

Acknowledgments

On 14 June 2002 the contributors to this book gathered at the University of South Carolina to discuss drafts of essays and sharpen the thematic approach of the proposed collection, thanks to the generous support of the university's Institute for Southern Studies and African American Studies Program, as well as the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. In attendance were various members of the University of South Carolina community, along with Joseph A. DeLaine Jr. and his brother, Brumit B. (B.B.) DeLaine. Both men are sons of the late Reverend Joseph Armstrong DeLaine, the man celebrated in Richard Kluger's magisterial *Simple Justice* (1976) for encouraging the African American residents of rural Clarendon County, South Carolina, to demand equality in their public schools and to become a driving force behind the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Historians in their own right, the DeLaine brothers have been actively leading efforts to educate the public about the history and legacy of *Brown* and the Clarendon County contribution to it, *Briggs v. Elliott*. During the daylong discussion of essays, the DeLaines offered their insight into the past, and they led all of us on a memorable bus excursion to Clarendon County the following day.

Down highways and back roads, we traversed the Black Belt county. We viewed the plantation lands that drove the region's economy in days past and the black churches, most notably Liberty Hill A.M.E. and St. Marks A.M.E., that hosted mass meetings to rally support for litigation aimed at equalizing and then integrating the county's public schools. We saw the modern schools that have replaced the small, often ramshackle, one- and two-room schoolhouses that were the most visible signs of Jim Crow injustice and some of the most important symbols of black resolve in the years before *Brown*. We visited the land of the Pearson family, one of the black families that anchored support for the county's civil rights struggles, and we stood under a tree in front of Hammett Pearson's home to absorb the surroundings and meet members of the local community. Our day was capped by a splendid barbeque dinner with community members, including descendents of the litigants who risked their lives to tear down the legal edifice of racial segregation. Amid the clamor of the festive event, we talked about our scholarly work and community members shared their stories of struggle and perseverance. Although Clarendon County remains one of the poorest counties in the nation fifty years after *Brown*, the spirit of its people

suggests that hope for a better tomorrow is undiminished and that the struggle for equality continues. Ensuring that the stories of people like those we met in Clarendon are heard and understood is one of the primary reasons for this collection. A special thanks is owed to the DeLaine brothers and to all of those engaged in struggle who have been willing to share their stories for all the world to hear and learn.

There are many people to thank for helping to produce this book. Foremost are the writers who agreed to contribute original essays and who have worked diligently to revise numerous drafts, incorporating the thoughts of each other and the anonymous readers at Duke University Press, as well as my own. The collection received crucial institutional and financial support from the Institute for Southern Studies (ISS) under the direction of Walter Edgar, the African American Studies Program under the direction of Cleveland Sellers, and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. Bob Ellis of the ISS provided the administrative work that made the writers' meeting in Columbia possible and created the index. Bobby Donaldson, Valinda Littlefield, and Dan Littlefield, all members of the History Department and African American Studies Program at USC, graciously contributed their time and expertise in African American history to the project. Tom Brown, the associate director of the ISS, first approached me about creating a collection of essays in commemoration of *Brown* nearly two years ago. Not only did he coordinate the writers' gathering in Columbia in June 2002, he also read drafts of each essay, passed along his thoughts about the organization of the book, and supported my efforts to move the collection along. Steven Lawson and David Levering Lewis, good friends and mentors, provided timely comments on the manuscript. Steven's urging years ago to understand the history of the African American struggle for civil rights in an "interactive" manner, incorporating perspectives that are "bottom-up" and "top-down," informs this entire collection.

Duke University Press has proved an excellent choice to publish the book. The anonymous readers for the press offered insight that made individual essays stronger and helped make the collection work. Dave Douglas guided me to the press and Neal Devins helped usher the manuscript into the review process. Throughout, Valerie Millholland has demonstrated patience, skill, and grace as an editor. Fred Kameny spearheaded the copyediting of the manuscript. His insightfulness and laserlike editing have improved each essay and the book as a whole.

Lastly, I would like to thank Sophie Glenn Lau and our daughter, Emmie, for their support and encouragement during the production of this book. Each in her own way provided me with the space, time, and motivation needed to see the project through to completion. There are few words that can fully express my gratitude to them both.