

Trenton Must Show Cause For Its Jim Crow School

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TRENTON, Sept. 18.—Trenton's Negro population of some 10,000 residents has won its first round in a legal battle to break the City's 20-year-old Jim Crow policy of segregating Negro children in local junior high schools.

Negro children in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades are restricted to the New Lincoln Junior High School, and are barred from attending Trenton's four other junior high schools.

As a result of action taken by parents of two Negro children, Supreme Court Justice Newton H. Porter has ordered the Trenton Board of Education to show cause Oct. 4 why the two children should not be assigned to Junior High School No. 2, one of the schools restricted to white pupils.

Two Petitions

Backed by the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People and its Trenton attorney, Robert Queen, the action was brought by Mrs. Gladys Hedgepath, a native of Trenton working in a war plant and mother of two sons in the armed forces, and Mrs. Berline Williams.

In separate petitions, Mrs. Hedgepath and Mrs. Williams charge that their children are excluded from Junior High No. 2 specifically because of color, and that such action is a violation of the State Civil Rights Act. The petitions also charge that New Lincoln Junior High, which was built in 1922 at the time the Jim Crow policy was put into effect, is overcrowded and offers a substandard curriculum.

Mrs. Hedgepath charges further that her daughter, Janet, 12, has been unable to pursue commercial studies since the New Lincoln Junior High offers only a straight academic course. No. 2's curriculum, however, includes a commercial program.

Walks 16 Blocks

Mrs. Williams' petition says that her son, Leon, 13, is forced to walk 16 blocks to the Negro school, although the white school No. 2, is only three blocks from her home.

Paul Loser, Trenton School Superintendent, told PM that he had not been advised of the court order, but admitted that the Board of Education ruled in 1922 that "Negro children of junior high school age shall be assigned to the New Lincoln School."

Beyond that, Loser offered no explanation of why Negro children in Trenton are segregated in the junior high school grades.