Vivian Malone and James Hood would enroll, and remain enrolled, at the University of Alabama.

A document can be found from the University of Alabama’s lawyers for the Autherine J. Lucy vs. William F. Adams, et al. case written several months after her permanent expulsion. On September 1, 1956 one members of the law firm, Gessner T. McCorvey, wrote to another member of the other law firm who had previously handled the case, Andrew J. Thomas, about the state of affairs with Autherine Lucy. Adams writes:

I have kept up with the proceedings in our celebrated Lucy case . . . . I don’t think we are ever going to have any more real trouble with Autherine, as Judge Grooms made it clear to us . . . that he was not, in any sense if the word, going to substitute himself for the “Dean of Admissions” . . . that he had nothing to do with who the University Authorities admitted as a student at the University, and who they did not admit, further than to see to it that no applicant was excluded because of race and color.87

The law firms and the Board of Trustees felt confident that they had resolved the situation and that they would not have to deal with Autherine Lucy ever again. Unfortunately, this was true. The University of Alabama would not interact with Autherine Lucy again until 1988, thirty-two years later.

86 Ibid.

87 Gessner T. McCorvey to Andrew J. Thomas, 01 September 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
Letters to President Carmichael, 1956

In the following weeks after the temporary suspension and in the following weeks after the decision to permanently expel Autherine Lucy, President Carmichael would receive mounds of mail, most of which can be found today in the University of Alabama’s archives located in the W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library. This mail contained varying forms of hate, and sometimes unwanted praise, towards President Carmichael. There were people writing him accusing him of racism, fascism, integrationism, and favoring miscegenation. Perhaps the worst ones for him were the letters thanking him for upholding White supremacy.88 These letters, which are the honest and brutal opinions of people in the state and in the country, give great insight in to the context and racial tension that was occurring at the time.

Letters Following Lucy’s Temporary Suspension

There were many students and parents writing to President Carmichael. Many of them expressed their anger in having to attend a university that an African American student was enrolled in. One incoming student, Miss Fay Willmon from Tuscaloosa, Alabama, gave her harsh views on Autherine Lucy being admitted to the University of Alabama right after the word was out that she was going to attend:

I had planned to attend your University of Alabama this summer because I thought it would be a fine place to attend. Ever since I was a very young girl, I dreamed of the day I would attend the University of Alabama . . . It hurts me very much to know that how my dream has been shadowed to pieces. . . . This year for the first time the University of Alabama has let a black negro enter as a student. This has ruined the wonderful name of the University of Alabama. . . . The Black negro on the University of Alabama campus now, in my opinion, is breaking a law. She is disturbing the peace with her presence. It seems to me that some of the people at the University of Alabama are willing to risk all for a Black negro.89


89 Miss Fay Willmon to Oliver C. Carmichael, 04 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
There are several other letters from prospective, current, and past students of the University of Alabama that expressed the same views as Miss Fay Willmon. The disgust, shock, and disbelief that she and others show about an African American student being admitted shows the kind of people that surrounded Lucy when she simply just wanted to attend school. It also shows the great bravery it took for her to attend school knowing the hatred and evil that surrounded her.

A large amount of the letters were from people living in the South but not affiliated with the University of Alabama. These outsiders had very strong opinions towards segregation and desegregation and they wrote President Carmichael to let him know their personal views. On February 6, 1956 one man from Kingsland, Georgia wrote to President Carmichael about something he was quoted saying in the paper, and it likely reflects the majority of the thoughts that people in the South had towards President Carmichael’s words: “From a quotation in this morning’s paper made by you ‘let us uphold the tradition of this great school,’ I think you will find that it is not for negroes or there would not be such enrollment. Believe me, if my son was there he would already be on his way home. All of Dixie has their eyes on you---show your guts.” His last sentence shows that many people were watching President Carmichael when it came to the desegregation of the University of Alabama.

A man from Morehouse, Missouri wrote a heinous and harsh letter that is difficult for one to read. This man was starkly against desegregation, and so much so that he believed any student who showed Autherine Lucy a word of encouragement, or even simply friendliness, should be punished: “I read with disgust that a few co-eds gave this negress some words of encouragement

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90 Charles Smith to Oliver C. Carmichael, 06 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
social penalties - lack of dates and invitations, and expulsion from their sororities - ought to be inflicted upon the guilty."\textsuperscript{91}

The man who wrote this letter continued his harsh words with "In these days when negroes are trying to take over it is best for all loyal Southerners to get their heads together and devise ways and means."\textsuperscript{92} By stating "ways and means" he was referring to finding alternate ways to keep African American students out of the colleges and universities. He described his idea of fashioning entrance examinations so that they become effective devices to keep African American students out. One can deduce from his suggestions that he was insinuating they make the entrance examines harder or put information on them that they assume African American students would not know. The hatred and narrowmindedness behind his words is frightening, but unfortunately representative of so many during this time.

While the last letter talked about punishing the students who were kind to Autherine Lucy, this next letter suggested something just as horrible. The writer, who was a representative of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, suggested that the students who started the mobs and violence should be commended for their actions: "It is indeed shameful that your fine university would allow desegregation to take place. . . . Concerning the investigation by your university, they ought to commend the students for their actions in attempt to preserve the American Republic, rather than see it destroyed. . . . There is no reason in the world for the admittance of the negro student."\textsuperscript{93} He ended his letter by stating that what had happened in Tuscaloosa was tragic.

\textsuperscript{91} J. S. Connelly to Oliver C. Carmichael, 05 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{93} Ralph W. Widener to Oliver C. Carmichael, 05 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
The fact that this man, and many others, called the situation in Tuscaloosa tragic because an African American student was admitted while people with different views called the situation tragic because an African American student was suspended and then permanently expelled, shows the grave separation and variance in views towards segregation around the country. These split and wildly varying views were what President Carmichael was stuck between. These were two sides that would literally be impossible please no matter what decision was made. President Carmichael was expected to pick one side to please, but the public would never get that decisiveness and boldness from the University of Alabama’s leader.

Another segment of letters that President Carmichael received, that likely also made him uneasy, discouraged, and ashamed, were letters from people from the North. Some of these people were friends he had made while working there. Many of these letters shamed President Carmichael for letting Autherine Lucy get expelled. A letter from a man in Long Island, New York sent President Carmichael newspaper clippings from the New York Post. The article was recounting what happened with the mobs on the University of Alabama campus. The man wrote next to the article: “See America is shamed and humiliated by this outrage. Are you proud of yourself?”94 Through this letter President Carmichael could be made aware of what was being printed about him and the University of Alabama in the North if he were not aware already.

One part of the article noted that the demonstrations of the mob would be heard around the world and “will defame America in many places. . . . it will also shock and humiliate thousands of Americans in the South and the North.”95 It went on to discuss what Autherine

94 Bernard S. Starper to Oliver C. Carmichael, 07 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

95 “The Crusade Against Miss Lucy.” New York Post, February 6, 1956,
Lucy was trying to do and how simple it could have been: “Here is a young woman quietly and unpretentiously breaking the race barrier at Alabama in simple consistency with the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court. The lonely ordeal confronting her would seem to call forth the most elementary qualities of human compassion and kindness.” People all over the country during this time viewed the segregation issues in such vastly different ways. It was these vastly different views that President Carmichael was refusing to pick one to align with even though they were pulling at him from all angles.

A letter written immediately after word of the mobs was heard around the country, discussed the legitimacy of an education from the University of Alabama because of the behavior shown by the students, faculty, and staff:

We Americans are often guilty of un-Christian and un-American conduct. This misconduct is primarily due to ignorance. When an institution of higher learning such as the University of Alabama demonstrates to the world the gross ignorance of its students with regard to the matriculation of Miss Autherine Lucy, one is forced to question the validity of the education the university is imparting to the students, or to question the general caliber of the students the university admits. . . . Do you, Dr. Carmichael, feel that your students have been trained to a full capacity to react favorably to any or all of the circumstances in which they are placed? . . . I sincerely hope that as one of the leading educators in the country you will do something to correct the very scandalous behavior of the students who are blackening the name of the University of Alabama.

While many of the University of Alabama’s students were actually against what happened with the mobs and how the University of Alabama let the mobs dictate their decision to expel Lucy, and in fact most of the people in the mobs were not University students, to the outside world it appeared that it was the students who controlled and ran the mobs. These letters were likely very frustrating for President Carmichael to deal with, as everyone had their own

96 Ibid.

97 Jean M. LoTruglio to Oliver C. Carmichael, 06 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
opinion and version of what happened at the University of Alabama, but nobody really knew the whole truth besides himself and the Board of Trustees. There was simply little to nothing he could do about people forming their varying opinions and versions of the story.

A group of teachers from the Executive Board of the Teachers Union of the City of New York wrote to President Carmichael to tell him their thoughts as a group on this situation. They unanimously voted that they protested the suspension from classes of Lucy as a concession to mob violence and as an illegal defiance of the Supreme Court ruling on desegregation. They called upon President Carmichael to uphold the dignity of a true educator and a take a stance as the leader he was to fight for equal opportunity of everyone in the United States, regardless of race. They told him that if he had showed better leadership, that of one of a true educator, that Lucy may have continued without incident to attend classes. They reminded him that his actions would be heard around the world, and they hoped it would result in praise and confidence for the country.98

Several letters were from his friends in the North, as President Carmichael had made many connections and friendships during his time working in New York. On February 9, 1956 a close friend of President Carmichael’s, Donald J. Shank from the Institute of International Education, sent him a letter expressing his sympathies. He addressed President Carmichael as “Mike” which was a nickname many of his close friends used. Shank wrote “We join with all your friends throughout the country in thinking of you and Mrs. Carmichael during these difficult days. Your courage and patience might well set a pattern for many of us in dealing with tough problems. Keep up your courage.”99

98 Lucile Spence to Oliver C. Carmichael, 17 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

99 Donald J. Shank to Oliver C. Carmichael, 09 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
While Shank sympathized with President Carmichael and called him brave and patient, he never once mentioned Autherine Lucy’s bravery, when in fact it is Autherine Lucy who was suffering the most from this situation, not President Carmichael. He also did not express any of his views on segregation and desegregation, and he and others in the North all seemed to have this understanding that President Carmichael was showing courage and was doing the right thing as a leader during this time. However, letters that express this were written before Lucy’s expulsion.

Another close friend, John K. Weiss from the Fund for the Advancement of Education in New York, wrote a very similar letter to Shank’s letter. Weiss said that he was distressed to read of Carmichael’s problems. Again, this was referring to President Carmichael’s problems but any mention of Autherine Lucy’s problems, the real problems at hand, are nowhere to be found. A third letter from New York yet again mentioned their sympathy towards President Carmichael’s troubles and then went on to congratulate him on how he handled the situation thus far. This letter noted that “all of your New York friends feel that you have done very well,” but mentioned nothing on Autherine Lucy or his views towards segregation and desegregation. Both of these letters were written just after the mobs and Lucy’s temporary suspension and before the permanent expulsion of Lucy.

It was not just the New York Times that was publishing articles about the University of Alabama, but it was also the Washington Post and Washington Evening, as evidenced by a man named Charles Alldredge who sent President Carmichael clippings from those newspapers. On February 8, 1956 he wrote: “I enclose editorials appearing today in the New York Times,

100 John K. Weiss to Oliver C. Carmichael, 09 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
101 James H. Hyde to Oliver C. Carmichael, 10 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
Washington Post, and Washington Evening dealing with the situation at the University. I hope the Board of Trustees will take these to heart.”

The article he sent President Carmichael from The Washington Post was titled “Failure in Alabama.” In this article, it discusses the prejudice that still prevails as well as how President Carmichael handled it:

It comes as a shock to be reminded, in this forceful and disgraceful way, of the prejudices which still prevail in some quarters despite the progress that had been made in race relations in the South in the last 20 years. . . President Oliver C. Carmichael, a distinguished educator, apparently exerted every effort to make the new policy work at the University of Alabama. He clearly saw his duty under the law and warned that the school might have to close “if we cannot operate under the law and order” . . . The demonstrators have besmirched the name of the university and created a new challenge to the South. Differences over laws and principles are one thing. A mob assault upon a young woman merely because she asserts her legal rights is quite another thing- a form of misconduct that cannot be tolerated.

This article condemned the violence, showed sympathy towards Autherine Lucy, and supported desegregation. The newspaper clippings are a way for Alldredge to say his thoughts without having to write them out. It almost seems as though all of these people from the North either were not bold enough to write out and have on record what they thought about segregation or they were not sure what their own beliefs were, so they avoided saying them. President Carmichael also falls in to one or both of these scenarios.

President Carmichael even received letters from graduates of the University of Alabama who were ashamed of the University’s failure to obey the law and let Lucy attend the institution. One letter, from a graduate who now resided in New York, New York, wrote about the shame

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102 Charles Alldredge to Oliver C. Carmichael, 08 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.


104 Ibid.
and disgust he felt from the situation that happened with Lucy. He also praised President Carmichael though for how he handled the situation thus far:

As a graduate of the University of Alabama I hang my head in shame. The events of the last few days left a terrible taste in the mouth of humanity not only for the University, but for the whole state of Alabama as well. . . . It would be serious enough if news of this incident were to be confined within our own country, but that is not the case. The eyes of the hostile nations are watching Tuscaloosa. . . . I do wish to say to you, sir, that your handling of this matter has been most admirable. . . . you certainly must be a man of great courage and high integrity.”

Another letter from a graduate of the University of Alabama, who still resided in Alabama, wrote President Carmichael to express her sympathies towards him. She wrote: “You are in a tough spot. And you are handling the situation wonderfully well. . . . I have talked to numerous old Alabama students and every one of them has only praise for what you have done. Now we hear that you are considering resigning. We wouldn’t blame you, but we beg you not to do that. Alabama needs you now.”

These are some of the few compliments that can be found of President Carmichael and his leadership during this time. It important to note when these letters were written, as they were written on February 7 and February 11, 1956, just a few days after Autherine Lucy was temporarily suspended but before she was permanently expelled. One of the writers also made it clear that the entire world was watching the University of Alabama and President Carmichael; waiting to see what decisions he and the institution would make.

Letters Following Lucy’s Permanent Expulsion

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105 Lawrence S. Croen to Oliver C. Carmichael, 07 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

106 Mary R. Peavy to Oliver C. Carmichael, 11 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
The letters that likely made President Carmichael the most uneasy were the ones thanking him and praising him for standing up for segregation. President Carmichael may not have stood up for desegregation, but he did not stand up for segregation. He made it clear that he wanted Autherine Lucy to re-enroll at the University of Alabama, but much of the general public who were viewing the situation from the outside assumed that President Carmichael was behind the permanent expulsion.

One man wrote President Carmichael on March 5, 1956 on behalf of the Madison County Board of Supervisors in Mississippi. He congratulated him on taking a stand on the Lucy case. He commented that they need more men like him in the South and that the Board of Supervisors were behind him and his choices one hundred percent. He even said that they were hoping to instill this stance against desegregation in their children so that they can carry on this belief when they are gone.107 Outsiders clearly viewed Autherine Lucy’s expulsion as President Carmichael’s doing and that the expulsion was based on President Carmichael’s beliefs and values. In their minds, President Carmichael took a stand to maintain segregation at the University of Alabama.

