ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: "THE SCHOOLS ARE KILLING OUR KIDS!" THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FIGHT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1949-1985

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This dissertation examines a grassroots movement led by black Bostonians to achieve racial justice, quality education, and community empowerment in the Boston Public Schools during the postwar period. From the late 1940s through the early 1980s black parents, teachers, and students employed a wide-range of strategies in pursuit of these goals including staging school boycotts, creating freedom schools, establishing independent alternative schools, lobbying for legislation, forming parent and youth groups, and organizing hundreds of grassroots organizations. At the heart of this movement was a desire to improve the quality of education afforded to black youth and to expand the power of black Bostonians in educational governance. This dissertation demonstrates that desegregation and community control were not mutually exclusive goals or strategies of black educational activism. I examine the evolution of the goals, ideology, and strategy of this movement over the course of more than three decades in response to shifts in the national and local political climate. This work traces the close ties between this local movement in Boston and broader movements for racial and social

justice unfolding across the nation in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. Most importantly, my dissertation puts this movement in conversation with a broader national project of various marginalized groups in the postwar period to radically transform the institutions of democracy.

This dissertation challenges a well-known narrative of civil rights and school desegregation in Boston in this period. This story of the so-called Boston "busing crisis" focuses on white resistance, a narrow period of time in the mid-1970s, and court-ordered desegregation. In the rare instances in which black Bostonians are included in this narrative it is as victims or apathetic bystanders. The rhetoric of "busing," particularly the framing of opposition to desegregation as "anti-busing," obscured and continues to obscure the more complex racial politics driving the opposition to the integration of the Boston Public Schools. My scholarship brings light to a much broader and more nuanced history of racial politics in Boston and demonstrates that we cannot understand the period of court-ordered desegregation without examining the decades of grassroots activism which preceded it.

“THE SCHOOLS ARE KILLING OUR KIDS!”: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FIGHT FOR SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1949-1985

by

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Contents

Abbreviations

BAQE	Black Advocates for Quality Education
BBURG	Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group
BEAM	Black Educators Association of Massachusetts
BHA	Boston Housing Authority
BPG	Boardman Parents Group
BPS	Boston Public Schools
BRA	Boston Redevelopment Authority
BSC	Boston School Committee
BSF	Black Student Federation
BUF	Black United Front
CAP	Community Action Program
CCC	Citywide Coordinating Council
CCIP	Community Crisis Intervention Program
CDAC	Community District Advisory Council
CEC	Community Education Council
CHPA	Concerned Higginson Parents Association
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CPAC	Citywide Parents Advisory Council
CPC	Citywide Parents Council
DPC	District Parent Council
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act

FHA	Federal Housing Administration
FHISE	Freedom House Institute for Schools and Education
HEW	Department of Health, Education and Welfare
HOLC	Home Owners Loan Corporation
HSA	Home and School Association
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
MCAD	Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NSM	Northern Student Movement
REPC	Racial Ethnic Parent Council
RIA	Racial Imbalance Act
RNDPA	Roxbury North Dorchester Parents and Association
ROAR	Restore Our Alien Rights
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SEPC	Student Ethnic Parent Council
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SPC	School Parent Council
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association

Introduction: The Origins of the Movement, 1647-1948

"When we fight about education, we're fighting for our lives. We're fighting for what that education will give us, we're fighting for a job, we're fighting to eat, we're fighting to pay our medical bills. This is a total fight with us."

Ruth Batson, 1988[1]

Describing the landmark school desegregation case, *Morgan v. Hennigan* which ordered the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools in 1974 activist Thomas Atkins said;

> The decision to file the lawsuit in federal court was essentially a decision of last resort. We tried everything else. Black parents were committed to doing whatever had to be done to get our children out of schools we were convinced were killing them. We met with the school administrators. We met with the School Committee. We met with the superintendent. Nothing. We got a state law passed in 1965, the Racial Imbalance Law. No sooner was it passed when it became clear that it was going to be impossible virtually to apply and implement it in Boston. We started boycotting the schools. We started using the open enrollment system. Operation Exodus was formed. METCO was formed to take kids outside the Boston school system. The Bridge Program was formed to take kids to private schools. Anything we could do we'd try. We created a whole new school, the Massachusetts Experimental School with state funding. By 1972, it was clear that in terms of dealing with the problems of most of the kids in the Black community, nothing short of a suit in federal court would work and that's why it was filed.[2]

As a longtime activist in this movement, the first African American to serve on the Boston City Council, and Associate Trial Counsel for the plaintiffs in *Morgan,* Atkins had a keen understanding of the city's black education movement and its racial politics.[3]

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[1] Ruth Batson, interview with Jackie Shearer, November 8, 1988, Eyes on the Prize Interviews, Washington University.

[2] Thomas Atkins, interview with Jackie Shearer, October 11, 1988, Eyes on the Prize Interviews, Washington University.

[3] Atkins served as Executive Secretary of the Boston NAACP from 1963 to 1965, served two terms as the city's first African American City Council Member from1967 to 1971, served as Secretary for Communities and Development from 1971 to 1974 which made him the first African American cabinet member in Massachusetts, was Associate Trial Counsel in *Morgan*, and was elected NAACP Boston Branch President in December, 1975.

Atkins frames the desegregation suit as one of the many approaches employed by black activists and a "decision of last resort" in a decades-long movement. As he suggests, by the time *Morgan* was filed in 1972 activists had experimented with nearly every political philosophy and strategy imaginable in pursuit of racial justice in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) and it was this prior work which made the case possible and successful. His statement shows that it is impossible to fully understand the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools, and the responses to it in the mid-1970s without an exploration of the decades of grassroots black educational activism that preceded it.

Atkins' portrait of *Morgan* as a part of a multi-decade campaign for racial justice in the schools stands in stark contrast to a much more well-known narrative of school desegregation in Boston. This story usually begins in 1974 with Judge Arthur Garrity's ruling in *Morgan* and focuses on the violent resistance of white Bostonians to desegregation and the role of the courts in making change. It presents the history of Boston school desegregation as an example of the ironic failure of liberalism in a city which was a symbol of democracy and educational excellence. It is fixated on the use of buses as a method of desegregation, which has given life to phrases like "busing in Boston" or the "Boston busing crisis."[4] The rhetoric of "busing," particularly the framing of opposition to desegregation as "anti-busing," obscured and continues to obscure the more complex racial politics driving the opposition to the integration of the Boston Public Schools.

[4] The phrase "busing in Boston" or the "Boston busing crisis" were and continue to be used with great regularity in both popular and academic spheres. Without exception however, every African American activist, parent, or student who I spoke with regarding the movement, rejected the term and emphatically stated that the *bus* was not the core issue at stake in the movement, rather it was the denial of a quality education to African Americans.

Contrary to Atkins' statement which highlights the determined political activism of black Bostonians, this storyline is characterized by its near total erasure of black Bostonians. In the rare instances when African Americans are mentioned, it is as passive victims or apathetic bystanders. This trope of the movement is embodied by a handful of frequently cited images of the "busing crisis." Photographs of frenzied mobs of white protestors gathered menacingly around crowds of black school children serve as provocative visual shorthand for what happened in Boston. The most famous example of this is the photograph "Soiling Old Glory" which pictures an "anti-busing" protestor attacking an African American man with an American flag on City Hall Plaza.[5]

Figure 1. Soiling of Old Glory, 1974[6]

[5] "The Soiling of Old Glory," photographed by Stanley Foreman on April 5, 1976, depicts white anti-integration protestor Joseph Rakes attempting to attack African American lawyer Theodore Landsmark with an American flag during an anti-desegregation rally on Boston's City Hall Plaza. Foreman received a Pulitzer-Prize for this work. See Louis Masur, *The Soiling of Old Glory: The Story of the Photograph that Shocked America* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008).
[6] Stanley Foreman, "The Soiling of Old Glory," April 5, 1976.

Figure 2. Protestors Surround School Buses

This narrative has gained a strong foothold in the public memory thanks to an enormous body of historical work and media accounts which recount this captivatingly tragic busing saga. The most well-known of these is Anthony Lukas' Pulitzer Prize monograph *Common Ground* which follows the lives of three Boston families during the period of court-ordered desegregation. Although widely considered *the* story of what happened in Boston, former activists and a small number of scholars have issued scathing critiques of Lukas' work. Ruth Batson, leader of the black education movement for over four decades, captured the sentiment of many black Bostonians in response to *Common Ground* when she wrote, "JOHN ANTHONY LUKAS STOLE OUR MOVEMENT. The book completely leaves out the struggle that was carried out for so many years by Black activists in Boston [emphasis in original]." She continued, "When the book was first published, many of us who had labored long and hard in the battle for educational equity felt as if we had been cut off at our knees."[7] Lukas' work is joined by a number of other works including Ronald Formisano's *Boston Against Busing* and Alan Lupo's *Liberty's*

[7] Ruth M. Batson, *The Black Educational Movement: A Sequence of Historical Events*: *A Chronology* (Boston: Northeastern University, School of Education), 11.

Chosen Home.[8] These works overwhelmingly ignore the black activism in the schools, present *Morgan* as driven by the action of the courts, and portray class as the most important factor in the conflicts of the mid-1970s, at the expense of an interrogation of race and racial politics. In the rare instances in which these works do engage with black protest, it is described as motivated by a desire to place black children into white classrooms and adheres to the argument of white protestors that desegregation was a zero-sum game.[9]

Atkins's and Batson's comments point to a rich history of black educational activism which exists just beneath the surface of the busing narrative. This dissertation explores black Bostonians' fight for community empowerment and racial equity in the Boston Public Schools and the evolution of this movement from 1949 to 1985. Activists employed a wide range of strategies including staging school boycotts, forming parent school groups, and establishing independent schools in their fight to create a racially just

[8] *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Knopf, 1985). *Common Ground* was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1986 for its depiction of Boston school desegregation, was made into a television movie, and was also the recipient of the National Book Critics Circle Award and the American Book Award. It remains highly celebrated in both popular and scholarly circles, with the exception of black activists and a small number of sharp critiques by scholars—most notably Jeanne Theoharis. See also Robert Dentler, "Boston School Desegregation: The Fallowness of Common Ground," *New England Journal of Public Policy* Vol.2, No.1 (1986). Dentler was a court-appointed expert in *Morgan* involved in crafting desegregation plans. There is a large body of work which is very similar to *Common Ground*. They overwhelmingly zoom in on a narrow period of time in the mid-1970s, present "busing" as the core issue in this movement, highlight (and in some cases seek to rationalize) white resistance and violence (also erasing white Bostonians who did support desegregation), ignore the issue of race or racism, and as Jeanne Theoharis has put it, "present black as recipients of the court's largesse, as opposed to the organizing force which made the court's take up the issue in the first place." Perhaps most importantly they present school desegregation as a failed, foolish, and ultimately unnecessary project. This final point has had major implications for educational politics in the decades since. Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 64. See Ronald Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1991); Emmett H., Jr. Buell and Richard A. Brisbin, Jr., *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods: The Boston Controversy* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1982); Jon Hillson, *The Battle of Boston* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977); Alan Lupo, *Liberty's Chosen Home: The Politics of Violence in Boston* (Boston: Little Brown, 1977); Ione Malloy, *Southie Won't Go: A Teacher's Diary of the Desegregation of South Boston* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); George Metcalf, *From Little Rock to Boston*: *The History of School Desegregation* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983); Pamela Bullard and Judith Stoia, *The Hardest Lesson: Personal Stories of a School Desegregation Crisis* (Boston: Little Brown, 1982).

[9] See especially Formisano.

public education system in which citizens held decision-making power. At the core of my work is an examination of this vision of educational self-determination and its implications for the city's political processes and institutions—including its schools.

My dissertation builds upon a small but important body of works that explore this movement. Several works by activists including Ruth Batson and Mel King have sought to recover this history of grassroots black activism and challenge the busing narrative embodied by Lukas' work. A small body of historians have also explored this movement, most notably several Jeanne Theoharis and late historian Gerald Gill, both of whom also challenge the *Common Ground* story.[10] Gill's works seek to recover the foundational years of the movement of the 1940s and 1950s, while Theoharis' highlights the leadership of black women and the ways in which the story of Boston's black education movement challenges our understandings of the broader civil rights movement.

My dissertation builds on these works—offering a full-length study of the movement which is grounded in the context of the national black freedom movement and postwar urban history, expanding its chronology to examine the dynamic evolution of the movement over the course of more than thirty years, and examining the impact of the vision of educational self-determination on the city's educational and political structures. It explores the process of building a grassroots movement for racial democracy in the

[10] See Batson, *The Black Educational Movement in Boston*; Gerald Gill, "Struggling Yet 'In Freedom's Birthplace'—the Civil Rights Movement in Boston," unpublished paper; James Jennings and Melvin H. King, *From Access to Power: Black Politics in Boston* (Boston: Shenkman Books, 1986); Polly Welts Kaufman, "Building a Constituency for School Desegregation: African American Women in Boston, 1962-1972," *Teachers College Record* 92 (1991): 619-631; Melvin H. King, *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development.* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Jeanne Theoharis, "I'd Rather Go to School in the South": How Boston's School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm," In Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); and Theoharis, "We Saved the City': Black Struggles for Educational Equality, 1960-1976," *Radical History Review*, 81 (Fall 2001): 61-94. Despite these works the narrative of Boston busing remains very dominant.

Boston Public Schools as a way to understand the ways in which racial change happens in urban education. Most importantly, my dissertation puts this movement in conversation with a broader national project of various marginalized groups in the postwar period to radically transform the institutions of democracy.[11]

Challenging a portrayal of desegregation as the primary goal of black educational activism in the postwar period, my dissertation shows that a desire for educational self-determination—defined as the ability of citizens to shape their own educational destinies—was the central objective and intellectual principle guiding this movement. Activists pushed for the creation of a more responsive and participatory educational system which empowered African American citizens to directly shape school policy and practice. Questioning the entitlement of elected officials and formally credentialed policy "experts" to make decisions on behalf of the people, black Bostonians asserted the right of community people to be equal partners with school officials in educational delivery. This vision challenged a central tenet of representative democracies that elected officials held the power to make decisions on behalf of the people. Black Bostonians refused to allow school officials to act on their behalf —asserting that they possessed the skills and knowledge to lead their own institutions. In this way black Bostonians challenged a deeply ingrained practice of American political culture and modern bureaucracies of valuing formal markers of expertise and credentials above the lived experiences of non-elected officials.[12]

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[11] Peniel E. Joseph, "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* (December 2009), 775.

[12] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, translated by Ephraim Fischoff et al. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 993. Weber argues that the valuing of so-called "official knowledge" within bureaucracy is a central means by which modern societies and have created social, political, and economic hierarchies. His arguments regarding the role of expertise in modern bureaucracy offer a very useful and interesting frame through which to understand the black education movement in

Black Bostonians' education movement had tremendous import for the role of African American citizens in the city's civic life and the nature of municipal governance. By the mid-twentieth century, Boston's political system was anything but democratic. This was an exclusionary, parochial system of ethnic patronage politics which barred black Bostonians from nearly all positions of public power. By questioning the entitlement of elected officials and formally credentialed policy "experts" to make decisions on behalf of black citizens in the schools, activists were making a claim for expanded power for black Bostonians in *all* aspects of the public sphere. The radicalism of Black Bostonians' educational movement and vision lay in this desire to affect transformative social, political, and cultural change—beginning, but not ending with the schools. The movement's potential to alter the balance of power in the city at large can be most clearly seen in the virulence of its opposition.

Activists believed that all black citizens had the right and expertise to directly shape all aspects of school practice. This included everything from curriculum and educational materials, to the selection of faculty and administrators, to dress and behavioral codes. Among its most direct applications was the creation of independent community-controlled schools. However, it also manifested itself in demands for the addition of black studies courses, the revision of student testing practices, and the representation of black parents on school governing bodies.

Boston. The bureaucratic system required officials to possess expertise in specific topics considered crucial to administrative management, which could only be gained through formal training and marked them as experts. These expert officials attempt to consolidate their new found power by limiting the number of people with degrees and withholding information about the nature of their work from the general public, and even from other parts of the State. "Bureaucracy naturally prefers a poorly informed, and hence powerless, parliament—at least insofar as this ignorance is compatible with the bureaucracy's own interests." Weber makes a powerful argument that the "expertise" culture that grew out of bureaucracies served to create larger separations between people and thus create a less egalitarian society.

Tracing the evolution of this vision of educational self-determination over the course of more than three decades, my dissertation reveals an incredibly dynamic process of political learning which took place in Boston. Across time and organization, activists' vision of educational self-determination remained remarkably constant, however the political forms which it took and the strategies activists employed in its pursuit changed considerably. For instance, in the early 1960s activists' argued that black Bostonians had the right and unique expertise to be involved in the selection of a new school superintendent. Less than five years later, activists invoked a similar vision and language in their arguments for the value of alternative community-controlled schools. My dissertation traces the ways in which changes in the local and national political and economic climate, demographics, and the nature of opposition drove these strategic shifts. In addition to shaping their movement in response to these external forces, activists' drew upon past experiences in the movement as they made decisions about where to go next and how to achieve these goals. For instance, fierce resistance from school officials to integration, expanded federal support through the War on Poverty, and the ideologies of Black Power created a perfect storm for the creation of the community-controlled schools in the mid-to-late 1960s. But by the early-1970s activists refocused their efforts within the Boston Public Schools in light of the financial struggles of these schools and building legislative momentum for school desegregation in cities across the country.

The evolution of the Boston movement elucidates the ways in which the Boston movement engaged with, influenced, and was influenced by the national black freedom movement. In their demands for educational self-determination, black Bostonians were

linked to a broader national project for racial autonomy taking place in the postwar period. In their assertions of the educational expertise of black Bostonians, activists in Boston were in conversation with a political vision put forward by civil rights leaders like Ella Baker and Septima Clark who celebrated the right and capacity of the people to lead their communities and movements.[13] Likewise, student activists who formed a Black Student Federation in the early 1970s cited the influence of Black Power and Nationalism and the Black Arts Movement. Boston activists were directly engaged with the national struggle as shown by events such as a September 22, 1963 "March on Roxbury" in which 10,000 black Bostonians marched in protest of school segregation—echoing the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom less than one month prior.[14] Activists like Ruth Batson travelled outside Boston to participate in other campaigns across the country and exchanged ideas with other fronts in the movement.[15]

Looking beyond solely legal appeals and desegregation suits, my dissertation offers an expanded framework for what constitutes educational activism. Activists employed an incredibly diverse body of strategies which included forming tutoring programs and independent schools, staging school boycotts and creating freedom schools, lobbying for legislative reforms, and establishing parent advocacy groups. My definition

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[13] See Katherine Mellon Charron, *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[14] On June 26, 2,000 black Bostonians took part in a Medgar Evers Memorial March on the Common. Batson, *Black Educational Movement*.

[15] One particularly powerful example of this is Ruth Batson's involvement in the "Wednesdays in Mississippi" project—a program started by the National Council of Negro Women which brought northern women of different races to Mississippi on a weekly basis for Wednesday workshops. The program helped give birth to a number of important economic and social programs targeting racial inequality including the Fannie Lou Hamer Daycare Center. "Wednesdays in Mississippi: Civil Rights as Women's Work: Breaking Down Human Barriers and Mobilizing Women, an exhibit website," developed by Virginia Center for Digital History, http://www.history.uh.edu/cph/WIMS/, accessed February 12, 2013; "Journey of Terror, Triumph," *Boston Herald*, January 17, 1985.

of educational activism is not limited to actions that took place within the physical walls of the school building. Rather, I show that educational activism took place in the homes, neighborhoods and city streets, community centers, and recreational spaces.[16] This definition shows that the goal of black educational activism, from Boston to Hyde County, North Carolina was not to seat black children next to whites in classrooms, but to claim black citizens' right to shape their educational institutions.[17]

Organizing Tradition

The black education movement in Boston was grounded in a grassroots organizing tradition defined by several key characteristics; the formation of institutions, parents as key drivers of political action, personal experiences and commitments as central forces in shaping political action, and a high degree of interpersonal and institutional interconnectedness. These organizing principles served as the foundation of the movement from the 1940s through the late 1970s. As they experimented with new strategies and grappled with changing local and national conditions, activists turned time and again to these core principles to guide their movement.

Drawing upon a tradition of institutional formation in black politics, activists in Boston formed a myriad of organizations throughout this movement and relied heavily on these institutional homes. These organizations served as political "greenhouses" for

[16] My thinking along these lines has been greatly influenced by several works on African American women's activism and the politics of family and parenthood including; Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Dayo Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard. eds., *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle.* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Sara Rzueszutek, "Love and Activism: James and Esther Cooper Jackson and Black Freedom Movements in the United States, 1914-1968" (Ph.D Dissertation, Rutgers: The State University of New Jersey, 2009).

