

Remembering the desegregation of Tulane

September 30, 2014 11:00 AM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin
aduples@tulane.edu



Pearlie Hardin Elloie, left, and Barbara Guillory Thompson visit the Tulane uptown campus in summer 2013, 50 years after they entered the university. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In the September 2013 issue of *Tulane* magazine, the stories of Barbara Guillory Thompson and Pearlie Elloie, the plaintiffs on the lawsuit to desegregate Tulane University 50 years ago, were told in a feature article titled “The Desegregation of a University.”

Below is an excerpt from the magazine article.

Thompson, who had already obtained a bachelor's degree from Dillard University and a master's degree from Louisiana State University, sought admission to the PhD program in sociology at Tulane University while Elloie, who also had earned a bachelor's degree from Dillard, wished to pursue a master's degree in social work.

In their minds, they were simply two highly qualified women with an interest in furthering their education. Having their role serve a larger purpose was lagniappe.

Today, both women agree it was a win-win situation.

“One of my college professors came to me and Barbara and talked about this group of good people who wanted to force Tulane to open its doors,” Elloie said. “I said fine because it met their needs and it met mine. I just happened to be there at the right time.”

Confident that her decision to participate in the lawsuit was the correct thing to do, Elloie said she still could not bring herself to tell her parents, who lived in Houston, the truth about what she was a part of. Since neither of the women was required to make court appearances, it wasn't until the first day of school that their families were able to register the reality of what had transpired.

“I downplayed the whole Tulane thing to my mother and father because I felt like my mother would have been fearful for my safety,” Elloie said. “Fortunately, Tulane turned out to be a great experience. And it opened doors for so many others to experience it as well.”

Read the full article [here](#).

The [culminating event](#) of a year-long commemoration of the 1963 desegregation of Tulane will feature Lani Guinier, the first African American woman to be appointed a tenured professor at Harvard Law School. The event is scheduled for Wednesday (Oct. 1) at 6:30 p.m. in the Lavin-Bernick Center on the Tulane uptown campus.

"I downplayed the whole Tulane thing to my mother and father because I felt like my mother would have been fearful for my safety."

- Pearlle Elloie