

*The Resurrection of the St. George Incorporation Movement
in Southeastern Louisiana*

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Abstract: In the mid-2010s, a second attempt of a school district secession movement dubbed “St. George” resurfaces in the state of Louisiana, eventually morphing into an urban breakaway movement where hundreds of wealthy, white residents fight to separate from the current City-Parish governance model of the City of Baton Rouge and the East Baton Rouge (EBR) Parish. Simultaneously, sizzling tensions rise as countless debates and conversations about Critical Race Theory (CRT) and anti-racism flood classrooms and legislatures across the United States. Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the racially divided city and parish. This case examines Mayor-President Broome's struggle in staving off the resurgence of St. George incorporation efforts. Becoming a trailblazer when it comes to addressing a plethora of challenges, Mayor-President Broome exemplifies the values of perseverance and self-confidence in her unwavering attempts to maintain a united Baton Rouge with the goals of revitalizing race relations, ensuring a stable financial status for the City-Parish, and strengthening the East Baton Rouge Parish public education system for all.

A Mayor-President Makes History

On January 2, 2017, Baton Rouge Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome shared the following statement with her city during her Inaugural Address:

I want to be clear that I will be an active opponent to any and all efforts, actions, and agendas that serve to divide us by race, socioeconomic status, or geography... I will be supportive of other endeavors that are emerging in the city that serve to tear down the artificial barriers that divide us by race (Gallo 2017, n.p.).

Making political history in January 2017 as the first Black woman elected as Mayor-President¹ of the City of Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge (EBR) Parish, Sharon Weston Broome should have been overjoyed. Instead, she lifted an unbearable weight on her shoulders as her victory came after a summer filled with heightened racial tensions, numerous protests after violence against Black Americans, and catastrophic flooding which left more than a dozen individuals dead and thousands more displaced, including her own family (Baton Rouge Area Chamber Team 2017).

Similar to many Southern cities across the United States, Baton Rouge is racially segregated with a demographic of 47.6 percent white individuals and 47.2 percent Black

¹ A term specific to Louisiana legislature stemming from 1947; refers to whom is Mayor of the City of Baton Rouge and President of East Baton Rouge Parish.

individuals (U.S. Census Bureau: East Baton Rouge Parish 2021). A long past of racial segregation is still visible today as the city split into two: a predominantly white region in the southeast and a majority-Black section in the northeast. So, when Broome announced her plans to address issues pertaining to public services in Baton Rouge, she placed emphasis on not only improving the quality of life for citizens through education and economic development but also working to ameliorate race relations in the city (BRLA 2022b). Broome rose to the occasion, working to heal a parish² and city with long-standing, deep divisions on the basis of race, class, and geography (BRLA 2022b).

Sharon Weston Broome: Public Leader Facing Racial Division

Sharon Weston Broome was born in October of 1956 in Chicago as an only child to her parents, Lucy and Willie Weston Jr. (Gallo 2017). While her parents grew up in Mississippi, they moved to Chicago as part of The Great Migration, when Black people moved away from the South to large cities in the North and West to escape racial violence and seek valuable economic opportunities (Gallo 2017). Broome's parents told her stories about growing up in a time when there were limited educational opportunities for Black people, as her father was only able to complete up to fourth grade. Learning about the educational inequities her parents battled lit a fire under Broome, and she sought out every opportunity to make a name for herself with a goal of obtaining higher education and a passion for teaching others. She went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and a Master of Arts in Communications from Regent University. Eventually, her passion for communications led her to serving as an Adjunct Professor of Mass Communication at three universities in Baton Rouge.

When Broome was 22 years old, she helped relocate her parents back to the South half a decade after they had moved to Chicago and at that time, she witnessed a “void of leadership and unresponsiveness to citizens [of Baton Rouge]” from government officials in their actions and correspondence with members of the public (Broome n.d., n.p.). Despite working as an Adjunct Professor in Baton Rouge, Broome only realized her deep dissatisfaction with the Baton Rouge government during her parents' move.

Seeing a lack of appropriate leadership tactics sparked an interest in public policy and educational reform which lured her to the sector of public service, where she was tremendously successful. To date, Broome has been serving more than 30 years in the Louisiana House of Representatives and Louisiana State Senate (Broome n.d.). Broome's diligent efforts culminated in her becoming the first-elected female and second Black Mayor-President in East Baton Rouge Parish history in 2016.³

During her first term of service, Broome focused on actively improving and demanding public school excellence, particularly in the underserved areas—North and South regions—of East Baton Rouge. As an adamant advocate for educational equity, Broome pushed tirelessly to implement a cabinet-level position within the Louisiana legislature to handle public education in the Parish and strengthen the existing education system in Baton Rouge. It was not all smooth sailing for Broome, though.

² In the state of Louisiana, "parish" denotes a local governmental unit, equal to that of a county. Today, Louisiana is divided into 64 parishes and there are several different forms of government being utilized within the parishes (Pope 2017). City-Parish governance is a unique model where taxpayers residing in the City of Baton Rouge pay both parish and city taxes to contribute to infrastructure maintenance and revenue services.

³ Sharon Weston Broome was elected as Mayor-President in a runoff election held on December 10, 2016, and assumed office beginning on January 2, 2017. Her first term lasted for the subsequent four years.

Little did Broome know that an attempt to carve out a new breakaway city and school district in the southeastern part of EBR Parish called “St. George”⁴ would revive during her second term⁵. Two men—Christopher Rials and Norman Browning—have led a racially-motivated initiative to establish a largely white city on the edge of Baton Rouge for the past decade (Runnels 2016). If incorporated, the City of St. George would break off legal and economic ties with the City of Baton Rouge and EBR Parish, which are both majority-Black populations and areas of disproportionate poverty. Despite overt segregation along racial lines that the establishment of the City of St. George would bring forth, leaders spearheading the St. George movement indignantly deny race as an underlying motivating factor (Barlow 2015). How could Broome share her vision of change and communicate with proponents of the redistricting movement who did not think race is a component of the urban secession problem?

Not only did Broome have to contend with the St. George movement organizers, but she was also responsible for serving as an advocate and liaison for *all* the voices of Baton Rouge, including both St. George supporters and opponents. Would Broome be able to find common ground with St. George supporters or would legal action—such as a lawsuit—be required as a means of intervention? How could she calm the St. George supporters and shift their focus to improving the currently troubled public education system? On the other hand, how would she motivate the parents whose children attend schools in EBR Parish to trust her leadership? Ultimately, what actions would Broome need to take to leverage power to both the St. George group and individuals in opposition to St. George?

History and Trajectory of Desegregation Efforts

During the Reconstruction Era, a period of time from the end of the Civil War to 1877, the United States legislators grappled with the challenges of reintegrating seceded states into the Union and deciding the legal status of African Americans. As African Americans in former slave-holding states began to build lives as free people, they eagerly sought out opportunities to learn. Many valued education as a foundational step in achieving equality and preparing for participation in civic life (U.S. National Park Service n.d.) However, advantaged groups in power placed numerous economic and racial obstacles in their path.

Jim Crow laws, a collection of regulations that enforced racial segregation, were introduced at the end of Reconstruction in 1877. They lasted for around 100 years, with the motive of legalizing the marginalization of the African American population in the American South, by denying their right to vote, hold jobs, or obtain an education. As a result, African American students had trouble finding schools to attend in their respective districts and attended schools that did not meet adequate educational quality or health standards due to coercion.