One person made it very clear in his letter what he thought about Lucy and segregation. He kept it simple and straight to the point: “Stick to your decision and keep her out of your school. She does not want to go to your school really the association does. The whole of us are pulling with you.”108 This person was insinuating that Lucy was only applying to the University of Alabama because the NAACP wanted her to. While the NAACP was indeed helping Lucy fight to gain admittance to the University of Alabama, and this was also in support of civil rights,
it was Autherine Lucy herself that wanted to attend classes and earn a degree from the University.

One letter President Carmichael received, that also showed him sympathy, was actually written after Lucy’s permanent expulsion. Kenneth Kirkwood from Oxford, England wrote to President Carmichael on November 29, 1956 once President Carmichael’s plans for resignation came out. Kirkwood wrote to him:

As a former Carnegie visitor to the United States, who had the pleasure of meeting you in New York in 1953, I write to wish you all the happiness in your new and important post as a consultant to the Fund for the Advancement of Education. (I saw the notice in the New York Times). Throughout the Alabama “troubles” you were very much in my thoughts, and in the thoughts of others who have benefitted from meeting you, and although we have naturally lacked details we have all been glad that it was you who were present to guide people responsibly and adequately during what must have been a particularly trying time.109

Like the other letters previously talked about, the writer does not actually address the issue of desegregation and segregation or Autherine Lucy, but instead refers to all of it as “troubles.”110 It would have been interesting to know what all of these Northern and international acquaintances and friends of President Carmichael actually thought about segregation and desegregation given that none of them chose to mention their views of Lucy. They simply stuck to focusing on President Carmichael and how he was doing.

This letter also reveals to other important factors. The writer admits that he and others around him are lacking details of what actually happened to Autherine Lucy and about the decision to permanently expel her. While it can be assumed that the majority of the people outside of the University of Alabama lacked details about the entire situation, it is evident here in

109 Kenneth Kirkwood to Oliver C. Carmichael, 26 November 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

110 Ibid.
this letter that this point is true. The other important factor from this letter informs us of how widespread the Alabama controversy was in terms of the world. This person lived in England yet read the *New York Times*. The *New York Times* printed quite a few pieces about Atherine Lucy and the University of Alabama. If this writer read the *New York Times*, that means it was likely widely available to people internationally. Therefore, this shows just how many people had access to the stories and news articles written about the situation in Tuscaloosa.

President Carmichael was the face of the University of Alabama to the general public. People believed the president was the one who had the power and was the one who should take a firm stance on the issue. People were waiting intently for President Carmichael to take a firm stance on the desegregation issue. Taking a stance was something they expected of him, to the point where they were demanding it. They were not satisfied with President Carmichael’s neutral and non-committal attitude to one side or the other. A letter from a man in Montgomery, Alabama literally begged him to support the efforts to maintain segregation at the University of Alabama and within all of the public schools in the state of Alabama, as the man states: “I urgently beg your continued support and active efforts to maintain segregation at the University of Alabama.”

The pressure that President Carmichael was facing was immense, greater than anything he had experienced before. People of the state, country, and world made sure to remind him of this immense pressure through these personal letters. One of the letters put it best though when she noted that it has been rumored that President Carmichael was going to retire. While she begged him not to do, she said she also understood why. Her last words are ones that President

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111 John R. Marshall to Oliver C. Carmichael, 27 March 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
Carmichael should have listened to as he decided to leave the University in the grave mess it had turned into: “Alabama needs you now.”\textsuperscript{112}

\textbf{Carmichael Resigns as President}

President Carmichael announced his resignation as president at the end of 1956. There was speculation as to why he resigned, and the truth will never be fully known. Some said he resigned because the Board of Trustees would not take the steps necessary to keep Autherine Lucy enrolled at the University of Alabama. Others say he left on good terms with the Board of Trustees, but he just simply did not want to deal with desegregating the University of Alabama.

Board of Trustees member John Caddell claimed that President Carmichael left “because of the problem, not because of what the Board did. I think the Board supported him, and that he was in accord with what the Board did. He was in attendance at each meeting and never indicated disagreement.”\textsuperscript{113} Caddell went on to say that he actually left because he did not want to be “involved with the unpleasantness of the desegregation procedure.”\textsuperscript{114} President Carmichael did not want to be “faced with the unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances the rest of his life.”\textsuperscript{115} John Caddell continued:

He had come to Alabama as a distinguished elder statesman in the field of education to work for a few twilight years in an academic atmosphere, then he gets into this barrel of snakes. He was too old and too tired. He didn’t have to put up with it, and he didn’t intend to. He didn’t give any earthly indication he left because he disagreed with what had been done.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.


President Carmichael left the University of Alabama in early 1957, a year after the desegregation crisis and three and a half years after he became president, to work for the Fund for the Advancement of Education. The Fund for the Advancement of Education was established by the Ford Foundation and its purpose was to support new and experimental programs within all levels of formal education. As a *Time* magazine article stated, “Last week Oliver Cromwell Carmichael decided to get out of Alabama and to accept a two-year-old offer from the Fund for the Advancement of Education to do a survey of higher-education programs. ‘I feel,’ said he of his new job, ‘that it is the greatest opportunity that has come to me.’”

Whether Carmichael genuinely meant this, or whether he was simply saying this to convince people he had a different reason for leaving the University of Alabama other than what happened with Autherine Lucy, is unknown. One can speculate though that Carmichael’s reasoning for saying this was the latter.

The Fund for the Advancement of Education focused on problems that were aligned with Carmichael’s expertise, such as improvements in curriculum and clarification of the functions of educational institutions. One of its focal points was even on equalization of educational opportunity where they examined the bi-racial aspects of public education. Even though Carmichael left the issue of desegregation at the University of Alabama, there was no escaping the issue of desegregation if he were going to work in higher education.

In 1961, Carmichael was asked by the chairman of the Southern Regional Education Board, Governor Ellington of Tennessee, to serve on the Commission on Goals for Higher Education in the South along with several other accomplished men, such as the former Governor

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of Virginia and president of the University of Virginia Dr. Colgate W. Darden, and former
president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce A. Boyd Campbell. The seven-member commission
was charged with identifying the major goals of Southern higher education for the next ten to
twenty years. They were also charged with recommending ways to form the understanding and
support necessary to achieve the identified long-term goals.\textsuperscript{119} Carmichael was always looking
for ways to improve the state of higher education, so it is no surprise that he was chosen for this
role.

In 1963, Carmichael was recognized for his written work and was awarded the first
annual American Council on Education book award, which consisted of a gold medal and
$1,000. His book which received the award was titled \textit{Graduate Education: A Critique and a
Program}. The award was given to him because the Council considered his book to be the most
outstanding published work contributing to the knowledge and advancement of higher education
in America. The book discussed problems that face graduate education in the South and in the
country.

One of the main problems he discussed was graduate schools handing out degrees to
students who are not equipped with the proper knowledge or experience upon graduation to be
deserving of those degrees. He also noted the inconsistency when it comes to admission
standards and completion of degree standards between different graduate programs. One
suggestion that Carmichael had to solve these issues was a three-year master’s program which
actually started during the Junior of the undergraduate degree.\textsuperscript{120} Carmichael was always on the

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forefront of ideas which would make higher education better equipped for the changes and challenges of the future. However, he was not on the forefront of ideas when it came to making higher education better equipped to handle desegregation.

Oliver Cromwell Carmichael passed away in 1966 from an illness at the age of 74 in his home in Asheville, North Carolina. This was just nine years after leaving the University of Alabama. Carmichael’s passing was announced in newspapers all over the state of Alabama. Many of the newspapers mentioned that he was regarded as one of the outstanding men in America’s education as well as listed the positions he held within education. Many newspapers also mentioned that his presidency at the University of Alabama was surrounded by controversy over the enrollment of Auserine Lucy. The newspapers failed to mention any of the accomplishments he had as president of the University of Alabama. One newspaper referred to Carmichael’s experience as the president of the University of Alabama as a brief chapter in a long and respected career. That same newspaper noted that it would be unfair to a distinguished educator like Carmichael, and the state that produced him, to encapsulate his career in a brief paragraph noting only the fact that he was president during an unhappy time at the University of Alabama.

The Tuscaloosa News also listed his accomplishments outside of his presidency at the University of Alabama, but only mentioned “the Lucy affair” in regard to his time as president at Alabama: “His tenure at the University of Alabama was marred by the Lucy affair. It is unfortunate that he will be remembered most for having served as president here during those trying and hectic days.” The article also made a point to try and paint Carmichael in a positive

121 “Carmichael Dead At 74.” The Crimson White, September 26, 1966.

light by noting that he did declare the University of Alabama would not defy the law or allow a breakdown of law and order on campus. The article also stated that Carmichael was an outstanding educator whose many achievements were never fully appreciated, but it still, like the majority of the other newspaper articles on his death, failed to mention anything else accomplished or achieved while serving as president.\textsuperscript{123} Perhaps, since he was only University president for three and half years, nothing he did during that time was notable enough to mention and it would always be out shadowed by what he did not do for Aurtherine Lucy and desegregation.

The \textit{New York Times} printed an article on the passing of Carmichael and it too made a point to talk about the controversy surrounding his presidency: “His reign was marked by a violent controversy over admission of negro. . . . Politically, he was a Southern moderate. But he aged visibly, his associates said, when he was caught in the middle of the conflict over racial segregation at the University of Alabama in 1956.”\textsuperscript{124} The article continued talking about Carmichael’s involvement over the racial conflict in another section titled “Defended Trustees Actions.” In this section it stated that Carmichael at first supported being in compliance with the court order and the admission of Aurtherine Lucy, but then he publicly made it appear as though he defended the Board of Trustees actions to expel her.

This \textit{New York Times} article quoted Carmichael as saying “The fact that the trustees acted as they did has given the erroneous impression that we have abdicated in favor of mob rule. You and I know this is not true, but we must resolve not to permit such disorder in the future.”\textsuperscript{125} That

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\item \textsuperscript{123} “Great Educator, Outstanding Man.” \textit{Tuscaloosa News}, September 27, 1966.
\item \textsuperscript{124} “Dr. Oliver Carmichael, 74, Dies; Ex-President of U. of Alabama.” \textit{New York Times}, September 27, 1966.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
is the only evidence the article presented to support their claim that Carmichael defended the Board of Trustees’ actions. This statement from Carmichael though only showed that he did not think they gave in to the mobs. It did not show though that he supported the Board’s decision to expel Lucy. The title of this section of the article portrayed Carmichael as supporting something when there was still no solid proof that he did. While this article did actually go on to list Carmichael’s other accomplishments in detail throughout his life, it still started the article talking about how he handled the issue of desegregation at the University of Alabama, and did so in a negative light, and over half of the article discussed this over anything else Carmichael accomplished. This proves again that what happened to him at the University of Alabama truly overshadowed anything else in his long career in education.

Carmichael was unable to see the University of Alabama desegregate while he was president or for many years after. However, he did ultimately end up seeing the University of Alabama desegregate with the enrollment of Vivian Malone and James Hood. This happened seven years later in 1963, despite the antics of Governor George Wallace.

One of Carmichael’s major plans for the University of Alabama was realized decades later. Carmichael had plans to expand the institution to have campuses across the state. This way the University of Alabama could accommodate the influx of students and also increase access. The campuses would all be directed out of Tuscaloosa and resources would be shared among all campuses. Carmichael was able to open one campus in Dothan. After Carmichael left, the University of Alabama went through retrenchment and the Dothan campus had to be closed. The University of Alabama also pulled out of Mobile and Montgomery as well as sold their radio station. In 1975 the University of Alabama System was established with the headquarters

being in Tuscaloosa, Alabama and that system still stands as of 2018. As years passed there was more collaboration and cooperation between the three University of Alabama System campuses in Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, and Huntsville. As of 2018, the University of Alabama had campuses in Dothan and Gadsden, making part of Carmichael’s dream realized. In 1973, twenty years after Carmichael became president of the University of Alabama, a building was named in his honor: Carmichael Hall. Once the administration building that Carmichael spent much of his time in, today it houses several offices and classrooms for the College of Education.127

The University of Alabama Honors Autherine Lucy

While a building was never named in honor of Autherine Lucy and the bravery she showed as the first African American student to enroll at the University of Alabama, the University has tried to pay respect to her. In 1992 the University placed her picture on the third floor of the Ferguson student center, coincidently named after Hill Ferguson, the man who played a large role in getting her permanently expelled. In 2010, the University also built a clock tower named the “Autherine Lucy Clock Tower” in front of Foster Auditorium, and in 2017 the University placed a historic marker in her honor in front of Graves Hall, the building where she hid from the mobs on her final day of class in 1956.

Autherine Lucy married later that year in 1956 to Reverend Hugh Lawrence Foster and she moved with him to Texas. She had a difficult time getting a job in teaching because of her high profile due to what happened at the University of Alabama and because public school desegregation did not make any progress for a while, so she settled for being a supply teacher. Autherine Lucy Foster and her husband resided in Alabama as of 2018. They have four children, two of whom went to and graduated from the University of Alabama.

127 Ibid.
Aughterine Lucy Foster did eventually get her opportunity to attend the University of Alabama as a student, but this time she would be a graduate student. In 1988, the University of Alabama annulled her expulsion from 1956, and 1989 she enrolled in her first class in the College of Education. In 1992, Lucy graduated with a Master of Arts degree in Education. She was able to attend the University of Alabama at the same time her daughter was enrolled as a student there. The University of Alabama also named an endowed fellowship in her honor upon her graduation.\footnote{Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 253.} None of these gestures to honor Lucy could ever make up for being denied admissions, having to fight to get admitted, and then being expelled after three days of attending classes and enduring mob violence, but Lucy has always accepted these honors from the University and even attended the public ceremonies held to present these honors.
CHAPTER V: SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS DEALING WITH DESEGREGATION

There are common trends that exist throughout presidencies at Southern universities during the mid-1900s. Whether the university be public or private, three issues—racism, segregation, and desegregation—are consistently three of the main issues written about when discussing these presidents. They are also some of the main issues that people associate these presidents and universities with to this day. A *Time* magazine article explained President Carmichael and the attempted desegregation of the University of Alabama as: “Carmichael was caught between those who thought he should have taken a bolder stand for principle and those who blamed him for allowing a Negro to get into the university in the first place.”¹ President Carmichael was not the only Southern university president stuck in this situation.

Racism, segregation, and desegregation were some of the most challenging issues presidents had to cope with and try to find resolutions for. Racism, segregation, and desegregation also served as the main source of conflict between a president and the board of trustees. Presidential biographies are often a place where one can discover and learn about a president’s journey through higher education. They are also a place where one can find patterns, mistakes, engrained traditions, and battles fought since the establishment of these higher education institutions. In nearly every Southern presidential biography, one can expect to find a look into the evolution of racism, segregation, and desegregation in higher education, unexpected controversial incidents presidents had to quickly and effectively respond to, and the complex

relationship between the president and the board of trustees. While all of the presidents showcased in these stories had varied, and sometimes drastically different, leadership styles, there are many of the same patterns, mistakes, engrained traditions, and battles fought through each Southern president’s journey through higher education.