[17] See David Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). Du Bois articulated a similar argument to those made by black parents in Hyde County and Boston nearly fifty years later. "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" *Journal of Negro Education* Vol. 4, No. 3 (July 1935).

young activists—serving as a space in which they could hone their political skills, fostering a sense of collective community consciousness, and providing the material resources necessary to keeping the movement running on a daily basis. These community organizations were particularly important in Boston given the city's small black population which limited its economic and electoral power, particularly prior to 1960. Of particular importance was Freedom House, which served as a hub for the movement for more than thirty-five years. Black parent school groups were also key—serving as an entrée for many black Bostonians to the movement, mobilizing the base, and exposing the abysmal conditions in majority black schools. The value of these institutions was heightened by the fact that activists forged strong linkages between them through which they pooled resources, crafted strategy, and shared experiences and challenges. These networks brought together both grassroots organizations as well local and national bodies and frequently spanned strategic and ideological divides.

Personal experiences and intimate concerns drove the intellectual, emotional, and organizational development of grassroots racial politics in postwar Boston. Nearly every activist who participated in the education movement in Boston traced that decision back to a personal encounter with injustice. Teachers joined the movement when they couldn't provide books or pencils for their students. Parents joined the movement when they saw the horrific overcrowding and terrible physical conditions of their children's schools. Students joined the movement when they were suspended for wearing a Dashiki to class or demanding a course in Black history. These personal encounters with educational injustice fed the fire of activists' emotional commitment to the movement, which was crucial to keeping it alive for over three decades. Additionally, community activists'

shared personal experiences with inequality also fostered the development of strong emotional bonds between participants which provided sustenance to participants in the face of constant repression. The combination of these strong institutional networks and the centrality of personal experience was the creation of a movement which was defined by a remarkable degree of interconnectedness.

African American parents were often the first to voice discontent with the schools and they expressed their desire for improvement in educational conditions early and often through meetings with school officials and the formation of parent groups. These local bodies often served as the base for the creation of citywide networks, as was the case with a group of African American women in Roxbury who created the Concerned Higginson Parents Association in the early 1960s. Parents offered some of the most forceful and clear articulations of the vision of educational self-determination—asserting their right to be equal partners in educational governance not in spite of, but because of, their insights as caregivers.

This was a movement defined by the leadership of black women. Although many African American women labored behind-the-scenes at the grassroots level, a number of women also occupied highly visible positions of leadership. Women like Melnea Cass, Muriel Snowden, Ruth Batson, Ellen Jackson, and Barbara Elam were major players in every aspect of the movement—shaping strategy, crafting political philosophy, and going head-to-head with city school officials. African American women played particularly prominent roles in dozens of parent groups which sprung up citywide over the course of the movement. In their activism, black women like Batson and Jackson both drew upon and defied traditional gender roles. African American women often employed maternalist

rhetoric—arguing that their roles and experiences as mothers uniquely qualified them to shape school practice and assume positions of educational leadership. But, they also framed their position in the movement in more gender neutral language on the basis of their rights as citizens. For instance, black women organized both along gender specific lines such as Roxbury "mother's group" working as volunteers in their children's classrooms and the advocacy group "Women in Politics" and alongside their male counterparts in organizations like the NAACP and Freedom House. A statement issued by the members of Women in Politics in 1967 provides a useful summary of the ways in which black women employed gender to frame their activism. They said, "Although living in a society admittedly racist and sexist, black women have never faltered in their efforts to bring this country to the realization of its original principles based on one nation, indivisible and with liberty and justice for all."[18] And yet despite the tremendously important role which women like Batson, Jackson, Snowden played as *the* leaders of this movement, they are largely absent from accounts of this movement. In the rare instances in which the organizing of black Bostonians is mentioned, it is usually of male leaders.[19]

Historiography

A new generation of scholarship has transformed our understandings of the chronology, goals, geography, and actors of the civil rights movement. As Jeanne Theoharis writes, these works bring to light a movement which was "led by local people

[18] "Women in Politics Members," Box 2, Folder 7, Papers of Ruth Batson (hereafter: "Batson"), Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University (hereafter: "Schlesinger"). Members included Ruth Batson, Lana Brennan, Pat Brennan, Mary Berger, Jo Bertelsen, Dr. Erna Ballentine Bryant, Audrey Butler, Dorris Curry, Gwynne Dilday, Ramona Edelin, Jeanne Gallo, Dr. Patricia Goler, Ellen Jackson, Elizabeth "Betty" Johnson, Kay Nurse, Marlene McIlvane, Hazel McFerson, Dr. Bernice Miller, Doris Mitchell, Dr. Patricia Morse, Helen Rees, Ann Stutz, Sylvia Simmons, Dee Swann, and Shelia Wilson.
[19] See Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 64.

in communities across the country that began in the 1940s and 1950s and extended through the 1970s, married self-defense with nonviolent direct action," and "relied on organizing and ground-level theorizing of local problems as well as charisma and national organizations."[20]

In recent decades, a tremendous body of scholarship has expanded the geographic boundaries of the black freedom movement far beyond the South and the period from 1954 to 1968.[21] Works by scholars including Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Jeanne Theoharis, Komozi Woodard, and Matthew Lassiter among many others, have been instrumental in challenging a notion of either racial protest or racism strictly as southern phenomenon and of northern activism as a failed spin-off of the southern movement. As this scholarship has shown, attention to freedom struggles outside the South also highlights the goals of the movement beyond the desegregation of public places and in doing so highlights its unfinished business, as well as its accomplishments.[22]

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[20] Jeanne Theoharis, "Black Freedom Studies: Re-imagining and Redefining the Essentials." *History Compass* Vol. 4, No. 2 (2006): 348-367.

[21] For an example of a narrative of the movement which focuses on the South and the period from 1954 to 1968 see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming* (New York: Viking, 2001); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988). Carson writes, "The spontaneous urban uprisings of 1968 ended an era of black struggle, for unlike earlier rebellions involving SNCC and Southern blacks, they dissipated quickly when confronted by powerful institutions."

[22] Recent work challenging the 1954 to 1968 southern frame of civil rights include Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005); Theoharis, "Black Freedom Studies"; Theoharis and Woodard, eds., *Freedom North; The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, Matthew Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, eds. (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 20090; Greta De Jong, *A Different Day: African American Struggles for justice in Rural Louisiana. 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Charles M. Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); Beth Tompkins Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). See also Charles Payne and Adam Green, eds., *Time Longer than Rope: A Century of African American Activism, 1850-1950* (New York: New York University Press, 2003). The "long movement" interpretation is not without its critics. See Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial

Case studies and biographies have both proven effective tools in expanding our understanding of a longer arc of civil rights activism outside of the South.[23] Although not a biographical study, my dissertation includes a number of activist "life histories" which provide concrete examples of what civil rights activism looked like in spaces outside the South and the "classical" phase of the movement. Rejecting the standard Boston narratives' focus on court-ordered desegregation in the mid-1970s, I trace the evolution of black educational activism from the late 1940s through the early 1980s. Although my study is focused on the period after WWII, it is also attentive to the ways in which the contemporary movement was shaped by African American educational activism dating back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In its examination of an incredibly rich period of educational activism from the late 1960s through the late 1970s my work challenges a narrative of the civil rights movement which depict the period after 1968 as one of decline, disorder, and growing apathy from African Americans. My study of Boston demonstrates how an expansion of the geographical frame of the movement also shows that the goals of black educational activism were not limited to desegregation but rather connected to broader struggles for political power.

Among the most tremendous advancements in the field of civil rights history has been the burst of scholarship focused on the activism of local people. In recent decades

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Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of African American History* Vol. 92, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 265. Cha-Jua and Lang argue that the "long movement" approach "collapses periodization schemas, erases conceptual differences between waves of the BLM [Black Liberation Movement], and blurs regional distinctions in the African American experience."

[23] See Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Patrick Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Adina Back, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth': The Harlem Nine and New York City's School Desegregation Battles", in eds. Theoharis and Woodard, *Freedom North*, 65-92. Biondi argues that in their pursuit of political sovereignty and racial equality, activists embraced philosophies of integration and Black Nationalism. Although seemingly contradictory ideologies these labels were largely irrelevant in the lives of people.

scholars include Charles Payne, William Chafe, John Dittmer and others have brought light to the political labors of black citizens who worked at the grassroots level to make the movement a reality. These works have provided a much more nuanced and broader portrait of civil rights politics—its strategies, its actors, and its intellectual underpinnings. They have shown that movements do not just happen—rather major protest events like the March on Washington or accomplishments like *Brown* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were a product of decades of careful, difficult, and often dangerous organizing work.[24]

Through its exploration of the activism of black Bostonians and their claims for expanded power in the schools, my research builds upon this effort to center the politics of local people. Scholarship has shown that local people figured centrally in the movement and my study builds on that by fleshing out the operation of racial protest politics. Despite this explosion of scholarship on local people's activism, there remains a lack of work on the activism of African American youth. In recent years a growing number of scholars have explored the politics of black college students, but few works focus on the political work of elementary and high school-aged youth.[25] My work centers

[24] See Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*; John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Wiliam H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980); Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984). The publication of John Dittmer's *Local People* and Charles Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom* marked a major shift in the historiography of the civil rights movement towards local people's activism and grassroots black freedom movements. For a biographical approach see Barbara Ransby *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*. Ransby uses biography rather than a local study to examine how Baker conceptualized the role of local people in the movement. See also Steven Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America since 1941* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991) and Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968* (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield, 1998).

[25] Recent excellent works on black student activism on college campuses include Peniel E. Joseph, "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement," *Journal of African American History*, Vol. 88, No. 2 (Spring 2003): 182-203; Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Wayne Glasker, *Black Students in the Ivory Tower: African American Student*

the activism of black youth activists in Boston who demanded a better quality, and more responsive educational system and a larger role in school governance in various campaigns.

In recent years, scholars have greatly expanded and complicated our understanding of Black Power, civil rights, and the relationship between the two.[26] Scholars have challenged an older narrative which frames Black Power and civil rights as chronologically, geographically, and ideologically distinct and diametrically opposed phases of the black freedom movement to reveal a considerably more nuanced and complicated story of twentieth century black activism.[27] Peniel Joseph has challenged the portrait of Black Power as the angry, violent, anti-democratic evil-twin of the civil rights movement framing it instead as part of the ongoing quest of African Americans to remake the practice and institutions of American democracy.[28] Likewise, in his biography

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Activism at the University of Pennsylvania , 1967-1990 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009); Stefan M. Bradley, *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the late 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009). Three very notable exceptions to this focus on black college students rather than younger activists' are, V.P. Franklin, "Black High School Student Activism: An Urban Phenomenon?" *Journal of Research in Education* 10 (Fall 2008); Jon Hale, *The Freedom Schools: A History of Student Activists on the Frontlines of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement* (Forthcoming); Dione Danns, "Chicago High School Students' Movement for Quality Public Education, 1966-1971," *Journal of African American History* Vol. 8, No. 2 (Spring 2003): 138-151.

[26] The body of work deconstructing the standard narrative of Black Power includes; Komozi Woodard, "It's Nation Time in NewArk: Amiri Baraka and the Black Power Experiments in Newark, New Jersey," in Theoharis and Woodard, eds., *Freedom North*, 287-311; Brian Purnell, *Fighting Jim Crow in the County of Kings: The Congress of Racial Equality in Brooklyn* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013); Peter Levy, *Civil War on Race Street: The Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Rhonda Williams, "Black Women, Urban Politics, and Engendering Black Power," in Peniel E. Joseph ed., *The Black Power Movement: Re-thinking the Black Power-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[27] Among the works which present Black Power largely as a post-1965 northern phenomenon are William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Viking, 2001).

[28] Peniel E. Joseph, "The Black Power Movement, Democracy, and America in the King Years," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 4 (October 2009): 1001-1016; *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006); *The Black Power Movement: Re-thinking the civil rights-Black Power*

of Robert Williams, Timothy Tyson has shown that Black Power and civil rights "grew out of the same soil, confronted the same predicaments, and reflected the same quest for African American freedom."[29]

This dissertation builds on the work of scholars like Joseph and Tyson which highlights the blurred lines and close ties between Black Power and civil rights to explore the ways in which activists practiced and shaped these political ideologies through grassroots educational activism. Through its exploration of black Bostonians' quest for educational self-determination, my work is in particularly close conversation with Joseph's arguments regarding "Black Power's impact on American democratic institutions."[30] Through its focus of educational self-determination as the central goal of black educational activism in Boston, my dissertation brings to light a movement in which activists experimented with a wide range of political tactics which elide easy classification within the categories of Black Power or civil rights. In their daily lives, people had little use for hard and fast ideological divides and structures, and the dividing line between Black Power and civil rights were blurred, if visible at all. Faced with the challenges and responsibilities of daily life, black Bostonians were much more likely to turn to their own definitions of educational activism and justice and time-tested strategies than stiff ideological frameworks.

My work also speaks to a body of literature on the history of Boston. Boston is a city with a particularly prominent position in the public consciousness and yet its history remains incomplete and in many ways distorted. The bulk of scholarship on black Boston

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Era (New York: Routledge, 2006); *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

[29] Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[30] Joseph, "The Black Power Movement," 775.

is focused on the period prior to World War II, particularly in the abolitionist period.[31] These works offer very important contributions to the history of black Boston; however a large gap remains in the literature about black politics and community formation in the postwar period. My dissertation takes up this silence in the historiography—arguing that Boston was a site not only of tremendous resistance to civil rights but of black political organizing dating back to the World War II era.

My dissertation also contributes to a rich body of work in urban and metropolitan history which highlights the powerful role played by the state in racially segregated urban spaces. Scholars including Arnold Hirsch, Thomas Sugrue, and Kenneth Jackson have traced the conscious actions taken by state actors at both the federal and municipal level to develop and sustain racially segregated landscapes dating back to the New Deal era. These works have exploded the myth of northern segregation as de facto and a white backlash that emerged in the 1960s.[32] This body of scholarship also complicates an outdated portrait of white racism embodied by "Bull" Connor or Governor George

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[31] Lorenzo Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England.* (New York: Athenaeum Press, 1968). Although the bulk of scholarship on African American politics after the Civil War remains largely focused on black Southerners, there is a small but important body of work on black Bostonians during this period. Millington William Bergenson-Lockwood, "Not as Supplicants, but as Citizens: Race, Party, and African American Politics, in Boston, Massachusetts, 1864-1903" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011), 8. Bergenson-Lockwood's exploration of the dynamics of alliance-building with other groups of Bostonians—specifically the Irish—make a much-needed contribution to the historiography of black Boston which remains fixated on clashes between Irish and black Bostonians during desegregation. See also Emma Lou Thornbrough, T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, Black Migration and Poverty: Boston 1865-1900 (New York: Academic Press, 1979); Richard Alan Ballou, "Even in Freedom's Birthplace!": The Development of Boston's Black Ghetto, 1900-1940 (PhD. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1984). Notable exceptions to this focus on the South as the sole site of black reconstruction era politics outside Boston include Lisa G. Materson, For the Freedom of Her Race: Black Women and Electoral Politics in Illinois, 1877-1932 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Leslie A Schwalm, Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[32] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); David M. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Wallace, shining a light on the less visible, but equally virulent and deliberately constructed machine of racial inequality in northern cities. In this way, these works highlight the dual role which the state has played since the New Deal era in empowering citizens while simultaneously codifying racial and gender inequality within structures in the areas of housing, employment, and education.

A number of recent works have married the scholarship in racial politics and state policy, white resistance, and black activism. Robert Self's study of postwar Oakland and his explication of the relationship between grassroots conservatism and Black Power within the context of the development of the postwar state is a particularly excellent example.[33] Scholars including Rhonda Williams, Annelise Orleck, Premilla Nadasen, and Lisa Levenstein have highlighted the ways in which poor African American women specifically have challenged the racially and gendered discrimination of the state and its institutions in urban spaces.[34] A central project of these works has been to explode stereotypes of poor minority communities—particularly of black women—at the core of arguments about the so-called "culture of poverty."[35] Taken together these works put

[33] Robert O. Self, *Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[34] Rhonda Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought their Own War on Poverty*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003); Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States.* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) See also Nadasen, "'We Do Whatever Becomes Necessary': Johnnie Tillmon, Welfare Rights, and Black Power," in Theoharis, Dayo F. Gore, and Woodard, eds., *Want to Start a Revolution*, 317-338; Felicia Kornbluh, "Black Buying Power: Welfare Rights, Consumerism, and Northern Protest," in Theoharis and Woodard eds., *Freedom North*, 199-222.

[35] Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace*, 5-6. Orleck's work particularly suggests that histories such as this can and should inform contemporary policy initiatives related to poverty. She writes, "The Operation Life model worked then, and it could work now, but only if we make the leap of listening to the real experts on poverty: poor mothers."

forward a broader and more nuanced portrait of whom and what is political and where politics happen.

By challenging the busing narrative's focus on white resistance in response to court-ordered desegregation in the mid-1970s, my dissertation brings light to a longer and more deeply ingrained structure of racial discrimination in Boston in housing, employment, education, and urban renewal. Unlike many accounts of the "busing crisis" which seek as Ronald Formisano does to "portray organized antibusing with understanding" and as something other than racism, my work argues that white resistance to the black education movement was motivated by a desire to marginalize Boston's black citizens.[36] Building on the work of scholars like Matthew Lassiter and Joseph Crespino who have challenged notions of southern exceptionalism in racism and racial protest, my work traces the deliberate actions taken by school and city officials to create a dual system and calls into question the usefulness of distinctions between de jure and de facto segregation for understanding racial inequality. Black Bostonians exposed the actions taken by city school officials to create and maintain segregated schools and pointed out how the language of "de facto" segregation was used as a cover for a deliberate program of educational segregation.[37] Far from emerging in the late 1960s as a backlash against the "excesses" of the civil rights, my work reveals the origins of a

[36] Describing anti-desegregation protestors Formisano also writes, "Thousands of decent, moderate whites across the city cannot be said to have been racists." Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, x. The many works that embrace the busing narrative adopt a similar argument which seeks to explain and understand white resistance outside of the frame of race.

[37] Plaintiffs in *Morgan* echoed a sentiment expressed by a number of activists when they wrote, "Traditionally, 'de jure' segregation has referred to that racial separation of pupils which is official and purposeful, and therefore, unconstitutional; while 'de facto segregation' has described that racial segregation, which, however lamentable on other grounds, is not illegal because it is wholly fortuitous, i.e., unrelated to the policies and practices of school authorities. In our view, the recent history of school desegregation law confirms that these labels are not more than convenient terms of art applied as conclusions after a judicial inquiry into the factors underlying identifiability of schools." Plaintiffs' Memorandum on De Jure Segregation, *Morgan v. Hennigan*, June, 1972.

system of white resistance and segregation in Boston which took root in the 1940s and grew along with the expansion of the black population in the 1950s and 1960s. The history of Boston's black education movement firmly rejects a theory of the underclass which portrays black urban communities in the north as apathetic and dysfunctional. It tells a story of a community which was firmly committed to providing their children with the best possible education and built a sophisticated, well-organized political movement to achieve their goals. It challenges a portrait of black Bostonians, and northern urban blacks more broadly, as apathetic to the cause of civil rights which has been used to justify their marginalization.

Foundations

Since the revolutionary era, Boston has been home to a politically active black community. During the antebellum period, the city was a hotbed of abolitionist activity led by figures like Lewis Hayden and a site of strong organization against the Fugitive Slave Act.[38] During these years and through the end of the nineteenth century the vast majority of black Bostonians made their home in downtown Boston, on the North side of the neighborhood of Beacon Hill and in a small section of the adjacent community of the West End.[39] By 1865, the city's black population of 2,348 made up 1.2 percent of Boston's population. The concentration of the black community in these districts enabled black Bostonians to exert greater political influence than their small numbers would suggest. For instance, during the final decades of the nineteenth century, fourteen African

[38] Bergenson-Lockwood, "Not as Supplicants, but as Citizens," 8.
[39] The bulk of black Bostonians lived on a handful of streets in Beacon Hill which were considerable less desirable, in part because they were very heavily shaded. These included Joy Street, Phillips Street, Smith Place, Robinson Alley, Livingston Place, West Cedar Street, Irving Street, and Cyprus Street. Adelaide M. Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins: Boston's Black Upper Class, 1750-1950* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 20.

Americans were elected to the State House of Representatives. However, the electoral power of the black community declined significantly after the mid-1890s thanks to redistricting.[40]

Beginning around the turn of the century, black social elites led a migration out of Beacon Hill and the West End to establish a black community along Columbus and Tremont Street in the neighborhood of the South End. By the end of World War I, the majority of black Bostonians had followed suit. In 1900 the number of black Bostonians had grown to 11,591 which represented just over two percent of the city's total population. It was during this period that the South End established itself as one of the most racially and ethnically diverse in the city. In the early 1920s, black elites once again led the migration charge, moving still further southward to settle in the community of lower Roxbury. By 1930 the city's African American population had grown to just over 30,000 which although a substantial increase, still represented a small proportion of the total population.[41] Beginning in the late 1930s, greater numbers of African Americans began to settle in the area of Roxbury known as the "Hill" which had historically been home to a sizable Jewish community.[42] The shifts of the black population away from the center of the city further into Roxbury and Dorchester continued throughout the postwar period, particularly after 1960.