Half a century later, in 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional in the pivotal *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case. However, the Court simply ordered that the states end segregation with “all deliberate speed” (Smithsonian National Museum of American History n.d., n.p.). The term not only provided an unspecified amount of time to admit students to school on a non-discriminatory basis but also translated to segregationists taking this opportunity to organize resistance and end segregation on their own desired timetable (Smithsonian National Museum of American History n.d.).

⁴ The breakaway effort was titled “St. George” because the proposed coverage area of the new city mainly included a significant portion of an existing subdivision called “Village St. George”; so, the new incorporation effort retained its namesake (Subdivisions | Open Data BR 2022).

⁵ Sharon Weston Broome was re-elected in a runoff election held on December 5, 2020 to serve as Mayor-President for a second term. Her current term will end on December 31, 2024.

Additionally, this court decision targeted *de jure* segregation, or legal segregation, as opposed to addressing *de facto* segregation, or “natural” segregation (National Archives and Records Administration 2021, n.p.). Hence, this ruling allowed segregation to continue in practice, particularly in the southern United States and Louisiana.

East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS)

Out of all the school districts within Louisiana, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS) has historically served the largest student population since its incorporation in 1880. In light of the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Black families and the United States Justice Department filed a desegregation lawsuit against EBR Parish School Board with the intent of forcing EBRPSS to abide by the Supreme Court’s ruling (*Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish* 1980). EBRPSS had the longest-running desegregation case in the United States history, remaining for nearly 47 years since its original filing in 1956.

Very few progressive steps took place until 1963 when the EBR Parish School Board implemented a new education plan referred to as “freedom of choice.” Under freedom of choice, the goal was to dismantle racially segregated schools by providing each student, regardless of their race, the unrestricted right to attend any school within a geographic area (Watson 2002). To persuade more schools to allow marginalized students greater agency in choosing which schools to attend, the government under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 threatened to scrutinize school boards and withhold federal funding assistance from any school district demonstrating a failure to comply with the requirements set by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for the school desegregation proceeding (*Civil Rights Act of 1964*). While the school choice plan gradually permeated the South, many school boards still adopted forms of the plan that allowed them to utilize freedom of choice to perpetuate segregation. For example, with personal preference at hand, white families were unlikely to choose a traditionally Black school that most likely already experienced facilities of lower quality, inadequate educational resources, and lower government funding compared to majority-white institutions. In EBRPSS, most students’ families were reluctant to choose schools predominantly populated with students of a different race. Since school choice was shaped by segregative choices, EBR schools continued to experience *de facto* segregation. Later, discriminatory housing practices contributed to residential segregation and led to large disparities in educational achievement between students attending different schools, since some schools received more funding from the state than others which makes a difference considering property taxes fund public schools.

After several years of unsettling tensions under the school choice policy, a major court order was handed down in 1969, mandating the closing of multiple overtly segregated schools in EBR— mainly in Mid-City, Baker, and Zachary (Pierre and Hebert 2004).

In the 1970s, the United States government launched “desegregation busing” programs in an effort to reform racial imbalance in schools. Student busing referred to the act of transporting children to schools outside their residential areas and local school districts in order to diversify the racial make-up of schools. The new desegregation order mandated by federal courts faced enormous resistance, demonstrated by a drastic fall in school enrollment statistics. After busing went into effect in East Baton Rouge, public school enrollment records noted a decline of 4, 722 students within the parish school system, with nearly all of those being white students (Marcus 1981). White flight⁶ reduced the effectiveness of the busing policy, as waves of middle-class white

⁶ The departure of White Americans from central cities or places increasingly populated by minorities to suburban areas (White flight didn’t disappear — it just moved to the suburbs 2018).

families moved out of the public school system and out of the city of Baton Rouge to the suburbs. Simultaneously, private schools experienced a substantial increase in their enrollment numbers as hundreds of white students enrolled. In 1981 alone, 7,000 white students transferred from public schools to private schools (Build Baton Rouge 2020).

Furthermore, some white families took the route of homeschooling their children as it provided an “escape from a bad [school] system,” and the main intent was to “[put] pressure on [the] system to do better” (Marcus 1981, n.p.). Homeschooling allowed parents to be in control of the education their children received, and moreover, it was a clear-cut opportunity for parents to avoid engaging with the school desegregation process in any capacity. Although this alternative form of schooling enabled many parents to avoid enrolling their children in racially imbalanced institutions, there were many drawbacks. Students who abruptly transitioned to homeschool learning no longer had exposure to peer groups, taking away opportunities for them to build interracial friendships and curbing their motivation to academically succeed. In fact, children are stimulated to consistently achieve at faster rates through encouragement from their classmates which is only achievable in a classroom group setting (Rossell 1983). Nonetheless, the effects of white flight converted the EBR school district from a majority white district to a predominantly Black district.

The busing era left dissatisfactory results in Baton Rouge; by the 1990s, it became clear that busing had not succeeded in desegregating the EBR school district. In 1996, the EBR Parish School Board issued another proposal calling for the equalization of the quality of education which eliminated much of the forced busing that was previously required (Zahirovic-Herbert and Turnbull 2009). The new plan focused on establishing stable community-based school attendance zones to create a direct link between a student’s house location and a school’s quality in terms of academic performance (Zahirovic-Herbert and Turnbull 2009). The proposal transformed into a Consent Decree⁷ and the district court swiftly approved it. In addition to attendance zones, the proposal stated that school desegregation was to be accomplished through setting up “magnet” school programs with a unique enrichment curriculum to attract white students to majority-Black schools (Zahirovic-Herbert and Turnbull 2009, n.p.). In the EBRPSS, the incorporation of Magnet programs led to a slight increase in the student enrollment numbers, a change from previous trends. While Magnet programs did not contribute to solving racism in schools, the academic performance of students increased as two of EBR’s Magnet schools ranked in the top 35 of 1,300+ schools statewide (Public Affairs Research Council 2005).

A turning point hit in 2003 when James Brady, the federal judge of the U.S. District Court for Baton Rouge, signed off on the final settle agreement to the long-running desegregation lawsuit (Public Affairs Research Council 2005). EBR residents viewed the resolution as a chance to start new community-based efforts against desegregation without the oversight of the district court. Even though desegregation efforts in Louisiana took place over a span of nearly fifty years, the legislative advances implemented did not bring the progress EBR residents desired. EBRPSS still had a long way to go to improve racial inclusion and overall academic performance in schools.

Zoned Out: School Attendance Zoning Limits Educational Opportunity

Despite *Brown v. Board’s* decision, racial segregation remains pervasive and is worsening annually in countless regions across the United States, including East Baton Rouge. Moreover,

⁷ A Consent Decree is a settlement that is set to resolve disputes between two parties without admission of liability and it is often an agreement that is subject to approval by a court (Consent Decree | Wex | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute).

school districts having the power to redraw boundaries of school attendance zones have only augmented inequality between Black and white students.

A closer look into American public schools' attendance zones shows these lines are drawn in a biased manner. For instance, the figure in Appendix A depicts clear-cut segregation: attendance zone lines are gerrymandered⁸ to cluster wealthier, white communities together while Black or Hispanic populations reside on the opposite side of the dividing line (Chang 2018). This type of zoning perpetuates current trends of white families living in racially homogeneous neighborhoods and attending largely white schools. In the case of East Baton Rouge, while the figure in Appendix A shows a stark racial divide in 2018, segregation patterns have only further intensified due to school zone gerrymandering in recent years.