Unfortunately, many presidents who were at these Southern universities in the mid-1950s when the discussion of desegregation became larger than it ever had been before, were not there when these issues were finally resolved, or at least somewhat resolved. Between the complexity of the desegregation process and the massive resistance from the board of trustees and various community and institutional members, these presidents were not able to persevere and see their university eventually desegregate. This speaks volumes as to the effectiveness of their leadership styles as well as the extent of the power of the board of trustees. Every president in the South today can learn from this complex history of Southern presidencies and apply it to their leadership and communication styles, as the issues of racism, segregation, and desegregation continue to be a subject of controversy.

One approach for examining the leadership of President Carmichael is to contrast it with the leadership and experiences of other presidents of institutions of higher education across the South. In Melissa Kean’s *Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt*, she provides an in-depth look into how each of the presidents of these five private universities in the South handled the impending push for desegregation by the government, Northerners, students, and faculty while also balancing the strong desire for continued segregation by the majority of the people in the South and their stubborn board of trustees.
Four out of the five presidents examined in this book resigned without desegregating their university, even though they attempted to do so, some more than others, for many years. President Carmichael also experienced a similar story, as he too walked away without desegregating his university, the University of Alabama. In comparison to President Carmichael, the president who displayed the most similar leadership style, and a similar ending as a result of that leadership style, was Hollis Edens of Duke University.

**President Carmichael and President Edens**

President Carmichael and President Edens both handled the issue of segregation and desegregation in a very similar manner: they approached it with caution and avoided the issue as long as they possibly could. Kean’s description of President Edens is almost as if she were describing President Carmichael as well, as she notes he “was by nature a cautious man, more than a bit unnerved by the changes rolling in the South. . . . Unsurprisingly, his leadership on racial issues was hesitant. . . . On the whole, avoiding trouble, rather than positioning Duke for change, drove his actions.” On the rare occasion that both presidents did speak out about possibly supporting desegregation, the moment they knew that their Board of Trustees or the Southern community was angry at their gesture supporting desegregation, they retreated from their previous thoughts and words. They either put out conflicting statements or amended what they said previously. These two presidents were consistently and constantly either avoiding the

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4 Ibid.
President Carmichael

President Carmichael had several conflicting statements and numerous times where he tried to change his wording or meaning to match his audience. President Carmichael was always quite skilled at aligning his wording towards his specific audience. In July of 1954, President Carmichael was invited by the Commercial Law League to address their convention in Miami. In an interview President Carmichael did with a United Press correspondent, the correspondent reported that President Carmichael said “non-segregation” could be brought to the University of Alabama if all sides adopted an intelligent and tolerant approach to the situation. President Carmichael was quoted saying “The University of Alabama will make every effort to comply with the Supreme Court ruling banning segregation in public schools. . . . with mutual understanding and clear thinking the segregation problem can be worked out just as it has been worked out in the armed services.”

The Boston Post Herald reported that President Carmichael said he believed “non-segregation could be successfully brought about in Southern schools if both sides adopted a tolerant and intelligent approach to the problem.” He went on to praise both African American and White leaders in the South for a generally mutual sympathetic approach to the problem. The only logical reason for him saying that about the White leaders was to make the situation seem

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5 Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation’s Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 32-33.

better than it actually was because he had to know that White leaders in Alabama did not have a sympathetic approach to the situation.

As far as the University of Alabama, President Carmichael said he and the University expected “specific decrees to be laid down by the court by sometime in December and at that time plan appropriate compliance.”7 He also addressed the fact that it was difficult to legislate and hand down court decrees on folkways and traditions, but he believed with mutual understanding the problem could be worked out.8 President Carmichael came under attack by Southern segregationists for saying this because it implied he and the people of the University of Alabama were for desegregation and that is not something Southern segregationists were going to let him get away with saying.

President Carmichael was criticized about what he said by John Temple Graves, the editor the Birmingham Age-Herald and senior editor of the Post-Herald. President Carmichael sent him a personal note to explain himself. President Carmichael could have taken this as an opportunity to take a stand on the issue and his beliefs, but instead he did what he always tended to do, and only partially owned his comments so that he could please everyone. President Carmichael explained that the comments attributed to him had not been a part of his speech. He expressed that he was caught off guard by the United Press correspondent and was pressed to answer questions from him. He said that he responded with what he thought to be an accurate statement of the Board of Trustees’ policy. President Carmichael claimed that all other comments, such as references to the armed forces, were ones that the correspondent suggested

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
and talked about on his own initiative. President Carmichael stated that he only minimally commented in response to the correspondent.⁹

The news story was already out in the public and was widely read already. President Carmichael said that he did not want his statements retracted so as to not cause even more discussion amongst the public. Since his statements and views were out, whatever liability attached to what he said was already done, and he had no intention on retracting what he said, he could have used this as a prime opportunity to stand by his beliefs. It was early on his presidency, so he still had an opportunity to tell the Board of Trustees what his views were and then maybe even have time to sway their thinking in his direction. The time was right to take a stance one way or the other on race relations. However, for President Carmichael, even if the time was right, he would choose to stay neutral nonetheless.

During the next spring, in 1955, President Carmichael found himself in another situation where he would be faced with taking a stance on desegregation. Birmingham Southern College hosted a conference titled “Negro Progress in Alabama and its Effect Upon Race Relations.” When President Carmichael was asked by Joe Adams of the Anniston Citizens’ Council whether or not he participated in the conference and what his position on segregation was, President Carmichael replied that he did not attend the conference, even though the University of Alabama was represented, and that his views on the integration of races was that he never favored it.¹⁰

Now there were two distinct situations where in one President Carmichael said he was willing to support and work out the segregation problem and in the other he said he did not favor the integration of races. This makes it difficult to determine if President Carmichael was indeed a

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⁹ Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 32-33.

¹⁰ Oliver C. Carmichael to Joe Adams, 05 April 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
Southern moderate. It very well may have been that he was telling Joe Adams, a segregationist, what he wanted to hear instead of having to deal with any confrontation as President Carmichael showed time and time again that he tried to avoid confrontation and instead wanted to please everyone. In another instance, President Carmichael again said something about desegregation that makes it difficult to determine his true stance on the matter.

A parent of a student at the University of Alabama and former math instructor at the Naval Academy, Willis F. Kern, wrote President Carmichael to tell him that his daughter was being brainwashed on the subject of integration in one of her classes taught by. Dr. Verner Sims. At first, President Carmichael wrote back to Kern defending Dr. Sims. Kern distributed this correspondence to trustees, legislators, and even got it published in *Alabama* magazine, which was run by segregationists. President Carmichael refused to put out an official statement to calm the situation. He did however write to a prominent businessman about his thoughts: “I do not believe there is any professor on the staff who believes integration of the races or desegregation on the schools and colleges would be desirable any more than you and I would believe it to be. I am convinced, therefore, that no one has been teaching such a view either directly or indirectly.”

It is important to take into consideration that President Carmichael first defended his professor instead of giving in to what Kern was wanting to hear. Perhaps Kern wanted to hear something such as President Carmichael was going to look in to the situation, hopefully fire the professor, and/or would make a statement to the faculty that they cannot preach about integration in their classrooms. It is also important to take in to consideration the fact that President Carmichael refused to put out an official statement to calm down the segregationists, yet he then

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11 Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama*, 35.
wrote a letter stating that he did not find integration or desegregation desirable. This makes it challenging to determine President Carmichael’s true views on the racial matters at hand. He would not give in to the segregationists and reaffirm their principles and opinions, yet he would not make a statement saying that he supports any efforts towards desegregation. To make it worse he said he did not find it desirable. The question remains whether or not he did not find it desirable because of the challenges and controversy it would present or because he did not believe classrooms should ever be integrated. This question is hard to answer because of his many conflicting statements.

President Carmichael continued to give mixed views toward desegregation in a letter that he wrote to a random citizen from Newton, Alabama. This citizen wrote to President Carmichael about their concerns towards what happened with Autherine Lucy. President Carmichael decided to take the time to respond to this person who was not of significance to his role or to the University of Alabama. In his letter he wrote “I, too, have been disturbed about the segregation issue and the tendency toward violent reaction that we have evidences of. I sincerely hope something may be done soon to lift the tension which seems to be growing.”

In this letter, which he surprisingly took the time to write on February 3, 1956 in the midst of Lucy attending class and the mobs forming, President Carmichael still maintained his neutrality. He did not actually say in this letter if he is for or against segregation and then leaned toward talking about the violence and tension occurring, instead of actually saying something meaningful and impactful about segregation and desegregation. He did feel compelled though to take the time to write this random citizen whom he did not know. Perhaps he felt the need to tell

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12 Oliver C. Carmichael to Mrs. Albert Atkinson, Sr., 03 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
somebody what his thoughts on the violent situation were, but still did not want to put in writing what his thoughts on segregation and desegregation were.

When approached about another occasion that implied President Carmichael was for desegregation, he yet again would not own it. President Carmichael was a member of the 1947 commission for “Higher Education for American Democracy,” which stated its support for integration. The Commission said the members were “opposed to discrimination and believe it should be abandoned. . . colleges have a unique opportunity to order an experience in tolerance and understanding. . . colleges should become laboratories of inter-race and inter-faith fellowship.”¹³ President Carmichael participated in this Commission before he arrived at the University of Alabama. When questioned about it by Hill Ferguson, chairman of the Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama, he altered his views to fit his current audience, and said “the commission was principally in connection with Jews, Italians, and other such groups in New York City, and only incidentally with negroes.”¹⁴ President Carmichael was blatantly trying to avoid being connected with opposing racism and segregation. It appears that he would say anything he could to avoid that kind of conflict with the Board of Trustees. Hill Ferguson was actually constantly in contact with President Carmichael trying to gauge his views on desegregation and President Carmichael was always carefully navigating Ferguson’s strong opinions and harsh recommendations.

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¹⁴ Hill Ferguson to Oliver C. Carmichael, 27 April 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
President Edens

Hollis Edens took on his role as president of Duke University in 1949. At that time, the Duke University Board of Trustees was very similar to the University of Alabama Board of Trustees. The majority of the members were White older men who had attended Duke University as undergraduate students and who were born and raised in the South. Their industries spanned from textiles to tobacco to lumber. The Board of Trustees also had a leader much like Hill Ferguson, Willis Smith. He was a graduate of Duke University Law School and joined the Board of Trustees in 1929. He had served on the Board for twenty years by the time President Edens started his tenure.15

Willis Smith was elected chairman in 1946 and from then on, he took on a lot of control and power over Duke University matters. Smith also had strong political ambitions. When he ran for a Senate seat in North Carolina, his staff ran a campaign characterized by race-baiting as he was running against a Southern liberal whose racial stands were outside of the mainstream. Smith ended up winning the race. Because of who Smith was and especially because of his political position, President Edens knew it would be difficult, if not impossible, to bring up desegregation to the Duke University Board of Trustees.16

During the first year of President Edens’ tenure at Duke University he was faced with a test of his attitude towards racial matters. The faculty and students of Duke’s Divinity School began a petition for desegregating the Divinity School. They carefully articulated their reasoning as to why Duke University and all higher education institutions of the South should desegregate

15 Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 35, 41 .

16 Ibid., 41-42.
and even formed a committee to study the issue. After the committee was formed and conducted its research, it presented an official report on its findings that would support its stance. The report concluded that the difficulties that would arise from desegregation did not outweigh the values that would be achieved by desegregating the Divinity School at Duke University.

Even though they were only suggesting that two or three African American students be admitted, President Edens refused to bring the report to the Board of Trustees for fear of challenging and upsetting them. President Edens stated, “I do not think that the interests of either the negro race or of Duke University will be served at this time by raising for discussion the question of admitting negroes to the Divinity School.”17 This was the first of many times when President Edens would address the racial matters with avoidance and without revealing any of his own personal views and beliefs towards the matter.

Throughout his entire tenure as President, Edens would remain hesitant to reconcile the very traditional Board of Trustees to the inevitable change in race relations that was to come. Instead Kean describes Edens as the type of person who:

downplayed the change, bringing the matter before the board in a serious way only once during the early part of the decade. On the whole, avoiding trouble, rather than positioning Duke for change, drove his actions. When he finally did delicately suggest a minor adjustment and the Duke trustees refused, he quickly retreated to his former inaction, and the possibility of Duke playing a meaningful leadership role in southern race relations faded.18

In 1951, when another student group from the Divinity School called for the admittance of African American students, President Edens yet again dismissed the request. The students

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17 Hollis Edens to Harold Bosley, June 24, 1949, Box 21, Hollis Edens Papers, Duke University Archives, Perkins Library, Durham, North Carolina (hereinafter cited as Edens Papers, DUA).

18 Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 59.
were upset that Duke University was behind not only the majority of the universities in the North, but they were even behind the universities in the South. They put together a report stating how segregation is actually a sin and morally wrong, but it was not enough for President Edens to even present their request to the Board of Trustees.\(^\text{19}\) President Edens, much like President Carmichael, had a great fear of even trying to convince the Board of Trustees to budge on its desegregation bans. Either they were avoiding confrontation, or they knew the Boards of Trustees well enough to know that such requests may actually make them angrier and less likely to eventually desegregate. Perhaps they knew the Boards of Trustees so well that they knew there was not a chance at all that they were going to budge unless the law literally forced them to do so.

President Edens also had his moments of conflicting and confusing statements about segregation and desegregation. In one instance, when the Association of American Law Schools claimed that it might withhold accreditation from segregated universities, President Edens actually openly stood up for the segregation of Duke University. He wrote the Association and argued that segregation should have nothing to do with the work they were doing in the Law School, and that the work they were doing was all that should be considered for accreditation.\(^\text{20}\) President Edens could have used this as an opportunity to manipulate the trustees into budging on their segregation viewpoints by telling them that they were in danger of losing their Law School accreditation. However, President Edens did the exact opposite. He wrote this letter and chose to tell the Board of Trustees that the Association was only threatening them, but their threat was not concrete. When several other racial issues surfaced over the next few years

\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., 60.

\(^\text{20}\) Hollis Edens to J. A. McClain, April 17, 1951, Box, 25, Edens Papers, DUA.
President Edens addressed all of them with caution and a complete unwillingness to cause an argument, much like President Carmichael.\(^{21}\)

Conflicting opinions were given by President Eden when he responded to a letter from a Duke University alumna. This alumna expressed her unhappiness about the segregation of the University. She wanted to know specifically what steps Duke University was taking to desegregate. In his response, President Edens would not say anything that showed he was for or against segregation, but instead he rambled off phrases that were essentially skirting around the issue and not actually answering the question. He stated, “It will require patience and mature judgement . . . I wish I could point to a clear solution of the problem which confronts us.”

Other statements he would use in reply to people’s question and inquiries about desegregation talked about how difficult it was to pinpoint the proper timing to take steps towards social progress or that the issue was complicated and must be seriously examined.\(^{22}\) President Edens and President Carmichael were similar in that they had the ability to manipulate words so that they could still give a response but not give away any real or substantial information. There was an instance though where President Edens finally gave a firm response to someone about his views towards desegregation. He responded to a letter from Helen Morrison, another alumna of the University. He told her:

I am a gradualist, which is a hated word in many quarters. It is my firm conviction that Duke University can and should admit negroes only when the community and constituency are prepared for it. We have an obligation to foster social progress, but we have a larger responsibility for maintaining an intellectual atmosphere where all controversial subjects can be debated.\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 60-61.

