

DALE THORN PAPERS

Mss. 5214
Inventory

Compiled by
Kris Kallies

Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections
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Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University

2022

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SUMMARY

Size	1.25 linear feet
Geographic Locations	Baton Rouge, La.; Richmond, Va.; Montgomery, Ala.
Inclusive Dates	1978-2013
Bulk Dates	1981-1986
Languages	English
Summary	The materials in the Dale Thorn Papers consist of legal documents related to <i>US v. Louisiana</i> and the establishment of a higher education consent decree, professional writings and journal articles related to higher education administration, photographs and drafts for a book written by Thorn, greeting cards and materials from the Public Relations Society of America.
Access Restrictions	None.
Reproduction Note	May be reproduced.
Copyright	Physical rights and copyright are retained by the LSU Libraries.
Related Collections	William Arceneaux Papers, Mss. 4107 Joseph M. Reynolds Papers, Mss. 4529 LSU Office of Academic Affairs Records, A0100 LSU Office of the Chancellor Records, A0001 LSU Board of Supervisors Records, A0003 Louisiana Board of Regents Higher Education Consent Decree Records, A0004, U104
Citation	Dale Thorn Papers, Mss. 5214, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries Special Collections, Baton Rouge, La.
Stack Location(s)	43:69

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Jesse Dale Thorn was born on October 7, 1942, in Brandon, Mississippi. He grew up in West Monroe, Louisiana, where he attended Ouachita Parish High School. When he graduated in 1960, he joined the US Marine Corps and served until 1964. After separating from the military, he received his bachelor's degree in journalism from Northeast Louisiana University (now the University of Louisiana-Monroe) and his master's in journalism from LSU. He received his PhD in higher education from Florida State University.

After working for several Louisiana newspapers, in 1968, he was appointed press secretary for Edwin Edwards during his term as a member of Congress, serving what is now the defunct Louisiana 7th Congressional District. Thorn continued to work as Edwards' press secretary during his first two terms as governor. Following his time as press secretary, in 1974 he was appointed to the Louisiana Board of Regents as commissioner for higher education. His hire was specifically to work on mediating a dispute between the US Department of Justice and the state government over inequality between the LSU system's programming and facilities compared to that of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the state.

After a short stint as vice president for academic affairs at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, La., he became a journalism professor at LSU. He remained in that position until his retirement in 2000 when he, along with his wife Diane, returned to Brandon. He died of Parkinson's disease on May 8, 2014, at the age of 71.

In 1969, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) notified Louisiana and nine other state governments that they were maintaining a racially based dual system of higher education in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. All 10 states were required to submit plans for the desegregation of their higher education systems and noncompliance would include termination of federal funds. Louisiana offered no plan and argued the state's open admissions policy showed compliance with Title VI.

In 1974, the U.S. Justice Department filed suit against Louisiana and its boards of higher education after contending the state's open admissions policy was not compliant. After initial discovery proceedings, however, the suit lay dormant until it was reactivated in 1979. In 1981, just before the case went to trial, the two parties agreed to a court-approved consent decree.

As per the decree, the state agreed to improve racial diversity at its public institutions of higher education through detailed recruitment plans for students, staff, and faculty; to enhance programs, facilities, and faculty at HBCUs; to distribute desirable degree programs equitably; and to institute cooperative programs and activities between the HBCUs and the LSU system. The two parties agreed that this program would be in effect for six years, at which time progress would be reevaluated. Additionally, a committee dedicated to monitoring the program was formed to collect data and documentation from every college and university regarding the efforts to come into compliance.

In 1987, just before the decree's expiration, the Department of Justice moved that Louisiana still had not fulfilled its obligations. By 1988, after legal maneuvering on both sides, the court ruled that Louisiana remained in violation of Title VI and that the decree had not been effective. Louisiana was asked to submit a remedial plan for desegregation. When the two parties to the suit were unable to agree on a plan, the court appointed an overseer charged with recommending a desegregation plan, which took a year to draft. The outcome was the state's multiple boards of higher education would be combined into one. Additionally, the law schools at Southern University and LSU would be combined and all institutions would be differentiated by admissions standards. Neither university wanted this outcome and because it is not possible to compel students to attend certain colleges and universities, between 1988 and 1993, a series of remedial orders were vacated, and in 1994, all parties to the lawsuit reached a settlement.

This new agreement included the establishment of Baton Rouge Community College, which would be administered jointly by LSU and Southern, and allowed both schools to continue their own selective admissions programs. The settlement also maintained the state's multiple boards of higher education and left both Baton Rouge law schools in place. The plan called for more than \$100 million in spending during a 10-year term with the funding spent on construction projects at Southern and Grambling State to bring up the quality of facilities, fostering doctoral programs at Louisiana HBCUs, and recruiting black students to historically white schools and vice versa.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The materials in the Dale Thorn Papers consist of legal documents related to *US v. Louisiana* and the establishment of a higher education consent decree, professional writings and journal articles related to higher education administration, photographs and drafts for a book written by Thorn, greeting cards and materials from the Public Relations Society of America. While most of the contents are related to the consent decree, Thorn's papers relate directly to what he worked on in his time as commissioner of higher education regarding the consent decree or wrote while working on his PhD from LSU [for Thorn's dissertation, see: *The Settlement of US v. Louisiana, 1980-82* by J. Dale Thorn, 1984, KF4155 .T56 1984A]. The materials present in the Thorn papers are broken into three series based on their content: higher education consent decree materials, written and published materials, and assorted materials.