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[40] After 1902, the next African American representative would not be elected in Massachusetts until 1958. Jennings, "Race, Class, and Politics in the Black Community of Boston," in *From Access to Power*; Lockwood, "Not as Supplicants, but as Citizens", 13.

[41] The small size of Boston's black community during the early twentieth century is especially clear in comparison to other Northern cities during the era of the Great Migration. For instance, from 1910 to 1930 the black population in New York grew from 91,709 to 327,706 while in Detroit the numbers grew from 5,741 to 120,066. Schneider, "Decline of the Abolitionist Impulse".

[42] Violet Johnson, *The Other Black Bostonians: West Indians in Boston, 1900-1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 37.

Black Bostonians had a long history of educational activism which informed the postwar movement. Throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century black Bostonians pushed for the formation of and the city's financial support for schools for African American students. Although the BSC largely rejected these requests, black Bostonians succeeded in creating their own schools and kept them afloat with the support of parents and the black community—a tradition which continued in the mid and late-twentieth century.[43] A pivotal moment in the city's educational and racial history came in 1845, when Benjamin Roberts filed suit against the city when his daughter Sarah was prohibited from attending several white schools close to her home. Every day Roberts was forced to walk past five white schools in her neighborhood of Beacon Hill to attend the all-black Smith School. Attorneys Charles Sumner and Robert Morris argued that Roberts' exclusion from the nearby white schools violated an 1845 state law which prohibited the exclusion of any child from any public school and the Massachusetts Bill of Rights which stated that all citizens were born equal. Although the suit failed initially, in April 1855 the State passed legislation forbidding racially separate education. When the schools were officially integrated in September, 1855 Sarah Roberts was finally able to attend the white school nearest to their home.[44] Black activists of the mid-1970s spoke

[43] Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins*, 32-5. In1787 Prince Hall petitioned the Boston School Committee (BSC) for the formation of a separate school for people of African descent. When the BSC rejected their request, blacks created their own school in the home of Primus Hall in 1798. In 1800 the Boston School Committee rejected the request of sixty-six black Bostonian for a publicly supported black school. In1806, black Bostonians moved their school from the home of Primus Hall on May Street to a Baptist Church on Belknap Street. The school secured its own building in 1835 with funds provided by Abiel Smith Jr. At this point the city provided $200 of support annually and parents provided tuition of twelve cents per week.

[44] Although an important short-term victory, the court's ruling against the Roberts suit in 1854 was later cited as a key precedent of the Plessy decision legally enshrining "separate but equal" education. Robert Morris was the first African American to pass the Massachusetts State Bar. Stephen and Paul Kendrick, *Sarah's Long Walk: The Free Blacks of Boston of How Their Struggle for Equality Changed America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); James O. Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*, rev. ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1999), 78-81.

of the close ties between the activism of black parents like Benjamin Roberts and those in the 1970s. Writing in *The Bay State Banner* just days after the start of court-ordered desegregation in 1974 Robert Hayden wrote, "Just as black children and their parents helped to lead the way in Boston's school desegregation last week—there were courageous black children and parents breaking the walls of segregation in Boston during the 1800s."[45]

The first half of the twentieth century bore witness to a steady growth and diversification of the city's African American population, as well as a greater geographic concentration. The growth of the black population during the early twentieth century was driven by several waves of immigration of African Americans from the South and the migration of people of African descent from the West Indies. Immigrants hailing from Barbados, Jamaica, and Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Guyana settled in Boston in two main waves during the first half of the twentieth century. The first group of West Indians arrived in the 1890s and the second in the World War I era. From 1910 to 1920 the number of West Indians in Boston grew from just 566 to 2,877. By the end of the second wave of immigration that number had grown to just over 5,000 which represented twelve percent of the city's total black population.[46] Despite this expansion, black Bostonians made up a small percentage of the city's total population for much of the early twentieth century.

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[45] Bob Hayden, "Boston's Black History: Sarah Roberts," *Bay State Banner*, 19 September 1974, 12.
[46] Johnson, *The Other Bostonians*, 7-8. The first wave of immigrants was a fairly small group, largely male, hailed from upper class families with professional backgrounds, tended to be racially mixed, and were not well-known by the general public. Immigrants who came during the World War I era included much larger numbers of women and families, skewed more towards the working class, were more likely to settle permanently in Boston, and sought a more visible position in city life. Immigrants in these first two waves were largely adults—eighty percent of the immigrants who arrived prior to 1950 were between the ages of twenty and forty-five. They were likely to have completed at least an elementary level education and be competent in writing and speaking in English.

The city's Irish population also played a key role in the development of twentieth century educational governance and racial politics. Large numbers of Irish immigrants settled in Boston beginning in the 1840s and after struggling in the face of significant discrimination for several decades, began to establish themselves politically by the 1870s. Increasingly after the 1910s, city politics were dominated by a system of ethnic patronage politics which afforded few openings to black Bostonians. This insular parochial system of municipal governance was very well-entrenched by the time the black education movement emerged in the late 1940s and presented a serious challenge to black Bostonians efforts to have a voice in shaping their schools.[47]

Native black Bostonians, southern migrants, and West Indian immigrants all faced significant racial discrimination in their efforts to secure decent employment. The vast majority of black men and women in Boston were forced into poorly paid positions in unskilled menial labor or low-level manufacturing. Men were most likely to find work as dockhands, messengers, janitors, or porters, while the majority of women worked as domestics. A smaller number were able to secure work as dressmakers, hairdressers, bricklayers, and masons, and in rarer circumstances made their living as doctors, lawyers, clergy, funeral home directors, or business owners.[48] By and large, black Bostonians were almost entirely excluded from the retail, confectionary, textile, garment, and shoe industries which were strongest in Boston in the early twentieth century. Upon arrival in

[47] Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Boston Irish: A Political History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995); Jack Beatty, *The Rascal King: The Life and Times of James Michael Curley, 1874-1958* (Readding: Addison-Wesley, 1992); Daniel N. McClure, "A Woman of Action: Elma Lewis, the Arts, and the Politics of Culture in Boston, 1950-1980" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2009), 72. A turning point in Irish political status in Boston was the election of Mayor James Michael Curley in 1914. Curley was *the* dominant figure in city politics in the early twentieth century serving four terms in office: 1914-1918; 1922-1926; 1930-1934; and 1946-1950. He also served as Governor from 1935 to 1937.

[48] In 1930, of the total 11,060 black workers, 6,099 were employed in manufacturing, 5,782 in domestic work, 88 as school teachers, 99 as clergy, 49 were doctors, 15 were undertakers and 38 were lawyers.

Boston, West Indian immigrants found themselves pushed into many of the same unskilled, low-paying jobs as African American counterparts, despite their hopes that they could secure employment in skilled trades and management.[49]

Since its formation as the first chartered branch of the NAACP in 1912, the Boston NAACP has played a pivotal, if sometimes fraught, role in Boston's racial justice movement.[50] During the 1910s and 1920s the Boston Branch NAACP established itself as one of the largest and most integrated chapters in the nation. The political philosophy and agenda of the branch in this early period closely mirrored the political work of the abolitionist era in that liberal white elites played a significant role in the leadership and it was largely focused on national, rather than local, issues.

But by the late1920s, the branch faced a period of substantial challenges and transitions characterized by declining membership, increased internal tensions, and an increasingly vocal opposition movement from a new cadre of black activists. The branch struggled as a result of growing conflict with William Monroe Trotter's National Equal Rights League and its inability to tackle racial discrimination in employment.[51] The

[49] Jennings, "Race, Class, and Politics in the Black Community of Boston," in *From Access to Power,* 5, 26. Between 1910 and 1950 forty percent of West Indians in Boston worked as skilled workers. The majority of women worked as domestics for white families in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester, and the nearby suburb of Newton. Black women were excluded from all retail work, and the garment, confectionary, textile, and shoe industries. They found it was nearly impossible to move up from entry level work into the managerial and professional positions.

[50] Bergenson-Lockwood, "Not as Supplicants, but as Citizens," 355-361. Even before the formation of the Boston branch, the city played a key role in the formation of the NAACP nationally thanks to the close relationship that formed between William Monroe Trotter and W.E.B. Du Bois through their shared opposition to Booker T. Washington. Du Bois credits the so-called "Boston riots" in which Trotter and Granville Moore staged a physical protest against Washington's political stance at a Boston meeting of the National Negro Business League in 1903 as critical in sparking the formation for the Niagara Movement, which in turn helped lay the foundation for the NAACP.

[51] Schneider, "The Boston NAACP."

declining support for the branch can be seen in the fact that membership in the Boston branch fell from 3,602 in 1946 to 1,409 members in 1950.[52]

The challenges faced by the NAACP during the interwar period provides insight into the class dynamics of racial politics in Boston and the ways in which their evolution shaped black protest in the postwar period. The influx of a host of new Bostonians from the South and West Indies began to challenge the political control of the small group of black and white elites who had dominated the NAACP and black politics more broadly for a generation. The political dominance of black elites had been aided by the small size of the black population and its relative homogeneity through much of the early twentieth century. The influx of a large number of poorer migrants from the South and immigrants from the West Indies who were not so willing to cede control of their political lives to this same group and who were unhappy with the body's lack of attention to the issues faced by the majority of working-class black Bostonians, particularly in employment, weakened the power of the NAACP beginning in the late 1920s. In the mid-1940s the NAACP came under fire from the weekly Black newspapers such as the *Chronicle* and William Monroe Trotter's *Guardian* for adopting an accomodationist stance and making only sluggish progress in the fight for racial justice. These critiques of the political stance of the NAACP also reflect changes in the national black freedom movement in the Interwar and World War Two era when African Americans embraced a more direct rights-focused style of racial politics.[53]

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[52] Boston branch NAACP membership declined steadily in the immediate postwar period: 1946: 3,602; 1947: 3,429; 1948: 2,453;1949; 1950: 1,409, NAACP Papers, Boston Public Library, Part 25: Series A, Reel 3.

[53] Gerald Gill, "'No Time for Banqueting': African-American Protests in Boston, 1945-1955," unpublished paper, 9; Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins.*

The Boston Branch NAACP also faced a substantial challenge in the anti-communist movement which put considerable restriction and pressure on NAACP branches across the country to purge members with Communist associations and distance itself from radical and left-leaning critiques more generally. The Boston Youth Conference was one of the first victims of the anti-communist crusade in 1946 when the national NAACP office suspended its charter after the Youth Conference refused to rescind its endorsement of William Harrison, Communist Party and NAACP Executive Board member, for State Representative. Although the Boston adult leadership supported the Youth Conference's support of Harrison, political calculations prompted the national NAACP to take a hard stance against the Boston youth. Prior to its suspension the Youth Conference had led the way in pushing for a more confrontational political agenda. In the spring of 1946 youth led a sit-down demonstration at several insurance firms in downtown protesting their refusal to hire black employees.[54]

These developments in the local and national political landscape drove major changes in the leadership and agenda of the Boston Branch NAACP in the immediate postwar period. During the mid-to late 1940s the branch began to shift its programmatic focus from national issues to the problems of racial discrimination locally and adopted a more assertive political stance. These shifts were driven in large part by pressure from youth activists. Just prior to the suspension of the Youth Conference, a cadre of black youth activist began to place greater pressure on current branch president Julian Steele to more launch a more direct challenge against segregation in Boston. In the face of these pressures, Steele declined to run for re-election and Reverend Kenneth P. Hughes was elected branch president in 1946, promising a full-frontal assault on racial discrimination

[54] Gill, "No Time for Banqueting", 9.

and segregation. Hughes' decision not to run for re-election in 1947 in the wake of the Youth Conference suspension set the stage for the election of Florence Lesueur in 1948. Lesueur, who was the first woman to lead the Boston Branch NAACP in the organization's history, was committed to creating a branch that was more responsive to working-class black Bostonians and initiated a campaign tackling the issues of employment, police brutality, access to public facilities, and housing. Despite these efforts, continued repression from the anti-communist movement put a damper on the branch's efforts to address issues of racial discrimination in employment and housing, and led to a further decline in membership among youth and working-class black Bostonians.[55] Although the NAACP established itself as a leader in the fight for racial justice in Boston very early on, it was through a very gradual process that the branch became the strong advocate for racial justice and empowerment for black Bostonians that it became by the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In addition to the NAACP, black Bostonians established a number of other important settlement houses and neighborhood centers which supported the social, economic, and political needs of their growing communities. These organizations also played central roles in the development of a black political community during the postwar period, particularly related to youth and education.

Among these was the Robert Gould Shaw House, which was established in 1908 in the South End to provide services and support to the city's growing black population in the face of increasing racial discrimination. Shaw House provided a range of much-needed services to the black community—the strongest of which were also related to

[55] Ibid., 18.

youth welfare. Concerns over the scarcity of programming available to black youths involved in the juvenile justice system sparked the formation of the Shaw House and drove the creation of a Saturday morning kindergarten and job training initiative for youths. Foreshadowing the organizing tradition of the black education movement in decades to come, the Shaw House actively sought the involvement of the black community. The staff included large numbers of black volunteers and black Bostonians played a prominent role in its leadership.[56] Other key community sites established prior to World War II included the Norfolk House and St. Mark's Social Center—both of which played central roles in the postwar black education movement.

Boston Public School System

The activism of black Bostonians must be understood within the context of the city's educational and bureaucratic structures and the actions of the city's political and educational officials. Created in 1647, the Boston Public Schools were the first public school system in the country earning the city a reputation as a center of educational excellence and opportunity.

City school officials, with rare exceptions, put up tremendous resistance to the postwar black education movement. Leading the way on this front was the Boston School Committee—a body made up of five members who were elected at large by city residents to serve a two-year term. The school system was also managed by a board of superintendents which included the Superintendent, chief administrative official for the BPS, Deputy Superintendent, and several Associate Superintendents, responsible for specific aspects of school operation such as curriculum.

[56] Geoff K. Ward, *The Black Child-Savers: Racial Democracy and Juvenile Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 111-2.

Although state educational authorities historically exercised little direct control over the daily operation of individual school districts, it was within their official capacity to assert expansive authority over local schools. The State Board of Education and its parent agency the State Department of Education was responsible for offering general support for school districts and ensuring compliance with educational standards. The bulk of the state's power over individual school systems like the BPS lay in its responsibility for the allocation of state and federal funds—a role which proved key in the growing conflicts over desegregation in the 1960s.The State Department of Education possessed the authority to assume complete control of local school districts in the case of continued non-compliance with state standards. The system of funding for the BPS played a particularly key role in shaping the black education movement, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. The Boston School Committee held the independent authority to allocate a majority of the system's funds but required permission from the Boston City Council and the Mayor to disperse the remaining funds.

Black activists seeking to affect racial change in the Boston Public Schools faced a significant obstacle in the maze-like organization of the system. The BPS was officially as a district-based system in which students either progressed from elementary to high-school within a single geographic district or attended one of two types of citywide schools—examination or vocational schools. However the actions taken by city school officials (particularly the Boston School Committee) to create and maintain segregated education resulted in the creation of an incredibly complicated and confusing administrative structure which followed little pattern. This system was made even more complex and opaque by the fact that the BPS employed an irregular grade progression

system which included K-8 elementary programs, 7-9 and 6-8 middle schools, and 9-12 and 10-12 high schools. The option to transfer, a right afforded unequally to black and white parents throughout the 1950s and 60s, made the BPS incredibly difficult to navigate for even the most informed and proactive parents.[57]

Mapping the City

The geography of the city played a key role in the development of the Boston Public Schools and black educational activism. The mid-nineteenth century bore witness to the physical expansion of the city thanks to the incorporation of a number of adjacent towns including Roxbury and Dorchester and an influx of European immigrants such as the Irish.[58]

[57] *Morgan v. Hennigan.*
[58] The city of Boston annexed Roxbury in 1868 after which it was temporarily renamed as the Boston Highlands. Lily D. Geismer, "Don't Blame Us: Grassroots Liberalism in Massachusetts, 1960-1990," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2010), 35-7.

Figure 3. Map of Boston Neighborhoods, 2014[59]

Beginning in the 1910s and 1920 Boston's various ethnic and racial groups began to lay claim to various neighborhoods as their "turf"—setting the stage for the starkly

[59] Boston Neighborhoods, The Boston Indicators Project, the Boston Foundation, http://www.bostonfoundation.org/indicators2004/executivesummary/summary.asp?id=3027, accessed April 13, 2014.

segregated city which developed by the mid-twentieth century. For instance, during the first two decades of the twentieth century the city's Italian population became concentrated in the North End, the Irish began to settle in larger numbers in Charlestown and South Boston, and African Americans began their steady movement towards the South End and Roxbury. Increasingly in the twentieth century, the city was defined by profound ethnic divides rooted in spatial location. This sense of ethnic pride and privilege rooted in the ability to defend one's place against "outsiders" created a deeply segregated city by the postwar period, in which many black Bostonians rarely ventured outside of their own neighborhood to so-called white sections of the city. To enter South Boston or Charlestown for example, as a black person in Boston in the 1950 or 1960s was incredibly dangerous.[60] This racial landscape and sentiment of "ownership" figured centrally in the education movement as many school leaders and some white Bostonians fought tooth and nail to defend "their" schools against black access.[61]

Although this dissertation is centered geographically on the city of Boston generally, it is specifically focused on a handful of neighborhoods that were predominantly African American after 1950. These neighborhoods, which were all located to the South of downtown, include Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End. Specific neighborhoods within Roxbury and Dorchester which were home to large segments of the black community and political activity include: Grove Hall, Sugar Hill, Blue Hill Avenue, "the Hill" and the area of upper Roxbury and North Dorchester. With

[60] A number of individuals who I interviewed echoed this dynamic of a racially segregated and closed city reflecting that they never set foot into whole sections of the city until they were adults or entered desegregated schools after 1974. See author's interviews with Cheryl Borden and Barbara Burke. See James W. Loewen, *Sundown Town: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: New Press, 2005).

[61] Jeanne Francis Theoharis, "'We have to learn to define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves': Black Teenagers, Urban Schools, Writing and the Politics of Representation," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1996), 105.

the start of court ordered desegregation in the fall of 1974, African American students attended schools throughout the city. After 1974 then, my study expands its focus geographically to include the schools (and surrounding neighborhoods) to which the desegregation plans assigned significant numbers of African American students. These include the predominantly white neighborhoods of South Boston, Charlestown, and Hyde Park, in which African American students and families faced significant resistance from white Bostonians.

Chapter Descriptions

This study takes a long view of the African American education movement, beginning twenty-five years before and ten years after *Morgan* captured national headlines. This periodization brings light to the strategic and ideological evolution of the movement as well as its consistencies over the course of more than three decades.

Chapter One examines the period from 1949 to 1959 when activists' laid the institutional, philosophical, and strategic foundations of their movement. This chapter explores the origins of the movement's organizing tradition and activists' articulation of a vision of black self-determination in the schools. The movement took shape thanks to the formation of vital organizations such as Freedom House in 1949 and the NAACP Education Committee in 1953—which mobilized community engagement in the issue of educational racial politics and provided a space through which black Bostonians could craft their agenda. In large part through these organizations a new generation of activists like Ruth Batson and Muriel and Otto Snowden, cut their teeth in politics, began their careers in racial justice activism, and began the work of building a closely connected movement culture. This period also bore witness to the expansion and diversification of

the city's black population with the influx of new immigrant and migrant populations from West Indies and the southern states. The 1950s were also marked by the development of more formal and widespread racial segregation in housing, employment, and the schools as many city leaders regarded the flood of new migrants and immigrants as a threat and consciously worked to contain this perceived danger. The emergence of a formal edifice of segregation in housing and education especially drove the formation of a movement in this period.

Chapter Two focuses on the period from 1959 to 1965 in which a mass movement for racial justice and self-determination emerged marked by the entry of tens of thousands of black Bostonians into the movement and strong linkages between its institutional bases. During this period, activists' vision of educational self-determination was closely related to the goal of desegregation—that is they believed it was possible to secure a meaningful role in educational governance within integrated Boston Public Schools. Activists articulated this vision, and attracted the support of a growing number of black Bostonians, through several major and closely related campaigns. During the late 1950s and early 1960s the NAACP Education Committee pressured the Boston School Committed to formally recognize and address racial segregation in the schools. Likewise, in 1963 a group of mothers in Roxbury protested the blatant racial discrepancies in the schools and their right to shape their schools through the creation of the Concerned Higginson Parents Association. Despite these efforts, the School Committee refused to take action—prompting activists to stage Freedom Stayouts and Schools in 1963 and 1964. The Stayouts attracted more than ten thousand students and broad community support, as well as the attention of state leaders. In the wake of the second boycott, the

State Commissioner of Education called for an investigation into the state's public school system which laid the groundwork for the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act (RIA)—the first state-initiated voluntary desegregation act in the nation. Despite its limitations the RIA was an illustration of the growing power of grassroots protest to shape state action and created the legal framework for *Morgan*.