Unfortunately, most of today's school boundaries in East Baton Rouge link back to the housing segregation policies originating from the Jim Crow era. Beginning in the 1930s, the Federal Housing Administration put governmental public housing policies in place that refused to insure mortgages in and near Black neighborhoods—this policy is now known as redlining, and it ultimately disconnected Black families from integrated neighborhoods (Gross 2017). In the 1950s, to further facilitate residential segregation⁹, federal and state governments built physical barriers such as interstate highway systems and freeways straight through Black neighborhoods to displace those residents, forcing them to relocate (Ware 2021). Federal housing policies coupled with the impact of the infrastructural divide reshaped many American metropolitan regions, including Baton Rouge. Interstate development flourished until the mid-1970s in Baton Rouge with the support of federal funding, and highways contributed to the division of the city's Black neighborhoods (Ware 2021). Meanwhile, white residents benefitted from the implementation of highways since it facilitated easy access to employment opportunities downtown (Build Baton Rouge 2020).

Since housing segregation benefitted privileged groups and harmed marginalized identities, it is unfortunately no surprise that people in Baton Rouge are familiar with experiencing residential segregation. When the federal government passed housing policies with the intent of segregating people by race and geographical location, they also sought to ensure that schools reflected the same racial attitudes of segregation. Furthermore, recent studies have found that stable communities—ones that maintain steady racial demographics—sustain high levels of gerrymandering enabling school segregation (Richards 2014).

Too often, the gerrymandered nature of school zoning translates to some students attending poorly performing schools, even though they live in closer proximity, to a higher-performing school (Schwalbach 2021). Thus, depending on which side of the boundary line a student resides on, they may or may not have certain educational opportunities available to them.

How is gerrymandering of school attendance zones possible, and who holds the authority to draw sharp color-dividing borders in East Baton Rouge? According to the National Center for Education Statistics, attendance boundaries are defined as the “geographic extent served by a local school” and typically, school district administrators hold the authority to create attendance areas that balance local student populations throughout a district (Geverdt 2018, n.p.). Likewise, the EBR Parish School Board oversees the annual revision of maps of the school attendance areas as they were initially designed by the Consent Decree in 1996 (Zahirovic-Herbert and Turnbull

⁸ Gerrymandering refers to the act of manipulating district boundary lines with the purpose of providing one group with advantage over another (Gerrymander 1995).

⁹ The term “residential segregation” refers to the degree to which two or more groups of people—categorized by factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other variables—live separately from one another within an urban environment (Massey and Denton 1988).

2008). Since the decisions on where to draw attendance zone lines are set on a local level, EBRPSS gerrymanders school zones by restricting student enrollment depending on which neighborhood attendance area a student resides in; members of the school board justify changes in attendance zones as facilitating shorter bus rides for students and providing students and families with improved feeder patterns that “minimize emotional strain” for younger students switching schools (BRProud 2019). Though the school board states that the redistricting or reassigning of attendance zones “do not discriminate on the basis of age, race, religion,” recent data demonstrates that this is far from the truth (East Baton Rouge Parish School System 2022).

According to a 2020 assessment of fair housing conducted in EBR Parish, Black students have the lowest access to proficient schools as measured by the School Proficiency Index¹⁰, while white students have the highest access to proficient schools (BRLA 2020). By establishing school attendance zones and restricting school enrollment based on a student’s location, the dividing lines created through housing segregation are maintained. Thus, the attendance zones drawn by the EBR School Board allow white students from predominantly white neighborhoods to have access to and attend higher-quality schools while Black students from low-income neighborhoods face difficulty accessing and attending proficient schools simply because higher-quality schools are not within their zone.

Furthermore, while inaccurate or racially problematic attendance boundaries may be protested by East Baton Rouge community members at public forums, the choice of amending attendance zones is under the control of school district officials only (East Baton Rouge Parish School System 2022). Nonetheless, predominantly white parents of students attending EBR schools have collectively decided to secede from the larger EBR school district over the past decade; these parents believe that creating a new independent school district would allow them to maintain local control over their children’s education quality without the oversight of the EBR school board and their school zoning policies.

Interestingly, instead of Black parents whose children face significant disadvantages due to school zoning laws, it is often the affluent white parents who want to break away from the non-white, poorer school system. White parents of higher socioeconomic status have the financial means of relocating homes to a school district containing higher-quality schools and do not face racial barriers in the housing market (Frankenberg 2009). Systemically advantaged white families view the racial makeup of schools as an indicator of school quality, and white parents seek to move to predominantly white school districts under the belief that “better” schools serve students similar to their own children (Holme 2002).

Beginning of Breakaway School Districts in EBR Parish

Municipalities Baker and Zachary—both part of EBR Parish located just north of the city of Baton Rouge—successfully broke away from the EBRPSS and created their own independent school districts in the early 2000s (City of Baker School District n.d.). Although Baker and Zachary are two separate cities, they had historically sent students to schools within the EBR school district.

Shortly after the creation of separate school districts within Baker and Zachary, Central, an unincorporated suburb in the northeastern part of EBR Parish, pursued secession as well. Constructing a separate school district in Louisiana requires the approval of a constitutional amendment at the state legislature level and ultimately, a city’s governing authorities hold the

¹⁰ This is a scale created by the United States Dept. of Housing & Urban Development that uses school-level data on the performance of fourth grade students on standardized state exams to describe which neighborhoods have high-performing elementary schools nearby and which ones are near lower performing schools (School Proficiency Index 2017).

jurisdiction of approving separate school systems (La. Stat. title 17 § 64 1999). Since Baker and Zachary were already their own cities with separate governments under the oversight of a Mayor and Metro Council, the process of lobbying for their own school districts was executed without much backlash (La. Stat. title 17 § 64 1999). On the contrary, when Central attempted to break away from the EBRPSS, governing authorities denied wealthy white parents the request to establish an independent school district twice. As a result, Central incorporated as a separate city in 2005 as a byproduct of attempting to break away from the EBRPSS. After achieving cityhood status, the Louisiana State Legislature granted Central the approval needed to form and operate a separate school system in 2006, and the Central Community School District was born (City of Central 2022).

The Rise of the St. George Movement

In 2013, inspired by the success of Zachary, Baker, and Central, one of the largest school district separation efforts from another community—called St. George (See Appendix B)—in the EBR Parish triggered a heated debate in the state of Louisiana that remains underway nearly a decade later. The St. George movement originated from a shared goal among upper-middle-class white residents of greater autonomy over EBR Parish affairs, particularly those pertaining to the school system (Barlow 2015). If approved, the St. George school district's proposed area would shift to a 70 percent white and less than 15 percent Black population, although EBR Parish is currently 46.5 percent Black (Harris 2019). Despite the drastic potential effects of this secession, proponents of St. George have furiously denied racial separation as a motivating factor behind this initiative. St George Movement Organizers stated:

Playing the race card, it's an intellectually dishonest point of view. It's a lazy point of view. We get it. It plays well, it's sensational. But there's nothing any of us can do about what happened 20 or 30 years ago [in Baton Rouge]. [We] don't carry that burden because there's nothing [we] can do about that, but what [we] can do is affect what's going to happen today and what's going to happen tomorrow. Race has unequivocally nothing to do with what we're looking at (Barlow 2015, n.p.).

However, racist history is unescapable and extremely pertinent no matter how much the St. George Movement Organizers denied it.

The Central Figures Driving the St. George Debate

Since the proposal for St. George began with the goal of creating a school system independent from EBR Parish, one may assume that wealthy, white parents were behind the movement. However, this is not entirely true.