\(^{22}\) Hollis Edens to Anna G. Douglas, June 29, 1951, Box 12, Edens Papers, DUA.

\(^{23}\) Helen Morrison to Hollis Edens, October 8, 1953, Box 33, Edens Papers, DUA.
This letter, where President Edens voiced his true opinion towards desegregation to a non-influential citizen, is similar to the letters President Carmichael would send to non-influential citizens. In these replies President Carmichael would also express his true thoughts and opinions, such as feeling disturbed by the segregation issue and hoping that something can be done to lift the tension soon. These are thoughts he usually kept to himself. Both President Edens and Carmichael used opportunities to finally voice their opinions to people with whom it did not matter if they knew their true opinions or not. Perhaps they just needed to tell someone, anyone, after so many years and instances of staying neutral and trying to please all sides.

It was not until 1953 when President Edens finally made a somewhat considerable move towards approaching the trustees about changes that needed to be made towards desegregation. He told them that the issues surrounding segregation were multiplying and could not be avoided any longer. Not only this, but decisions they were making were becoming of public interest, as much of the country was calling for the desegregation of higher education institutions at that point. In 1953 the leader of the Board of Trustees, Willis Smith, passed away and President Edens took his death as an opportunity to try to make some changes in their racial policies.

President Carmichael and President Edens had a very similar leadership style that consisted mainly of caution and lack of commitment towards a side. In the case of these two presidents, their leadership style was not conducive to solving major controversies at the university level. Looking deeper into President Carmichael’s leadership style and overall experience as president of the University of Alabama, it is impossible to ignore the substantial impact that the boards of trustees had on President Carmichael and all of the other Southern university presidents when it came to maneuvering through the complex and serious desegregation process.
President Carmichael and Chancellor Branscomb

In *Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt*, Kean gives considerable attention to the board of trustees’ impact on desegregation and on the decision-making process of the president or chancellor. In particular, Chancellor Harvey Branscomb of Vanderbilt University (1946-1963) is an interesting case. Chancellor Branscomb was the most determined, self-confident, and persistent president when it came to pushing for desegregation out of all of the presidents noted in Kean’s book as well as President Carmichael. Yet, he still received very similar reactions and decisions of resistance from the Vanderbilt University Board of Trustees that the other university presidents received from their board of trustees.24 This shows just how much power and control the board of trustees had at all of these Southern public or private university no matter what kind of president was working under them.

Even in the case of two very different leaders, President Oliver Carmichael and Chancellor Harvie Branscomb, the members of the boards of trustees still managed to have the same power and control over them. Chancellor Harvie Branscomb is also a central figure in Paul Conkin’s book *Gone With the Ivy – A Biography of Vanderbilt University*. Chancellor Branscomb actually succeeded Carmichael as chancellor of Vanderbilt in 1946 after serving at the Duke University Divinity School for twenty-one years. While today it is still unknown where President Carmichael truly stood on the issue of desegregation, it is clear where Chancellor Branscomb stood at the time. Chancellor Branscomb was a strong-willed, self-confident leader with a powerful vision and strong convictions. He was ready to fight for change, but he also

knew that he had to carefully prepare the board of trustees for upcoming, necessary change. Because of this, he positioned himself to the Vanderbilt University Board of Trustees not as an active proponent for change but as a responsible Southern leader.

Chancellor Branscomb firmly believed that segregation was wrong and that the South needed to embrace new ways of thinking. He was not afraid to go after what he wanted, and from the start, he was able to persuade the Board of Trustees to make small, yet meaningful, changes to Vanderbilt University’s relationship with the African American community. For example, he was able to enact a policy that allowed African American students to enroll in Vanderbilt University’s Divinity school as early as 1952 and to the Law School in 1955. This is something that President Carmichael never attempted to do at the University of Alabama.

However, even with a personality and leadership style that was in sharp contrast to President Carmichael’s, Chancellor Branscomb still faced strong resistance from the Board of Trustees at Vanderbilt University. This resistance prevented him from making the influential moves towards the desegregation of Vanderbilt University when and how he wanted to. The Board of Trustees had nearly complete control over Vanderbilt University, just like it did at the University of Alabama. Even though they both faced resistance from their board of trustees or did not quite see eye to eye, President Carmichael and Chancellor Branscomb still managed to get along with their trustees fairly well.

They were both consciously always trying to stay on the trustees’ good side and not push them too much on the issue of desegregation. Chancellor Branscomb was even successful at getting the Board of Trustees to allow two African American students attending Scarritt College

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25 Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 71-72, 161.
for Christian Workers to take Vanderbilt University courses based on a previous arrangement they had. Scarritt College for Christian Workers was the first private White college in Tennessee to admit African American students. When Chancellor Branscomb received backlash from the public for this decision, the Board of Trustees admired his ability to handle negative public attention.  

Even though President Carmichael and Chancellor Branscomb managed to maintain friendly relationships with the Boards of Trustees at their institution, that all changed with the first Supreme Court resolution on Brown v. Board in 1954. The fear of having to follow the ruling and admit African American students was the Board of Trustees’ worst nightmare, and the two presidents were preparing themselves for the mess to come. They had never dealt with an issue quite of this magnitude with the Board of Trustees before, and it was going to take a lot more savviness and strategic maneuvering on their part to get the Board of Trustees to follow the law.

The Makeup of The Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama and Vanderbilt University

The makeup of the Board of Trustees at Vanderbilt University and at the University of Alabama present numerous similarities. They both consisted of White Southern, older alumni and businessmen, mainly over the age of sixty-five, who were deeply committed to their university while also being deeply committed to upholding the traditional ways of the university and the South. They were suspicious, cautious, and mainly uninterested in innovation.  

26 Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 69, 73.

of the Board of Trustees, the members were consistently reelected, and even when new members were added they were still usually over the age of sixty-five. Any young members that were elected usually defaulted to what the older members wanted.²⁸

On both the Vanderbilt and Alabama Board of Trustees there was also a long-standing member turned unofficial leader or chairman of the Board of Trustees. On the Vanderbilt University Board of Trustees, the leader was James Stahlman. Stahlman was a conservative and outspoken alumnus as well as publisher of the *Nashville Banner.*²⁹ At the University of Alabama there was Hill Ferguson, who by the time the Supreme Court ruled that segregation violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment had already served on the Board of Trustees for thirty-eight years and had a lot of power and influence over the University of Alabama, the other board members, and the president of the University.³⁰

Both James Stahlman and Hill Ferguson made it markedly evident that they were against desegregation of any kind. Both Stahlman and Ferguson were always spearheading efforts to prevent their universities from admitting African American students, and the vast majority of the time their efforts worked. When Vanderbilt University alumni found out that African American students had been admitted to the University, they were furious, but Stahlman assured them that the Board of Trustees had no intentions of opening undergraduate admissions to African


²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama,* 29.
American students, and that he for one had no intentions of integrating Vanderbilt University at all. 31

The Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama and

Hill Ferguson

Hill Ferguson was the Board of Trustees member at the University of Alabama who initiated hiring the outside agency to investigate both Autherine Lucy and Pollie Myers with the intentions of trying to find something on their record that would give the Board of Trustees grounds to not admit them. In a letter to President Carmichael on June 10, 1955, Ferguson wrote to President Carmichael about a detective agency that he called and hired to investigate the personal lives of Lucy and Myers. In this letter it appears as though Ferguson is not asking President Carmichael if he agrees with doing the investigation, but instead, like many of his letters, he essentially is telling President Carmichael that this will happen.

The Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama was a self-perpetuating body. The Trustees were protective over their Board and were especially cautious of the governors and legislators of Alabama attempting to control the Board. The Board of Trustees did not want to share their power or decision-making process with anyone, even the president of the University of Alabama. 32 The Board of Trustees in 1953, when President Carmichael was hired, consisted of ten members elected by congressional district. Their professions spanned a wide range of areas, including banking, medicine, textile manufacturing, real estate, and law. They were not exactly the state’s wealthiest or most powerful men. Even Hill Ferguson was not seen as a man

31 Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 164.

32 Clark, The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama, 27.
of great power within the state. He had gained a modest fortune from being a vice president of a realty company, but he was mostly known for promoting community development in Birmingham, Alabama.\textsuperscript{33}

Two of the lawyers on the Board of Trustees, Robert Eugene Steiner Jr. and Brewer Dixon, both followed their father’s footsteps in being a member of the Board of Trustees. During President Carmichael’s tenure, two of the members, William H. Mitchell and Gordon Palmer, would be replaced upon their death by John A. Caddell of Decatur, Alabama and Ernest Williams, the university treasurer. Eris Paul, a circuit judge from southeast Alabama would also be added during President Carmichael’s tenure as one role was vacant at the time.\textsuperscript{34}

The majority of the Board of Trustees meetings consisted of talk about Alabama football, honorary degrees, construction authorizations, real estate matters, and other topics pertinent to the inner workings of a university. If it had not been for the desegregation crisis, the topics of the meetings would have remained the same and the Board of Trustees could have kept their communication with the president about inconsequential things like football tickets. However, the desegregation crisis did happen, and these men were going to have to deal with it and their interactions with the president were going to become more involved. One member of the Board of Trustees would take on the main role of communicating with the president. That Board of Trustees member was Hill Ferguson.\textsuperscript{35}

Hill Ferguson was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. He entered the University of Alabama in 1891 where he held the position of quarterback for the football team. He received

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 28.
his A. B. degree in 1896 and stayed on another year to attend law school and serve as the secretary to President Richard C. Jones. Ferguson was very loyal to the University of Alabama, and this one of the chief characteristics that was looked for when considering Board of Trustees members. He served as president of the Alumni Society for a few years where he led a fundraising campaign that brought $550,000 to The University. He also pushed heavily for the election of President George Denny in 1912. In 1919, Ferguson was elected to the Board of Trustees. It was easy for him to control the Board, because everyone on it, besides the younger members, were of like mind. Even the younger members though would always defer to their elders.\textsuperscript{36}

President Carmichael had an interesting relationship with Hill Ferguson and the Board of Trustees. It is clear from the correspondence between the two that Ferguson had a lot of influence over President Carmichael. Ferguson was always strongly suggesting the choices President Carmichael should make for the University of Alabama and President Carmichael seemed to agree with or give in to what Ferguson wanted. Even after Autherine Lucy was permanently expelled, Ferguson would not stop trying to keep the University of Alabama from being desegregated or from trying to have to control over President Carmichael when it came to this matter. On September 5, 1956 Ferguson wrote President Carmichael about another African American student, Billy Joe Nabors, who was trying to gain admittance to the University of Alabama Law School. In this letter it is clear that Ferguson tried to take complete control over the situation, had already made up his mind on it, and was writing President Carmichael to give him all of the information, including his opinion and that of other people he talked to. Ferguson wrote to President Carmichael that “Brewer thinks this application should be denied by Dean

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
Adams as a routine matter and not dignified to the extent of making a Board case of it. I certainly concur with this. What do you think?"37 Would President Carmichael go against what Ferguson has stated that he wanted? That is not likely, especially when Ferguson often gives his opinions and suggestions before hearing what President Carmichael has to say on the matter at hand. He was pressuring President Carmichael to agree with him. Ferguson usually backed up his stance by stating that he talked to others who felt the same way. This way he had even more leverage to convince President Carmichael to do what he said and agree with his opinions.

In another incident a few months later, Hill Ferguson again wrote to President Carmichael. Ferguson was sure to mention the people he had already talked to about the incident as well as his personal thoughts about the incident. In the Empire Building in Birmingham, Alabama, it was reported that two professors from the University of Alabama were trying to get the elevators in the building desegregated. There was a report that the same thing was happening at the Frank Nelson Building. Ferguson got word of both of these incidents and wrote to President Carmichael: “Radical ‘do gooders’ like this on our staff, I think do us unmeasurable harm. I hoped that a suggestion from Dean Volker would hush them up, but it seems not. What can be done in a case of this kind?”38 One could gather from this that Ferguson was telling President Carmichael that he needed to do something about these staff members. If he could have it his way, Ferguson was hinting at the at the fact that he thinks the professor should be fired. Ferguson did not want anyone on staff at the University of Alabama making public acts that supported desegregation, and he made sure to tell President Carmichael that.

37 Hill Ferguson to Oliver C. Carmichael, 05 September 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

38 Hill Ferguson to Oliver C. Carmichael, 10 December 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
Hill Ferguson undoubtedly had a lot of power and influence over the University of Alabama and President Carmichael, and he consistently made it clear that he was against desegregation. By the time Atherine Lucy wanted to enroll at the University of Alabama he unquestionably controlled and ran the Board of Trustees.\textsuperscript{39} He made it clear in a letter to President Carmichael that it was the Board of Trustees who made decisions about desegregation, and not the president. The letter that Ferguson wrote President Carmichael on April 27, 1956, reveals the type of control Ferguson tried to have over President Carmichael and the actions he took as president of the University.

In this letter, Ferguson stated that he is enclosing an unsigned circular published by the Citizens Council which criticized President Carmichael for two instances that showed he may be in favor of desegregation: “For your alleged interview at Miami in July 1954, which you have vigorously denied. For your participation in 1947 in a commission for ‘Higher Education for American Democracy’. You say this was principally in connection with Jews, Italians, and other such groups in New York City, and only incidentally with negroes.”\textsuperscript{40} Ferguson then went on to say that he thinks that the Board of Trustees should make a statement that the Board of Trustees itself assumes full responsibility for the admission or non-admission of African American students to the University of Alabama and that it was not the responsibility of President Carmichael. He added that he does not need President Carmichael to respond to this letter.\textsuperscript{41}

Hill Ferguson was doing a few things in this letter: Letting President Carmichael know that his actions were still being talked about and his actions reflected poorly on the Board of

\textsuperscript{39} Clark, \textit{The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama}, 29.

\textsuperscript{40} Hill Ferguson to Oliver C. Carmichael, 27 April 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
Trustees and the University of Alabama, and that he wanted to announce that the Board of Trustees members were the ones who made decisions about African American admissions. By making a statement about the Board of Trustees being the ones who make any decisions regarding desegregation at the University he was making sure the public did not think President Carmichael was the one who makes those decisions. He wanted to make sure people did not think it was President Carmichael who made those decisions because President Carmichael has made it appear as though he favored the admission of African American students. This notion about President Carmichael had been circulating throughout the state and country. These statements made by Ferguson show just how badly he wanted to keep the University of Alabama segregated and how badly he wanted everyone to know that. It also shows just how much power and control he had over President Carmichael, or in other words, how little power and control President Carmichael had over the desegregation of the University of Alabama. It can be assumed from this study that President Carmichael did not have much say or control towards the issue of segregation and desegregation, and this statement from Ferguson supports that notion. The Board of Trustees did ultimately have the final say in the segregation and desegregation matter

Chancellor Branscomb and the Board of Trustees

Even though in coming to Vanderbilt University Chancellor Branscomb knew that he was more liberally inclined than the Board of Trustees and that the race issue would be trouble, he was pleased with the progress he had made with the Board of Trustees up until 1956. He was able to essentially manipulate the Board of Trustees into inching its way towards desegregation by using careful wording and giving careful reasoning as to why a certain change needed to be made. He would solve tiny difficulties by convincing the Board of Trustees to simply relax a
specific policy without having to give up their complete commitment to desegregation by abolishing the entire policy.\(^{42}\)

He used reasoning such as the need to uphold contract obligations or the need to uphold the supposed Southern tradition that Southern Whites were helpful and not hostile towards African American people. Chancellor Branscomb also used the threat of losing major funding from large philanthropies in the future as a very real consequence of staying completely desegregated.\(^{43}\) By picking and choosing his battles wisely, Chancellor Branscomb was able to uphold his credibility and positive relationship with the Board of Trustees. Chancellor Branscomb started making moves toward desegregation early in his tenure, but because of the resistance of the Board of Trustees to make major changes, it took Chancellor Branscomb sixteen years to finally desegregate Vanderbilt University.