Chapter Three looks at the period from 1966 to 1971 in which a significant shift in the political application of the vision of educational self-determination took place—from a focus on securing power within integrated Boston Public Schools to pursuing independent community-controlled programs outside the school system. In light of the continued resistance of school officials, increased federal support for community-controlled social programs, and the influence of Black Power, activists in Boston looked outside the schools for educational equity and empowerment. Manifestations of this include the formation of a spate of independent community-controlled schools, community organizations like Operation Exodus, and a vibrant black student movement.

Chapter Four focuses on the efforts of community people to secure a larger role in shaping the court decision and its implementation and the elements of the courts' orders which granted this authority to community people during the period of court-ordered desegregation. In March 1972, the NAACP and Harvard Center for Law and Justice filed the class action suit of *Morgan v Hennigan* against the Boston School Committee charging city and state school officials with violation of the Fourteenth Amendment for its purposeful segregation of the BPS. In June, 1974, Judge Arthur Garrity released his landmark decision mandating the desegregation of the BPS. But activists did not sit back and wait for the courts to determine the future of the BPS or their children—rather they

built a massive network of racial justice organizations and activists through which they protected their children and asserted their right to direct involvement in school governance. At the heart of this effort was the newly formed Freedom House Institute for Schools and Education which coordinated dozens of educational and social service programs for the black community. Activists' efforts to achieve a leadership role in the schools during implementation and in the future bore considerable fruit. In 1974 the court created a multi-leveled citizen advisory structure created by the court which granted substantial power to community people to oversee the implementation of desegregation orders and shape school practice. Thanks to black activism, the courts also ordered a major reorganization of the BPS into nine-community school districts which granted much greater school governing power to local people.

The conclusion explores the period from 1977 to 1985 when black Bostonians fought to make real and permanent the foothold they had secured in educational governance in the future of the BPS. Although stark racial segregation had largely been eliminated during the first three years of court-ordered desegregation, the movement was far from over because desegregation was never the sole goal of black educational activism. Rather activists continued to seek greater educational self-educational self-determination through the new citizen advisory structures created by the courts. Moreover, after thirty years in the movement, activists' understood that a court ruling alone would not change the lives of people, and so they continued their grassroots organizing to secure educational power for black Bostonians in Boston Public Schools.

Chapter One: "Education for Democracy": Making the Movement for Educational Justice, 1949-1959

"The main thing is not to set out with grand projects. Everything starts at your doorstep. Just get deeply involved in something…You throw a stone in one place and the ripples spread."

Bob Moses[62]

On the wintry night of February 9, 1949, seventeen neighbors gathered in the Roxbury, living room of Muriel and Otto Snowden to discuss the future of their community. These friends came together to discuss their concerns with the physical decline and increasing segregation of Roxbury and to craft a plan to revitalize their community and bolster civic engagement. By the meeting's end, the group had concluded "that we needed in our community some kind of nonsectarian, interracial center where all of us might come together to work on our common problems."[63]

This was the genesis of Freedom House—an organization which came to lead the movement for racial justice and community empowerment in postwar Boston. The early history of Freedom House unearths a narrative of black educational activism that challenges traditional understandings of civil rights protest in Boston—bringing to light the intellectual origins of educational community control in black protest, the role of personal bonds and experiences in grassroots racial politics, and the importance of community institutions in movement building. Under the Snowdens' determined leadership, backed by substantial community involvement, Freedom House led the charge

[62] Bob Moses, quoted in Pete Seger and Bob Reiser, *Everybody Says Freedom: A History of the Civil Rights Movement in Songs and Pictures* (New York: Norton, 1989), 246.
[63] Muriel and Otto Snowden, "Report of Committee to Mediate Upon and Attempt to Rephrase 'What Freedom House Is,'" 1962, Box 1, Folder 1, Freedom House, Inc. Records, Archives and Special Collections Department, Northeastern University (hereafter: "FH").

for racial equality in nearly every sphere of life for black Bostonians including education, housing, employment, recreation, and urban development. Freedom House was so critical an anchor for the city's black freedom movement that it earned the moniker Boston's "black Pentagon."[64] Its hands-on, pragmatic approach to the fight for racial justice offered up a myriad of community services and programs, including youth job training, academic tutoring, and neighborhood clean-up campaigns.

An excavation of the early development of Freedom House brings to light the genesis of a vision of democratic racial politics rooted in the practice of citizen-directed municipal governance which quickly took root in the city's burgeoning black education movement. This history challenges conventional wisdom which identifies desegregation as the sole objective of black educational activism in Boston and in the nation more broadly. Freedom House promoted the right and capacity of all black Bostonians to play active roles in *every* aspect of urban governance and civic life—including the schools. The Snowdens passionately believed that this participatory model of urban governance had political value for the city in that citizen-participation would yield more effective city programs and policy. They also possessed a faith in the political import of this program in that the act of participating in urban governance by definition politically empowered black citizens.

Over the next ten months, the Snowdens and their neighbors crisscrossed Roxbury sharing their vision of Freedom House with community members. Many Freedom House founders drew upon their deep roots in Boston and prior experience in community organizing in these efforts. Otto Snowden is remembered as particularly effective, given

[64] *The Boston Globe* referred to Freedom House as the "black pentagon" during court-ordered desegregation because of its pivotal role in coordinating black community activism during this period. "History of Freedom House Inc., Education Highlights," Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern.

his amiable personality and hands-on organizing style. Much of this organizing work took place in spaces which fall outside the traditional definition of political—in homes, streets, parks, bars and restaurants, and even grocery stores. An araticle wrote, "Otto Snowden's office is not really at 14 Crawford Street, but on the street, in Freedom Foods, or anywhere people have a problem and want to talk about it."[65] Thanks both to its persistence and passion, before long Freedom House had captured the political imagination and commitment of the people of Roxbury, who saw the need for neighborhood revitalization and community empowerment in every burnt out street light and dilapidated school building.

The pivotal role of Freedom House in driving Boston's fledgling education movement highlights the importance of local institutions, and the linkages between them, in movement building.[66] While national organizations like the NAACP and Urban League played significant part in the process, community-based and focused organizations like Freedom House, Shaw Settlement House, Norfolk House Center, and St. Mark's Social Center were also key actors in the political, intellectual, material, and psychological formation of the movement in its early period.[67] Through the institutional relationships it formed both with other local entities, and with national bodies like the NAACP, Freedom House provided critical material and intellectual support to the budding movement and its foot soldiers.

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[65] Untitled article, Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern.
[66] Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*.
[67] Boston branch NAACP membership declined steadily in the immediate postwar period: 1946: 3,602; 1947: 3,429; 1948: 2,453;1949; 1950: 1,409. NAACP Papers, Boston Public Library, Part 25: Series A, Reel 3. Describing the role of the NAACP community activist Victor Bynoe said, "The NAACP was a parlor discussion group in the early days—too long…The NAACP never became effective until it got down to the little people." Carden, ed., *Witness,* quoted in Daniel McClure, "A Woman of Action", 61.

Leading the Charge for Change

Husband and wife, Otto Phillip and Muriel Sutherland Snowden were the intellectual, emotional, and political heart of the Freedom House from the first meeting in their living room in 1949 through their retirement in 1984. The Snowdens possessed complementary political skills. Otto was practical, hands-on, a passionate public speaker sure to mobilize supporters and quick to lend support to fellow organizers. He was known for his abilities in facilitating mass gatherings and he had an innate talent for connecting with people from all walks of life. Muriel, in contrast, was the "big picture" political thinker—working behind the scenes writing reports, crafting ideas, and developing strategy.[68]

The Snowdens' personal, childhood experiences with racism profoundly shaped their political work. Muriel Sutherland was born in Orange, New Jersey on July 14, 1916. Soon after, the family moved to the predominantly white, middle-class community of Glen Ridge, New Jersey where they faced significant racial hostility. The racism was so virulent that Dr. Sutherland, a Howard trained dentist, was forced to use a white person as a "straw" to purchase the family home and to move his young family in under the cover of night for fear of white mobs. Nonetheless, Muriel attended the all-white Glen Ridge Public Schools through graduation, when she earned the honor of class valedictorian. After graduation, she moved to the Boston area to attend Radcliffe College. Upon graduation in 1938, she volunteered at several local institutions serving black Bostonians, including St. Marks Social Center—a social service center connected to St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Roxbury. It was at St. Marks that she met her future husband and

[68] Belknap, "To Chip Away at the Walls," Snowden, Northeastern.

future professional partner, Otto Snowden. She briefly left Boston in 1943 for a two year stint at the New York School of Social Work, where, on a National Urban League Fellowship, she earned her Master's in Social Work. During Muriel's time in New York, she and Otto reignited their earlier friendship, and they married in 1945, moving to Roxbury, where they remained for the rest of their lives.[69]

Otto Snowden's family had deep roots in the Boston area, arriving from Virginia in the 1920s when Colonel Snowden was transferred by the Army Quartermaster Corps. The Snowdens like many African American families who migrated North in this period had high hopes of leaving racial segregation behind in the South. However, they soon found that segregation and discrimination were very much alive and well in the "cradle of liberty." Otto's experiences in the Boston Public Schools, and his observations of the discrimination his father faced in the military, outraged the young man. As a student at the Lewis Junior High School in Roxbury in the late 1920s, he led a boycott by African American students on the school track team of a major meet, in protest of the racially discriminatory practices of the school, which he later described as his first conscious act of educational activism.[70] After graduating from Dorchester High School, Otto briefly attended Harvard before leaving school to help support his family during the Depression. During this period, Otto began to volunteer at St. Mark's Social Center. After completing his degree at Howard University he took a teaching position at Camp Lee in Virginia

[69] Muriel and Otto met at a dance sponsored by the YMCA in Roxbury while Muriel was visiting family in the Boston area. Years later, when she was a student at the New York School of Social Work, Otto wrote Muriel asking if he could visit. Although initially somewhat reluctant, Otto was persistent and the two were married within two years. For a more detailed discussion of Muriel Sutherland's life see Muriel Sutherland Snowden Interview Records, Black Women's Oral History Project (hereafter: "BWOHP"), Schlesinger; Belknap, "To Chip Away at the Walls," Snowden, Northeastern.

[70] Untitled document, Box 1, Folder 1, Freedom House. Snowden wrote, "I was disturbed about Boston schools as far back as 1927 when I was a student at Lewis Intermediate School. I organized a boycott because of discrimination. I remember I was class president in the ninth grade there."

during WWII. As a young man, Otto was disgusted by the discrimination his father, Frank Snowden, faced in the Army (he was demoted five times during his first several years in Boston) and remained critical of the discriminatory and segregative practices of the U.S. military as a young man. When WWII broke out, Otto attempted to evade the draft, but eventually agreed to the teaching position in Camp Lee to appease his father.[71]

Like Muriel, Otto pursued graduate studies in social work, as a special graduate student at the Boston University School of Social Work. He soon returned to Roxbury to become Director of St. Mark's Social Center, remaining there until 1949, when he resigned to devote himself fully to the development of Freedom House.[72]

With the vision for Freedom House and the support from the community established, the founders set their sights on securing a permanent building in Roxbury from which they could work. Early financial challenges forced the Snowdens to begin operation of Freedom House out of their home, but they were eager to acquire a larger space to accommodate community gatherings. They launched an ambitious fundraising campaign in 1950, which raised $50,000, and enabled them to purchase a building at 14 Crawford Street in Roxbury, less than one mile from their home. Members, including Muriel and Otto Snowden who served as co-Directors of Freedom House, worked without pay for at least the first six months of its existence. During this period, Muriel also worked at the Cambridge Civic Unity Committee to help support the family, since Otto had left his position as Director of St. Mark's Social Center to focus on Freedom House full-time. Muriel continued to work at both CCUC and Freedom House, despite its obvious strain, until 1950 when Colonel Snowden gave the couple a gift of $1000 to help

[71] Belknap, "To Chip Away at the Walls," Snowden, Northeastern, 5.
[72] Box 5, Folder 1-2, Snowden, Northeastern.

them get Freedom House off the ground.[73] From this location in the heart of Boston's African American community, Freedom House assumed its role as the hub of Boston's Black Freedom Movement.[74]

Significant demographic shifts unfolding in Boston in the immediate postwar period fueled the emergence of Freedom House at this precise movement and drove its agenda tackling the problems of racial segregation. The 1950s witnessed the beginnings of rapid growth in Boston's black population, and a concomitant increase in racially segregative practices in education, employment, and housing—the result of which was a vastly more racially closed city than had existed prior to World War II. African American population of the city increased from 23,679 in 1940 to 40,057 by 1950 largely as a result of the migration of black southerners.[75] These developments presented considerable challenges for black Bostonians, but also new opportunities thanks to their greater numbers and expanded opportunity for political organizing. The Snowdens found a ready audience when they spoke of their desire to arrest the physical degradation thanks to the rising tide of segregation. The formation of Freedom House at that precise moment was a reflection of the Snowden's determination and the changing nature of the city's racial landscape.

While the African American population in Boston was growing, the white population was in relative decline as increasing numbers left for the suburbs. Although many scholars have pointed to the conflicts over court-ordered desegregation as the cause

[73] McKenney, "Focus: The Community," Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern; Belknap, "To Chip Away at the Walls," Snowden, Northeastern, 7-9.
[74] "A Vision for 21st Century Leadership," 1999, Muriel Snowden interview records, BWOHP, Schlesinger.
[75] Thomas O'Connor, *Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal, 1950-1970* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 60.

of white flight, evidence shows that most whites left the city in the 1940s and 1950s lured by the booming technology, research, and development industry in the newly booming and prosperous suburbs. [76]

These economic shifts, occurring simultaneously with the arrival of thousands of new Black Bostonians, played a major part in the creation of a more racially segregated city. After WWII, Massachusetts was at an economic crossroad after decades of decline in the manufacturing and service industry.[77] State leaders found their economic salvation in the rise of a federally funded military-industrial-research complex so successful it earned the moniker, the "Massachusetts Miracle." This burgeoning high-tech industry took root in a cluster of suburbs to the North and West of the city.[78] The communities of Waltham, Lexington, and Burlington exploded as new employees and their families flooded the area. By the 1950s and 1960s the Route 128 technology corridor had established itself as *the* model of a successful high tech industry. From 1949 to 1957, it created 27,600 new "high tech" jobs, while the number of jobs within the city limits decreased by 17,500.[79] With the influx of a new generation of largely white and upwardly mobile professionals, these suburbs became some of the wealthiest and most racially

[76] H. McKinnis, "A Selective History of Boston 1635-1950," 1986, Box 5, Folder 10, Series IV, Citywide Parents Council Records (hereafter: "CPC"), City of Boston Archives (hereafter: "Boston City"). The migration of many white Bostonians out of the city for the surrounding suburbs as early as the 1940s also resulted in an overall decline in the city's population. Between 1950 and 1960, Boston's population declined nearly thirteen percent from 801,444 to 697, 197. This decline in the period from 1950 to 1960 was a dramatic shift from the period from 1920 to 1950 when the city's total population exploded from just 74,800 to 801,444—a growth of more than 930%; Tahi Lani Mottl, "Social Conflict and Social Movements: An Exploratory Study of the Black Community of Boston," (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1976), 47.

[77] Jeanne Theoharis, "We have to learn to define ourselves," 108. Between 1947 and 1975 industrial jobs in Boston declined from 112,000 to 50,000 and wholesale and retail jobs declined from 150,000 to 90,000.

[78] "Freedom House Fact Sheet," Box 1, Folder 1, 1950, Freedom House, Northeastern.

[79] Geismer, "Don't Blame Us," 20. The majority of this industry was concentrated along Route-128 which forms a sixty-five mile arc around the city. Fueled by the explosion in federal military and research spending, some of the nation's first major industrial parks—Raytheon, General Radio, and Wang, were established along the 128 corridor. As the number of manufacturing jobs declined—formerly the lifeblood of the state's urban economy—the number of professional jobs, largely located outside of the city, tripled.

segregated in the state, if not the nation. Through its massive military spending and support for a high-tech, research-based economy, the federal government fueled the development of deeply racially segregated landscapes in metropolitan regions across the nation, and metropolitan Boston was no exception. [80]

The racial shifts which the Snowdens witnessed in Roxbury beginning in the late 1940s accelerated in neighborhoods across the city through the 1950s. Increasingly in this period, the majority of white and black Bostonians lived in racially distinct neighborhoods, whereas prior to the war the city contained many racially, economically, and ethnically diverse neighborhoods. The shifts were most dramatic in neighborhoods South and Southwest of downtown, including Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End. Prior to the 1950s, these neighborhoods were racially and economically mixed, with sizable Jewish, white-ethnic, and African American communities. However, the influx of migrants and immigrants and city officials' concurrent creation of segregative housing and banking policies, transformed the demographics of these neighborhoods. By 1960 ninety-seven percent of African Americans in Boston (all but 1,500 of 63,000) lived in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, North Dorchester, and the South End, known as the "Black Boomerang."[81]

Federal, state, and local housing and banking officials played a critical role in creating and maintaining this racially segregated landscape in Boston through restrictive covenants, red-lining, discriminatory lending practices, and public housing policies. The

[80] Ibid., 23. M.I.T. and Harvard led the way in federal funding for research and development in defense and military related industries—ranking first and third respectively in 1963.

[81] The demographic history of Blue Hill Avenue illuminates in microcosm this broader shift in the city's racial landscape. In the immediate postwar period, Blue Hill Avenue, a major thoroughfare running from Lower Roxbury through North Dorchester and Mattapan, was the business center of the Jewish community in Boston. However, by the early 1950s, the West Indian and African American community began to settle along Blue Hill in larger numbers and within a decade the area was predominantly African American.

Boston Housing Authority (BHA) promoted residential segregation through its administration of the city's large public housing program. Drawing upon the mandate for racially segregated housing outlined in the 1938 Federal Housing Authority Underwriting Manual, the BHA created and maintained segregated public housing through the assignment of tenants on an explicitly racial basis. A 1951 report by the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination (MCAD) wrote, "The pattern of racial segregation and discrimination in public housing in the City of Boston was set as early as 1940 at the beginning of the federal slum clearance program. By 1950 colored families were housed exclusively in two projects in the South End and in the wing of a third."[82] Segregation was the official policy of the BHA in public housing until the Massachusetts State Legislature prohibited segregative housing practices in 1950, but discriminatory practices continued as evidenced by the large number of complaints of racial discrimination filed against the BHA after 1950.

Local and state banking and housing officials, in collaboration with federal agencies such as the FHA, Veterans' Administration (VA), and Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), also played a major role in promoting racial segregation in the private housing market in Boston and the surrounding suburbs. A report authored by the office of the Director of the United States Commission found that Boston real estate, banking, and housing officials adhered closely to the segregative policies of the federal

[82] "Plaintiffs' Findings," *Morgan v. Hennigan*, Papers of the NAACP, Library of Congress (hereafter LOC), Series V, Box 954, Folder 4-5, 253. As of 1951, Boston's public housing program was the second largest in the nation. MCAD was a state body which was created by the state in 1950 to receive and address discrimination complaints. The forerunner to the MCAD was the state Fair Employment Practices Commission established in 1946. The FEPC had enforcement power to prohibit discrimination on the basis of "race, color, religious creed, national origin, or ancestry." The FEPC had limited resources, personnel, and enforcement power in its early years until it expanded to become MCAD.

agencies.[83] Boston banks denied mortgage applications for homes in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, and South Boston, based on HOLC maps which marked these neighborhoods as blighted. These practices forced many white prospective homeowners, including returning veterans, to purchase a home in the suburbs rather than the city. As a result of these discriminatory local, state, and federal policies, which effectively denied suburban homeownership, the majority of African Americans had few housing options outside of the South End, Roxbury, and sections of Dorchester.[84]

The increased racial segregation and discrimination which alarmed and mobilized the Snowdens and their neighbors were also a result of an ambitious program of urban renewal which took shape in the late 1940s and gained steam through the 1950s. City housing, banking, and political leaders affected a major residential and economic transformation of the city through re-zoning, corporate tax breaks, highway construction, and the destruction and forced re-location of residential communities.[85] Through urban renewal, city leaders sought to boost the city's ailing economy, halt the flow of white Bostonians to the suburbs, and revitalize the declining city center. City leaders accomplished their goal—but at the expense of racially and economically diverse communities like Roxbury and the South End.[86] Urban renewal's destructive impact on

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[83] "Plaintiffs Findings," *Morgan v. Hennigan*, LOC.

[84] Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, The Voice of the Ghetto, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967; *Morgan v. Hennigan*; Geismer, "Don't Blame Us", 41-42.

[85] Boston's urban renewal agenda was overseen by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) and city leaders (most notably Mayors Hynes, Collins, and White who held office in the period from the 1950s through the 1970s).