Norman Browning, a 60-year-old white native of Baton Rouge, is the founder and lead organizer of the Committee for the Incorporation of St. George. Browning spent the majority of his post-military adulthood in the pharmaceutical sales field out-of-state but later decided to take up a volunteer coach position at Woodlawn High, in Baton Rouge. Examining the boisterous behavior of students at Woodlawn drove this disgruntled teacher to propose plans for St. George. Browning noted that students were “running the [Woodlawn High] school” and the only consequence for disobeying instructions from teachers and staff was going home with no further disciplinary actions (225 Staff 2014, n.p.). “When do we begin to hold the students, and the parents of these students, accountable for this behavior?” Browning asked (225 Staff 2014, n.p.). Later,

Browning joined forces with Christopher Rials, a White former 40-year employee and Project Executive at ExxonMobil Chemical Company with a background in the fields of economics and business. Right now, Rials serves as the Vice-Chairman of the St. George initiative.

Neither Browning nor Rials themselves have school-age children attending EBR schools. Instead, they were both simply grassroots citizens invested in incorporating St. George due to the long-standing fiscal problems within the parish. Since 1947, the City of Baton Rouge and EBR Parish have participated in a single, consolidated form of government designed to increase government efficiency by avoiding redundant costs in terms of taxes and public services (BRLA 2022a). In the current City-Parish model, a taxpayer living in the City of Baton Rouge pays parish taxes for the provision of all public infrastructure, such as highways, bridges, and airports, as well as city taxes for the maintenance of city revenue services, like sewers and costs associated with garbage collection (BRLA 2022c). Rials and Browning argue that despite upper-middle-class white residents in the St. George area comprising “more than two-thirds of the parish’s tax base, only one-third of the money is invested back [into their community]” (Browning and Rials n.d., n.p.). In addition to complaints regarding the excessive cost of services stemming from the City-Parish model, the St. George organizers are highly dissatisfied with the underperforming public schools in East Baton Rouge filled with violence and poor infrastructure. To address their discontent, St. George organizers began working towards creating a smaller, more efficient school district in their community.

St. George’s First Attempt to Secede from EBRPSS

Similar to Central’s quest for secession, the campaign for St. George began with the lobbying of Louisiana legislature. An important figure of support for the St. George organizers was State Senator Mack White, who authored previous legislation which helped create separate school districts in the cities of Zachary, Baker, and Central. In 2013, while White’s original bill (SB 199), which would have authorized the construction of the St. George school district, received approval from the House of Representatives, the successive bill (SB 73), an amendment to grant funding for the new school district, did not win the required two-thirds vote from members of the House (Runnels 2016).

Though SB 73 failed at the House floor, St. George organizers were determined to continue their secession efforts. Brown and Rials spoke to legislators and received insightful feedback: St. George cannot form its own school district because it is not its *own* city (Yancy 2022). With this critique in mind and continued determination, St. George organizers set out to pursue a new, viable approach: instead of just incorporating an independent school district, they would create their own City of St. George.

A Fight for the Cityhood of St. George

For the St. George leaders, attempting to incorporate a new city was a sophisticated endeavor given the current legal and political barriers. Firstly, a petition gathering signatures and support from at least 25 percent of residents living within the proposed St. George area must be collected (Yancy 2022). Then, the EBR Parish Registrar of Voters’ Office would have to assess the validity of the petition. Next, the governor would need to hold a special election, in which only registered voters residing in the proposed area of the new city would be able to vote (Browning and Rials n.d.). At that point, if a majority vote of “yes” to the incorporation of St. George is received, the motion to create a new city could succeed.

In 2014, St. George's leaders submitted stacks of petition papers to the Registrar of Voters' Office containing thousands of signatures of supporters; this was the culmination of nonstop petition drives and neighborhood door-to-door canvassing from the past year-and-a-half (Yancy 2022). Weeks later, a volunteer-led anti-St. George group called Better Together started educating residents in the proposed St. George area about the negative racial and financial implications the incorporation would bring if the petition advanced to the next stage of working towards cityhood status (Yancy 2022). Through door-to-door conversations with many signees, Better Together learned that thousands of residents were under the misconception that signing the petition only “indicated willingness for the issue to be voted on” when in reality, every signature counted as an individual’s official support for the incorporation effort (Yancy 2022, 53). Better Together informed residents that they had the choice of removing their signatures from the petition before the official count of signatures by the Registrar of Voters' Office (Allen 2015). To no surprise, hundreds of seemingly misinformed supporters withdrew their names from the petition by filling out a form to officially rescind their signatures. A year later, the campaign failed to meet the requirement of obtaining signatures from 25 percent of voters within the boundaries of the proposed city, falling short by approximately 71 valid signatures (Allen 2015). St. George organizers rushed to bring a lawsuit against the Registrar of Voters' Office to challenge the signature count, but the lawsuit was quickly dismissed by a state judge. As a result, the petition was void, and the entire effort could not be renewed for another three years.

Furthermore, the fight for the City of St. George was far from over, especially since national tensions rose with many white parents looking to put their children in public schools where racism is not overtly discussed in classrooms.

A Dividing Concept: The Critical Race Theory Debate

From time and time again, evidence shows that the institutions such as the U.S. education system and governing systems in authority have racism rooted in regulations and rules that produce discrepancies in outcomes by race. This academic concept, referred to as the Critical Race Theory (CRT), was developed during the 1980s. Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund defines CRT as “an academic and legal framework that denotes that systemic racism is a part of American society—from education and housing to employment and healthcare” (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund 2022).

In the last few years, CRT has gained much attention largely due to the heightened tensions and public awareness of police violence against Black citizens. In May 2020, the killing of George Perry Floyd Jr.—a Black man who was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on his neck after repeatedly telling the officer that he could not breathe—sparked immense unrest across the globe over the treatment of Black people by the police (MPR News n.d.). Floyd’s murder spurred mass protests as people nationwide experienced a culmination of anger and public awareness, recognizing police officers’ unjust escape from consequences for murder. Additionally, the incident elicited new conversations about the history of structural racism in the United States.

In September 2020, U.S. President Donald J. Trump issued a memo to governmental agencies labeling CRT as “divisive and demeaning anti-American propaganda” (Vought 2020, n.p.). His memo was followed by an executive order warning federal agencies to cease using taxpayer dollars toward funding any anti-racism training that teaches or suggests that “the United States is an inherently racist country” (Vought 2020, n.p.). Trump greatly expanded the term CRT to include anything from references to white privilege and systemic racism among many other race-sensitive topics. Months later, in January 2021, the Biden administration rescinded Trump’s

ban on diversity training as President Joe Biden reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to undertake an honest examination of systemic racism, white privilege, and other racial issues (Vought 2020). Though the Biden administration swiftly reversed Trump's harmful Executive Order, many Republican-dominated state legislatures had already begun implementing similar bans on conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion not just in corporate settings, but also in K-12 public education (Gabriel and Goldstein 2021).

Although K-12 teachers were never using CRT as a framework in talking about how institutional racism has shaped American history, with politicians making public schools a political battleground, many teachers have begun intentionally refraining from discussing the adoption of CRT in schools. Teaching about the different forms of systemic racial injustice and oppression is not new to public schools, but the manner in which curriculum regarding how narratives of racism are presented demands a change. Traditionally, school curriculums have taken a Eurocentric approach with hierarchically racialized values such as whiteness and white supremacy at the core (Ward 2021). But now, in a time where voices of marginalized people are being lifted up after tragic racial violence, many educators and community members argue that facilitating an anti-racist curriculum that challenges Eurocentrism is necessary to educate young people on ideals like inclusion and valuing diverse perspectives.