In May of 1955, Chancellor Branscomb was actually successfully able to persuade the Board of Trustees to admit two African American students to the Vanderbilt University Law School. He was able to convince them because the National Association for Accreditation of Law Schools demanded compliance with its antidiscrimination policy, just like it had done to President Edens of Duke University.\(^{44}\) Even though this was not the first time an African American student had been admitted to Vanderbilt University, as one was admitted to the Divinity School in 1953, and even though the Board of Trustees made the decision to admit these two law students a year prior, when the public got word of this decision in 1956, the alumni


\(^{43}\) Ibid., 17.

\(^{44}\) Conkin & Swint, *Gone with the Ivy: A Biography of Vanderbilt University*, 545.
became furious. They believed it was wrong to admit African American students to Vanderbilt University and that the admittance of two would only lead to the admittance of more. James Stahlman assured them that the board had no intentions of opening undergraduate admissions to African American students, and that he for one had no intentions of integrating Vanderbilt University at all.45 Surprisingly, issues in regard to race relations stayed calm, yet moved very slowly, for the next few years.

Chancellor Branscomb always had a firm sense of control and balance over how he would get the Board of Trustees to cooperate little by little, but there was one outcome that he feared would upset his plan to desegregate Vanderbilt University. That fear was public unrest and public attention. In 1960, the Nashville sit-ins, which challenged segregation in downtown stores, and the fact that African American Vanderbilt Divinity School student James Lawson was involved in these sit-ins, caused the hostile unrest that Chancellor Branscomb feared. James Stahlman was especially appalled by James Lawson’s behavior and wrote about it in the Nashville Banner.

Having substantial influence over the Board of Trustees, Chancellor Branscomb was worried Stahlman would convince the Board of Trustees to do something rash. Much like what happened to President Carmichael, Chancellor Branscomb expelled James Lawson and was likely forced to do so by the Board of Trustees. The times of a mostly peaceful desegregation plan for Chancellor Branscomb had come to an end.46 The result of Lawson’s expulsion was a

45 Ibid., 164.

46 Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 196-198.
faculty rebellion, leading to eleven of them threatening to resign, and the Board of Trustees no longer appreciating Chancellor Branscomb.

The Board of Trustees of Vanderbilt University did not force Chancellor Branscomb to resign from his role as chancellor, but the trustees blamed him for all of the negative publicity brought to Vanderbilt University. The Board’s reasoning was if Chancellor Branscomb had never initiated letting African American students enroll in the first place, then none of this trouble would have happened. The Board of Trustees turned its back on Chancellor Branscomb and blamed him for the negative effects of desegregation. Even though Chancellor Branscomb felt betrayed and disappointed, he chose to finish what he started at Vanderbilt University, unlike President Carmichael who had no desire to finish what had been started under his leadership. Chancellor Branscomb stayed for another two years and finally saw the desegregation of Vanderbilt University in 1962.47

It is important to note that Chancellor Branscomb was not a supporter of immediate and full desegregation of his institution, as he was instead in support of gradualism, like many liberal Southern educational leaders of his time. He believed that changes could only happen successfully if it was slow and began with the only “exceptional” African American people at first.48 He wanted to desegregate slowly, but not nearly as slowly as the pace the Board of Trustees caused to happen. President Carmichael also mentioned several times the possibility of a gradual integration as a means to desegregate the university, especially since the university was already overcrowded.

47 Ibid., 203-208.
48 Ibid., 16.
In light of what happened with Autherine Lucy, a gradual desegregation seemed like the most realistic way to integrate the University of Alabama.\textsuperscript{49} This could have been the truth, and President Carmichael very well could have believed that a gradual integration was the only way things could be done without creating a huge disaster. However, while gradualism may have seemed like the most realistic solution, the length in time President Carmichael likely would have wanted to gradually desegregate the University of Alabama would have been far too fast for the Board of Trustees. If the trustees could have it their way, they would have gradualism occur over decades.

In fact, in 1949, when Chancellor Branscomb made plans for a graduate school that would accept African American students, but would be physically separate from the main campus, and run by Vanderbilt University nonetheless, he sent those plans to President Carmichael. This was four years before President Carmichael came to the University of Alabama as he was president of Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching at the time. President Carmichael’s response was especially favorable, and he was enthusiastic about Chancellor Branscomb’s idea. Unfortunately, Chancellor Branscomb ended up abandoning this plan at the time because he knew the Board of Trustees would not accept it, but at least he was brave enough to conceptualize his ideas and talk to others about this plan.\textsuperscript{50} President Carmichael never even attempted to devise a plan where desegregation might be more realistic, or if he did there is no evidence of it today. In the end, the reality is that President Carmichael chose not to end segregation at the University of Alabama, and more important, he also chose to not even try.

\textsuperscript{49}Richard Eastwood to Oliver C. Carmichael, 07 March 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.

\textsuperscript{50}Kean, \textit{Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt}, 18-19.
President Carmichael and Chancellor Williams of the University of Mississippi

Another Southern presidential parallel to President Carmichael at the University of Alabama can be seen in the book Making Haste Slowly, where author David Sansing describes the troubling times of desegregation of higher education in the state of Mississippi. Within this coverage of Mississippi university presidents, Chancellor John Williams of the University of Mississippi and the case of desegregation at his university is highlighted. Chancellor Williams was at a pivotal position during the desegregation crisis as he tried to maintain a delicate balance between pleasing a variety of constituents. When African American student James Meredith enrolled at the University of Mississippi, Chancellor Williams found himself in a position where he was trying to please all forces involved in the incident, including the governor, the state of Mississippi Board of Trustees, known as the Board of Trustees of Institutions of Higher Learning, the national and international press, the student body, the Attorney General, and President of the United States. Similarly, President Carmichael also found himself in a position where he was trying to please numerous constituents who all had opposing views about desegregation and segregation. Whether they were for or against desegregation or segregation, the people of the South took a strong stance, and it was one that could not be avoided by a well-known university and its president.

In August of 1950, the Mississippi Board of Trustees that oversaw the entire higher education system, “armed the presidents of Mississippi’s white colleges with the power to avoid the tragic consequences of integration. In an incredibly naïve act, the board gave them the authority to accept or reject any applicants according to the best interest of everyone.”

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However, the university system in Mississippi continuously denied admission to African American students due to a series of changing requirements. In 1953, three years after the board of trustees adopted the policy to give the university presidents the power to admit or reject their applicants, Chancellor Williams of the University of Mississippi brought the law school application of an African American student to the attention of the Board of Trustees at the University of Mississippi. While this African American candidate was very qualified and held a master’s degree from Boston University, the Board of Trustees denied his admission with little discussion or debate on the matter. Their reasoning was that his undergraduate degree was from an unaccredited college, Claflin College in Orangeburg, South Carolina.52

When another African American applied to the law school after Brown vs. Board in 1954, the Board of Trustees at first denied him. When the student applied again, but this time with all of the requirements needed, the Board decided to change the requirements. It changed the number of letters of recommendation he needed from two to five. The Board of Trustees at the University of Mississippi was doing all it could to not admit an African American student to their institution to the point where the trustees were changing institutional policies to keep out one student.53 A large contributor to this was the Sovereignty Commission, a select group of political allies within Mississippi. Their main purpose was to keep public institutions of higher learning segregated. Much like Hill Ferguson from the University of Alabama and James Stahlman from Vanderbilt University, Governor Ross Barnett of Mississippi used his power to gain control of

52 Ibid., 141-142.
53 Ibid., 142-143.
the desegregation issue. He was on a mission to stop anyone who would encourage or advance the movement towards desegregation within higher education in the state of Mississippi.\textsuperscript{54}

The University of Mississippi, like the University of Alabama and Vanderbilt University, had one African American student who was granted admission to their college but ended up being surrounded by controversy. James Meredith was granted admission to the University of Mississippi after the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court ordered his admission in 1962, which was several years after the Autherine Lucy and James Lawson incidents. James Meredith had intended on insisting on his civil rights to attend the state-funded institution, even though it was still only admitting White students on the sole basis of the engrained culture of segregation. Meredith did not just want to gain admission to the University of Mississippi for himself, but he hoped to do something bigger. He hoped to change the entire system that had shut out African American students for so long. Meredith applied to the University of Mississippi on January 21, 1961 and received his first rejection letter on February 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1961.\textsuperscript{55}

Governor Barnett did all he could to prevent the admission of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi. He even had the University Board of Trustees rewrite the admission requirements and university policies so that Meredith’s following requests could be denied. The changes were prompted specifically by Meredith’s application and situation. Those changes appeared in the 1962 University Bulletin with a note saying, “Changes or revisions are sometimes made without prior notice in order to cope with changing conditions.”\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 155.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 156.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. 162.
Meredith was denied admission to the University of Mississippi twice. After many hearings, it was not until Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, a University of Alabama Law School graduate, vacated all legal barriers by the University and ordered that the district court carry out the fifth circuit’s decree, which was to admit Meredith to the University of Mississippi. Governor Barnett made a public statement that same night on the statewide television network stating that no school would be integrated as long as he was Governor. He even pledged to go to jail if necessary and scared people, including the Board of Trustees, in to thinking he might shut down the University all together since he had the power to do so.\textsuperscript{57} Six of the Board of Trustees members were actually willing to admit Meredith to the University at this point rather than be held in contempt or have the University shut down.\textsuperscript{58}

If Governor Barnett was going to let James Meredith register for courses, he would only allow it to be done at the State House in Jackson, MS and not on campus. Chancellor Williams was not made aware of any of these decisions and he made a public announcement that Meredith would register at campus on September 20\textsuperscript{th} and would be treated as any other student would.\textsuperscript{59} This made it clear to segregationists that the university officials and Governor Barnett were not on the same page.

On the day of registration, a Jones County judge issued an injunction that prohibited Meredith from enrolling in classes. The injunction cited the Board of Trustees, university officials, and federal authorities. It is not known if Chancellor Williams was made aware of this injunction or not. Governor Barnett was able to get the legislature to enact a new law, Senate Bill

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 168.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 169.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 172.
1501, which prohibited the admission of any person who had been convicted of a certain class of offenses to a Mississippi institution. James Meredith had been found guilty of false voter registration in the past, and Governor Barnett was using this offense as a means to keep him out of the University. When Meredith arrived on campus to register on September 20, 1962 Governor Barnett told Meredith himself that he was denied admission to the University of Mississippi.\textsuperscript{60}

This action by the Governor and the Board of Trustees placed Ole Miss Chancellor John Williams and key administrators in contempt of Justice Black’s order. Therefore, Chancellor Williams and Dean A.B. Lewis were forced to appear in federal court. Governor Barnett tried to impose his control and influence over Chancellor Williams, much like Hill Ferguson did to President Carmichael several times during his presidency. Governor Barnett told Chancellor Williams to stand firm and if necessary, go to jail. He even went as far as telling the Chancellor that he would double his salary if he defied the court. Chancellor Williams declined to even discuss it any further.\textsuperscript{61}

Chancellor Williams and the other university officials had their contempt charges dismissed later that day since they had been stripped of the authority to even act on Meredith’s application by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees, however, was issued contempt citation later that afternoon. The federal courts told the Board of Trustees that if it did not allow James Meredith to enroll at the University of Mississippi, then the Board would be removed from office, fined, sent to jail, and replaced by court-appointed members who would ultimately

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 172, 176.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 178.
admit Meredith anyways. The Board of Trustees unanimously voted to register Meredith as a student the very next day.\textsuperscript{62}

Because of the legal penalties that would ensue, the Board of Trustees was finally forced to admit James Meredith to the University of Mississippi. However, Governor Barnett continued to be hostile toward the situation and in historical terms, the blame for the coming violence and mobs associated with Meredith’s admission can be placed on Governor Barnett and not with Chancellor Williams.\textsuperscript{63} Very little information is provided on the leadership of The University of Mississippi exhibited by Chancellor John Williams during his tenure in \textit{Making Haste Slowly}. In reality, the confrontation and politics of the situation related to desegregation were beyond his control and taken over by the Governor of the state and the Board of Trustees, much like it was with President Carmichael.

Chancellor Williams served as chancellor at the University of Mississippi from 1946 to 1968 and it appears he took a cautious approach to his position, much like President Carmichael did. Chancellor Williams is not portrayed as a powerful administrator or leader, but he is shown to be skillful at understanding the politics related to his position. There is one instance in 1963 where Chancellor Williams actually did not give in to the pressures of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees tried pressuring Chancellor Williams to expel James Meredith right before he was about to graduate from the University of Mississippi because of potential inflammatory remarks he made during a speech. Chancellor Williams refused to do this, and Meredith did graduate shortly afterward.\textsuperscript{64} For the most part, Chancellor Williams at the University of

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 179-180.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 176.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 198.
Mississippi is portrayed as an administrator who is simply carrying out political directives and President Carmichael is similarly portrayed this way. Both leaders seemed to have chosen not to fight and instead please those in power whether they agreed with them or not because in the end it was just easier to give in.

Both of these leaders encountered great strife and violence at their universities and they both were unable to take any sort of control over the situation. Instead, they were consumed with trying to maintain a balance between all of the various constituents who were watching them, from the governor of the state to the students on campus. In a summary that Chancellor Williams wrote about the James Meredith case, he stated that “the University’s power to admit or deny him had been withdraw by an authority competent to make such a withdrawal. From the moment this power was returned to the University, its officials stood ready to register him at any time…University personnel had no part whatsoever in barring Meredith from their presence.”65 He also noted that he and all university officials were cleared of contempt charges in two Federal courts.

After laying out that he and his staff had no part in attempting to prevent desegregation at the University of Mississippi, Chancellor Williams then went on to justify the actions of the Board of Trustees and Governor Barnett. He stated that “the Governor was not interposing himself between the Board and the Chancellor…for the purpose of coercing the University into a particular line of action.”66 In reality, that is exactly what Governor Barnett was doing. This is a clear example of Chancellor Williams trying to save himself by showing that he did not choose a

65 The University of Mississippi and the Meredith Case Statement by Chancellor J. D. Williams, Nov. 1962, Equal Educational Opportunities Program Collection, U.S. Department of Education, 17.

