



**Public Media**  
Issues & Voices that Matter

**Commentary  
for the January 13, 2011  
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by Judith Dolores Smith**

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As our nation begins preparations to celebrate the MLK Holiday and Black History month, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the African-American experience in Seminole County since my birth.

I was born a few months after May 17, 1954, when the Warren Court's unanimous (9–0) decision stated that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Oviedo, Seminole County, Florida, my hometown, was a little city where the main industries revolved around citrus and vegetable farming. In a community as small as Oviedo, colored and white people interacted with each other on many levels.

As I became older, I observed that when we had to go to the doctor's office there was a separate waiting room for colored and white patients. There were only colored children attending our school. And the only white staff that we had if you wanted to call her staff was the "Bible lady" who came once a week to teach us Bible stories.

In our neighborhood, Miss Doris, a white woman, lived behind and owned the local corner store. She seemed to be a part of our lives almost on a daily basis. My father operated one of the many colored owned businesses within Oviedo. On the weekends he would show cowboy movies in a hall on Division Street and sell bar-be-que sandwiches.

The clearest line of demarcation as far as race was concerned occurred within the school system. In 1932, my mother began her teaching career within the one room school system for colored children at Oviedo Elementary.

In 1967, instead of graduating from the eighth grade of Jackson Heights Elementary Colored School and attending Crooms Academy Colored High School in Sanford or finding transportation and attending the Hungerford Colored High School in Eatonville, Florida as my sister did, the Oviedo area schools were desegregated. I attended the eighth grade at the Oviedo Elementary and High School complex at what today is the Lawton Elementary School. In my 9<sup>th</sup> grade year I attended the present site of Oviedo High School. In my senior year, I was elected the senior class president!

Perhaps the one event that redefined my world in terms of race was the desegregation of the public school system. But oddly enough, in my opinion, instead of being the panacea that perhaps our fore fathers hoped that it would be, desegregation within all areas provided new obstacles to overcome in the never ending process of integrating the progeny of former slaves into truly becoming one of *We the People of the United States* as stated in the Preamble of the Constitution.

I am Judith Dolores Smith and the state of integration in 2011 in Seminole County matters.