However, an overwhelming majority of white parents seeking control over what their children are taught in school have concerns about the way CRT is communicated in classrooms. These parents see CRT as a subversive scheme that admonishes all white people for being oppressors in American history, while their Black counterparts are classified as hopeless victims of oppression (Gibbons and Ray 2021). While these parents protest CRT in hopes of protecting their children, they are doing quite the opposite. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, "social and emotional qualities, [learning about the general presence of] discrimination, [and] racism" directly shape the mental health of young people (Murthy 2021, n.p.). Educators across the United States continue to argue that the purpose of teaching young kids the unpleasant realities of America's history is not to preach hate about the country, but rather to provide children with a clear understanding of how to unravel historical racial inequity and work toward a more equitable future.

Despite the need for CRT being clear-cut through court rulings like *Brown* which contributed toward ending legal de jure segregation, the theory has become a controversial political issue 40 years after its creation. A key limitation of these legal ramifications is the inability to address covert *de facto* racism in schools. Thus, today, there are many indicators of racial inequality in education, including but not limited to:

- “1. School funding inequities, including the persistent underfunding of property-poor districts, many of which are composed primarily of children of color
2. Deficit-oriented instruction that characterizes students of color as in need of remediation
3. Narrow assessments, the results of which are used to confirm narratives about the ineducability of children of color
4. School discipline policies that disproportionately impact students of color and compromise their educational outcomes” (George 2021, n.p.)

Louisiana's Stance on CRT in Public Schools

In parallel with the racial attitudes of frustrated white parents, lawmakers across the United States have attempted to incorporate legislation restricting the teaching of CRT in classrooms. As of February 2022, at least 36 states have introduced laws that restrict so-called divisive instruction about the history of racism in schools (Stout and Wilburn 2022).

Inevitably, the CRT controversy spilled over into Louisiana's State House Education Committee when a bill (HB 564) from the former House Education Chairman Ray Garofalo sought to ban the teaching of CRT across Louisiana schools (Deslatte 2021). Garofalo defended his bill, claiming that he was working to take "politics out of the classroom" and trying to ensure that schools facilitate a "learning environment free of discrimination" (Deslatte 2021, n.p.). Garofalo's bill faced extreme backlash from other legislators and the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), the administrative body for all Louisiana public K-12 schools. BESE stated that the proposal to ban CRT from the school curriculum would "threaten the ability of educators to be honest" in telling the truth about Louisiana's and the country's racialized history (Ferrando 2021, n.p.). Given the strong opposition from BESE, HB 564 lost steam. In the end, the bill was dismissed and Garofalo was removed from his position as Chairman of the House Committee for his discriminatory remarks on the history of slavery when discussing HB 564.

On a more local level, moral panic¹¹ about CRT and anti-racist education continued to sway aggrieved white parents to break away from public school systems. School district secession, or the splintering off whiter, wealthier districts from larger, diverse ones, historically emerged as a means of Southern resistance to *Brown v. Board of Education*. Today, school secession movements are gaining more momentum than ever, spreading to various parts of the United States, as white families flock to schools where race is not a component of the curriculum. Since 2000, 128 communities across the country have attempted to separate from their school districts, and 73 breakaway movements have been successful at splitting from larger districts, while another 17 secessions are ongoing, including one of the longest ongoing secession movements in U.S. history taking place in Louisiana (EdBuild 2019).

The Return of the St. George City Incorporation Efforts

While the St. George breakaway attempt in East Baton Rouge started with the goal of creating a new school district, it quickly transitioned to a greater urban secession movement to break off from the EBR City-Parish governance system and establish a new city. Though the first attempt at secession was met with failure in 2015, Rials and Browning revived the movement three years later.

In 2018, St. George efforts rekindled, and the organizers were given nine months—as opposed to the lack of a timeline during their first attempt—to gather signatures on a second petition to vote on the incorporation. This time, Rials and Browning modified the proposed area of the city, eliminating a significant number of majority-Black neighborhoods that were included in the original proposal (Jones 2019). The revised map (see Appendix C) helped strengthen the St. George campaign, as the only residents eligible to vote were the upper-middle-class white families living in the proposed area of the new city. This time, the poorer Black residents of EBR Parish no longer had any say in the vote for a new city. With an overwhelming wave of support from white residents in the proposed new city, St. George leaders secured the required number of approximately 12,996 verifiable signatures by November of 2018 (Jones 2019). Meeting the signature requirement pushed the St. George organizers to the next stage: a special election. On

¹¹ The term "moral panic" refers to a phenomenon that emerges when a group or event is perceived as threatening the function and well-being of society (Lottermoser).

October 12, 2019, a majority of registered voters, precisely 54 percent, voted in favor of creating the new city (Yancy 2022).

Based on the 2019 election results, the support for the city of St. George was clear. However, Rials and Browning met with a lawsuit initiated by Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome when the election results moved past the public and to the Louisiana legislature.

Broome Steps Up to Fight Against St. George

When Broome first stepped into office as Mayor-President in 2017, one of the first highly publicized clashes she had faced was the St. George Movement. Her predecessor, Mayor-President Kip Holden, had fought to temporarily stave off the first St. George incorporation effort that unfolded around 2013 (Gallo 2017). Under the first half of Broome's first term, Rials and Browning remained under a three-year hiatus from renewing any St. George efforts since their petition had been voided in 2015. But Broome kept a keen eye on their continued unofficial campaign efforts. Moreover, Broome did not shy away from sharing her thoughts with the public:

I don't think anyone would argue with the fact that a city should have a plan. If you're trying to start a city, you don't start the city and then develop the plan. You show the plan, and then you start the city. And to date, they have not shown us a plan...But everyone in that area is not in agreement with a breakaway city. I still represent [St. George supporters] and will continue to represent them as Mayor-President. I never will neglect any constituent or community (Corfah 2021, n.p.).

In 2019, St. George caught more attention after winning a majority in the special election. Simultaneously, tensions around urban breakaway movements and whether CRT should be taught in classrooms pervaded the nation. It was now or never. Broome could either watch the City of Baton Rouge split in half or position herself as a unifier of the Parish in spite of the racial and socioeconomic divides. Amidst division, why did she want to keep the town together?

Broome spent a significant amount of time in 2017 and 2018 speaking out about the financial and emotional impacts St. George would bring to the community. She started by echoing her concerns about the expenditures listed in St. George's budget proposal. The official St. George budget, crafted by Rials, Browning, and a certified public accounting firm, claimed that St. George would function with a surplus each year based on \$58.4 million in revenue (Gallo 2018). However, when Broome requested more information on the money allocation, she was met with silence or vague answers from Rials and Browning. She did not let that deter her. With uncertainty about the validity of the St. George budget, she requested a budget estimate from her administration. Her administration's finance department extrapolated Baton Rouge's current City-Parish tax data and landed on an approximate \$45.4 million revenue forecast to establish a new city (Gallo 2018). In other words, St. George overestimated their revenues by an extra \$13 million annually, with a largely problematic discrepancy coming from sales taxes (Gallo 2018). The overestimated projected revenues for the City of St. George would take away from the annual revenue funding available to run the City-Parish and that would impact everything from public services to economic opportunities (Gallo 2018).