[86] See Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson, *The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change* (New York, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000); Sean Fisher and Carolyn Hughes, eds., *The Last Tenement: Confronting Community and Urban Renewal in Boston's West End* (Boston: Bostonian Society, 1992); Marc Fried et al., *The World of the Urban Working Class* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villages: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1982); Chester Hartman, "The Housing of Relocated Families," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 30 (November 1964): 266-86; Thomas H. O'Connor, *Building a New Boston: Politics*

neighborhoods like the South End sent a clear message that city leaders could not be counted upon to advocate for the interests of the city's minority and poor communities, and that if black Bostonians wanted to protect their neighborhoods; they would have to do it themselves. The founders of Freedom House seized the opportunity to lead.[87]

The Snowdens and their co-founders were committed to empowering local people to lead these types of programs. In its mission statement, Freedom House founders wrote, "In the complex, dehumanized and centralized city life, it aims to restore some capacity for direct influence of and impact by the individual upon his community and to promote concretely the basic principles underlying a desirable community."[88] Likewise, founding Freedom House Board Member Elwood McKenney wrote, "Achieving the good

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and Urban Renewal, 1950-1970 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995). Although many scholars have been critical of the impact of the city's early urban renewal efforts, particularly in the West End, on working-class ethnic communities, O'Connor's work is more focused on the politics behind urban renewal projects and presents a comparatively positive portrait of the motivations and actions of city officials. His work contains little information about the opponents of urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s.

[87] Local people and scholars alike point to the re-development of the neighborhood of the West End as emblematic of the damaging impact of urban renewal on the city's most vulnerable residents and the enormous power held by city, state, and federal officials in re-making the city's landscape. Beginning in the mid-1950s urban renewal claimed the forty-eight acre residential community known as the "West End" which had been home to a large multi-ethnic, working class immigrant community since the turn of the century. The project, which was developed by the BHA and the U.S. Housing and Home Financing Agency and administered by private developers and BRA, displaced more than 2,800 families to make way for high-rise luxury apartment complexes and a large complex of government offices known as Government Center. The project, which was one of the first of its kind in the nation, is generally considered an economic debacle because of its failure to attract new residents, its displacement of a large economically vulnerable community, and the lack of transparency on the part of city officials regarding the effect of urban renewal. Moreover, the destruction of this racially diverse community furthered the trend towards the forced isolation of the majority of Black Bostonians in a handful of neighborhoods. The BHA and city leaders hoped that the newly constructed high-end residencies would attract middle and upper-class white professionals who were leaving the city for the high-tech suburbs along Route 128 at this time. For a discussion of the negative impact of the West End re-development project see Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962); Chester Hartman, "The Housing of Relocated Families," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 30 (November 1964): 266-86.

[88] "Freedom House Inc. Fact Sheet," 1950, Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern.

community, then, is our 24-hour a day, full-time focus. Citizen-inspired, citizen-organized, citizen-supported and citizen-staffed."[89]

Beginning in 1955, the first urban renewal project in Boston claimed what was known as the "New York Streets" area of the neighborhood of the "South End." The "New York Streets," located in the far Northeast corner of the South End adjacent to Interstate Highway 93, was home to a diverse working-class community in the first half of the twentieth century. The neighborhood was razed to make way for a new plant for the Boston Herald Traveler newspaper as part of a larger vision to bring factories into the declining city center.[90] Urban planners targeted the racially and economically diverse neighborhood of the South End because of its close proximity to the downtown commercial and business district, major highways, and the availability of space to construct industrial and corporate facilities. Joyce King, a longtime community activist, grew up in the New York Streets area. She recounts that the project clearly demonstrated the discrepancy in power between city officials and community people. "They just did it. There were no community meetings or anything like that. So people just moved out. Everybody went in different directions once the neighborhood said, 'You gotta get out.'"[91] The destruction of the New York Streets sent a clear message to working-class

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[89] Elwood McKenney, "Focus: The Community," Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern. Hon. Elwood S. McKenney was a long-time Roxbury resident and leader in social justice movements city-wide. In 1946 he was the first African American appointed to the newly created Massachusetts Fair Employment Commission (forerunner to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination). As a justice of the Roxbury District court after 1950, he was a strong advocate for racial equality in the criminal justice and legal system. In addition to his work with Freedom House Judge McKenney was also involved with the NAACP and the Boston Legal Aid Society.

[90] Christopher Marstall, "Boston's Vanished New York Streets," *Boston Globe*, 19 August 2012, http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2012/08/18/boston-vanished-new-york-streets/EVxSqBnv9ups9yO5Q6MhTP/story.html, accessed December 5, 2012

[91] As urban renewal programs continued to target the South End in the 1960s, the African American community rallied in formal opposition to development projects which called for the destruction of their homes, schools, and churches. Joyce King, interview with author, 28 November 2012 (hereafter: "J. King interview").

nonwhite communities that their interests were secondary to city officials' vision of economic development.

Witnessing this steady physical decline and increased racial segregation, the Snowdens and their neighbors were convinced of the need for immediate and bold action to save their communities. As parent-activists, the Snowdens' commitment to reversing these trends was motivated foremost by their desire to create more just and safe neighborhoods for their children. As such, education and youth welfare always stood at the center of Freedom House's mission. According to a founding document written by Board President Elwood McKenney, "The future of every town as well as that of the entire nation lies in its human resources—youth. Every young person should be encouraged to develop and utilize his talents to his own best advantage and for the benefit of society."[92] In the 1950s, Freedom House launched one of its early youth-focused programs—an Applicant Preparation Workshop that assisted local Black and Jewish teens to find jobs and internships. In 1952, the Snowdens and Freedom House established Freedom House Play School, one of the city's first interracial pre-schools, described as an "experience in democratic living." Their efforts on behalf of Roxbury youth in the early 1950s also included the rehabilitation of local playgrounds and the establishment of interracial after-school groups for teenagers.[93]

The Snowdens, like many parents, became involved in education politics because of concerns for their children. Reflecting on their motivations for creating Freedom House Muriel Snowden wrote, "As Otto and I looked around our community and thought in terms of Gail, our little girl, we had to make up our minds whether we would do as

[92] McKenney, "Focus: The Community,", Box 1, Folder 1, Freedom House, Northeastern.
[93] "Freedom House Activities Pamphlet", Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern.

Otto's father had done OR whether we should dig in where we were to try to reverse the trend slum-ward."[94] Otto Snowden cited a specific incident in the early 1950s in which he called the central office at Gail's school and to his great surprise Gail herself answered the phone. Upon questioning, Gail's teacher informed Otto that she had sent Gail to the office to answer the phones to occupy her because she was finishing her work more quickly than her classmates.[95]

These youth programs show how Freedom House acted as a "magnet" bringing together disparate organizations in the fight for educational justice and youth welfare very early in the movement. Freedom House brought together a coalition of other community organizations and religious institutions to become involved in these early education programs including, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Elliot Congregational Church, YMHCA, YMCA, and the Urban League. In keeping with their goal of interracial organization and fellowship, Freedom House also brought a number of social and racial justice organizations outside of Roxbury into their early educational programs including the American Friends Service Committee, Massachusetts Division of Employment Security, MCAD, Children's Aid Association, and even the Vocational Guide Department of the Boston Public Schools. Throughout the movement, Freedom House was also one of the community organizations in the Black community most willing to work with white liberal groups and state and city bodies.

Just months after its formation, Freedom House spearheaded a project focused on youth welfare which exemplifies the central role community interests and alliance-

[94] Snowdens, "What Freedom House Is," Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern
[95] Jenny Belknap, paper for History 187: Professor Gerald Gill, Tufts University, December 17, 1993, "To Chip Away at the Walls:" The History of Freedom House, Inc.: Youth Programs and the Desegregation of the Boston Public System, 1949-1969, Box 1, Folder 1, Muriel S. and Otto P. Snowden Papers, Northeastern, 22 (hereafter "Snowden").

building played in its political style. In the spring of 1949, Freedom House published a brochure for parents listing programs available to Roxbury children and families during the summer vacation. As they gathered information, it became clear the city did not intend to staff or equip the three parks in the community—Munroe, Washington, and Franklin Park. Appalled, Freedom House wasted no time, inviting staff from several community institutions in Roxbury and the South End, including St. Mark's Congregational Church Social Center, the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), YMCA, and Elliot Congregational Church, to a meeting to strategize a plan to address this problem. As a result of that gathering, this alliance of community organizations presented a proposal to the School Committee and Parks Department to provide staff and funding for the parks. In the following years, Freedom House submitted annual requests to city officials reminding authorities of their responsibility to Roxbury youth.[96]

Freedom House was not the only organization in the black community working for racial equity and community empowerment in the postwar period. It joined a small but important network of settlement houses, founded in the early twentieth century, including the Shaw Settlement House, Norfolk Center, and St. Mark's Social Center. By the late 1940s, these community centers, located in the South End and Roxbury, were well-established in their respective neighborhoods as important gathering spaces and social service providers for the community. As the racial demographics of these neighborhoods changed, so too did the work of these organizations—shifting to focus specifically on the welfare of black Bostonians. Reflecting on her experiences growing up in the community of Madison Park in lower Roxbury in the 1950s, community

[96] "Freedom House Fact Sheet," FH, Northeastern, 2; Belknap, "To Chip Away at The Walls," Snowden, Northeastern.

educational activist Barbara Burke described the important role that settlement houses like the Shaw House played in fostering community ties. "The settlement houses in the area—Shaw House, Cooper Community Center, Shelbourne Center, Norfolk House, Hecht House—people congregated there," Burke said.[97] Like Freedom House, the political significance of these community centers lay both in the programs they offered and this experience of social and political congregation.

Fighting for Democracy at the Higginson School

The Snowdens and Freedom House cut their political teeth on one of the first African American parent educational reform movements of the postwar period. From 1949 to 1951, the Snowdens and a determined band of parent-activists in the Higginson School District in Roxbury waged a battle for more democratic practices in school governance.[98] Before its end, the parents' movement had sparked accusations of Communist infiltration and sparked a major conflict between black parents and school administrators. Ultimately, it demonstrated the ability of determined, organized people to affect educational change.

The Higginson School District was located in the neighborhood of Upper Roxbury, very close to the Snowden's family home and Freedom House. The District had an enrollment of 1,125 students in three elementary schools—the David A. Ellis, Henry L. Higginson, and W.L.P. Boardman.[99] In the late 1940s and early 1950s the

[97] Barbara Burke, interview with author, April 18, 2013 (hereafter: "Burke interview).
[98] "Temporary Committee to Secure a Democratic Home and School in the Higginson District," 31 January, 1951, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern. A partial list of active members of the Committee included Muriel and Otto Snowden, Mrs. Margaret Marsh, Mrs. Eva Jordan, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Jarvis, Mrs. Irene Robinson, Mr. Bill Ellis, Mrs. Doris Hart, Mrs. Charlotte Pollock, Mrs. Frances Teixera, Mrs. Edith Washington, Mrs. Rheable Edwards, Mrs. Marguerite McKinney, Mrs. Mary Lou Morris, and Mrs. Alice Sherarion.
[99] "Breakdown of the Henry L. Higginson District," Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.

neighborhood was racially and economically mixed, and included a large African American and Jewish population. However, beginning in the early 1950s the racial makeup of the neighborhood, like many others throughout the city, was becoming predominantly African American.

On November 22, 1949 the year's first meeting of the Higginson Elementary School Home and School Association (HSA) was held. The meeting got off to a very rocky start when Higginson School Principal Elizabeth Cloney announced the names of the appointees to the HSA Board. Cloney was a forty-nine year veteran of the BPS with twenty years as Higginson Principal. A group of African American parents stood up to insist that board members should be elected, rather than appointed. The parents' assertion of their right to participate in HSA governance did not appear out of thin air—rather it explicitly drew on a 1948 Boston School Committee directive which stated that parents had the right to participate in the formation of a "democratic Home and School Association in their district."[100] Despite this, Principal Cloney pushed aside the parents' concerns. The parents, led by Mrs. Margaret Marsh, stormed out in protest of Cloney's "arbitrary, high-handed action." Within a week, Marsh and a dozen other parents established the Temporary Committee to Secure a Democratic Home and School Association in the Higginson District.[101]

These struggles played out in a protracted battle over a single document—the Higginson School HSA Constitution. Immediately after the November meeting, Committee Chair Marsh and the Snowdens launched a campaign to revise the HSA Constitution to include greater protections for parents' rights and democratic practices,

[100] Marshall Dames, "Spokes in the Hub," undated, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.
[101] "You Should Know About…The Temporary Committee to Secure a Democratic Home and School Association in the Henry L. Higginson District," Box 1, Folder 239, Snowden, Northeastern.

such as the election of board members. During the winter Marsh, the Snowdens, and other Committee members met with Principal Cloney more than half a dozen times to request constitutional revisions. Marsh and the Snowdens gathered 150 signatures for a petition in support of these revisions. Further, they stated that they could have gathered more signatures if not for parents' fears of reprisals by school officials and teachers against their children—pointing to the culture of racial animosity and authoritarianism which had permeated school culture by this time.[102]

Although this HSA Board incident was the spark to the parents' activism, the conflict between white administrators and black parents at the Higginson School had deeper roots. In a letter to parents, committee members wrote, "IS THIS SOMETHING NEW? No, it is not. For twenty-five years parents have been disturbed and upset by the tyrannical attitude of the principal of the district."[103] Comments made by Cloney demonstrated the deep racial hostility which colored these conflicts over the HSA. Cloney angrily rejected parents' demands for a greater role in the schools. "This is my job, not theirs," Cloney told an interviewer in 1951. Cloney insisted that the Snowdens, specifically, had "taken ten years off my life" with their protest. She denounced their work and that of Freedom House in the community as well—criticizing their neighborhood clean-ups on the grounds that street maintenance was the responsibility of the city, not the people.[104] In an interview with a local newspaper, Cloney described Otto Snowden as a "college graduate, high type of colored person now trying to open up some sort of community house and take jobs away from other people." Cloney went on to denounce many African Americans in the community for their supposed lack of

[102] Ibid.
[103] "Letter to Parents and Guardians," 7 May 1951, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.
[104] Interview with Principal Cloney, January 31, 1951, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.

religiosity and suggested that the growing racial tensions in the community could be blamed on African Americans with "too much education."[105]

Recognizing that they were unlikely to change Principal Cloney's views, the Committee began the search for outside allies. During the winter of 1950, as Cloney's wrath grew, the parents solicited the support of Boston Public School Superintendent Dr. Dennis Haley and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Frederick J. Gillis. [106] At first, this strategy seemed to find traction, as the parents convinced Dr. Haley to direct Cloney to appoint a constitutional Committee to revise the HSA Constitution. At a moment in which racial segregation and discrimination by school officials was on the rise, Gillis and Haley's willingness to back African American parents, particularly in opposition to Principal Cloney, bears further consideration. Statements from the Committee suggest that Gillis and Haley supported the parents simply because they agreed with their position. In a pamphlet to parents the Committee wrote, "Dr. Dennis Haley, Superintendent of Schools and Dr. Frederick J. Gillis, Ass't Superintendent in charge of overall Home and School Associations, agree that our request for a democratic organization is a simple, normal, and reasonable one."[107] Moreover, Gillis and Haley likely felt that the parents' demands were in line with the School Committee's 1948 directive regarding parental involvement in the HSA and they had a responsibility to ensure compliance from school principals.

But ultimately even a direct order from her superior was not enough to convince Cloney to accept greater parental involvement in the school. After agreeing to create the

[105] Cloney made frequent racist and xenophobic comments throughout the interview. Interview with Principal Cloney, January 31, 1951, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.
[106] Committee meeting notes", 8 February 1951, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.
[107] "You Should Know About…The Temporary Committee to Secure a Democratic Home and School Association in the Henry L. Higginson District," Box 1, Folder 239, Snowden, Northeastern.

Committee in May, 1950, Cloney blocked further movement on the issue by refusing to convene a meeting to discuss the Committee's findings throughout the summer. In October 1950, Cloney went so far as to schedule a meeting with the constitutional Committee, but at the last minute informed members that neither she nor the teacher representatives of the HSA would attend, under the guise that she had not received adequate advance notice.[108]

That winter, opponents of community educational power turned to red-baiting – in what would become a common tactic to suppress black freedom movements in the postwar period. On December 29, 1950, *Boston Herald Traveler* reporter Cornelius Dalton penned a sensationalistic article claiming that communist women controlled several Boston area Home and School Associations and planned a takeover of the entire system. Dalton specifically accused a Mrs. Anne Burlak Timpson of attempting a takeover of the Higginson District HSA.[109] While Burlak's involvement in the Higginson HSA is not clear, accusations of Communist influence damaged the Higginson movement. In the wake of Dalton's accusations, some parents left the group and others refused to join for fear of being labeled communist, leaving the Committee scrambling to keep its efforts alive. Several weeks later a meeting was held "To re-organize and re-establish interest in the Home and School Association in spite of the communistic attack made upon it by the articles of Cornelius Dalton, of the Traveler." Muriel Snowden suggested that the best way for the Committee to successfully move past Dalton's

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Cornelius Dalton, "Reds Driving Wedge into Boston PTA," *Boston Herald Traveler*, 29 December 1950, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern. In addition to Timpson, Dalton also named Mrs. Frances A. Wood, Mrs. Daniel Boone Schirmer, and Mrs. Barbara Bennett Rosencrantz. All three were members of Home and School Associations in the Brooks District, located in Roxbury. Dalton claimed that Timpson "some months ago led a campaign to change the Home and School Association in Roxbury, but it failed" and that she had met with high-ranking school officials who were unaware of her political affiliation.

accusations was "by keeping in mind the main purpose which is to secure a determined home and School for the best interests of all children." Committee members discussed, but ultimately rejected, a proposal requiring members to sign a loyalty oath.[110] Principal Cloney, for her part, attempted to use Dalton's article to discredit movement for greater parental participation and to target activists like the Snowdens who challenged the racial status quo. [111]

But the Committee, rather than giving in to the opposition, redoubled its efforts to bring racial democracy to the Higginson School. In a strategy meeting on February 8, 1951, Committee Secretary Muriel Snowden defined a democratic organization as "one which elects its officers and executive board through proper parliamentary procedure; an organization governed by a constitution formally presented to and adopted by the members." A democratic organization, Snowden continued, was one "which encourages the active participation of the total member in the planning and execution of programs designed to increase our knowledge and skill as teachers and parents in the handling of our children." In a subsequent pamphlet distributed to the Higginson school parent body, Committee members urged parents to claim their rights. "YOU must decide," Committee

[110] Evelyn Marsh, "Meeting of Interested People to Stimulate Action in Home and School Association," 26 January 1951, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern. Several others in attendance at the meeting concurred that support for the group had fallen off because of red-baiting and intimidation from Principal Cloney specifically.

[111] Timpson was a lifelong member of the Communist Party and advocate for workers' rights and social justice. Although she lived in Roxbury in the late 1940s, she fled the area in the early 1950s to try to avoid arrest, and the level of her involvement in the Higginson parents' movement is unclear. See Anne Burlak Timpson Papers, 1886-2003, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Five College Archives & Manuscript Collection, Northampton, Massachusetts. Although the papers document the entirety of Timpson's life in significant detail, there is no reference to any involvement she may have had with the Higginson School, any Boston Home and School Association, or this parent group. For information on the community response to Dalton's accusations and Cloney's attempts to use them to discredit the parent movement see Sara White, "Principal Quits Post Here in Red Tinged Row," *Boston Herald Traveler*, 31 May 1951, Box 6, Folder 239, Snowden, Northeastern; Mrs. Louise Winokur, "Letter to the Editor", *Boston Herald Traveler*, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern; Interview with Principal Cloney, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.

members wrote, "first as parents, then as citizens, voters, and taxpayers whether you are satisfied with a Home and School Association which gives you no opportunity 1) To express your opinion in meetings and 2) To participate in the formulation and the democratic acceptance or rejection of the Constitution by which your organization is governed." The Committee urged parents to overcome fear of reprisal from school officials and to "Remember—you are asking only that your fundamental rights as citizens of a democracy be respected!"[112]

However, Principal Cloney remained determined to retain control of the HSA constitution and through it the Higginson School. After nearly a year of refusing to discuss proposed constitutional revisions, on April 10, 1951, she shocked Committee members by distributing copies of a newly created HSA constitution. Secretly authored by Cloney and several HSA board members, it did not include any of the revisions suggested by the constitution Committee. Moreover, it granted a significant expansion of authority to school principals, including the automatic appointment as HSA president and the power to appoint all members of the HSA Board.[113] Committee members were particularly incensed that the accompanying letter to parents from Principal Cloney made no mention of the year-long struggle over the constitutional revisions.