LIST OF SERIES

- I. Higher Education Consent Decree Materials, 1978-1986, undated**
- II. Written and Published Materials, 1979-1999, undated**
- III. Assorted Materials, 1985-2013, undated**

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

I. Higher Education Consent Decree Materials, 1978-1986, undated

The materials in this series are related to Thorn's personal involvement in the lawsuit *United States of America v. Louisiana*. This was a suit levied against the State of Louisiana that the state was running a dual system of higher education in violation of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954. This series contains correspondence, handwritten and typed notes from Thorn, and assorted legal documents on which Thorn wrote notes. He also requested materials from other states which were also under orders to make higher education more equitable to see what their plans were, which are also present.

These materials are not an exhaustive resource concerning the consent decree but are made up only of what Thorn himself helped author or commented on. These materials comprise the first eight folders of box 1 and a bound blue volume titled "Excellence in the Eighties: The Master Plan for Higher Education in Louisiana."

II. Written and Published Materials, 1979-1999, undated

The materials in this series are comprised of essays written by Thorn himself or others about higher education. Several essays were written by Thorn while he was working on his doctorate from 1979-1984, as well as from his time as a journalism professor during the 1990s. The remainder are from academic journals or other authors. All essays are on the topics of higher education, racial equality, integration-related court cases, and university programming. These materials comprise the remainder of the folders in box 1. This series also contains drafts of a book written by Thorn and the photographs that were included in it. It is unclear if the book was ever published.

III. Assorted Materials, 1985-2013, undated

This series contains three notebooks with materials from Thorn's career. These notebooks appear to be related to academic tenure, with sections on topics like service, publications, conference presentations, grant information, and potential publications. The first two notebooks are held together by comb bindings, are neatly bound, and are found at the back of box 1. The third notebook is in box 2 and has handwritten tabs. This series also contains a folder of greeting cards and materials from the Public Relations Society of America, both found in box 1.

INDEX TERMS

Materials relating to these people, places, and things can be found in the series indicated, as represented by their numbers.

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Minority students--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.--United States.	I-II
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Southern University at Shreveport.	I-II
Southern University Baton Rouge.	I-II
Treen, David C., 1928-2009.	I
United States. Department of Justice.	I
University of New Orleans.	I

CONTAINER LIST

<u>Stack</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
				I. Higher Education Consent Decree Materials, 1978-1986, undated
	43:69	1	1	News clippings, Oct. 1978-Dec. 7, 1985
			2	Consent decree materials, May 15, 1980-Sept. 2, 1981
			3	Consent decree materials, 1980-1981
			4	Correspondence, April 14, 1981-Feb. 14, 1986
			5-6	"First Annual Report of the Consent Decree Monitoring Committee, State of Louisiana" Aug. 1982
			7	Materials requested from Virginia, Feb. 26-28, 1986
			8	Handwritten notes on Consent Decree, undated, possibly 1980-1986
			--	"Excellence in the Eighties: The Master Plan for Higher Education in Louisiana" by Dale Thorn, executive summary, April 1984
				II. Written and Published Materials, 1979-1999, undated
			9	Journal essays on higher education, 1981
			10	"Federal Affirmative Action mandates and Higher Education: Some Implications" Aug. 28, 1979
			11	"Affirmative Action in Faculty Employment among Schools/Departments of Journalism in Louisiana, Aug. 28, 1979
			12	Two essays on higher education and integration, July 1980, May 1981
			13	Interview transcripts by Thorn, Sept. 7, 1981-Nov. 9, 1981
			14	"Developmental Educational Programs in Louisiana's State Colleges and Universities" 1984
			15	Untitled essay, undated, possibly 1983
			16	"The Financial Conditions of Historically Black and Comparable Louisiana Institutions of Higher Education" by Larry L. Leslie, March 23, 1981
			17	HIS 6059 term paper (likely from LSU), Nov. 18, 1983
			18	"The Influence of National and Regional Agencies on the Adams Case" July 14, 1983
			19	Assorted syllabi (likely from LSU), 1983
			20	"Developmental Education Programs in Louisiana's State Colleges and Universities" Spring 1984
			21	"Accreditations as a Tool of Accountability and Incentive" Oct. 4, 1992
			22	"Media Coverage of Higher Education Desegregation in the South" Nov. 22, 1994
			23	"Beyond the Racial Divide" Sept. 12, 1998
			24	"Teaching Beyond the Racial Divide: A Case Study" 1999

Stack

<u>Location</u>	<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Contents (with dates)</u>
43:69	1	25	“HBCUs: Surviving Despite Media and Judicial Opposition” undated, possibly 1990-1999
		26	Book draft on higher education, undated, possibly 1985
		27	Photographs for book, Sept. 24-Nov. 4, 1985
			III. Assorted Materials, 1990-2013, undated
		28	Public Relations Society of America materials, Dec. 8, 1992- Spring 2000
		29	Greeting cards, Nov. 7, 1990-July 28, 1996
		30	LSU School of Journalism recruitment brochure, 2013
		--	Notebook, Volume 1: Annual Reports, Teaching, Service, undated
		--	Notebook, Volume 2: Research and Publications, undated
43:69	2	--	Notebook, Volume 3: Public Relations Society, Grants, Book Proposals, undated