Furthermore, beyond the budget disparities, the entire St. George movement circles back to the topic of education. Since Rials and Browning transitioned to focusing on the development of a new city, conversations about the original cause of wanting to set up a new school district slowed down. Nonetheless, Broome wanted to hear from the voices that should have been included

in the St. George movement conversation from the beginning: the parents whose students attend EBRPSS.

Amplifying Voices of EBRPSS Parents

Broome spoke with parents on both ends of the St. George movement at events put on by the Foundation of EBR Schools, alongside EBRPSS Superintendent Warren Drake. Broome emphasized the importance of the City-Parish and school board working in conjunction to ensure that EBR schools have adequate funding (WAFB 2017). She embarked on a quest of interviewing parents in the East Baton Rouge community to hear their stories on how St. George would impact them. Initially, Broome heard from parents like Claire Rutland who were optimistic and in full support of the St. George initiative given the glimmer of promise regarding school funding aspirations:

It's life or death over here. It's big time. We're so excited...When [St. George] came about, we were just all over it...We couldn't believe that we might have a chance [to] send our kids to a good public school (Paterson 2019, n.p.).

For Claire Rutland, a 38-year-old Marketing Specialist, with a seven-year-old son who has high-functioning autism, St. George brought new hope to her family. Her son currently attends a specialized private school, but their insurance will not cover the expenses of his schooling for long (Paterson 2019). With eventual plans of sending him to a public school, Rutland eagerly awaits sending her son to a new school in the St. George district since her family resides in the proposed area of the new city.

Many other white parents like Rutland have found a variety of reasons for supporting the St. George movement. Ranging from concerns about EBR public schools being plagued by a lack of discipline to a shortage of spots in the system's current magnet and gifted and talented programs, parents wanted local control over well-maintained public schools free of racial battles and limited funding for shared resources based on the EBR Parish tax base (King 2014).

Meanwhile, with a more somber tone when contemplating the impact of St. George, parents against the St. George movement, Vicki and Jay Brooks, stated:

[The vote on incorporating St. George is] disheartening...It's disturbing [because] great cities grow by inclusion, not exclusion. That's the most frightening thing to me. (Paterson 2019, n.p.).

For white parents in their mid-60s like Vicky and Jay Brooks, who have three adult children, their opposition to the proposed city rises from worries about an "exclusionary mindset" in terms of the projected racial demographics of the City of St. George (Paterson 2019). Additionally, the Brooks family and others were concerned with the financial uncertainties of the new city and the potential for the education and economic sectors within EBR Parish to suffer with a decrease in funding.

Based on Broome's engagement with community members, a majority of white families were in favor of the breakaway movement while most Black families stood in opposition. However, there were still outliers to the common trend as a small number of white families were against St. George and some middle-class Black families in favor of the proposed new city's school system.

With parents divided on the matter of the St. George incorporation, how could Broome keep Baton Rouge united when there is little agreement among the residents? She initially tried to meet with Rials and Browning to strike civil conversation and prevent the breakaway attempt, but she did not hear from either of them (Riegel 2017). Broome no longer had time to spare. If she let Rials and Browning achieve a victory in gaining state approval, Baton Rouge would face severe financial harm and the public school system would fall into shambles.

Soon enough Broome was locked in a legal battle against Rials and Browning, hoping to block St. George organizers from receiving approval from the state legislature and the governor to formally establish a separate municipality.

Legal Dimensions of the City of St. George Incorporation Efforts

In November of 2019, citing financial hardship to the consolidated City-Parish government if Baton Rouge must forfeit taxes to St. George, Broome contested the efforts of Rials and Browning with legal action. The lawsuit was filed under Louisiana Revised Statute Title 33, which describes the process for municipal incorporation in Louisiana and the criteria for contesting incorporation. In accordance with Louisiana Revised Statute 33:4, Broome sued Rials and Browning for their lack of a detailed budget for the new city's public service costs (as required by Louisiana law) and the adverse impact of the proposed city's incorporation on the financial state of the City of Baton Rouge alongside EBR Parish. Additionally, she sued on terms of a major violation of EBR Parish Plan of Government, as the addition of new cities within the parish boundary lines is prohibited (§4. Legal action contesting an incorporation 1984).

With a legal stranglehold looming over Rials and Browning, they were both quick to respond with criticism against Broome. Citing their majority in a "lawful election," St. George organizers claimed that Broome was challenging the "right" of the voters and a St. George spokesman referred to the lawsuit as "voter suppression" (Jones 2020a, n.p.). An attorney representing Broome in the case, Mary Olive Pierson, notes that the lawsuit does not seek to reverse the results of the election, but rather asks the court to deny the incorporation effort due to the negative financial impact St. George's creation would have on the City-Parish of Baton Rouge through significant budget cuts.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and several disastrous hurricanes in Louisiana, the lawsuit's progress halted. In the waiting period of the case, Broome found temporary relief: she staved off Rials and Browning by taking legal action, and the longer it took for the court to make a decision, the longer Baton Rouge stayed together (WBRZ 2019).

With the St. George incorporation lawsuit left in limbo, Baton Rouge currently remains in a state of tension. If the court grants a win for the supporters of St. George, an amendment that would allow the addition of a new city within EBR Parish boundaries would be added to the official Plan of Government (Jones 2020b). On the other hand, if the court accords Broome the win, the decade-long St. George incorporation efforts would be prohibited until appealed. Regardless of the judge's ruling, the losing side is highly likely to appeal the court's decision, meaning a final decision could potentially still be a long time away.

Although the St. George lawsuit awaits a verdict, the case has revealed a pertinent racial divide and a decision from the 19th Judicial District Court is expected at the end of May 2022 (WAFB 2022).

Epilogue: A Decision Made

On May 31st, 2022, Judicial District Judge Martin Coady, who presided over a week and a half long trial pertaining to the St. George case in early May, released his official ruling. Judge Coady's ruling sided with Mayor-President Broome and EBR Parish officials who sued to halt the proposed city's incorporation effort. Like Broome's line of thinking, the judge cited St. George's estimated budget "unreasonable" as its establishment would impose a cost of \$48 million on the Baton Rouge government which translates to a 45 percent cut in its budget (Cobler 2022, n.p.). What began as an initiative that was motivated by segregation and racist sentiments ultimately snowballed into a decision determined by a financial conflict. In response to the ruling, spokesman of the St. George movement stated the following:

Today, the citizens of St. George are disappointed that our right to vote was invalidated...we believe the ruling was incorrect. St. George will appeal this ruling and fight until St. George is incorporated and the voices of our citizens are heard (Cobler 2022, n.p.).

Residents of Baton Rouge may initially think Judge Coady's ruling spells the end of the nearly decade-long saga, but St. George leaders were prompt to shatter the notion that his ruling marked the end. Andrew Murrell confirmed that St. George organizers have appealed Judge Coady's ruling and thus, the case itself, will proceed to the next stages: the state First Circuit Court of Appeal in Baton Rouge and The Supreme Court of Louisiana in New Orleans.

Meanwhile, Judge Coady's ruling offered a glimpse of hope to Mayor-President Broome and her legal team, who remain steady in their case and intentions to block the push for the St. George incorporation. Mayor-President Broome made the following statement about the ruling:

We are pleased with today's decision because [Judge Coady] found there was no clear plan to provide basic services for the citizens inside the proposed city...our legal challenge was always part of the democratic process and we will continue the work to improve the services for all citizens in East Baton Rouge Parish (Cobler 2022, n.p.).

