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Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Activist led way to school integration

The first African-American on Denver's Board of Education was resolved to get "her point across."

By Claire Martin

The Denver Post

<mailto:cmartin@denverpost.com?subject=The%20Denver%20Post:%20Activist%20led%20way%20to%20school%20integration>

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Rachel Bassette Noel, who championed desegregation of Denver's public schools, died Monday in Oakland, Calif. She was 90.

The first African-American to sit on the Denver Board of Education, Noel in 1968 introduced a resolution calling for a comprehensive school integration plan.

"If we let the bigots have their way at successfully opposing measures to integrate Denver public schools," Noel warned, "Denver will move toward an apartheid society."

Facing threats to herself and her family, Noel pushed for the passage of the resolution, which sparked heated debate and protests in the city.

"She was a doer — soft-spoken and genteel — but she always got her point across," said her son, Edmond "Buddy" Noel Jr. of Parker.

Even before Noel introduced her resolution, fellow board member Stephen J. Knight Jr. had said that to "concentrate too much on the doomy-gloomy aspects" of improving education for black children would "incite riots."

In May 1968, thousands of residents, mostly parents, filled the auditoriums at Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson high schools, testifying vehemently against the resolution.

A week later, 200 students from nine Denver high schools met at East High School, voting almost unanimously to approve the Noel Resolution.

Justices backed move

The resolution finally passed in 1970, and in 1973 a U.S. Supreme Court decision led to mandatory desegregation of Denver's public schools.

Federal court supervision of Denver's desegregation plan ended in 1995.

Noel "had this wonderful ability to turn prejudice into enlightenment," said former Colorado Gov. Dick Lamm.

Denver Public Schools officials Monday issued a statement praising Noel for her "fierce determination and unrelenting advocacy on behalf of the children of Denver."

In 2002, DPS named its newest school the Rachel Bassette Noel Middle School.

Noel became chairwoman of the African-American Studies Department at Metropolitan State College and taught sociology.

In 1976, she was the first African-American voted onto the University of Colorado Board of Regents.

Rachel Bassette was born in Hampton, Va., on Jan. 15, 1918, the daughter of a Virginia lawyer and a teacher, who led dinnertime discussions about efforts to register African-American voters.

Growing up in Hampton, she knew firsthand about racial prejudice and Jim Crow laws.

Hampton's public and commercial buildings had separate entrances and drinking fountains for whites and blacks.

She attended an all-African- American elementary school — founded by her grandfather, a former slave and the first black man to successfully register to vote in Jackson, Miss.

Noel graduated magna cum laude from the Hampton Institute, now the traditionally black Hampton University.

She earned her master's degree in sociology from Fisk University and married physician Edmond F. Noel.

The couple moved to Denver in 1949, when Dr. Noel took a post at Rose Hospital, the only hospital in the city that would hire an African-American doctor, their son said. Edmond Noel Sr. died in 1986.

Noel's first job was with the Denver Human Rights Commission.

When Denver school board member Frank A. Traylor died in September 1963, local civic leaders campaigned for the board to nominate Noel as Traylor's replacement.

At the time she was a staff member of the mayor's Commission on Community Relations, a vice president of the Mile Hi Council of Girl Scouts and Colorado Urban League board director.

She was also a member of a committee studying the equality of educational opportunity in Denver Public Schools.

Rejected by board

In a decision that inflamed civil rights supporters, the board chose Robert McCollum, a University of Denver vice chancellor of public affairs, for the post.

Two years later, buoyed by a 186-member support organization and endorsements from Denver public school teachers, administrators and supervisors, Noel won a six-year term, with a lead of more than 1,000 votes over the closest competitor in a field of 22 candidates.

Noel "was a great lady of Colorado politics," said former Denver Mayor Wellington Webb. "Her passing is part of a generation of people of leadership we have lost."

Noel's daughter, Angie Noel, said: "I hope what she contributed to Denver will live on for generations to come."

Noel died at her daughter's home. In addition to her son and daughter, Noel is survived by five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

A memorial for her will be held in Denver later this month, Edmond "Buddy" Noel Jr. said.

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DPS principals hear the law on reporting abuse

DENVER — Denver school principals were read the letter of the law Monday about when they should report a crime, coming a month after a principal was served with a summons for failing to make a timely report.

The legal advice was delivered during a session at the quarterly principal institute, a workshop for the school leaders. Denver Public Schools' legal team provided the principals with a procedural checklist on when authorities should be called and what should be done when sexual assault or child abuse is alleged.

Nicole Veltze, 37, principal of Skinner Middle School in northwest Denver, will appear in court Feb. 21 on charges she failed to report child abuse to authorities over an incident involving students. Veltze has been temporarily removed from her position and is working in the district's administration building.

Veltze's attorney said his client conducted an independent investigation into the allegation that one student sexually harassed another.

