There was not a word in my mind that said it but my body knew and my glands, and I was filled with anxiety.

But I felt compelled to believe they were right. It was the only way my world could be held together. And, like a slow poison, it began to seep through me: I was white. She was colored. We must not be together. It was bad to be together. Though you ate with your nurse when you were little, it was bad to eat with any colored person after that, it was bad just as other things were bad that your mother had told you. It was bad that she was to sleep in the room with me that night. It was bad...

**READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How does Smith describe the impact of her mother’s reaction to the news about Janie? What effect did it have on her view of her parents?

2. What was “Out There” that so frightened her? To what degree do you think Smith believed the civil rights movement was an effort to defeat the thing “out there”?

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**Southern Congressmen Issue Manifesto Against Brown v. Board Decision**

*Declaration of Constitutional Principles (1956)*

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that the long-standing “separate but equal” doctrine, affirmed in the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, was unconstitutional. The *Brown* decision required the racial integration of public schools by arguing that separate institutions were “inherently” unequal. One hundred and one congressmen from southern states, outraged by the Court’s decision, signed their names to the “Declaration of Constitutional Principles,” often referred to as the “Southern Manifesto.”

We regard the decision of the Supreme Court in the school cases as clear abuse of judicial power. It climaxes a trend in the Federal judiciary undertaking to legislate, in derogation of the authority of Congress, and to encroach upon the reserved rights of the states and the people.

The original Constitution does not mention education. Neither does the Fourteenth Amendment nor any other amendment. The debates preceding the submission of the Fourteenth Amendment clearly show that there was no intent that it should affect the systems of education maintained by the states.

The very Congress which proposed the amendment subsequently provided for segregated schools in the District of Columbia.

When the amendment was adopted in 1868, there were thirty-seven states of the Union. Every one of the twenty-six states that had any substantial racial

differences among its people either approved the operation of segregated schools already in existence or subsequently established such schools by action of the same law-making body which considered the Fourteenth Amendment.

As admitted by the Supreme Court in the public school case (Brown v. Board of Education), the doctrine of separate but equal schools "apparently originated in Roberts v. City of Boston (1849), upholding school segregation against attack as being violative of a state constitutional guarantee of equality." This constitutional doctrine began in the North—not in the South—and it was followed not only in Massachusetts but in Connecticut, New York, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and other northern states until they, exercising their rights as states through the constitutional processes of local self-government, changed their school systems.

In the case of Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 the Supreme Court expressly declared that under the Fourteenth Amendment no person was denied any of his rights if the states provided separate but equal public facilities. This decision has been followed in many other cases. It is notable that the Supreme Court, speaking through Chief Justice Taft, a former President of the United States, unanimously declared in 1927 in Lum v. Rice that the "separate but equal" principle is "within the discretion of the state in regulating its public schools and does not conflict with the Fourteenth Amendment."

This interpretation, restated time and again, became a part of the life of the people of many of the states and confirmed their habits, customs, traditions and way of life. It is founded on elemental humanity and common sense, for parents should not be deprived by Government of the right to direct the lives and education of their own children.

Though there has been no constitutional amendment or act of Congress changing this established legal principle almost a century old, the Supreme Court of the United States, with no legal basis for such action, undertook to exercise their naked judicial power and substituted their personal political and social ideas for the established law of the land.

This unwarranted exercise of power by the court, contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the states principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through ninety years of patient effort by the good people of both races. It has planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding.

Without regard to the consent of the governed, outside agitators are threatening immediate and revolutionary changes in our public school systems. If done, this is certain to destroy the system of public education in some of the states.

With the gravest concern for the explosive and dangerous condition created by this decision and inflamed by outside meddlers:

We reaffirm our reliance on the Constitution as the fundamental law of the land.

We decry the Supreme Court’s encroachments on rights reserved to the states and to the people, contrary to established law and to the Constitution.
operation of segregated schools and such schools by action of the
16th Amendment.
Public school case (Brown v. Board of Education) - apparently originated school segregation against attack of equality. This constitu-
tional process of local self-government.
the Supreme Court expressly said that no person was denied any of his public facilities. This decision has that the Supreme Court, speaking for the United States, unani-
致ously said that it is the public schools and does not
become a part of the life of the nation, of the habits, customs, traditions and values, which are for parents to direct the lives and education.
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e public school systems. If done, it would create a dangerous condition created by the fundamental law of
ments on rights reserved to the states and to the Constitution.

We commend the motives of those states which have declared the intention to resist forced integration by any lawful means.
We appeal to the states and people who are not directly affected by these decisions to consider the constitutional principles involved against the time when they too, on issues vital to them, be the victims of judicial encroachment.
Even though we constitute a minority in the present congress, we have full faith that a majority of the American people believe in the dual system of government which has enabled us to achieve our great ness and will in due time demand that the reserved rights of the states and of the people be made secure against judicial usurpation.
We pledge ourselves to use all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation.

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the congressmen frame their opposition to the Supreme Court's decision in Brown v. Board? What specifically did they say they were objecting to?
2. What conclusions can you draw from the Southern Manifesto about the challenges that faced the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s?

27-3 Civil Rights Activist Challenges Racial Discrimination

FANNIE LOU HAMER, Testimony Before the Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Convention (1964)

The foot soldiers of the civil rights movement included women like Fannie Lou Hamer, an African American activist born in 1917 in Mississippi, where racial oppression often took violent form, as she recounts in this testimony. In 1964, Hamer's Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) sought delegate seats at the Democratic National Convention, but President Johnson, seeking reelection, wanted to avoid a convention split over civil rights. Johnson won, and neither Hamer nor any other MFDP delegates were seated, but her compelling story, aired on national television, brought visible attention to the movement's cause.

Mr. Chairman, and to the Credentials Committee, my name is Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, and I live at 626 East Lafayette Street, Ruleville, Mississippi, Sunflower County, the home of Senator James O. Eastland, and Senator Stennis.

It was the 31st of August in 1962 that eighteen of us traveled twenty-six miles to the county courthouse in Indianola to try to register to become first-class citizens. We were not in Indianola by policemen, Highway Patrolmen, and they only