The St. George movement began as a community-based effort with an emphasis on establishing an independent school district located in the southeast portion of the Parish. The movement quickly caught eyes of many residents in the city of Baton Rouge as it expanded to a quest for creating a new city. Despite facing tons of backlash and back-and-forth, the St. George organizers stood clear in their vision and gained a majority vote to approve the incorporation. However, just when the path forward seemed crystal clear, Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome walked in and filed a lawsuit against the city of St. George. Now, with St. George organizers moving forward with their appeal against Judge Coady's ruling, once again, both parties involved are thrown back into a waiting period, awaiting rulings from the state's highest courts to determine the next steps and a course of action.

Mayor-President Broome stands tall as she continues to fight the battle against an urban secession movement that threatens the financial, economic status, and race/education/class matters Baton Rouge. With the legal case, her intent was not to challenge the will of her constituents, but rather to gain clear insight on how the city of St. George will affect her City-Parish regions and to maintain unity among everyone. While her experience with the St. George group has been a

challenging road, she remains confident in her intent to stand up to segregationists. Broome will continue her work towards leading the city of Baton Rouge with grace by tackling any and every racially motivated setback that comes her way.

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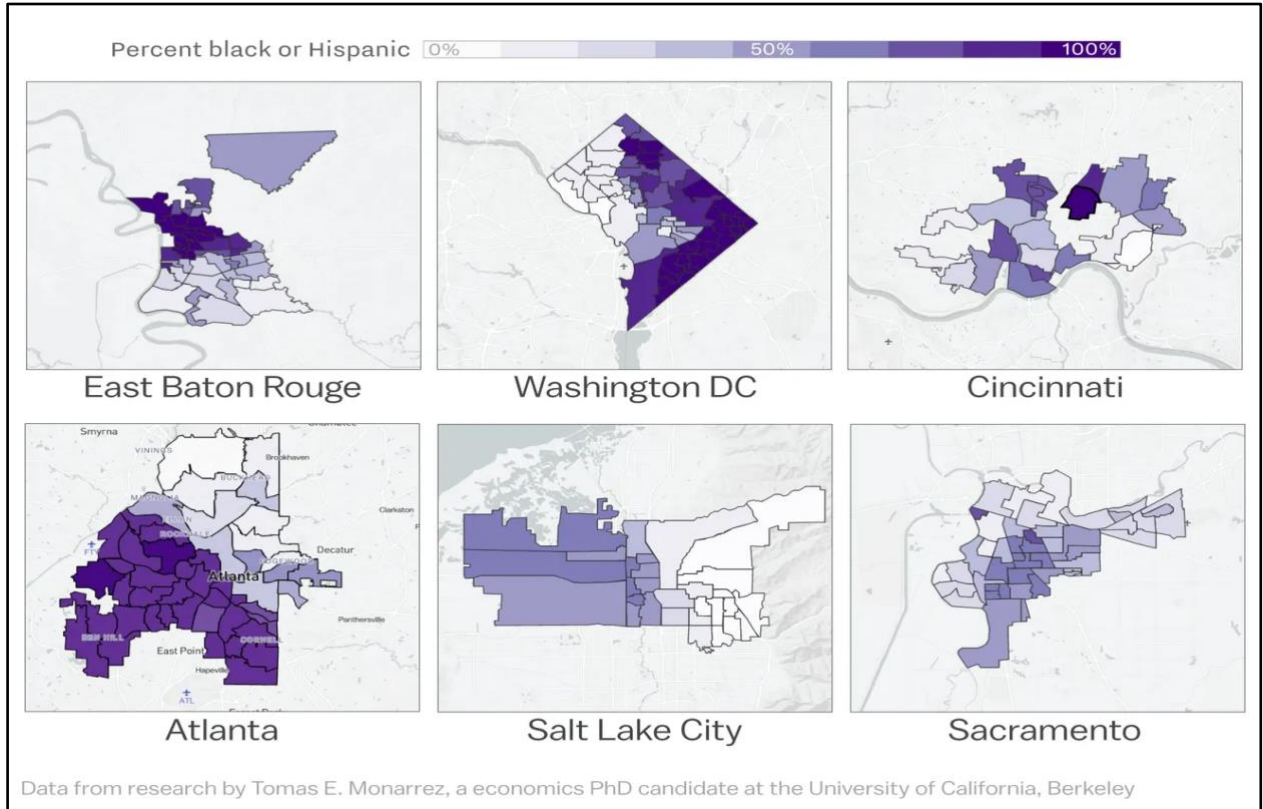
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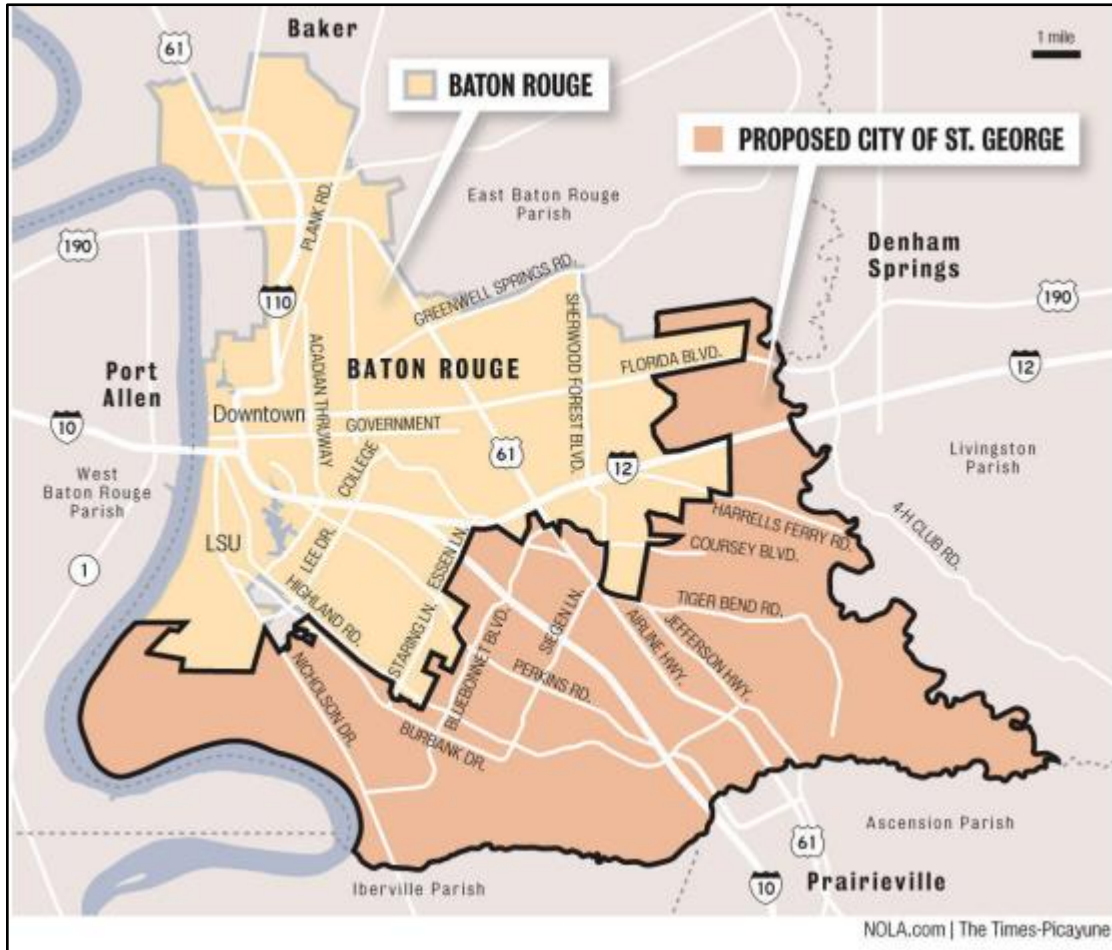
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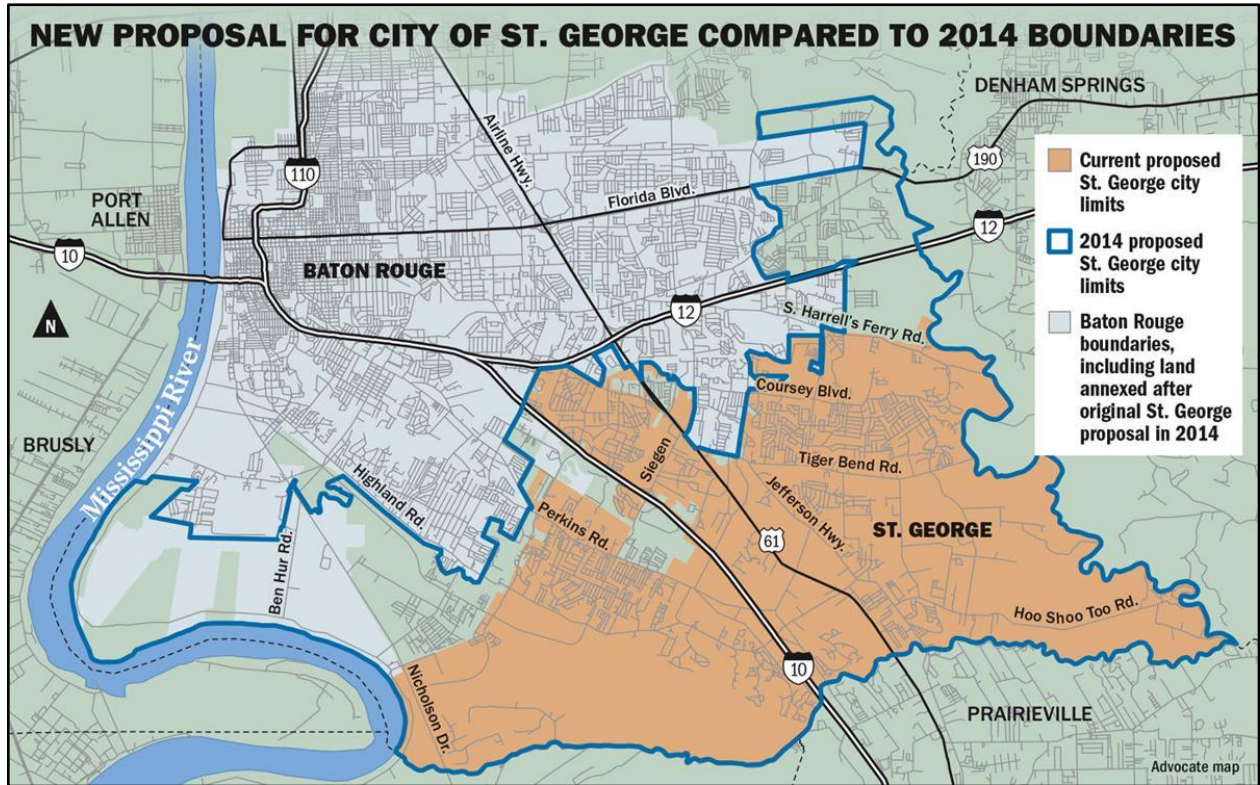
Appendix A: Gerrymandering of School Attendance Zone Lines Depicts Racial Segregation (Chang 2018)