DPS attorneys on Monday told principals they should not question either the victim or the accused student and should notify police. "Regardless of the age of (the) student being accused, notify poli

Monday, February 4, 2008

DPS pioneer Rachel Noel dies in Calif.

By Mike McPhee

The Denver Post

<mailto:mmcphee@denverpost.com?subject=The%20Denver%20Post:%20DPS%20pioneer%20Rachel%20Noel%20dies%20in%20Calif.>

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Rachel Noel, the first black woman in Denver elected to public office, died today in Oakland, Calif. She was 90 years old and died in her sleep, according to her son, Buddy Noel.

Noel, who grew up in the Jim Crow South, was elected to the board of directors of Denver Public Schools in 1965. She gained national attention when she pushed hard for integration of the schools. The Noel Resolution polarized the city but was passed by the school board in 1970.

Three years later, a U.S. Supreme Court decision led to mandatory desegregation of Denver Public Schools, a plan of forced busing that remained under federal court supervision until 1995.

Noel grew up in Virginia but moved to Colorado, where she became a professor of sociology and African-American studies at Metropolitan State College of Denver in 1969. She was chairwoman of the African-American Studies Department until she retired in 1980.

In 2002, the DPS board named the Rachel Bassette Noel Middle School in her honor.

Noel had moved to Oakland exactly a year ago to be with her daughter, Angie.

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Rocky Mountain News

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Education pioneer Rachel Noel, 90, dies

Her fight was key in desegregation of Denver schools

By [Nancy Mitchell](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/>> , **Rocky Mountain News** ([Contact](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/) <<http://www.rockymountainnews.com/staff/nancy-mitchell/contact/>>)

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Rachel B. Noel died in her sleep early Monday, her son said, a peaceful ending to a life that forever changed Denver Public Schools.

"She was on an extended visit with my sister, and she became more frail," said her son, attorney Edmond "Buddy" Noel, as he prepared to board a plane to his sister Angie's home in Oakland, Calif. "It became apparent she would not be able to get back home."

He said his mother's heart failed. Rachel Noel turned 90 on Jan. 15.

Mrs. Noel became the first black woman elected to public office in Colorado. She won her citywide campaign to serve on the DPS board in 1965.

Three years later, she introduced a resolution directing the superintendent to create a plan for the integration of DPS. It eventually led to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling to desegregate the city school district.

The catalyst behind the "Noel resolution" was the 1968 assassination of civil-rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

"It seemed to both of us that this was an event that called for action," said Ed Benton, a board member who worked with Mrs. Noel on the resolution.

Mrs. Noel's public service did not start or end with DPS.

Her grandfather was a slave who became a lawyer. Her father was also a lawyer, and her mother was a teacher.

Growing up in the segregated South, in Hampton, Va., Mrs. Noel knew the sting of racism but also saw her father fight for, and win, voting rights for blacks there.

"I came from a family that was willing to stand - stand up and be counted on the side of right," she told the *News* last year.

Rachel Bassette earned a master's degree in sociology from Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn., where she met her future husband, Edmond F. Noel. They came to Denver in 1950, hoping he would be able to practice medicine without racial bias.

He wasn't. The first black surgeon in Colorado, he was turned away from every hospital except a Jewish hospital now known as Rose Medical Center.

But the couple persevered, and by the time Rachel Noel won election to the DPS board, she was already known for her work on behalf of children.

Mrs. Noel's resolution brought death threats into her home, by mail and by phone. She never wavered, Benton said. "During all this controversy . . . I never heard her say an unkind, hateful word about anyone. I never heard her express personal fear."

She left the DPS board in 1971, and five years later she became the first black to serve on the CU Board of Regents. She also was a faculty member at Metropolitan State College of Denver, where she chaired the Afro-American Studies Department.

Mrs. Noel never lost interest in DPS. She talked often with Kevin Patterson, the board's lone black member, and sent one day for Superintendent Michael Bennet.

"She was a visionary and a revolutionary. . . . She gave me great advice," Bennet said, although he declined specifics. "That's between me and her, but I'm following it."

In 2002, DPS leaders named a middle school in far northeast Denver in her honor. Her grandfather, Andrew Bassette, has a school named for him in Hampton.

"Despite all the turmoil Rachel was involved in all her life, she always handled herself with total dignity, calm and deliberate judgment," said Benton, 82, a friend for more than 40 years.

"When her son called me this morning and said she died peacefully, I thought, what other way would Rachel die but in a calm, peaceful manner? She died the way she lived."

Mrs. Noel is survived by two children and five grandchildren. Her son said a

Denver memorial service is planned before month's end.

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Schools quit serving beef

Area school districts including Denver, Jefferson County and Douglas County have temporarily quit serving beef in lunches after the Agriculture Department announced it was investigating reports of mistreatment of sick animals at a California slaughterhouse.