66 Ibid., 19.
side, but then also pleasing the Board of Trustees and the Governor by not placing any blame on them either. Both Chancellor Williams and President Carmichael consistently changed their stance or wording so that they were always on the side that would benefit them and their job the most at that particular time. They also never exactly took a side, but they made they said just enough so that they were suspended between both sides.

In a time where the entire South was in conflict with the Supreme Court verdict, higher education institutions found themselves in a battle with not only the law, but with the people of the state, the entire nation, and even parts of the world. Debating, disagreeing, and rarely agreeing over the decision to desegregate their institution, university presidents and board of trustees found themselves in a tricky situation that would not be easily or quickly solved, no matter what the law said. Even the presidents of private institutions, who were not legally required to follow the ruling, knew that they would only be able to keep their university segregated for so long before the entire North, and even people in the South, began to shun them, which would eventually result in a massive loss of funds. However, these public and private university presidents also knew the mighty force of the stubborn and traditional board of trustees would prevent them from doing so.

Between the University of Alabama, Duke University, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Mississippi, it is clear the board of trustees ran and controlled all major decisions in regard to the segregation and desegregation at their institutions. These institutions were in four different states and had four different leaders, yet the experiences they had in fighting for or against desegregation were similar in many ways. The biggest similarity they had though was the makeup and role of their board of trustees, as well as the fact that the boards ensured continued segregation for as long as they could do so.
CHAPTER VI: LEADERSHIP AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

The leadership style of Oliver Cromwell Carmichael is one of the overarching focuses of this study in regard to how it affected his failures and successes in the three and a half years he spent as the University of Alabama president. President Carmichael was seen as lacking in the attribute of leadership, mainly, and possibly only, during his time at the University of Alabama; his leadership style made him very successful up until his presidency at the University of Alabama, as he was continuously hired for complex administrative roles throughout his career. However, while he was continuously hired for complex administrative roles, at places such as Vanderbilt University, he was not always a highly accomplished leader, but he found a way to get by and keep moving forward and upward. He had a difficult time getting by at the University of Alabama though. As an overarching theme, it is important to examine the relevant leadership theories that apply to and explain President Carmichael’s leadership style.

As Birnbaum states in his overview of leadership theories of college and university presidents, it is easy to talk about organizational leadership but difficult to study it. He also states that despite the countless scholarly works on leadership, there is still no agreement on how it is defined and measured, as well as what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective ones. Birnbaum addresses the even further challenging aspects of studying leadership within higher education institutions:

studying leadership in colleges and universities is even more difficult than in many other settings because of the dual control systems, conflicts between professional and administrative authority, unclear goals, and other properties unique to normative, professional organizations. . . .Understanding the leadership models implicitly held by
presidents is important; these models affect how presidents interpret their roles and find meaning in the flow of events they encounter.\(^1\)

While essentially any leadership theory could be applied to the case of President Carmichael, the leadership theories discussed here in particular illuminate President Carmichael’s leadership style and provide a means to assessing his effectiveness or ineffectiveness as a leader.

Overview of Leadership Theories as Viewed by College and University Presidents

As Birnbaum stated, studying leadership within higher education institutions was challenging due to the complex and unique nature of how the higher education system was organized. Birnbaum found it important to analyze the theories that were implicit in how college presidents viewed and defined leadership within higher education in order to gain a better understanding of how leaders could be successful in a higher education setting.\(^2\) This is also important to understand for this study. This study strives to understand what aspects of President Carmichael’s leadership style caused him to fail at the University of Alabama by analyzing his leadership through the lens of leadership theories.

Birnbaum used the five categories of leadership as defined through the literature on organizational leadership. The five categories were: Trait theories, which looked at specific characteristics a person holds, power and influence theories, which looked at the source and amount of power a leader has and how they use that power to influence followers, behavioral theories, which looked at what leaders actually do, contingency theories, which looked at the situational and external factors, and symbolic theories, which looked at leadership as a social


\(^2\) Ibid., 126.
attribution that allows people to connect outcomes to causes. He then interviewed thirty-two college and university presidents to collect their definitions of leadership. The data used was from one question that each president was asked: “What does the word ‘leadership’ mean to you?” The majority of the presidents in the study related leadership to categories of organizational leadership: power and influence and behavior.

There are two aspects of the power and influence theory that strongly relate to President Carmichael’s leadership style. First, he used the influence that came with perceived expertise, otherwise known as expert power. President Carmichael’s reputation was a very positive one and it served him well up to his presidency at the University of Alabama. President Carmichael was known as a man who was an expert in the field of higher education. He was known as one of the greatest educators the state of Alabama had ever produced. Take his excellent reputation and add on each job he got over the years and that made for one strong resume.

This resume automatically allowed for people to respect, trust, and look up to him as a leader in higher education. President Carmichael also had referent power. This refers to how others personally identified with and liked him. When it came to the University of Alabama, the people of the University and of the state of Alabama all welcomed him with open arms because President Carmichael was born and raised in Alabama. Many citizens in Alabama had a reason to identify with him, as they saw his returning to Alabama as welcoming him home. President Carmichael instantly won many people over, not just because of his reputation and past experience, but because he was seen as one of them.

3 Ibid., 126-127.
4 Ibid., 128.
5 Ibid., 128.
There is one aspect of behavioral theories that was the most commonly mentioned by the presidents interviewed in Birnbaum’s study and this aspect also directly relates to President Carmichael’s leadership style. The most commonly expressed behavior of leadership was the ability to set institutional goals. President Carmichael had visions for the University of Alabama. His strong suit was that he was well-versed in higher education administration. He was able to pinpoint and predict the future needs of the University as well as articulate a plan to maintain and grow the success of the University. Because of his time spent on the 1947 Commission and the SUNY Commission, President Carmichael anticipated the surge of post-war baby-boom children who would be flooding the Alabama’s colleges and universities. He had a plan for what the state and the University of Alabama would do to accommodate them in the most efficient way possible. President Carmichael also quickly launched a self-study of the University of Alabama after his arrival there. This self-study included the University of Alabama’s present situation, its potential, and the role he believed it should fill in the state of Alabama. Setting institutional goals was one leadership trait that President Carmichael certainly was not lacking.

Birnbaum concludes his findings with noting that while these may be the leadership qualities these presidents mentioned when they were interviewed, it does not mean they are actually acting in this way. They could very well have given what they believed was the appropriate answer, or perhaps how they think they should likely be acting, instead of a real representation of how they actually act. Unfortunately, the majority of these college and university presidents did not mention how a leader should cope with a turbulent outside

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6 Ibid., 129.

7 Ibid.
environment, which is one of the main focuses of this study. Birnbaum states that perhaps one of the reasons these presidents did not mention this very important aspect of a presidential role is because when they hear the word “leadership” they immediately associate it with dealing with internal problems instead of external problems.\(^8\)

**The Theory of Transformational Leadership**

The theory of transformational leadership, initiated by James M. Burns and Bernard M. Bass, is a central and influential leadership theory in education administration. A transformational leader is described as having a charismatic quality that inspires and motivates those they lead, and in return they get enhanced followership and performance from those who work with them.\(^9\) Leaders are noted for their ability to communicate clearly. They have a clear vision of their goals, powerful influence over stakeholders, and empower those they lead. Transformational leaders look to gain support from followers for organizational objectives. One purpose of the theory of transformational leadership is to guide leaders who are involved in a time of change.\(^10\)

It is difficult to tell if President Carmichael had the ability to empower those he led. He was often described as one of the real educators and scholars of the South and as having all the qualities one would like to see in a president, but his ability to empower those he led was never clearly noted. He did appear to have support from his followers as he was never truly disliked as a leader until his last year at the University of Alabama in 1956. This major shift in having

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\(^8\) Ibid., 128.


general support from followers and being able to gain the acceptance of those he led to no longer having either of those was a large shift. It may have been too great a shift for any leader to recover from, but especially for a leader like President Carmichael who cared so deeply about his relationships with fellow higher education administrators and how others viewed him. He did not know how to operate as a leader when those two aspects of his leadership style were suddenly no longer present. The question is, how and why did President Carmichael lose those qualities so quickly and could he have prevented this loss?

As a leader, President Carmichael was put in to a position where he was being pressured from two sides to either take a stance for segregation or for desegregation. President Carmichael actually had three options to choose from: 1. Take a stance in support of segregation of the University of Alabama 2. Take a stance in support of the desegregation of the University of Alabama 3. Take a stance for neither and try to remain in a neutral state. By going with the third option of not taking a stance and instead taking a neutral position, President Carmichael lost the leadership qualities of being well-liked and having support and acceptance from those he led. Unfortunately, taking this stance did not turn out well for Carmichael. He was no longer well-liked by many and he no longer had the support and acceptance from those he used to have support and acceptance from.

President Carmichael did not have the ability to see or realize that not taking a stance would evoke outrage and disappointment in all of the people he led. Perhaps if President Carmichael had picked a side, and taken a stance either for segregation or desegregation, he would have at least preserved a deep and trusting followership from probably half of his followers, instead of losing that from all of them. This probably would have benefited him in the long run and perhaps would have allowed him to remain president for years to come.
One study on leaders found that leaders tend to have several common personality traits: “They can challenge the prevailing view without provoking outrage or cynicism; they can act on the big and small pictures at the same time, and they lead with inquiry as well as advocacy, and with engagement as well as command.”11 President Carmichael did not have the majority of these leadership qualities. He was able to not provoke outrage or cynicism in people before coming to the University of Alabama, but he was able to do so by not outwardly challenging their views and beliefs. President Carmichael was wary that challenging their views and beliefs would in fact cause outrage and cynicism.

While at the University of Alabama, it seems as though he was only able to focus on the small picture, which was keeping Atherine Lucy out of harm’s way on campus. He constantly brought up the fact that he wanted to keep Lucy safe and that was the only reason she was temporarily suspended. When it came to her coming back on campus, he again would only address Lucy and her safety, but avoided the overall subject of African American students being allowed to enroll as students at the University of Alabama. President Carmichael was unable to focus on the big picture at hand, which was potentially ending segregation at the University of Alabama. Not being able to focus on both the small and big picture at the same time hurt his ability to handle the situation of desegregation in the best way possible. Even with him focusing on just the smaller picture of Lucy being enrolled at the University, he still was unable to handle that situation smoothly as its outcome did not result in her remaining a student.

President Carmichael lead with inquiry, as he was always trying to find ways to improve the overall education at the university, but he lacked in leading with advocacy. He would not

advocate for something if it meant displeasing his surrounding constituents. Last, President Carmichael was able to lead with engagement his entire career leading up to his time at the University of Alabama. His ability to do this was one of the qualities that got him hired several times in his numerous positions prior to coming to the University. However, it was his inability to lead with command as well as engagement while at the University of Alabama that ultimately ended his career. If he had all these qualities paired with his ability to move swiftly throughout different circles and finding ways to please everyone, he would have had a better chance of being a successful president during the time of desegregation.

Desegregation and Leadership Theories

Desegregation was one of the main controversial incidents that presidents had to quickly and effectively respond to while also balancing the complex relationship between the president and the board of trustees. Theories about what made desegregation possible have existed since the process of desegregating schools began. Arthur M. Cohen presented a theory that speaks to what the leaders of educational institutions should have done in order to successfully desegregate. In his piece titled “The Process of Desegregation: A Case Study,” Cohen began by stating that in the early 1960s Southern schools continued to be destined to be the battleground in the fight over desegregation being waged between the Southern people and the Federal courts and government.12 This was true in the early 1960s and it most certainly was true in the early 1950s. The University of Alabama is a perfect example of a battleground in the fight over desegregation. Atherine Lucy was the main face associated with that battleground, and perhaps

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the second most associated face was that of President Carmichael. He was after all the face of the University of Alabama at the time.

While President Carmichael was at the University of Alabama the institution did not successfully desegregate after it admitted its first African American student. What would President Carmichael and the Board of Trustees, as leaders of the institution and of higher education, had to have done in order to successfully desegregate the University if they had in fact chosen to do so? Cohen examines the factors of a successful desegregation process based on educational institutions who were able to do so effectively, even though each institution’s overall plan to desegregate may have varied. He argues that there were three common principles in all of the cases in which the transition to a desegregated institution was achieved smoothly. In all of these institutional cases the choice to transition to desegregation was also made voluntarily. The three principles followed were: the school boards made it clear their intent to desegregate, the intent to desegregate was made known to all people who were directly connected with the institution, and all of the institution’s personnel were willing to work toward the goals set for desegregation.

Cohen noted that the first principle was mentioned in a 1954 book on the process of desegregation. Cohen included a quote from this book that is very pertinent to the situation that happened at the University of Alabama and how it was, or was not handled, by the administration and leadership:

A clear definition of law and policy by legitimate social authorities may reinforce willingness to conform to the requirements of new situations. Persons coming into an unfamiliar situation, such as that experienced in initial desegregation, will be unusually sensitive to cues as to what is the appropriate and acceptable behavior. Hence the great importance of clarity and decisiveness in early policy and practice in the desegregation process cannot be overemphasized.13

The University of Alabama administration did nearly the opposite of this advice. Instead of enforcing the Supreme Court’s verdict, the Board of Trustees enforced a clear definition of upholding their historical traditions of segregation. This caused confusion, chaos, and a divide between the people connected to the University. These people were extremely sensitive to the cues of what the administration deemed the appropriate and acceptable behavior, whether they agreed or disagreed. President Carmichael was not bringing any clarity to the situation either. Because the University of Alabama administration, particularly the Board of Trustees, caused such disarray from the very start, the chance of the University desegregating smoothly and without violence was highly unlikely.

Cohen argues that the leaders who are approaching this unfamiliar situation of desegregation must be clear and decisive in the early policy and practice in the desegregation process. He also argues that a decision must be made, and a stance must be taken that allows for no misunderstanding of the situation.¹⁴ In this study I argue that this is the key leadership principle that President Carmichael lacked: the ability to take a firm stance on the issue. The Board of Trustees was able to take a firm stance on the issue, it was just not the appropriate or law-abiding stance. I argue that this lack of taking a firm stance by President Carmichael was the main leadership quality that he was lacking. Not being able to take a firm stance contributed to his lack of success and resignation as president, for the reactions from many were not favorable of President Carmichael’s neutrality, and he was eventually disliked by most.¹⁵

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¹⁵ Letters to Carmichael, 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL
The second principle, making the intent to desegregate known, touches upon the importance of clear lines of communication when a serious controversy strikes a higher education institution. Communication of the plan must go from the Board of Trustees to the president, faculty members, administration, and students.\textsuperscript{16} Even though the Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama did not make a plan to desegregate, the communication between them and President Carmichael was still very poor. President Carmichael was unaware of all of their decisions and was left finding ways to stall giving the faculty, students, and all other interested parties any substantial updates on the desegregation process. The Board of Trustees did not seem to ever have a clear plan of what their next steps were. They were constantly scrambling to make their next decision, and often times President Carmichael was only told information after the decision had been made.