Appendix B: St. George Original Map from First Breakaway Attempt in 2013 (Samuels 2013)



Appendix C: Revised St. George Map from Second Breakaway Attempt in 2018 (Swenson 2018)



Appendix D: Timeline of the First Breakaway Attempt of the St. George Movement (Runnels 2016)

- 1954 — In the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Supreme Court declares segregation in public schools unconstitutional.
- 1956 — Individual students and the U.S. Department of Justice file a desegregation lawsuit against the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board.
- 1960 — Judge E. Gordon West orders the school board to adopt measures to desegregate the school system.
- 1963 — The school board implements a “freedom of choice” desegregation plan.
- 1969 — The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court rules the school board’s desegregation plan unacceptable.
- 1970 — The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court approves the committee’s new voluntary majority-to-minority transfer plan; the Supreme Court rules that student busing is an appropriate desegregation strategy in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*.
- 1980 — Judge John Parker orders the EBRPSB to prepare a new desegregation policy proposal.
- 1981 — Judge Parker rejects plans submitted by the school board and the local government and implements his own plan that includes court-ordered busing.
- 1996 — The school board proposes a desegregation plan that predominantly depends on magnet schools to attain integration; the Department of Justice and the NAACP negotiate a consent agreement with the school board; Judge Parker approves the agreement, ending court-ordered busing.
- 2001 — Judge James Brady takes over the case from Judge Parker.
- 2003 — All parties accept a new settlement agreement, and Judge Brady grants EBRPSS unitary status; Baker and Zachary break away from the EBRPSS.
- 2005 — Central incorporates as a city.
- 2007 — The court relinquishes its supervision of the school district, ending the lawsuit; Central City breaks away from EBRPSS.
- 2012 — Norman Browning and Senator “Bodi” White meet with Parent-Teacher Association members to discuss the possibility of a breakaway school district; Senator White’s breakaway school district plan fails to pass; Davis and other parents form One Community, One School District.
- 2013 — Senator White authors Senate Bills 73 and 199, but SB 73 fails to pass the House; St. George proponents decide to create a breakaway city; OCOSD organizes the first public forum to oppose St. George on October 10; BRAC and BRAF release a report on the impacts of the proposed city on December 1.
- 2014 — “Separate and Unequal” airs on PBS on July 15; St. George leaders turn in the petition to incorporate the proposed city to the Registrar of Voters Office on October 20.
- 2015 — The Registrar of Voters Office determines that the petition was short approximately 2,700 signatures in March; the Registrar of Voters Office determines that the re-submitted petition is still 71 signatures short on June 13.

Appendix E: Timeline of National CRT Debate and the St. George Movement's Return

- 2015 - 2017 — The St. George campaign petition failed to meet the required 25% of signatures; the petition was voided and the entire effort was expelled from being renewed the next three years.
- 2018 — The St. George incorporation efforts resurfaced and proceeded to secure a minimum number of signatures needed and Governor John Bel Edwards called a special election for voting on the incorporation.
- 2019 — In the special election held on October 12, 2019, a 54% majority of registered voters voted “yes” in favor of establishing the City of St. George. Consequently, Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome filed a lawsuit against the St. George leaders, Christopher Rials and Norman Browning.
- 2020 — Former United States President Donald J. Trump issued a memo and Executive Order to federal agencies prohibiting any form of anti-racism or diversity training.
- 2021 — Current United States President Joe Biden rescinded Trump’s ban and reaffirmed funding for anti-racism training. Meanwhile, House Education Chairman Ray Garofalo proposed a bill (HB 564) in an attempt to ban CRT across Louisiana schools, but strong opposition from BESE dismissed the bill.
- 2022 — At least 36 states across the United States introduced laws and legislation that restricted teaching about racism in classroom settings. On another note, the St. George lawsuit awaits a verdict as a decision from the judge is expected at the end of May.