The move is strictly precautionary and there is no indication the beef has reached Colorado, according to Whei Wong of Douglas County Schools.

Still, school officials said beef would stay off the menu until they got the all clear from the USDA, possibly in a week to two weeks.

The USDA has barred any use of meat coming from the Hallmark Meat Packing Co., based in Chino, Calif., in federal food and nutrition programs.

Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer said last week the department was taking the allegations seriously after video footage showed workers repeatedly mistreating cows.

Daily Camera

Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Rachel Noel was a legend in Denver Public Schools and was CU regent

Noel first black woman on Denver Public School Board

By April M. Washington, Rocky Mountain News
Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Rachel Noel, the first black woman to serve on both the Denver Public Schools board and the University of Colorado Board of Regents, died Monday in her sleep in Oakland, Calif. She was 90.

Noel was elected to the DPS board in 1965, said DPS spokesman Alex Sanchez, where she was best known for working tirelessly in the face of threats and taunts to integrate the schools.

She authored the Noel Resolution in 1968, calling for DPS to "provide equal educational opportunities for all children."

The resolution polarized the city and called for the superintendent to develop a plan to integrate the school system, according to a tribute written in Noel's honor. It was passed in 1970.

Three years later, Denver was ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court to desegregate Denver Public Schools. The plan of forced busing remained under federal court supervision until 1995.

After Noel became a CU regent in 1976, she worked to get the university to become more aggressive in its efforts to recruit and retain non-white students.

Noel was born and raised in Hampton, Va. She moved to Colorado when she became a professor of sociology and African-American studies at the Metropolitan State College of Denver in 1969. She chaired the African-American Studies Department until she retired in 1980.

A year later, she was honored by Metro State with the formation of the Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Professorship. A visiting professor is named each year to conduct classes, seminars and workshops for students, faculty and the community.

In 2002, DPS named the Rachel Bassette Noel Middle School in her honor.

Noel moved to Oakland a year ago to be with family, Sanchez said.

Editorials

A pioneer for equity

Remembering Rachel B. Noel

By [Clint Talbott](http://dailycamera.com/staff/clint-talbott/) <<http://dailycamera.com/staff/clint-talbott/>> ([Contact](#)

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Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Rachel B. Noel fought for equity in Denver Public Schools and, later, at the University of Colorado. Her efforts in the Denver system were more contentious. But her service at CU was no less important and deserves to be memorialized.

Noel, 90, died in her sleep in Oakland, Calif., Monday, the Rocky Mountain News reported. In 1965, she became the first black woman to serve on the DPS board. She wrote the "Noel Resolution" of 1968, which called for Denver schools to "provide equal educational opportunities for all children."

Noel's resolution came 14 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, which struck down the racially segregated schools that were alleged to be (but were patently not) "separate but equal." Her resolution came four years after the Civil Rights Act.

In such a time and place, Noel's efforts should have been non-controversial. They weren't. Like many who stand for equality, she was vilified. Her resolution generated a court battle and a Supreme Court decision that has been characterized as a model for desegregation.

Though she is usually remembered for her groundbreaking work in Denver schools, Noel is also an important figure in the annals of CU. She was appointed to be a CU regent in 1976 by then-Gov. Dick Lamm, thus becoming the first African American to serve on that board. She was elected to a six-year term in 1978.

Together with former Regent Sandy Kraemer, a moderate Republican, Noel urged the university to become more aggressive in its efforts to recruit and retain non-white students.

That work is not yet finished. Ethnic-minority groups are still under-represented at CU. Were it not for the work begun by Noel decades ago, the goal of equity and diversity would be even farther from our reach.

Rachel Noel's DPS resolution was precipitated, she once told the Associated Press, by the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "When King died, rhetoric no longer seemed adequate," she said in 1981.

"I felt that, being in a position of decision-making, I owed it to him to act. I hoped nothing but good would come out of it."

A great deal of good came of it. Her devotion to effective action clearly guided Noel's service at CU. It is still the case that well-meaning rhetoric is not enough. Enterprises of great pitch and moment require complementary action. That is a

lesson from the well-spent life of Rachel B. Noel.

Clint Talbott, for the editorial board

9 News

Monday, February 4, 2008

Beef pulled from school lunch menus

written by: [Jeffrey Wolf](#)

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DENVER – Several school districts across the metro area are not serving beef this week.

Schools in Colorado and around the country are not using meat from the Westland Meat Company because of a Humane Society undercover investigation. It revealed the meat was coming from abused cattle called "downer cows."

The Humane Society says there is an increased risk of disease in the meat that comes from cows too sick to stand for slaughter.

Denver Public Schools says it will serve chicken instead of beef and will not serve the beef until it receives more instructions. Jefferson County and Douglas County Schools have also pulled beef from school lunch menus.