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Guest (s): Mr. Roy V. Harris, publisher of Augusta Courier, president of States' Rights Council of Georgia and President of Citizens' Council of America

Title: Segregation in Georgia

Note: Questions were paraphrased and/or shortened by the transcriber. For the exact question, please consult the audiotapes.

Morphew: Introduction...the state administration in Georgia has maintained a policy of complete segregation in schools. A number of recent bills have been passed, do you think this indicates a surrender on the part of state officials?

Harris: Well, I don't think it's a surrender. Yet, as far as the state government it is a surrender because the effect of the state government has dumped the responsibility now on the local boards of education and the public school system and on the Board of Regents for the University of Georgia and various branches of the university system. We were disappointed. We had hoped the state administration would fight it out, but they didn't see fit to do so. Personally, I've always wanted to see one southern governor go to jail and defy the federal government. I believe it would produce a revolution in this country in the thinking of people that would help us establish states rights quicker than anything else that could happen.

Morphew: In other words this package of bills has put the state government out of the business of segregation and turned it over to local units of school administration.

Harris: That is correct. The only law we have now is a provision in the constitution saying that separate schools shall be furnished to the white and colored races. Yet, at the same time, we've got injunctions against us in the federal courts and the federal courts ordering the city of Atlanta to take a few nigras in its public schools and two nigras in the University of Georgia.

Morphew: What do you think the effect will be of this package of laws?

Harris: Well, we may, it may in the long run, turn out to be an asset instead of a liability for this reason: the people of Georgia have depended too much upon their governors and their politicians to handle this thing for them and they haven't organized in the communities as they should. They haven't seen to looking after their own schools and

their own business. Now, this is going to leave it directly up to the local boards and the local people in every school district. Now we have a hundred and ninety-nine school districts in Georgia. There are a hundred and fifty-nine county districts and forty city districts, and the local boards and the people in these hundred and ninety-nine school districts are going to have the say-so. Now it has some advantages. In the first place, it lets the people know that finally they are the ones who are going to determine what'll happen and I believe that the people in each community will organize and get together behind a program. They can certainly keep our segregated pattern of life. I believe they can convince the nigras in the great majority of communities to go along with us and continue the way of life that's made the South and Georgia especially a great state.

Morphew: Do you believe that one effect of these laws might be the opening of more private schools?

Harris: Yeah. Now, there's one provision of this package of four laws that I was strongly in favor of, and that is the one that provides that the local school district out of its money must pay a grant to any child that doesn't want to go to an integrated school or doesn't want to go to the public school as far as that's concerned for his tuition in a private school. For instance, if the per capita cost in a county is three hundred dollars, they'd have to pay him three hundred dollars and they'd use that to pay tuition. Now, I think that has three advantages: number one, it's going to go a long ways toward brainwashing in our favor some of these boards of education and some of these schoolteachers. They've been sitting down thinking they'd get their money anyhow and didn't care whether they were integrated or not and some of them have been brainwashed into believing into race mixing. Now, when they see that the majority of the people in a school district might walk up and take their grants and go over and patronize private schools, they're going to be very much interested in seeing that they're segregated. Now, another thing is, it's going to put some competition in our public school system. Our public schools have no competition. They've grown fat and lazy in a way. They've been contented. They knew they had the jobs, they knew the money was coming. The only thing that most of them were interested in that every time the legislature would meet, they'd ask the question, how big a raise you gonna give us? Now they are in competition because as long as the people can take their children out and take tax money to pay the tuition, they might all move off and leave the public schools, so it's going to make this public school system get on the ball. They're gonna have better teachers, they're gonna be in competition, and they're gonna have to deliver a better product than they've been delivering or else these people are going into private schools. You're going to see them spring up all over the country. And of course, the third reason I favor the tuition grant is this, it makes it possible for anybody who doesn't want his child to attend an integrated school to get tuition with which, money with which to pay the tuition in a private school. And I'm not so sure that this tuition grants, if its maintained, won't revolutionize our entire school system.

Morphew: As leader and spokesman for the segregation forces in the state of Georgia, what do you propose to do now?

Harris: Well, of course, we've got to start a different policy in Georgia and I believe that practically every community in the South is going to face the same proposition that we're facing and the people here in Atlanta are facing because I believe the Kennedy administration is going to furnish a whole army of lawyers to go all over the South into the federal courts helping the NAACP integrate schools. There's gonna be more injunctions and more court orders than you ever saw. When that time comes, it's going to be right down left for the people in the local communities to handle it. Now, with that in mind and the fact that the state of Georgia has got out of the segregation business, forces us to have a reappraisal of our situation. And since the burden is dumped on the local people, we're going to undertake to do this in Georgia: we're going to try to organize the people in every county, in every city in Georgia. We're going to try to organize them behind a movement to keep segregation. We're going to advocate that we do everything we can to sell both races in the community on the advantages of keeping a segregated system of public education. We're going to show them what happened here in Atlanta and everybody will remember that Sherman burned Atlanta and left it in ashes and ruins and the people had to start here and build from the ground up with no resources and with their own, and pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps. Yet, Atlanta today has more Negro wealth than any other city in the world. Atlanta has more Negro colleges and universities than any other city in the world. And Atlanta has more college students than any other city in the world. Even though there are less than 200,000 Negroes in Atlanta and there are a million and a half nigras and Puerto Ricans in New York City and over a million nigras in Chicago and there hasn't been time since the Civil War when Chicago and New York didn't have more nigras than they have in Atlanta. Now, that's our first goal. Then we are going to adopt this policy and try to get our people to go with it: we will not accept a nigra in a public school unless he's sent by a federal judge and accompanied by federal marshal.

Morphew: I was going to ask you, hasn't it been true that the only place where forced integration has worked has been where city and state police powers were used to escort them into the school?

Harris: That is absolutely true. There is no integration anywhere unless it had been forced by the local police and the local public officials. Now, we're going to ask them to take them only when they have to, keep them just as short a time as they can, then we're going to try and train our children that they will not speak to them, they will not associate with them and they will neither speak nor associate with any white who does either speak or associate with the nigra children. We're going to try to, by social ostracism, to maintain a patter of social separateness and social separation in our public schools. I believe we can organize our people and I believe it can be accomplished in that way.

Morphew: Has there been a great deal of propaganda leveled in favor of accepting integration in public schools?

Harris: Oh, certainly. All of the mass medium of communication have just had, for years, have been trying to brainwash the people into accepting it and, here in Atlanta for instance, we have a monopoly of the newspapers that have been the most liberal in the

whole nation in that respect and they have gone all out trying to force complete race mixing and acceptance even of the Negro on a social basis.

Morphew: But in spite of that do you believe the people of Georgia are determined to maintain the right to run their own institutions?

Harris: Yes, I certainly do, and I believe the people will do it and I believe that we're going to have to go through some troublesome times, but when we get through we will maintain our pattern of segregation in the state of Georgia.