In response, the Snowdens submitted four amendments to the new constitution to the HSA board, including their original request for the election of board members. Although Cloney and the HSA board did not respond directly to the Snowdens' proposals, on May 2 they sent a follow-up notice to parents informing them that the new

[112] "You Should Know About…The Temporary Committee to Secure a Democratic Home and School Association in the Henry L. Higginson District," Box 1, Folder 239, Snowden, Northeastern.
[113] Constitution of the Henry L. Higginson School Home and School Association, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.

constitution now *also* prohibited amendments for two years. The rejection of the Snowdens' amendments prompted Committee members to shift their focus to securing the support of the broader parent community. On May 7, the Committee sent a letter to all parents which, once again, asserted local peoples' right to exercise power in their schools. "As taxpayers and voters, you should know the facts about the struggle in this district to have something about which there should be no question—a Home and School Association which truly represents the parents and teachers in this area. What you do about these facts is entirely up to you, but it is your right at least to have a comparative basis for your decision."[114]

On May 7, 1951, just days after Cloney's rejection of their proposed amendments, the Snowdens rushed to meet with Dr. Haley to voice their outrage at this most recent turn of events. As they had for the past eighteen months, both Dr. Haley and Dr. Gillis threw their support behind the parents' movement, and ordered Principal Cloney to cooperate by holding a HAS business meeting to discuss the constitutional revisions. Cloney, however, refused to discuss the matter with parents or acknowledge that there was anything problematic about her actions, instead sending a letter to the entire parent community on May 11 which asserted that the majority of parents supported the new constitution.[115]

Just when it seemed that the Higginson parents' movement might be defeated, victory emerged, rather unexpectedly, within grasp. On May 29, 1951, after twenty-five years as Higginson Principal, Elizabeth Cloney tendered her resignation. Although

[114] "Letter to Parents and Guardians," 7 May 1951, Box 6, Folder 238, Snowden, Northeastern.

[115] "You Should Know About…The Temporary Committee to Secure a Democratic Home and School Association in the Henry L. Higginson District," Box 1, Folder 239, Snowden, Northeastern.

Cloney refused to concede she had bowed to community pressure, the growing opposition from BPS officials and the apparent failure of her effort to her own constitution "stick," likely convinced Cloney that she was fighting a losing battle. However, even in defeat, Cloney continued to assert the righteousness of her position in her letter of resignation. In her letter to Superintendent Haley, Cloney wrote, "In protest to your long continued support of a small group of agitators—one of them the Communist, Ann Burlak Timpson—in defiance of my authority as the as principal of the district…I respectfully ask that I be retired from service."[116] After years of fighting to build a school community rooted in the principles of democracy and justice, the parents of the Higginson District finally succeeded in removing an enormous roadblock—Ms. Elizabeth Cloney—from their path.

Cloney's retirement marked the formal end of the Committee's activism. Although the parents' movement did not eliminate all vestiges of racial inequality from the Higginson District, the movement provided local people the opportunity to develop and hone their political skills, specifically in direct action protest. Throughout this movement, community members met and negotiated with school officials, forged alliances, drafted press releases and pamphlets, organized meetings, and crafted strategy. This work provided dozens of parents with invaluable experience in racial politics, leadership, and community organizing. In this way, the Committee—much like other grassroots organizations that sprung up during this period—served as political incubator for a new generation of activists. Additionally, through the Committee, community members formed crucial personal bonds critical to the on-going development of the

[116] Sarah White, "Principal Quits Post Here in Red Tinged Row," *Boston Herald Traveler*, 31 May 1951, Box 6, Folder 239, Snowden, Northeastern.

movement. The skills activists developed and the bonds they forged helped the lay the foundation for subsequent waves of grassroots educational activism in Roxbury, and the Higginson District specifically, in the early 1960s. Ultimately, the most important legacy of the Higginson movement was its message that that through purposeful, concerted action Black Bostonians *could* affect social and educational change, even in the face of an entrenched institutional structure.

Ruth Batson and "Education for Democracy"

At the same time the Snowdens were building a movement for educational justice around Freedom House and the Higginson School District, another community activist, Ruth Marion Batson, was also fighting for racial democracy in the Boston schools. She became one of the most effective and determined activists in this movement.

Ruth Batson nee Marion was born in Roxbury on August 3, 1921 to West Indian migrants, Joel and Cassandra Watson. The Watsons, like many West Indian migrants, were politically active in the Garvey movement and attended meetings of the Boston Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Ruth's mother, with whom Ruth attended UNIA meetings, played a particularly formative role in the development of her political vision. The Watson family made their home on Lenox Street in lower Roxbury and Ruth attended Boston Public Schools where she was a talented and eager student.[117] Ruth's mother instilled in her the lifelong value of a strong education telling her, "What you put into your head, no one can take away." Shortly after graduation from Girls Academy in 1939, Ruth married John C. Batson, with whom she had three daughters,

[117] "Ruth Batson, Community Activist, Wins Roe Award," Harvard Gazette, 19 November 1990, Box 1, Folder 1, Batson, Schlesinger. Although she excelled in her early education in the Boston Public Schools, Batson recounted that her academic performance suffered when she began at Girls High because she hid her intelligence to be accepted by other students.

Cassandra, Susan, and Dorothy. Ruth's concern with her children's education drove her fierce fight for educational justice and self-determination throughout her forty year career as a civil rights activist.

Batson was a young mother living in Roxbury in 1949 when she began her formal involvement in community-based education reform. She accepted the invitation of a neighbor and friend to attend meetings of the Parents Federation, an interracial grassroots organization that promoted greater parental involvement in the schools. Batson and other parents met to discuss the findings of the Strayer Report, a 1945 study which described the poor physical conditions and political corruption in the Boston Public School system.[118] Captivated by the report's findings regarding racial discrimination in particular, Batson began to organize her own meetings of parents in Roxbury and North Dorchester to discuss racial inequality in the Boston Public Schools.[119] While Batson's time with the Parents Federation ended prematurely - a victim of red-baiting, it nonetheless kick started her long activist career.

Building on her experiences in the Parents' Federation and growing knowledge of the educational inequities in the Boston Public Schools, Batson made a bold shift from local grassroots to city-wide electoral politics. On September 25, 1951, Batson announced her candidacy for the Boston School Committee—making her the first African American candidate for that office in the twentieth century. The Boston School Committee held tremendous power over all aspects of the Boston Public Schools in this

[118] The Strayer Report was commissioned by the Boston Finance Commission and released on January25, 1944. The Strayer Report was a foundational report in the documentation of racial discrimination, segregation, and general educational failure in the Boston Public Schools. Its findings included evidence of significant political corruption in the Boston Public Schools (most notably within the Boston School Committee) and severe physical deterioration of many school buildings (especially in South End and Roxbury). The Strayer Report documented a pattern of members using the Boston School Committee as a platform to launch further political careers.

[119] Batson, *The Black Educational Movement*, 3-7.

period from curriculum and materials to student and faculty assignments. The body was dominated by political insiders—many of them white, male and Irish and traveling in the same political and social circles. Her campaign challenge was notable, given that white men had long held the vast majority of Committee seats and in that she ran without any sort of political machine to back her campaign.[120] As a young, working-class African American woman, Batson's bid was a bold political move.

Batson made a strong case that her experiences as a mother uniquely qualified her to serve on the Boston School Committee. "For Your Children's Sake," one campaign flyer read, "Elect a Mother!" Another campaign flyer, which showed Batson posed with her three elementary school-aged daughters, Cassandra, Susan, and Dorothy, described her as a "Life Long Resident of Boston; Mother; Teacher; Civic Worker." She also called for the elimination of the "marriage bar" for female teachers. Her platform also reflected a commitment to supporting the economic needs of families and educators. She called for cost of living salary increases for teachers and the introduction of a hot-lunch program for all Boston Public Schools, beginning with elementary programs.[121]

Batson also affirmed the value of local people's experiences by stressing her extensive involvement in a variety of community organizations working with youth. A local newspaper article announcing Batson's candidacy highlighted her service as the Director of the Episcopal City Mission Summer School Kindergarten, Lenox Street Housing Project Play School, and the Unitarian Toy Lending Library. The article also

[120] For instance on September 9, 1951 Batson held a musical fundraising event at the Rector Hall at St. Cyprian's Church in which attendees were asked to donate $1 to her campaign. Ruth Batson Boston School Committee campaign materials, 1951, Box 2, Folder 8, Batson, Schlesinger.
[121] Ibid.

noted Batson's membership in the Boston Association of Nursery Schools, NAACP, and Parents Federation.[122]

Batson's campaign platform was rooted in a concept she referred to as "Education for Democracy" which she described as "Interracial Understanding and Responsible Citizenship."[123] Her articulation of the importance of democratic principles in public education, which echoed the language of the Higginson Committee, became a core part of the educational vision and practice that Black Bostonians were developing during this period.

Figure 4. Ruth Batson Boston School Committee Campaign Poster.[124]

Her bid to join the School Committee was unsuccessful—she earned 15,154 votes, placing sixteenth in a field of approximately twenty-six candidates. Still, her campaign was politically significant for Batson personally and the movement as a whole.

[122] Newspaper clippings, November 1951, Box 2, Folder 8, Batson, Schlesinger.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ruth Batson Boston School Committee Campaign, Box 2, Folder 8, Batson Papers, Schlesinger.

It sent a clear message to city elites that Black Bostonians would no longer accept the traditions of parochialism and exclusivity that had defined the Boston Public System for decades.[125] Moreover, her campaign gave Batson first-hand insight into the mechanics of Boston's educational politics and served as the gateway for additional involvement in educational politics in this period.[126] Lastly, Batson's campaign was a discursive space in which Black Bostonians educational vision of participatory democratic and community control was taking shape.

Batson's experience as a mother continued to drive the evolution of her political career. On an ordinary day in 1953, she was chatting on the phone with a friend and fellow mother she had met through the Parents Federation. In the midst of the conversation Batson's friend paused to remind her son about his upcoming school science project. Batson's interest and concern was piqued. Why did her friend's son, who was white and attended a predominantly white school, have a science project, while her own daughter, Susan, who was the same age but attended a majority Black school, did not? Her knowledge of racial inequality in the schools, gleaned through the Parents Federation, and her own mother's lessons on the value of education made Batson take pause. "At first," Batson recounted, "I shrugged it off, because, when you have three little kids you get busy, and you don't have any money, and you just have enough problems trying to live; never mind getting into other things. But I couldn't shake it; I couldn't shake this thing." [127] Batson decided to confront Susan's teacher and principal with the evidence of curricular un-evenness. Susan's teacher and principal assured Batson that all

[125] Un-authored newspaper article, November 1951, Box 2, Folder 8, Batson, Schlesinger.
[126] Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 65.
[127] Ruth Batson, interviewed with Katherine Shannon, 27 December 1967. Washington, D.C.: Civil Rights Documentation Project, Box 1, Folder 1, Batson, Schlesinger.

Boston Public Schools covered the same material, and that Susan's class would begin the science unit of their curriculum soon. Batson was delighted when Susan came home with an assignment for a science project within the month. Her relief proved short-lived however, because Susan complained to her mother that she was the *only* student in class with science homework. Batson sensed that Susan's experience was not an anomaly—rather it was representative of the inferior education afforded to African American students throughout the system. Personal concerns about her own daughter's education, her childhood exposure to a racial protest tradition with the UNIA, and Cassandra Watson's lessons on the value of education undoubtedly drove Batson to heed her worries and take action.

Batson's decision to pursue what she suspected were systemic issues with the quality of education afforded to Susan and other African American children in Boston was not only a seminal moment in her life, but also significant for the movement as a whole. With her growing determination to address the problems in the schools, Batson decided to report the incident to the Boston Branch NAACP. Batson identified her experiences growing up in a political family as a critical factor pushing her to report the incident to the NAACP. "This kind of thing was not new to me," Batson noted, "because I was raised in a family that was very active in the Marcus Garvey movement. My mother was very active, and as a child I used to go to these meetings. I guess that's why it was so hard for me to shake off the feeling that I should be concerned as to whether the other kids were getting science or not." Although she was initially disappointed by a tepid response from NAACP officials, leaders at the branch responded with quick and bold action. Just hours after returning home, Batson received a phone call from NAACP

Branch President, Lionel Lindsay, asking her to lead the newly formed NAACP Public School Committee, which would target racial inequality in elementary and secondary education. Batson agreed, and under her direction the NAACP Public School Committee labored to raise public awareness of the severity of racial discrimination in the Boston Public Schools.

The newly created Public School Committee was a leader in the fight for racial democracy in the schools for the next several decades. Under Batson's leadership through the mid-1960s, the Committee shed light on the racial inequalities in the schools and supported black parents' efforts to secure quality education for their children. The committee met with parents to discuss their concerns, accompanied them to meetings with school officials, and compiled data comparing curriculum, funding, and school materials in majority black and white schools.[128] The support offered by Batson and the NAACP Public School Committee empowered Black Bostonians to demand higher educational standards in their schools and a larger voice in the process of educational governance.

Batson's intervention in the Boston NAACP transformed the organization by expanding its organizational focus to include the needs and experiences of the masses of black Bostonians. Prior to Batson's involvement, the only educational programming offered by the branch was support for aspiring African American college students—a program which had been established by Florence Lesueur in the late 1940s, reflecting the evolution of the branch's agenda in the immediate postwar period. In this way, grassroots action not only challenged the white educational power structure, but also shaped civil rights organizations like the NAACP.

[128] Batson, *The Black Educational Movement,* 48.

In addition to this programmatic shift, the NAACP Public Schools committee, much like the Higginson Committee, significantly aided the political and organizational development of the educational movement, providing crucial space for a new generation of activists, like Batson, to hone their political skills and craft their vision of educational justice. Moreover, the re-vamped committee became part the institutional foundation of the burgeoning movement, providing crucial material resources. Moreover, through the NAACP Public Schools committee, local activists like Batson and her fellow Roxbury residents, developed personal relationships that served as mortar cementing the organizational building blocks together.

The early activist efforts of Higginson Parents HSA movement and Ruth Batson embodied a new vision of racial and educational politics in postwar Boston. Moreover, personal experiences and intimate concerns helped forge these leaders gave their work an urgency, immediacy and passion that without question helped forge a lasting, living movement. While at this stage in the movement the Snowdens, Ruth Batson, and the dozens of other community activists across the city were not yet working *formally* together, they were nonetheless jointly building the vision and the movement to challenge the status quo of racial politics and education in Boston.

Chapter Two: "I realized it was more than myself": The Birth of a Mass Movement for Educational Liberation, 1959-1965

"Just as we rise to the occasion to pay our taxes (for which we get small return)…we will rise to the occasion to see that our children are no longer shortchanged in the education they receive."

Ruth Batson, Statement to the Boston School Committee, 1963[129]

Seventeen-year-old Geraldine "Jerry" Carol Stubbs had a spring in her step on the morning of February 26, 1964. "Jerry" as she was known to her friends was a senior at Girls High, a predominantly black high school in Roxbury. That morning she rushed through her morning routine, hopped on the bus, and joined her classmates at her neighborhood freedom school at the Tremont Methodist Church. "When I woke up today, the first thing I thought of was getting to Freedom School on time. As soon as they announced the Stayout I made up my mind to go." Stubbs was one of 20,000 students who took part in the Stayout for Freedom in Boston on February 26, 1964. In protest of the racial injustice in the city's schools, Stubbs and her classmates stayed out of the Boston Public Schools, instead attending freedom schools where they participated in lessons in African American history, the philosophy of civil rights protest, and the current black education movement. At the end of the day, Stubbs and her freedom school classmates sang "freedom hymns" and received a Freedom Diploma. "I don't know what will come from it but something important will…something that will help us," she said.[130]

On June 18, 1963 and again in February, 1964 25,000 black and white students took part in Stayouts for Freedom in Boston. The stayouts protested the widespread racial

[129] Ruth Batson, "Statement to the Boston School Committee", June 11, 1963, Box 4, Folder 5, Batson, Schlesinger.
[130] Loretta Leone, "Why I Joined the Boycott Movement," *The Sunday Boston Herald*, 2 March 1964.

segregation in the Boston Public Schools and the refusal of school officials to listen to black community members concerns about their schools. The history of the freedom schools offers a key lens through which to examine key developments in the black education movement in the early 1960s including the formation of dynamic political alliances between local, state, and national activists, the influence of personal experience in movement mobilization, and the emergence of an increasingly powerful mass movement for racial democracy in education.

The freedom school story brings to light the emergence of powerful political and ideological ties between local, state, and national activists which figured centrally in every major campaign of the broader education movement in this period. Community activists, religious institutions, the local and national branches of organizations including the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and even national leaders including Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and James Farmer of CORE worked side-by-side in the Boston Freedom Stayout. Through their participation in the Freedom Stayouts, black Bostonians were tied to the broader black freedom movement as thousands of other students across the country in communities like Mississippi, Chicago, and New York were also attending freedom schools in the 1960s. These ties with the national movement can also been seen in the Boston freedom schools' grounding in a model of citizenship education embraced by other freedom schools across the country.

The history of the freedom schools highlights the important role which personal experience played in the expansion and the evolution of political movements such as this one. During the 1960s, personal encounters with racial injustice in the schools drove thousands of black Bostonians to join the education movement through campaigns like

the Freedom Stayouts. Through the experience of participating in the protest movements, individuals saw that many other black Bostonians faced similar challenges which cultivated a sense of shared purpose amongst participants and a clear goal around which to organize. Whether they chose to take part in the freedom schools, attend meetings of the NAACP Public School Committee, or join the Concerned Higginson Parents Association, personal connections and commitments often drove individuals' decision to take political action.

The story of the freedom stayouts also reveals the power of grassroots organizing to drive state action. Thanks to the efforts of this coalition of grassroots organizers, national organizations, religious institutions, the Freedom Stayouts captured the attention of state officials, including the State Commissioner of Education. Propelled by the continued pressure of community activists, in 1965 state legislators passed the Racial Imbalance Act (RIA)—the nation's first voluntary state-initiated school desegregation law. Although the RIA had a limited impact on the educational experience of black Bostonians in the immediate term, it became a foundational structure for the movement during the period of court-ordered desegregation and demonstrated the power of local movements to drive state action.

Through the Freedom Stayouts we can also gain insight into the evolution of black Bostonians' multi-faceted vision of educational self-determination in this period. Although the elimination of segregation was a central goal of the Stayouts, they were grounded in a model of citizenship education which saw an inextricable link between political empowerment and education. At their core, the Boston Freedom Stayouts sought

a fundamental transformation of the nature of educational governance and the racial order of the city by empowering black Bostonians to direct their own schools.

A Changing Nation and City

Black educational activism in Boston in the period from 1959 to 1965 unfolded in the context of profound changes in the local and national political, demographic, and economic landscape. In the wake of *Brown v. Board* while the American public and national civil rights organizations were consumed with the conflicts over school desegregation in the South, the decision was quietly and profoundly shaping the development of local black educational activism, and white response to it, in northern cities like Boston. Northern school officials and city leaders, including those in Boston, fearing similar judicial and legislative interventions in their city, scrambled to distance their schools from those in the South. They insisted that any segregation in their schools was "natural" consequence of urban life rather than the product of purposeful action and policies and therefore de facto rather than de jure. De facto segregation, they argued, did not constitute a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment in the same way as de jure and did not require the same legal remedies as in the South. School officials in Boston, especially the Boston School Committee, were only too eager to adopt this logic in the face of mounting segregation in the city's schools and neighborhoods and an increasingly politically empowered and organized black community.

However, no sooner had northern school leaders adopted this position than the courts delivered another serious blow with its ruling in the *Taylor v Board of Education of New Rochelle* in 1961. In *Taylor* the court ruled that de facto segregation was unconstitutional in cases in which school officials knowingly used residential segregation

as a means to create and maintain segregated schools.[131] The decision was a boon for the arguments of black educational activists in the North that distinctions between de facto and de jure segregation were false and that segregation, in any form, was unconstitutional.[132]

Taylor v. New Rochelle had direct and significant implications for the battles over educational reform for the Boston Public Schools in its arguments about segregation in the schools and housing. Although the city had experienced considerable growth of the African American population had grown in the 1950s, it paled in comparison to the expansion of the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1970 the Boston's African American population nearly doubled, from 63,165 to 104,596, to account for ten percent of the city's population. The majority of these newcomers hailed from the South and the West Indies—resulting in the increased heterogeneity of the city's African American population as well. The early 1960s bore witness to significant demographic, economic, and spatial shifts which resulted in the creation of an increasingly segregated urban landscape in which education and residential segregation were inextricably linked. Rather than being a "natural" product of urban life as school officials claimed, residential and educational segregation was the result of conscious action taken by city leaders. Elected officials, banks, and housing interests joined with federal agencies to construct a formal structure of residential segregation specifically in response to the influx of new black residents. Thanks to these efforts, by the early 1960s ninety-seven percent of African

[131] *Taylor v. Board of Education of City School District of City of New Rochelle, 294 F.2d* 36 (1961)
[132] Ibid.

