

### **Article of the Week (AoW) Directions**

1. Mark up your confusion – either highlighting or underlining
2. Mark up the text. Annotate the article with comments, questions, inferences, etc. You can use a variety of sentences, phrases, or symbols to show your thinking.
3. Write a developed paragraph response to one of the prompts below.

## **Georgia school hosts first racially integrated prom**

Source: Jamie Gumbrecht/CNN/April 4, 2014

Last week, for the first time in decades, students from Wilcox County, Georgia, attended a school-sponsored prom that was open to all students rather than a private, racially segregated prom.

For decades, Wilcox County High School hadn't hosted a prom for its 400 students. Instead, parents and their children organized private, off-site, racially segregated parties known to most as "white prom" and "black prom." After students planned their own integrated dance last year, school leaders announced they would sponsor the school's first prom -- and it would be open to everyone.

"Everything went off without a hitch," Wilcox County schools Superintendent Steve Smith said this week -- just as he expected.

The last official school proms were held in Wilcox County decades ago, before schools were racially integrated, community members said. Wilcox County and many other schools in the Deep South canceled proms and homecoming dances in the early years of integration, and in some places, private, segregated proms became the local tradition. (The school has long hosted Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps balls, which were racially integrated and open to all JROTC members.)

In 2013, a group of Wilcox County students organized an integrated prom open to white, black, Latino and Asian students. Organizers, both black and white, faced backlash from some community members who disliked the change -- or the crush of media attention it brought. The event made Wilcox County the butt of late-night TV jokes, but also drew thousands of supporters on social media, plus donated cash, dresses and DJ services.

Wilcox County is not the only place with a history of racially segregated proms. In the 2009 documentary "Prom Night in Mississippi," director Paul Saltzman followed the preparations for the first integrated prom in Charleston, Mississippi. Actor Morgan Freeman, a native of the area, offered in 1997 to cover the cost if the school board would hold an integrated prom, but the offer wasn't accepted till 2008.

Last year, many community members said they'd support an integrated prom, or a school-sponsored prom -- it's just that old traditions are tough to change.

Last year, it took a group of students, attention on social media and the support of the NAACP, parents and community members to make it happen.

"If we're all together and we love each other the way we say we do, then there are no issues," Wilcox County graduate Mareshia Rucker said last year after helping to organize the student-led integrated prom. "This is something that should have happened a long time ago."

**Respond to one of the following prompts. Use the back of this paper.**

1. Why do you think it took so long for the change to happen?
2. Choose a word, sentence, or passage and respond to it.