If the communication between President Carmichael and the Board of Trustees was poor, then it is not surprising that the communication relayed to the rest of the constituents on campus was even worse. If there had been more clear lines of communication between President Carmichael and the Board of Trustees then perhaps the situation that surrounded Autherine Lucy’s enrollment could have been far less chaotic, unorganized, and utterly confusing to the people of Alabama and the nation. The confusion caused deep frustration within all of the people waiting to see what the University was going to do, and this frustration left them angry with President Carmichael.

After examining the context of the University of Alabama in the early 1950s and the people who held the majority of the power, it is quite clear that these three principles were not

followed. The third principle, that of needing the willingness of constituents on campus to follow the plans to desegregate, would have never been followed because it would have impossible to convince the Board of Trustees and all of the institution’s personnel to work towards desegregation. At the University of Alabama, the issue of segregation was polarizing. However, the first two principles could have still been followed by President Carmichael himself, and if he had done so, perhaps the outcome of the attempted desegregation of the University of Alabama could have been different. If anything, President Carmichael’s career following the attempted desegregation could have been different had he made a clear intent and stance to desegregate and made that intent known to all people.

Leadership Approaches and Organizational Change

President Carmichael’s leadership skills can be also examined through the lens of Camelia Băeşu’s and Ruxandra Bejinaru’s five broad competency areas of leadership related to successful implementation of change. When it comes to the case of President Carmichael, it is important to understand and examine the role of a leader when it comes to implementing a major change. In a study completed by Băeşu and Bejinaru, leadership approaches in regard to organizational change were examined and the authors state, “Inside the organization, leaders must be promoters of change. Leaders have the power to influence others and motivate them in order to achieve certain goals.” The authors also explain that with change comes resistance. It is the leader’s job to overcome this resistance.

17 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
This was President Carmichael’s greatest challenge while at the University of Alabama. He was faced with the challenge of overcoming the massive resistance to a radical change. Băeșu and Bejinaru define change and change management as:

to alter the present shape/estate in order to become a better one. Change management is defined as the coordination of a structured period of transition from situation A to situation B in order to achieve lasting change within an organization. In general, individuals focus more on what it is that they have to give up when change occurs and not on what they could gain. This is the main factor for the resistance that individuals manifest towards change, which is rather paradoxical as any change is done for the good reasons.\(^{20}\)

When this definition is put within the context of desegregation in the South in the 1950s, it can be seen how difficult it would be to implement this change. People who were so used to segregation could not even begin to see the positives that could come from this change, but instead all they could see is what they would have to give up. What they had to give up, their tradition and deep-rooted beliefs, was unfathomable to them. This is the context that President Carmichael was operating within.

Băeșu and Bejinaru explain radical versus incremental change, and how people react differently to radical versus incremental changes:

Some changes, like incremental changes are easier accepted and implemented as these are gradually and informally applied. In time people get used to this kind of changes and become a routine, unlike radical changes. In contrast, radical changes are much more difficult to be accepted and resistance is stronger.\(^{21}\)

This leads to the examination of President Carmichael being faced with a radical change and the challenge of turning it into an incremental one, if even possible, in order to lower the extreme resistance he was facing. The radical change was desegregation of the University of Alabama.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
and the incremental change was gradualism. This can be examined through President Carmichael as a person and a leader, and whether or not he had the abilities to implement gradualism, and it can also be examined through the context that President Carmichael had to operate within and if it was possible for him to do that within that context. With gradualism, the University would have still desegregated but at a pace that would have made it more likely to succeed given the extreme resistance towards desegregation. However, it seems unlikely that President Carmichael could have developed a plan for gradualism because of the context he was operating within.

Băeșu and Bejinaru also presented five broad competency areas of leadership related to successful implementation of change: Creating the case for change, creating structural change, engaging others, implementing and sustaining changes, and facilitating and developing capability. President Carmichael’s leadership style can be examined through these five competency areas. For the first three competency areas, creating a case for change, creating structural change, and engaging other, the leader must build awareness among employees regarding the imminence of change and be insistent on the necessity of the change.\textsuperscript{22}

President Carmichael could have chosen to be more vocal about desegregation towards constituents on campus, the students, as well as the surrounding community. It could have helped the situation if he took the time to try and continuously educate people on the Supreme Court’s 1954 and 1955 resolution in \textit{Brown v. Board}, and about desegregation, as well as show the importance of the community’s support. Perhaps this would not have actually helped the situation, but it is not likely that doing this would have made the situation any worse than it already was. If President Carmichael had at least attempted to educate people on the necessity of

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
this change then perhaps more people would have given in to the change instead of reacting with pure violence and ignorance.

For the fourth and fifth competencies, implementing and sustaining changes and facilitating and developing capability, a leader must develop elaborate strategies and effective action plans towards the desired change as well as help others sustain their motivation for change. Because President Carmichael chose not to develop a plan for desegregation or gradualism, he did not have any reason for creating or sustaining motivation within those he was leading. If President Carmichael had developed a plan for desegregation or gradualism that would have been the preceding step towards motivating others, he would have had a specific plan to lead them with.

Băeșu and Bejinaru presented five competencies to enable and manage change. They also discussed the importance of having the ability to make a radical change an incremental one when necessary. President Carmichael failed to follow these five competencies laid out and he chose to not try to turn a radical change in to an incremental one. If President Carmichael would have had more experience in handling and leading change, he may have known how to handle the radical change of desegregation of the University of Alabama. However, no change he might have dealt with in the past could have truly compared to the change of desegregation.

These particular leadership theories provide a better understanding of President Carmichael’s leadership style and why it failed him, but also to examine what leadership styles would have made him and other presidents successful during the 1950s and 1960s when desegregation was hard fought by so many in higher education in the South. Based on the examination of these different theories, it could be concluded that if President Carmichael had

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23 Ibid.
the leadership capabilities of expert power, referent power, an ability to set institutional goals, 
the ability to inspire and motivate, a powerful influence over stakeholders, the ability to 
challenge the prevailing view without provoking outrage or cynicism, act on the big and small 
pictures at the same time, lead with inquiry as well as advocacy, lead with engagement as well as 
command, the ability to show clarity and decisiveness, the ability to alter radical changes into 
incremental ones, and the ability to take a firm stance on the issue then perhaps the outcome of 
desegregation or even just the outcome of his career could have been better than what it actually 
was. However, considering the context he was operating within, even if he had these leadership 
qualities it may not have been possible to implement them. When other major players, such as 
the Board of Trustees, come into the picture who are securely grounded in their traditions and 
hold so much power, doing those things are easier said than done
CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

Oliver Cromwell Carmichael, the University of Alabama’s 19th President, was president during a time of controversy. President Carmichael was aware that segregation was a deep-rooted tradition in the South, and he was aware of the progressive liberal ways of the North. President Carmichael found himself in the middle of these two groups, trying, but unable, to please both. On February 1st, 1956 the University of Alabama admitted its first African American student, Autherine Lucy. Within a week the University dismissed her because riots protesting her enrollment were increasingly violent. This would be the beginning to President Carmichael’s long career being remembered for only one awful incident and how he handled it.

President Carmichael was a cultured, modern, and highly experienced educator and administrator in the world of higher education, yet he failed as president of the University of Alabama, and more importantly, he failed at desegregating the University of Alabama when he was given an opportune chance. President Carmichael’s failure to be the president he had intended to be boils down to this question: How could a person, with so much experience, a person that was known as one of the greatest educators and administrators the state of Alabama had ever produced, fail at the job he had waited half his life for? President Carmichael’s story is a significant one for it explains partially why the University of Alabama remained segregated until 1963, instead of desegregating in 1956 when the first African American student enrolled. It

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is also a significant example of how and why some presidents in the South failed at desegregating their university in the 1950s and 1960s. President Carmichael’s actions and decisions as a university president can also provide insight into how university presidents today often have to make a swift, yet well thought-out reaction, to unexpected controversial moments. From President Carmichael’s story, we can take these lessons learned and translate them to how presidents could or should handle controversies that they face today.

Carmichael, as the president and face of the University of Alabama, was at the center of the controversy surrounding the first African American student, Autherine Lucy, enrolling at the University of Alabama. When controversies happen under a university president’s watch, whether the president has control over the situation or not, they are the person everyone blames. The president often takes the blame for decisions and actions taken by the university administration. President Carmichael was the face of the University of Alabama to the general public. People believed the president was the one who had the power and was the one who should take a firm stance on the issue. A letter from a man in Kingsland, Georgia stated “All of Dixie has their eyes on you---show your guts.” This statement shows that many people were watching President Carmichael, and not the Board of Trustees, when it came to the desegregation of the University of Alabama.

The question remains exactly why President Carmichael left so soon after the tragic incident with Autherine Lucy, but one can speculate why he did. John Caddell, a Board of Trustees member who actually showed sympathy for Lucy in one of his letters to President Carmichael, believed that President Carmichael left because he “did not want to be faced with unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances the rest of his life and because he did not want to live

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3 Charles Smith to Oliver C. Carmichael, 09 April 1956, Box 17, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
through the unpleasantness of the desegregation procedure both the Board of Trustees and President Carmichael knew was inevitable.” The atmosphere at the University of Alabama was turbulent and very unpleasant, and that can be seen in the large amount of letters President Carmichael received from around the country. It is apparent from these numerous letters that President Carmichael was caught in between pleasing the people of the South and all of his friends and acquaintances from the North.

In the following weeks after the temporary suspension and in the following weeks after the decision to permanently expel Autherine Lucy, President Carmichael would receive mounds of mail, most of which can be found today in the University of Alabama’s archives located in the W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library. This mail contained varying forms of hate, and sometimes unwanted praise, towards President Carmichael. There were people writing him accusing him of racism, fascism, integrationism, and favoring miscegenation. There were letters thanking him for upholding White supremacy.\textsuperscript{5} These letters, which were the honest and brutal opinions of people in the state and in the country, give great insight into the context and racial tension that was occurring at the time. It is astonishing how people all over the country during this time viewed the segregation issues in such vastly different ways. It was these vastly different views that were pulling Carmichael from all angles, but he refused to pick one to align with. This was likely very frustrating for President Carmichael to deal with, as everyone had their own opinion and version of what happened at the University of Alabama, but nobody really knew the


whole truth besides himself and the Board of Trustees. There was simply little to nothing he could do about people forming their varying opinions and versions of the story.

The pressure that President Carmichael was facing was immense and greater than anything he had experienced before. The people of the state, country, and world made sure to remind him of this immense pressure through these personal letters. One of the letters put it best though when she noted that it has been rumored that President Carmichael was going to retire. While she begged him not to do, she said she also understood why. Her last words are ones that President Carmichael should have listened to as he decided to leave the University in the grave mess it had turned in to: “Alabama needs you now.”

A *Time* magazine article explained President Carmichael and the attempted desegregation of the University of Alabama as: “Carmichael was caught between those who thought he should have taken a bolder stand for principle and those who blamed him for allowing a Negro to get into the university in the first place.” It is highly doubtful that President Carmichael did not know that segregation and desegregation were issues he was going to have to deal with eventually as president. No matter what kind of controversies Carmichael had to endure as president, it was a role he accepted. At the end of the year of 1956, The Birmingham News recalled the events surrounding the presidency of the University of Alabama:

The presidency of the University during the past year has not been an easy position to hold. With national attention fixed on events there, Dr. Carmichael labored under an unusually heavy burden. It is greatly to his credit that in the tumult and uproar, his voice remained calm, his advice clear and steady, his presence itself a moderating influence on all concerned. He made it quite evident nationally that the University of Alabama was not yielding to disorder.

6 Ibid.


It is true that the presidency was not an easy position to hold at that time. President Carmichael was not the only Southern university president in this situation. Racism, segregation, and desegregation were some of the most challenging issues presidents had to cope with and try to find resolutions for. However, presidents should always be prepared to take on the responsibility of making decisions and appropriate actions in response to a controversy. It is also important to note that while it was a hard time to be president of the University of Alabama it was a much harder time to be an African American student trying to get an equal university education to their White classmates.

Racism, segregation, and desegregation also served as the main source of conflict between a president and the board of trustees. The makeup of the Board of Trustees at the University of Alabama consisted of White Southern, older alumni and businessmen, mainly over the age of sixty-five, who were deeply committed to their university while also being deeply committed to upholding the traditional ways of the university and the South. One of those traditional ways that they were focused on upholding was segregation. The Board of Trustees members were suspicious, cautious, and mainly uninterested in innovation. At the University of Alabama there was one very influential leader of the Board, Hill Ferguson, who by the time the Supreme Court ruled that segregation violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, had already served on the Board of Trustees for thirty-eight years and had a lot of power and influence over the University of Alabama, the other board members, and the president of the University.

President Carmichael had an interesting relationship with Hill Ferguson and the Board of Trustees. It is clear from the back and forth correspondences between the two that Ferguson had

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a lot of influence over President Carmichael. Ferguson was always strongly suggesting the choices President Carmichael should make for the University of Alabama. Unfortunately, President Carmichael seemed to more often than not agree with or give in to what Ferguson wanted. Ferguson also made it clear in a letter to President Carmichael that it was the Board of Trustees who made decisions towards desegregation, and not the President. This letter reveals the type of control Ferguson tried to have over President Carmichael and the actions he took as president of the University.

In this letter, Ferguson states that he is enclosing an unsigned circular published by the Citizens Council which criticizes President Carmichael for two instances that showed he may be in favor of desegregation: “For your alleged interview at Miami in July 1954, which you interview you have vigorously denied. For your participation in 1947 in a commission for ‘Higher Education for American Democracy’. You say this was principally in connection with Jews, Italians, and other such groups in New York City, and only incidentally with negroes.”

Ferguson then goes on to say that he thinks that the Board of Trustees should make a statement that the Board of Trustees itself assumes full responsibility for the admission or non-admission of African American students to the University of Alabama and that it is not the responsibility of President Carmichael. It can be assumed from this study that President Carmichael did not have much say or control towards the issue of segregation vs. desegregation, and this statement from Ferguson supports that notion.

One newspaper claimed President Carmichael had clear and steady advice and that he was a moderating influence on both sides. However, after examining his actions throughout this controversy, it is hard to believe Carmichael was either of those things. He rarely gave any

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10 Hill Ferguson to Oliver C. Carmichael, 27 April 1956, Box 16, Carmichael Papers, UAL.
advice, but instead said things to skirt around giving an actual answer to any issues. His presence was also rarely a moderating influence on both sides, as he was more likely to aggravate both sides because of his wavering and neutral stance. President Carmichael approached the issue of segregation and desegregation with caution and avoided the issue as long as they possibly could.\textsuperscript{11} On the rare occasion that he did speak out about possibly supporting desegregation, the moment he knew that the Board of Trustees or the Southern community was angry at his gesture supporting desegregation, he retreated from his previous thoughts and words by either putting out conflicting statements or amending what he said previously.

In total, President Carmichael implied that he leaned towards desegregation over segregation. Several of the studies he participated in over the years favored the integration of races, such as the Temporary Commission on the Need for a State University, which clearly stated that race and religion should not be a factor for college admission\textsuperscript{12}. There was also President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education, which outright said that segregation must be eliminated in the education system.\textsuperscript{13} In many of President Carmichael’s letters to individual people he also implied that he was for desegregation over segregation. When President Carmichael was invited to discuss Harry Ashmore’s report on biracial education, he read the report and wrote to the Fund for the Advancement of Education that he was sure Governor Byrnes would find no objection to their approach if he read the report carefully.\textsuperscript{14} From this

\textsuperscript{11} Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and Vanderbilt, 59.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 73.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 38.

response, one would think President Carmichael was open to desegregation, or at least that he
definitely did not desperately want to prevent it from happening.