Americans in Boston (all but 1,500 of 63,000) lived in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, North Dorchester, and the South End, known as the "Black Boomerang."[133]

Public and private housing officials in the city, working in concert with federal agencies including the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), played a key role in this demographic reconstruction. The Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (BBURG), working in concert with the FHA, played a key role in this effort. BBURG affiliated banks administering FHA loans only approved financial support for African American applicants seeking housing within clearly delineated neighborhoods including Roxbury, North Mattapan, North Dorchester, and the lower South End. Because these FHA loans were virtually the only funding source available to black homebuyers, this policy ensured the confinement of black Bostonians to these neighborhoods. In a report on the racial transformation in the neighborhoods of North Dorchester and North Mattapan an administrator with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) stated, "An integral and essential part of the transformation process has been F.H.A. mortgage insurance." The public housing market, continuing a pattern established well before World War II, also did its part to ensure the segregation of black and white Bostonians. MCAD found substantial evidence that the "The Boston Housing Authority, which administers one of the largest public housing programs in the country built and maintains

[133] The demographic history of Blue Hill Avenue illuminates in microcosm this broader shift in the city's racial landscape. In the immediate postwar period, Blue Hill Avenue, a major thoroughfare running from Lower Roxbury through North Dorchester and Mattapan, was the business center of the Jewish community in Boston. However, by the early 1950s, the West Indian and African American community began to settle along Blue Hill in larger numbers and within a decade the area was predominantly African American. Report on Racial Imbalance in the Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, January 1965, 48. The report stated, "Twenty-two affiliated banks and lending institutions, chartered and regulated by the state or federal agencies, financed residential choices with federal aid so as to delimit and preserve racially homogenous neighborhoods…The BBURG's FHA mortgage pool—practically the sole source of home financing funds for low and moderate income blacks—was available for purchases only within the geographic territory encompassed by the 'BBURG line.' This line also established a clear demarcation of the main area in which rental property would be available to black families."

public housing, with the assistance of state and federal agencies, on a racially segregated basis."[134]

An expansive urban renewal agenda, led by the city's elected officials and business leaders, once again with the support of federal agencies, also fueled residential segregation in this period. Despite the assurances of newly elected Mayor John Collins that the city's urban renewal program would not repeat the mistakes of the West End project in the mid-1950s, development in the 1960s continued to privilege business interests over the autonomy of minority and working-class communities. As part of the effort to move the city's urban renewal program in a more positive direction, Mayor Collins hired Edward Logue to head the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) in 1959 granting him significant authority to shape the redevelopment agenda. Logue and Collins increased the pace and geographic scope of urban renewal, invested more in historical preservation in an effort to build tourism, endeavored to increase community people's participation in the re-development process, and placed more emphasis on neighborhood rehabilitation rather than razing. Despite these efforts, the construction of the Prudential Center, which was the centerpiece of urban renewal in the 1960s, elicited major opposition from residents in the adjacent neighborhood of the South End. Beginning in the 1950s city leaders had begun a campaign to build the headquarters of the Prudential Insurance Agency on a plot in downtown between the neighborhoods of Back Bay and the South End. City leaders were eager to construct the Prudential Center in downtown because it would provide a much-needed boost to the city's declining tax base and would also create a substantial number of new jobs in the declining city center. When the city

[134] "Plaintiffs Findings," *Morgan v. Hennigan*, LOC; Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, The Voice of the Ghetto (Washington: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1967)

ran into problems securing approval for the development plans, housing officials declared the existing buildings "blighted" which cleared the way for demolition and approval for the Prudential project. Prudential Life Insurance, in turn, received a substantial tax break for developing in a "blighted" area.[135] Although Collins and Logue professed their commitment to protecting the interests of minority communities like the South End, ultimately, the desire to attract corporations to the downtown core won out over local people's welfare.[136]

City school officials, local and federal housing and banking agencies consciously promoted residential segregation and incorporated these patterns into the school system through the manipulation of school district boundaries, feeder patterns, student transfers, and facilities construction.[137] From 1953 to 1972 the city defendants constructed at least twenty elementary schools, and dozens of school additions, directly adjacent to racially segregated public housing projects with full knowledge and intention that such placement would result in identically segregated schools.[138]

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[135] Lawrence Kennedy, *Planning the City Upon a Hill: Boston Since 1930* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 172.

[136] "Freedom House United Black Citizens," *Bay State* Banner, 16 May 1974, Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern. Throughout the1960s Freedom House and the Snowdens devoted considerable energy and resources to shaping the direction of urban renewal, and specifically its impact on the neighborhoods of Roxbury and Dorchester. Freedom House and the Snowdens coordinated their urban renewal related activism through a newly created organization—the Washington Park Citizens Urban Renewal Committee which sought to provide Roxbury residents with a voice in the process of urban renewal. The Snowdens labored to build positive working relationship with officials such as Boston Redevelopment Authority head Ed Logue and political figures including Mayor Collins and Hynes. Tangible outcomes of these efforts included the establishment of the Roxbury Boys Club, YMCA, Melnea Cass Skating Rink, a massive renovation of Franklin Park, and the rehabilitation of numerous buildings.

[137] *Morgan v. Hennigan.* Boston School officials, despite their claims otherwise, had an extensive knowledge of the precise patterns of residential segregation as a result of the Sargent Report, a 1962 study of city housing patterns commissioned *by* city school officials, which predicted with near perfect accuracy the racial housing patterns of the 1970s.

[138] *Morgan v. Hennigan.* Evidence demonstrated a significant correlation between segregation in Boston public housing and nearby schools. Judge Garrity in *Morgan* wrote, "In 1972, for nine public housing projects which are 80% black, there were 33 schools, all of which are majority nonwhite. Similarly, 38 schools serving eleven 80% white housing projects are all majority white, and 29 of them are more than 80% white…Their locations were such that it is readily inferable that their racial compositions were

Although in many ways a period of increased challenges for black Bostonians, the shifting residential and demographic conditions also presented new political opportunities to black educational activists in Boston. The Supreme Court's ruling in *New Rochelle* made Boston school officials incredibly vulnerable to a judicial challenge. And while increased residential segregation limited black Bostonians in many ways, the concentration of the population also meant more shared experiences around which people could unify and organizers and growth created a larger potential participant base. In one neighborhood in Roxbury a group of mothers seized the opportunity to challenge the educational status quo.

A Movement of Mothers

It was an ordinary morning in 1961 when two young mothers, Naomi Jones and Marianne Freeman, rang the doorbell at the home of Barbara and Harry Elam on Walnut Avenue in Roxbury. Jones and Freeman, longtime residents of this tightly-knit African American neighborhood, asked Elam if they could sit down to talk about the problems in their community schools. Elam was more than happy to invite her neighbors inside as she and her husband had been heard the rumblings of discontent from their neighbors about the nearby David A. Ellis School. The Elams had witnessed the problems at the Ellis School first-hand. Their son Jay was a first-grader at the Ellis and they were increasingly concerned about overcrowding, lack of educational resources, and poor physical conditions. Jones and Freeman proposed that they form a mothers' group of classroom

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intended; many were located within housing projects, bordered on three sides by them, or on the same block." A partial list of new schools (and expansions) built adjacent to racially segregated public housing included Fairmount, Greenwood, Taylor (expansion), Aggasiz, Hennigan, Bigelow (expansion), Hoar (expansion), and the Carter.

volunteers so they could make sure their children were receiving a good education and to see first-hand what was happening inside the schools. Elam eagerly agreed to join.

Within eighteen months a citywide movement for racial justice and community empowerment in the schools emerged from these modest beginnings around the Elam's kitchen table. With a dozen other mothers from the neighborhood, Elam, Jones and Freeman formed the Concerned Higginson Parents Association (CHP) to fight for educational improvements and greater power for parents at the Ellis School. The CHP quickly broadened its goal to dismantling racial inequality and discrimination citywide. With the help of other grassroots groups and national civil rights organizations including the NAACP, CORE, and Urban League, the Ellis school mothers rallied hundreds of black Bostonians to the cause. This mobilization of the grassroots base was critical to the success of other major protest campaigns in this period such as the Freedom Stayouts and the NAACP Public School Committee's challenge to the Boston School Committee.

Eight African American mothers from Roxbury—Marie Allen, Kay Wilson, Marianne Freeman, Eva Jaynes, Martha Coats, Barbara Elam, and Naomi Jones—were the core participants in the CHP. Five of these women were long-time Roxbury residents and had attended the Boston Public Schools themselves. Two other women had grown up in the very nearby communities of Brighton and Cambridge and attended integrated schools. The remaining participant was one of the thousands of African Americans who migrated to Boston in the postwar period.[139] On the whole, the women of the Higginson

[139] Concerned Higginson Parents Association Oral History Collection (hereafter: "CHPAOH"), University Archives and Special Collections, University of Massachusetts Boston (hereafter: UMB). Marie Allen, Marianne Freeman, and Barbara Elam were all born and lived the majority of their lives in Roxbury. Eva Jaynes and her family moved from western Massachusetts to Boston in the 1950s, but left Boston for the nearby suburb of Milton within several years because of concerns with crime and the poor quality of the schools.

group considered themselves middle-class on the basis of their level of education, relationships within Boston's black community, financial status, and most importantly their status as longtime Bostonians.[140] Dating back to the revolutionary era, length of time one's family had lived in Boston has been considered a significant marker of class status among black Bostonians. Several scholars have suggested that residence at least prior to 1950 (although preferably prior to 1930) was a strong indication of middle or upper class status. The majority of the Higginson mothers had children between the ages of six and ten and did not work full-time for wages outside the home, although several earned income through part-time jobs either within or outside the home.[141] All of these women explicitly identified their work as mothers and family care-givers as their primary occupation.

A combination of personal experiences and concerns and activism operating at the city and national level drove the formation of the CHP and its ideological and organizational evolution. Although hyper-local in its focus on improving the neighborhood school, the movement was also inextricably tied to the broader citywide and national black freedom movement. Barbara Elam and Marianne Freeman both pointed to their roles as mothers as the primary motivation for their activism, but their close affiliation with the NAACP also undoubtedly shaped their activism. At the time that she agreed to volunteer as a class mother, Elam was a member of the Boston NAACP Public School Committee. Likewise, Freeman came from a family with a rich tradition of

[140] For an excellent history of elite black Bostonians see Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins.* Other discussions of the class dynamics of Black Boston in this period include Jennings and King, *From Access to* Power; McClure, "A Woman of Action"; and Johnson, *The Other Black Bostonians.*

[141] For example, Martha Coats had a part-time sewing business and Eva Jaynes worked on a part-time basis in a bank.

political activism as the daughter of Melnea Cass, a leader of the civil rights movement in Boston dating back to the 1920s and the president of the Boston NAACP at this time.

These connections with the Boston NAACP, and particularly its Public School Committee, were critical in the mobilization of the CHP because this was a period of significant growth and activity for the Boston branch. For several years after its formation in 1954, the NAACP Public Schools Committee played a relatively quiet role in the movement as it struggled to find its footing in the city's political landscape. Batson noted that in the wake of *Brown* the national office was understandably consumed with the fierce battles unfolding over school desegregation in the South and was only able to provide limited support to northern branches to challenge local racial injustice. However, thanks to increased backing from the national office, the ambitious leadership of Cass, and the determination of Committee Chair Ruth Batson, the NAACP Public School Committee began to gain momentum in the early 1960s. In the spring of 1961 Committee members Ruth Batson, Erna Ballentine, Barbara Elam, Melvin King, Leon Lomax and Charles Pinderhughes began a campaign pressuring city school officials to provide detailed information on the racial makeup of the schools, assignment and transfer policies, and curriculum. When school officials refused, the Committee conducted its own racial census and survey of educational census which revealed extensive racial segregation and inequality, information which was critical in protests of this period.[142]

[142] In their effort to force the Boston School Committee and the Superintendent to share this information, the NAACP Public School Committee enlisted the aid of the MCAD, however the MCAD was unable to force the School Committee and Superintendent to comply. The MCAD had its roots in the WWII era. In 1944 Governor Maurice Tobin appointed a Committee to investigate the issue of discrimination in the state. Based on recommendations from the Committee, in 1946 the state legislature passed the Fair Employment Practices Act establishing the Fair Employment Practices Commission. The FEPC had enforcement power to prohibit discrimination on the basis of "race, color, religious creed, national origin, or ancestry." The FEPC had limited resources, personnel, and enforcement power in its early years until it expanded to become the Massachusetts Commission against Discrimination in 1950. The MCAD had greater

Personal connections and concerns were paramount in the formation and mobilization of the Higginson parents' movement. Even before they joined a formal activist organization like the NAACP or CHP many black parents were seasoned practitioners of informal daily educational activism which was focused on ensuring that their children had the best possible education. For many African American parents this meant frequently transferring their children between public, private, religious, independent, urban, and suburban schools—no easy task in Boston's racially hostile political landscape for parents already stretched thin by the demands of their everyday lives. CHP member Martha Coats's efforts to juggle her four children between schools were representative of this type of educational activism. In the early 1960s had three sons enrolled at the Ellis School. While she participated in the mothers' movement at the Higginson School to implement long-term reform, she worried that changes would not happen fast enough to help her boys who needed a good education now. In search of a stronger reading program, Coats enrolled her son Leonard at the independent New School for Children when it opened in 1965. After graduating from the New School, Coats enrolled Leonard in the METCO program in Needham, where he remained until graduation. Coats' second son Jerry began his schooling at the Ellis School before she moved him to the METCO program in Brookline, where he remained until eleventh grade. Coats' youngest son Sheldon stayed at the Ellis School until the sixth grade when she arranged for yet another transfer—this time to the Rogers Junior High School. This was no easy task for an African American parent in Boston in the 1960s. Despite her best

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enforcement power and also expanded its purview beyond employment to include public accommodations and housing. Since 1950, the MCAD's jurisdiction had expanded steadily to include prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and a focus on protection for families and children, and against sexual harassment. Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 63-4, 70.

efforts to find a good school for Sheldon within the Boston Public Schools, Coats eventually decided to remove him from the system entirely and enrolled him in the METCO program in Brookline. Coats' youngest child followed a similarly unconventional and patchwork educational path. After attending the New School for Children for kindergarten and first grade, she attended the Ellis School through the fifth grade. Coats then transferred her daughter to the private Seventh Day Adventist School in Dorchester for middle school, before transferring her again to East Boston High School, where she remained through graduation.[143]

Likewise, Marie Allen's personal encounters with racial discrimination in her children's education sparked her political activism. Monitoring her son David's education closely from an early age, she became concerned when David came home from school with straight "A" report cards. Although she believed her son was bright, she was not convinced that his school work merited perfect marks and suspected that low academic standards and expectations for African American students were to blame. When a teacher confided to Allen that many of the other teachers at the Ellis commonly used racial epithets and had lower expectations for black students, Allen knew that there were serious problems at the Ellis. She took quick action—filing a request to transfer for David to a predominantly white school. Although school officials approved her request she faced resistance from the principal who insisted that this was "his" school. "I pointed out to him that it was a public school, that I was paying taxes, and that I had a right." Allen wrote, "It was a very personal time because I had a child involved. So my concerns were

[143] Martha Coats interview, CHPAOH, UMB, 4-6.

for my child and children in generation. This just could not be tolerated. Whatever was going to be done to change it, I wanted to be a part of."[144]

When Eva Jaynes' older son began to complain that he could not complete his in-class work because of frequent classroom disruptions, Jaynes knew that there were serious problems at the Ellis School and that she must take action. Jaynes attempted to address these problems by scheduling frequent meetings with her son's teacher but she still worried that there were more deeply rooted problems at the Ellis. Her fears mounted when her younger son came home with his pants soiled because there was no toilet paper in the bathrooms and she learned that school materials were so limited that students often had to share pencils in class.

Living in the same neighborhood and frequenting many of the same community spaces provided ample opportunities for African American parents to see that many other families were also struggling against racial discrimination in the schools. As parents gathered on playgrounds and bus stops swapped stories about the neighborhood schools they began to see the broader, political implications of their personal experiences, which was a critical step in the emergence of a collective political consciousness and mass movement. Martha Coats said, "We started meeting while walking the little ones to school, talking about different things going on in the school. Then we would have the HSA meetings and we would meet and talk, and that is how it all came about."[145] Eva Jaynes wrote, "We used to pick them up right from the schoolyard, from the sidewalk once they were dismissed, and we used to talk, get together at different homes and talk

[144] Marie Allen Interview, CHPAO, UMB.
[145] Martha Coats interview, CHPAPH, UMB.

about the things."[146] Marianne Freeman also pointed to the importance of these neighborhood and personal bonds in driving the formation of the movement. "We all knew one another, even if you weren't close friends, you knew them…You knew them because they were neighborhood and when you'd go to meetings you'd familiarize yourself with other parents that you didn't know so well. You have a lot in common."[147] Likewise, Marie Allen described what a powerful role friendship and shared experiences played in shaping the movement. "There were people like Barbara Elam and Erna [Ballentine], and other friends of mine who I talked to at the time. We all shared the same sort of panic/concern about our children. They were all about the same age at the time…and attending the same school." She continued, "And we all, coming up in the Boston school system, were quite aware that there was something amiss. Suddenly I realized it was more than myself. Erna realized that it was more than herself. Barbara did. And we got together."[148] Residential and school segregation put African American parents, like those in the Higginson District, in close physical proximity which made the development of a tightly-knit activist community much more practically feasible.

The class volunteers program was an immediate success. The women assisted teachers with lessons, provided academic support for challenged or gifted students, and prepared classroom materials. Teachers, mothers, and students all responded very enthusiastically to the program, and before long every class at the Ellis had a parent volunteer.

The home room mothers program afforded these women with the opportunity to observe first-hand the conditions inside the schools including instructional practices, the

[146] Eva Jaynes interview, CHPAOH, UMB.
[147] Marianne Freeman interview, CHPAOH, UMB.
[148] Allen interview, CHPAOH, UMB.

quality of educational materials and resources, and the attitudes of school administrators. In their capacity as Higginson room-mothers, these women were also able to visit and observe other schools in Boston and the surrounding communities. These visits confirmed their suspicions that there were significant disparities in the quality of educational resources, instruction, and physical condition between schools in Roxbury and elsewhere in the city. This hard evidence of inequality empowered the women to press forward with their involvement in their local schools to ensure that their children received a quality education.[149] Marianne Freeman said, "So in that way we had got a little insight. Because we knew we were not professional people, we weren't political people or anything. But just looking, we could see that there were no pens and pencils." She continued, "And the books! When you took them to read, some of the pages were missing, full of food. Here they were, all in the Roxbury schools."[150]

Elam, Coats, Freeman, Jaynes, Jones, and Wilson set up a meeting with Ellis Principal William J. McCarthy to share their concerns. The mother's shared with McCarthy their alarm over the over-crowded classrooms, lack of substitute teachers, poor communication between school staff and parents, and the lack of basic school supplies like pencils and books. Many of the mothers worried that the school was not adequately preparing children to succeed academically in the future and informed McCarthy that they would withdraw their children from the Ellis School unless he took immediate action to address their concerns.

McCarthy rejected their concerns out of hand—denying their requests to hold a HSA meeting to discuss the problems with the whole school community. Shortly

[149] Kaufman, "Building a Constituency for School Desegregation," 622-3; Marianne Freeman interview, CHPAOH, UMB.
[150] Mariann Freeman interview, CHPAOH, UMB.

afterwards, the head of the Ellis School HSA informed the parents that if they continued "agitating" they would no longer be permitted to volunteer as home-room mothers.[151]

In the face of McCarthy's intransigence, the mothers formed the Concerned Higginson Parents Association and Barbara Elam and Marianne Freeman were named as co-chairs. The group's formation worried McCarthy sufficiently that he went on the offensive against the Concerned Higginson Parents. In an effort to secure the support of high-ranking school officials McCarthy wrote a letter to Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Elementary Education, Marguerite Sullivan, describing Elam and the other group members Higginson as antagonistic towards school officials and a threat to school order. McCarthy claimed that three of the Higginson group parents "entered the Higginson school building without the knowledge of the teacher in charge and interrogated two teachers." He concluded by warning Sullivan that this incident had the potential for political ripples at the state level because Barbara Elam's husband, Harry Elam, was a member of the Governor's Council—a body that provided guidance to the Governor on judicial nominations and pardons. "Since an appeal to the School Committee is not only likely but very probable," McCarthy wrote, "I feel you should be informed about what is taking place."[152]

Just days after Sullivan and McCarthy met the home room mothers received a letter from their children's teachers informing them that they were no longer welcome as volunteers. The letters wrote, "I wish to thank you for your wonderful help during the past months," first grade teacher Mary Howard wrote to Elam. "I have been told by my

[151] Ibid.
[152] Elam Interview, CHPAOH, UMB.

supervisor that I cannot have you help me any longer."[153] The letters made clear that school officials' saw no place in the system for parents who challenged the educational status quo and that parents should leave it to educational professionals to determine what was best for children. The letters also revealed the sometimes conflicted position occupied by teachers, many of whom were desperate for parents' help, but not willing to challenge the orders of higher-ups to expel the teachers.

Their expulsion enraged the parents. Barbara Elam recounted, "We were viewed as agitators by the power structure with the Boston Public Schools…because we were really saying that we were the equal of teachers and that we knew what our children needed. The refusal to listen to, acknowledge, and then plan with Blacks had to do with power and a definite unwillingness to share it. That was central."[154]

On February 8, 1963 Elam, Wilson, Jones, Freeman, Jaynes and Coats met with Sullivan at the offices of the Boston School Department. Elam said, "I wanted her to understand that we really felt that the Boston schools were failing our children. We had a right to expect them to be educated."[155] The meeting was extremely contentious from the start. The women were taken aback by the coldness and anger with which Sullivan dismissed their concerns. Marianne Freeman remembered with disgust Sullivan telling the parents that "those children just need drill, drill, drill" and recounted that Sullivan "put all this venom into her words."[156] Sullivan brusquely pushed aside Elam's concerns that the system was not helping gifted students reach their full potential. Sullivan told

[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Freeman interview, CHPAOH, UMB.