When President Carmichael wrote a letter to Professor Pauling, an invited campus
speaker who wanted to cancel his speaking engagement after what happened to Lucy,
Carmichael wrote to him that the University was caught in a very bad spot and was determined
that right shall prevail. He also wrote that no one could disapprove more heartedly than himself
of the entire series of incidents which led to the exclusion of Atherine Lucy from classes and
that the only reason for excluding her was to protect life. When President Carmichael wrote a
response letter to a fellow concerned citizen, he wrote that he was disturbed by the segregation
issue and that he sincerely hoped something would be done to lift the tension.15 Well before he
was at the University of Alabama, Carmichael wrote to Chancellor Branscomb of Vanderbilt
university in response to Branscomb’s idea to create a graduate school for African American
students at Vanderbilt so that they could slowly be integrated into the campus. Carmichael’s
response was especially favorable and enthusiastic over this idea.16

There were also several quotes from President Carmichael from public speeches or
interviews he did with newspapers that suggest he leaned towards desegregation over
segregation. In July of 1954, President Carmichael was invited by the Commercial Law League
to address their convention in Miami where he said that the University of Alabama would make
every effort to comply with the Supreme Court ruling banning segregation in public schools and

15 Oliver C. Carmichael to Mrs. Albert Atkinson, Sr., 03 February 1956, Box 17, Carmichael
Papers, UAL.

16 Kean, Desegregating Private Higher Education in the South: Duke, Emory, Rice, Tulane, and
Vanderbilt, 18-19.
that he thought the segregation problem could be worked out.\textsuperscript{17} In an interview with the New York \textit{Herald Tribune}, President Carmichael assured readers that the solution that the University of Alabama was trying to work out would, at all costs, be based on Autherine Lucy’s return to class and campus. He also noted that there was no thought in the minds of the authorities at the University of Alabama to further challenging Autherine Lucy’s right to attend the University.\textsuperscript{18} In address Carmichael gave to the students he made it clear that Autherine Lucy’s court case started a year before he arrived at the University of Alabama, and that it was the Board of Trustees who “sought through all legal means to maintain the historic tradition of segregation which they conscientiously believed to be in the best interests of all concerned.” He then stated that these were their personal beliefs, and that those personal beliefs were confirmed by the sentiment throughout the state.\textsuperscript{19} President Carmichael was trying to show that he was not associated with the Board’s beliefs and that it was not him who made the decision to exclude Lucy from campus.

However, even with all of the instances of President Carmichael suggesting he leaned towards desegregation over segregation, he also had several conflicting statements and numerous times where he tried to change his wording or meaning to match his audience. President Carmichael was always quite skilled at aligning his wording towards his specific audience. He had the ability to manipulate words so that he could still give a response but not give away any real or substantial information. There were two very distinct situations where, in one President Carmichael said he was willing to support and work out the segregation problem, and in the

\textsuperscript{17} Clark, \textit{The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama}, 32-33.


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
other he said he did not favor the integration of races. President Carmichael was trying to avoid being connected with opposing racism and segregation as he would say anything he could to avoid that kind of conflict with the Board of Trustees. However, while he tried to avoid being connected with opposing segregation, he also did not ever stand up for segregation. To make matters even more confusing, President Carmichael also never stood up for desegregation.

The question remains whether or not he did not find integration of the races desirable because of the challenges and controversy it would present, or because he did not actually believe classrooms should ever be integrated. This question remains hard to answer because of Carmichael’s many conflicting statements. These two situations, plus numerous others, makes it difficult to determine if President Carmichael was indeed a Southern moderate. It very well may have been that he was telling certain people what they wanted to hear instead of having to deal with any confrontation. President Carmichael showed time and time again that he tried to avoid confrontation and instead preferred to please everyone.

In addition, while he may have stated a few times that the University of Alabama would obey the law and he had intentions of letting Autherine Lucy return to campus, he absolutely did not follow through with those sentiments with his actions. The Board of Trustees did ultimately have the final say in the segregation matter. It was almost as if President Carmichael leaned toward segregation, not because he believed in the morals and beliefs that stood behind it or because he supported the lack of educational opportunities for African American students, but because he did not want to deal with everything that came with desegregation. He did not want to upset his acquaintances in the South or his acquaintances in the North. In President Carmichael’s eyes, the longer desegregation could be put off the better, at least where it would directly affect him and his presidency.
Why he would take such a prominent role in the South at an institution that undoubtedly
would have to deal with desegregation is a mystery. Why did he seem so utterly unprepared
when he was forced to handle the issue at hand? When Carmichael was president of the
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, he wrote about how those who enter into
the profession of education face scrutiny from the community about their personal beliefs:
“Many a teacher in a small community has lost her position because of engaging in some
innocent pastime which was not approved by the more conservative citizens of the community.
Others have suffered a similar fate because they took a stand on local issues which ran counter to
the views of those who had the power of appointment.”

Carmichael also addressed the extreme public scrutiny that a president must endure. He
described the level of scrutiny that the president must take on behalf of the university: “For some
unaccountable reason the average college or university is thought of in terms of its president. It is
often described as the lengthened shadow of the man who administers it.” These words are the
harsh yet true reality of the role and responsibility the president takes on. Each word the
president says, every decision and act the president makes is subject to scrutiny as well as
misinterpretation. Groups can interpret something he and she said in complete opposite ways and
the president can be criticized from all sides. Hence why a president must be savvy with their
words, something that Carmichael had always been good at. Carmichael expanded on the skills
he believed a president must have:

The college president needs a large measure of tact, a real liking for people, an ability to
appreciate the other fellow's point of view and a ready adaptability to people and to
situations. Cynicism or indifference are not assets. Friendliness, ability to reach a
decision, to say no pleasantly but firmly, and the capacity to feel a deep interest in all

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 686.
phases of the university's work and in those who direct it are useful qualities. Thorough-going sincerity, honesty, alertness, and courage are the foundations of success.\textsuperscript{22}

In this statement Carmichael knew that a president should not be indifferent and that they should be courageous, yet he did not follow his own advice. However, he did follow his other words of advice when it came to being able to adapt to people’s differing viewpoints and having a real level of tact when it came to working with people. He was also friendly, but he did not always have the ability to reach a decision and say no firmly. Carmichael did not know when he wrote this that he too would be facing scrutiny from the more conservative citizens of not just his community, but the entire country. Carmichael would face scrutiny to the highest degree for failing to take a stand on a local issue. Not only do educators face scrutiny when they take a stand counter to that of the people in power, as Carmichael stated in his article, but they also face scrutiny when they do not take a stand at all. Unfortunately, for most leaders, staying neutral is not something people react well to when a major crisis threatens to change what they are comfortable with, such as the desegregation of higher education.

I argue that staying neutral means a leader essentially has no stance at all. When a leader does not take stand at all it can be viewed as being the equivalent to taking a stand that runs counter to a person’s beliefs, because either way, the leader is not taking a stand that aligns with that person’s own beliefs. If one is going to face scrutiny either way, then they might as well take the scrutiny while voicing their opinion and beliefs instead of going down without having a voice at all. Carmichael was aware of the pressure educators face when it comes to taking a stand on controversial issues. Up until his presidency at the University of Alabama, he had managed to avoid massive scrutiny by not taking a stance.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 685-686.
One probably should not be a president of a large public university if they do not have the ability to make choices and important decisions when they are needed the most. Leaders cannot bend with the wind and alter their speech depending on who they are talking just to please everyone at all times, and that’s exactly how Carmichael was throughout his entire career. They need to know when it is the type of situation that warrants a clear and firm decision. When a crisis occurs, leaders need to have strong convictions and stand by them. Carmichael even addressed the fact that students should be taught to produce their own sound sense of values so that they can take a firm stance on issues:

students are taught to withhold judgment until all the facts are in. . . . All through life decisions must be made and action taken before complete knowledge of a situation can be acquired. The effective citizen must be more than a spectator in life's conflicts. He must take sides, must frequently act before it is clear what all the facts are or what the outcome will be.  

The ironic part of this being that Carmichael’s greatest weakness as a leader in higher education was his inability to take a side during a conflict and to make a decision in a timely manner while in the middle of a crisis. However, when other major players, such members of the Board of Trustees, come into the picture who are securely grounded in their traditions and beliefs, this is easier said than done.

The complex administrative and leadership dynamic of a university is also important to note. Before coming to the University of Alabama as president, Carmichael discussed the relationship and dynamic between the faculty, administration, and board of trustees when it came to making university and policy decisions. Carmichael argued that when the faculty has little say in university matters then the entire university suffers:

Thus, the faculty which is responsible for educational results has little to say about policy. No adequate channel of communication between the faculty and the

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23 Ibid., 632.
administration for the interchange of ideas on policy has been developed. It is not clear whether it is lack of interest on the part of the faculty or the desire of the administration to keep control in its hands that is the more responsible for this situation. Whatever the cause, the effect on the educational enterprise is the same. It suffers.\textsuperscript{24}

Another one of Carmichael’s publications during his time as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is especially significant to this study, as it is titled “What Makes a Good College President.”\textsuperscript{25} In this paper Carmichael discusses the other constituents that a president must work with and how they can affect the presidency:

Any one of a half dozen groups with which the president must work more or less closely can upset his administration: the trustees, the faculty, the students, the alumni, the local community, the denominational leaders in church-supported colleges, or the politicians in state-supported institutions. The case histories of presidential changes in American colleges and universities record the downfall of many, good men who failed to get along with one or another of these groups.\textsuperscript{26} Carmichael himself would find out in the future just how these groups of people could destroy the presidential administration of a qualified man, especially when nearly all of those groups are upset. In Carmichael’s case, at the University of Alabama, when the university was attempting to desegregate nearly all of these groups of people were upset for either the attempt of desegregating or the lack of effort put towards desegregating the university. It was the Board of Trustees that truly destroyed his presidency. Their decisions and actions were unfortunately a reflection of Carmichael’s leadership and administration. All of the anger and frustration was directed at Carmichael, not necessarily because he did not get along with all of these different groups of people, but because he was not telling them exactly what they wanted to hear.

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\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
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Carmichael suggested in his writing that the president and the coach hold the most hazardous positions at a university. He indicates that the length of time a president spends in office is not reflective of their qualifications, but instead it is reflective of their ability to get along with people.\footnote{Ibid., 683.} Carmichael was not only aware of this, but he acted on it during his presidency at Alabama State College for Women and at Vanderbilt University and it proved to be effective. Unfortunately, he was unable to use the same tactic at the University of Alabama because the situation called for more than just getting along with people. It could be concluded that one of the reasons Carmichael was in office for such a short amount of time was because of the conflicts he faced with various constituents on campus, in the state, and in the country.

Other qualities that he stated a president must have are patience, tolerance, and flexibility. He told a story to further illuminate what kind of person would be successful in this position, which is some that can be easily pushed around. Once again, this sentiment proved true for Carmichael for his entire career up until the University of Alabama. He had the ability to bend and maneuver depending on his audience and what he thought they wanted to hear, and therefore was always on the winning side. Technically, he was easily pushed around, and he did not seem to mind being pushed around either. He viewed it as a tactic to being a successful administrator.

However, Carmichael did not take in to account what a president must do when faced with an extreme crisis that challenges the morals and beliefs of the people surrounding the president. Carmichael would soon find out that in these situations being pushed around and trying to be on everyone’s winning side does not prove to be the best move for a president. In fact, being pushed around by certain constituents would prove to be Carmichael’s worst move as a president at the University of Alabama. There are a few characteristics that Carmichael
mentions that one can say he actually greatly lacked. Based on Carmichael’s experiences at Vanderbilt University and the University of Alabama, one can posit that Carmichael lacked honesty, courage, and the ability to reach a decision.

The leadership style of Oliver Cromwell Carmichael and university presidents in general was one of the overarching focuses of this study as it helps us to understand how President Carmichael’s leadership style affected his failures and successes in the three and a half years he spent as the University of Alabama president. President Carmichael was seen as lacking in the attribute of leadership, mainly, and possibly only, during his time at the University of Alabama. This was President Carmichael’s greatest challenge while president at the University of Alabama. He was faced with the challenge of overcoming the massive resistance to a radical change.

Based on the examination of the different leadership theories discussed in this study, it could be concluded that if President Carmichael had several various leadership capabilities, such as the ability to alter radical changes into incremental ones, and the ability to take a firm stance on an issue, and the ability to challenge the prevailing view without provoking outrage or cynicism then perhaps the outcome of desegregation, or even just the outcome of his career, could have been better than what it actually was. However, considering the context he was operating within, even if he had these leadership qualities it may not have been possible to implement them. When other major players, such as the Board of Trustees, come into the picture who are securely grounded in their traditions and hold so much power, doing those things are easier said than done. In the end, it was the Board of Trustees that destroyed Carmichael’s chances to have a successful reign as president regardless of his inability to take a stance as a
leader. The Board’s decisions and actions were unfortunately a reflection of Carmichael’s leadership and administration.

President Carmichael left the University of Alabama segregated in 1957 and with little hope or vision for the future. The institutional climate consisted of a lack leadership, lack of a strong strategic mission, poor faculty salaries, low faculty morale and a decline in student retention. President Carmichael also left as a failure to the job he waited half of his life for. He failed at becoming the president he and others thought he would be. Under the University of Alabama website today, in 2018, there is a tab labeled “Legends”, under which it lists the past University presidents. Under each president it lists a short biography with one or two facts of what that president accomplished during their reign. It does this for every president except Carmichael. Carmichael’s biography reads as follows: “Oliver Carmichael served as University president from 1953-1957, after serving as chancellor of Vanderbilt. Carmichael was president during the controversy surrounding Atherine Lucy Foster’s enrollment as the first African American student to enroll at UA.”

Carmichael’s presidency is known for what he did and how he acted surrounding Lucy’s enrollment, suspension, and expulsion, and not for anything else he did for the University in the three years prior. However, from the information found within his presidential reports it can be concluded that Carmichael, as president of the University of Alabama, did not accomplish anything truly out of the ordinary anyways. Carmichael’s name will forever be connected to the first African American student to enroll at the University of Alabama and the fact that she was expelled in order to keep the University segregated.

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Carmichael would go from being the president who was going to bring greatness to the University of Alabama and to the State of Alabama to the president who was caught under siege. Carmichael could have never predicted that he would end up being the exact opposite. The promise he brought to Alabama would never be realized. The president did his best to avoid the race issue by constantly giving contradictory views of his thoughts towards desegregation. What Carmichael did do as a leader was make it clear that he was not willing to fight for desegregation in order to please the Board of Trustees. This may have been a personal choice or a savvy business choice. Again though, considering the context at hand, it may have been the only choice Carmichael thought he had if he wanted to remain President of the University and remain in good graces with the majority of the important stakeholders and citizens of the state of Alabama. Unfortunately though, neither of those things happened.
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