Elam, "Will you let *me* do what is best for your children?"[157] Sullivan's actions angered and hurt the parents not only because she blocked their efforts to improve the quality of their children's education, but because her treatment conveyed her intense disrespect and contempt for black parents. Elam was so wounded and frustrated by Sullivan's behavior that she nearly broke out in tears. Elam recounted, "In some ways, we were naïve about the depth and intent of the racism, but I think that the meeting with Miss Sullivan really galvanized us." In the aftermath of this meeting, it was clear that a new strategy was in order, and that they needed to expand the scope of their movement. Securing the support of more established citywide organizations, including the NAACP and its Public Schools Committee, the Urban League, and the Black Ministerial Alliance, was critical to this effort. This alliance, led by the CHP, announced plans for a community wide meeting to discuss racial inequality in the schools to be held at St. Mark's Congregational Church Social Center in Roxbury on April 9, 1963.[158] The goals of the meeting were three-fold—to raise community awareness of and support for the ongoing conflict in the Higginson School District; to provide black parents with information about the inferior quality of education afforded to students in majority black schools citywide; and to embolden parents to take action to address these educational inequities.

Elam enlisted the aid of her good friend, friend, and fellow NAACP Public Schools Committee member Erna Ballentine to help organize the meeting. Elam and the other CHP parents posted flyers throughout Roxbury and North Dorchester aimed to capture parents' attention about school conditions and pull them into the movement. The flyers read, "Do You Know Your Child is Not Getting a Good Education? Schools are

[157] Elam interview, CHPAOH, UMB; Freeman Interview, CHPAOH, UMB.
[158] Kaufman, "Building a Constituency for School Desegregation," 624.

99.8% Negro. This is de facto segregation, yes, but it is segregation." The flyers also noted that Boston's segregated schools were plagued by low test scores, a lack of competent teachers, and a dearth of quality educational materials.[159]

More than 100 parents gathered at St. Marks on April 9, 1963. Meeting attendees listened to presentations from CHP members about their experiences at the Ellis School. State Representative Royal L. Bolling Sr., NAACP activist Paul Parks, and Urban League representatives facilitated discussions about the spending gap between white and black schools, the poor physical condition of the system's majority black schools, and the racist attitudes of some teachers. Parents and community activists gathered in small groups to discuss their experiences in the schools and crafted strategies for tackling these problems including attending BSC meetings, securing positions for black Bostonians on official school bodies, and taking part in the selection of a new superintendent. Meeting organizers urged community people to continue their involvement in the movement by holding regular meetings in their neighborhoods and forming local parents groups.

Building on the success of the meeting at St. Mark's the Higginson Parents launched an extensive media campaign to raise citywide awareness of the problems in the schools. Parents wrote letters outlining the racial inequality in the Boston Public Schools to the *Boston Herald, Boston Globe*, the Dean of the Harvard Law School, the President of the Boston Council of Churches, and the Executive Director of Action for Boston Community Development. In a letter to the editors of the *Boston Herald* Barbara Elam wrote, "I do not feel that as a Negro parent I need guidance and discipline," Elam wrote, referring to the condescending attitudes of Sullivan and other school officials. "I refuse to accept second-class education for any children and other Negro children and like Martin

[159] Elam interview, CHPAOH, UMB.

Luther King I have a dream that someday even in Boston children will receive a decent education regardless of the color of their skin."[160]

Within a year, the Concerned Higginson Parents had a national audience for their story. On March 21, 1964 Barbara Elam represented the group to testify before the Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights regarding segregation in the Boston Public Schools. She told the committee that there were significant differences between the curriculum in the system's majority white and Black schools and that many teachers and administrators believed that black students were intellectually inferior to their white counterparts. [161] Elam told the committee that Boston's racially segregated schools had "slipped far below standards of other districts in the Boston system."[162]

From its modest origins of a group of eight mothers and neighbors in Roxbury, the Concerned Higginson Parents sparked a citywide movement for transformative educational change. Drawing upon their close bonds as neighbors and friends, their shared experiences of racial discrimination in the schools, and their vision of educational self-determination and equity, the Higginson parents launched a movement that brought greater citywide attention and emotional energy to the broader movement. The Concerned Higginson Parents also fostered the development of a strong citywide network of activists by fostering the bonds between leaders like Barbara Elam, Paul Parks, Mel King, and Erna Ballentine. With this base of supporters, a network of leadership,

[160] Ibid., 14.
[161] Barbara Elam, Report on Racial Imbalance in the Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, January, 1965.
[162] Kaufman, "Building a Constituency for School Desegregation," 8.

organizations, and a central guiding vision, the movement for educational justice in Boston exploded onto the city's center stage at last.

Thanks in large part to the determined efforts of the Higginson mothers' hundreds of black Bostonians had joined the movement and growing numbers of white Bostonians were aware of the racial problems in the schools and the frustrations of black citizens. Energized by its involvement in the dynamic CHPA movement and the Supreme Court's recent ruling in *New Rochelle*, the NAACP Public School Committee saw an opportunity in June, 1963 to mount its boldest protest campaign to date—going head to head with the Boston School Committee.

The NAACP Public School Committee requested a public hearing for June 11, 1963. The NAACP Committee was eager to recruit community people to attend and take part in the meeting. In the week leading up to the meeting, NAACP activists distributed flyers throughout African American neighborhoods. The flyers read, "DO YOU WANT TO ELIMINATE SECOND CLASS EDUCATION IN BOSTON?" "IF YOU DO THEN COME TO THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE HEARING DEMANDED BY THE NAACP!" The flyers appealed to parents' experiences as parents. "Your children's future is at stake. Help us make it bright!" The NAACP's decision to hold the meeting at 9 o'clock p.m. when greater numbers of working parents would be able to attend illustrates their desire to involve the parent community. [163]

On the evening of June 11, 1963 the NAACP Public School Committee and hundreds of local community supporters arrived at the Boston School Committee offices at 15 Beacon Street in downtown Boston. In a statement to the School Committee members, read by Ruth Batson, the NAACP outlined its vision for the future of the

[163] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 87.

Boston Public Schools. Batson drew strong links between education and citizenship. "Our goal is First Class Citizenship, and we will settle for nothing less," Batson told the committee. "Education constitutes our strongest hope for pulling ourselves out of the inferior status to which society has assigned us. A boy of eight or nine years, who is receiving an inferior education today, will feel the effects at age thirty-fie, forty-five and until he dies…"[164] NAACP activist Paul Parks told the *Boston Globe,* "Tomorrow, at the rate the barriers are crumbling, our children will stand in a free society. But they will still be second-class citizens because they won't have had the training to admit them as equals in society."[165]

In their list of demands to the Boston School Committee at the hearing, activists called for the "immediate public acknowledgment of the existence of de facto segregation in the Boston Public School System." Batson said, "We then make this charge…There is segregation in fact in our Boston Public School system. To be sure, the May 17, 1954 Supreme Court decision dealt with deliberate segregation, but there can be no misinterpretation of the language used in that decision which stated that the 'separation of children solely on the basis of race generates a feeling of inferiority that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.'"[166] They also called for specific reforms, including a reduction of class sizes, an increase in multi-cultural instructional materials, an increase in the number of guidance counselors and social workers and black educators, and a review of the system's intelligence testing.[167]

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[164] Ruth Batson, "Statement to the Boston School Committee", June 11, 1963, Box 4, Folder 5, Batson, Schlesinger.
[165] "Anti-Bias March on City Hall," *Boston Globe*, 12 June 1963.
[166] Ruth Batson, "Statement to the Boston School Committee", 11 Jun 1963, Box 4, Folder 5, Batson, Schlesinger.
[167] Ibid.

NAACP activists and their supporters also pressed for a role in the selection of the new school superintendent. In the weeks leading up to the hearing, the NAACP Public School Committee and city school officials had been engaged in tense negotiations regarding the selection of the new superintendent which ended when the School Committee rejected the NAACP's request for formal involvement in the selection process. Speaking at the hearing Batson said, "We demand the right to discuss this selection in detail….and we demand that every applicant be examined thoroughly in regard to his background in the area of human relations." She continued, "You might question the ability of the community to rise to the occasion and I answer that just as we rise to the occasion to pay our taxes (for which we get small return)…we will rise to the occasion to see that our children are no longer shortchanged in the education they receive."[168]

Although the relationship between the NAACP Public School Committee and the Boston School Committee had grown increasingly strained in recent years, activists expected that the School Committee members would treat them with respect at the hearing, in part because that they had a cordial relationship with several members, including the newly elected Louise Day Hicks. But from the moment activists arrived at the School Committee offices, it was clear that the hearing would not be the civil negotiation they had envisioned. Activists were blindsided by hoards of local media who Batson and other activists suspected had been called in by the School Committee in order to intimidate the NAACP members.[169] Batson recounted, "I had the distinct feeling that

[168] Ibid., 5.
[169] Batson, *The Black Educational Movement*, 88. Adding to their sense that the hearing was a "set up" by school officials to publicly embarrass the NAACP, activists recounted that the Boston School Committee members appeared to be "performing" for the media.

we had been 'set up.' We had gone into the lion's den, like lambs being led to the slaughter. These people were not only cold and callous; even worse; they were so uninformed." After reading her statement, the Boston School Committee members flatly refused to admit to the presence of segregation in the schools—de facto or otherwise—and abruptly called off the meeting when the NAACP pushed them to reconsider.

Hicks had been elected in the 1960 Boston School Committee election with sizable support from Black Bostonians and was considerate a moderate in regards to race and the schools. NAACP Public School Committee member Paul Parks specifically had fostered a close working relationship with Hicks and felt confident that she could help a foster cooperation between the NAACP Public School Committee and the Boston School Committee. Ultimately, not only did Hicks not support the NAACP's efforts to end racial segregation and educational inequality in the schools, she became one of the fiercest and most outspoken opponents of the Black education movement, and the figure around which opponents of court-ordered desegregation rallied after 1974.

Meanwhile, thanks to the organizing efforts of the NAACP in advance of the meeting, over four hundred community people arrived for the hearing in hopes of participating; however 250 were turned away because of limited space. Attendees marched the short distance from the school committee offices to City Hall, singing freedom songs as they walked. After the abrupt end to the meeting NAACP Committee members and other community people joined the gathering at City Hall where activists remained late into the night singing freedom songs and listening to speeches from political and religious figures.[170]

[170] Abraham Oseroff, "Protests Staged, Boston Negroes Militant," *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 June 1963.

Stayouts for Freedom

The failure of a negotiated settlement with the Boston School Committee regarding the issue of school segregation and their clear hostility towards the movement prompted bold action from activists. The day after the disastrous hearing, a group of civil rights leaders, including Reverend James Breeden, Noel Day, and the NAACP Education Committee announced a boycott of the Boston Public Schools by Junior and Senior High School black students on June 18. In light of the refusal of the Boston School Committee to admit to the presence of segregation and its harmful educational impact on African American students, Breeden, Day, and other movement leaders stated that they had no choice other than to take bold and immediate action. Stayout leaders announced that rather than attending their regular Boston Public Schools on June 18 African American students would attend freedom schools located at churches, social service agencies, and community centers.

Reverend James P. Breeden and Noel S. Day were pivotal figures in the movement for racial justice in Boston throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Born and raised in Minnesota, Breeden attended Dartmouth College where he was one of only a handful of African American students in the early 1950s. Breeden's introduction to racial politics came during his time at Dartmouth when he and fellow students in the Dartmouth Christian Union boycotted a segregated religious conference in Ohio. After attending seminary school at Union Theological Seminary in New York City in the late 1950s, Reverend Breeden and his wife Jeanne, who was also a seminary student, moved to Roxbury where he began service as Curate of St. James Episcopal Church. James and Jeanne Breeden first became aware of the significant gaps in the education provided to

African American students in Boston through an after-school tutoring program held at St. James Episcopal Church.[171]

Noel S. Day, born and raised in Harlem in the 1940s, also attended Dartmouth University where he met and forged a close friendship with Breeden. After graduation, Day returned to New York where he worked as a social worker in various community centers. Day then moved to Boston to take a position as Executive Director of St. Mark's Social Center—the community center at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Roxbury. Noel and his wife Peggy, who were both trained as social workers, formed deep ties to the communities of Roxbury and North Dorchester through their community outreach work at St. Mark's during this time.[172] By 1963, the Breedens and Day were experienced community organizers, well-versed in the challenges faced by black students in the Boston Public Schools, and firmly convinced that the time had come for action.

The Freedom Stayouts were coordinated by a diverse coalition of local agencies, nationally affiliated civil rights organizations, and community people including parents and students. Although Breeden and the Days played especially pivotal roles, they worked closely with the Massachusetts Citizens for Human Rights, the Boston branch NAACP, Freedom House, and several African American churches including Charles Street AME, Columbus Avenue AME, All Saints Lutheran, Blue Hill Protestant Center, St. Mark's Episcopal, St. Cyprian's Episcopal, St. James Episcopal, and Tremont Street Methodist. The Citizens for Boston Schools was an interracial group that began to coalesce in the early 1960s made up mostly of young professionals and activists

[171] James Breeden, interview with author, 22 October, 2012 (hereafter: "Breedens interview").
[172] King, *Chain of Change*, 264. During his career as an activist Day was involved with training SNCC activists in Georgia, member of the Northern Student Movement, the Boston Action Group, and later became an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War.

including NAACP Public School Committee member and community activist Mel King, Paul Parks, lawyer and neighborhood advocate Herb Gleason, and Reverend Royden Richardson of Tremont Methodist Church.[173]

The vision for the freedom schools had been building for some time prior to Breeden and Day's announcement of the boycott on June 12. The Stayouts for Freedom in Boston were closely tied to the national black freedom movement. Shortly after arriving beginning his work as Curate of St. James Episcopal Church, Breeden participated in the Freedom Rides, traveling from New Orleans to Jackson, Mississippi.[174] Upon arriving in Jackson, police officers immediately arrested Breeden and six fellow riders for charges of disturbance of the peace. After several days in jail, Breeden posted bail and returned to his family in Boston. Convinced that their actions had been legal, Breeden and several other riders challenged their conviction, and returned to Jackson to Jackson in the spring of 1963 to deliver depositions for the appeal. It was during this trip that Breeden had the first idea for the Freedom Stayouts in Boston. After finishing his deposition, Breeden and a friend made an impromptu visit to Birmingham to observe first-hand the civil rights movement there. Breeden's observations of the critical role played by children in that arena of the movement sparked an idea for a similar campaign in Boston which involved African American students.[175] Freedom Stayout organizers emphasized these ties between Boston and sites of civil rights struggle in the South as shown in this flyer which was distributed to students attending freedom schools.

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[173] Although generally considered more radical in its goals and tactics than the NAACP, the group had strong support from NAACP Public School Committee activists, including Ruth Batson.

[174] Breedens interview. Breeden participated in the Freedom Rides through the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity which organized a group of Episcopal Priests to take part in the Freedom Rides. Breeden and his fellow riders were arrested on charges of arresting the peace and Breeden recounted that at the trial the chief of police testified that they were arrested "because we had behaved in a way that in his judgment might have led to a disturbance of the peace."

[175] Ibid., 8.

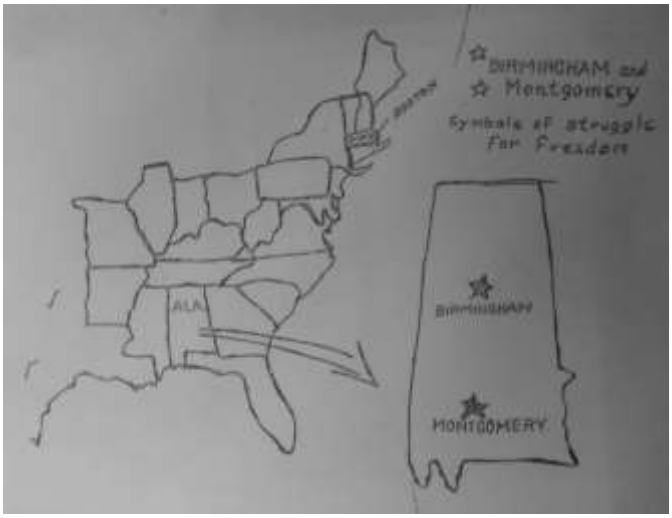

Figure 5. Birmingham and Boston, 1963[176]

Upon returning to Boston, the Breedens hosted a meeting of the major players in the movement including Ruth Batson, Paul Parks, and Noel Day to introduce his idea for a school boycott. Breeden recounts that some members of the group, including many of the black churches, were initially hesitant about the plan. Breeden recounted that Parks, who had developed a relatively positive working relationship with School Committee Chair Louise Day Hicks dismissed the plan, "because he could go have lunch or a drink with Louise Day Hicks and smooth it out."[177] Despite this initial reluctance, Breeden and Day eventually succeeded in garnering the support of the group and the boycott was launched.

Although it was the Boston School Committee's intransigence regarding segregation that sparked the Freedom Stayouts, the goals for the school boycott extended beyond school desegregation. Boycott leaders wrote, "Our children are not being taught

[176] Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools," Folder B: Freedom School Curriculum and Handouts, Museum of African American History, unprocessed collection (hereafter: "MAAH").
[177] Breedens interview.

even to read and write properly—and nothing is being done. 4,000 children graduate from high school each year—most of them unprepared either for college or a decent job—and nothing is being done…These children are supposed to be taught something in school!"[178] Breeden and Day also sought to use the boycott as a tool to build a mass movement for school reform by drawing large numbers of black Bostonians into the movement for the first time. The moment was ripe for a mass direct action campaign coming off the CHP movement and the NAACP-School Committee hearing and rally. Breeden told the *Boston Globe*, "This is the start of a process of involving students and parents in the making of a democracy…This is just the beginning. It will increase and spread."[179]

The Stayouts also sent a clear message that black Bostonians would no longer accept the sub-standard education afforded to their children and disrespectful treatment of school officials. The Boston School Committee hearing marked the beginning of a more assertive posture of activists. Speaking at the hearing Batson said, "I know that demand is a word that is disliked by many public officials, but I am afraid that it is too late for pleading, begging, requesting or even reasoning,"[180] Statements issued by the Freedom Stayout organizers echoed this sentiment. "We will go to any lengths to see that our children get a decent education! We will not meekly cooperate with a system that destroys our precious children. We intend to put an end to the criminal neglect of our children's education."[181]

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[178] "Fact Sheet on De Facto Segregation and its Impact on Negro Children," Box 3, Folder 15, Phyllis M. Ryan Papers (hereafter: "Ryan"), Northeastern.
[179] "Negroes to Go Ahead With Stay-Out," *Boston Globe*, June 18, 1963, page 1.
[180] Batson, Statement to the Boston School Committee, 2.
[181] "Fact Sheet on De Facto Segregation and its Impact on Negro Children," Box 3, Folder 15, Ryan, Northeastern.

The plans for the Stayouts took form quickly in the week between the School Committee hearing and the boycott on June 18. From June 12 to 15, the NAACP Public School Committee, represented by Ruth Batson, engaged in negotiations with the Boston School Committee, represented by Louise Day Hicks, in an effort to secure the school committee's recognition of the presence of de facto segregation in the Boston Public Schools. Batson and Hicks locked horns over the wording of a statement regarding educational and residential segregation, the responsibility of school officials for these conditions, and their impact on African American students. African American Attorney General Edward Brooke became involved in the dispute, attempting to mediate a solution to avert the school boycott. Ultimately, the refusal of the Boston School Committee to include the term "de facto segregation" in the statement resulted in the failure of the negotiations and ensured that the Stayout moved forward. Stayout organizers labored to increase black Bostonians' awareness of the conditions in the schools and encouraging them to support the boycott by enrolling their children in the freedom schools. Stayout leaders understood that a critical mass of participation was critical to the boycott's success. Breeden, Day, and the other Stayout supporters distributed flyers and pamphlets, issued public statements, and held community meetings. On June 16, Stayout organizers held a mass meeting at Charles Street AME Church in Roxbury to rally support for the Freedom Stayout. After last-minute negotiations between the NAACP and the Boston School Committee failed, over seven hundred supporters gathered at the Charles Street A.M.E. Church in Roxbury on Sunday June 16 to discuss plans for the boycott and listen to speeches by Reverend Breeden, Noel Day, and Ruth Batson.[182]

[182] Jeffrey A. Osoff, "Boston Negroes Push Plan for Boycott, Talks Falter," *Boston Sunday Globe*, 16 June 1963, Box 1, Folder 4, Batson, Schlesinger.

On the morning of Tuesday June 18, 3,000 African American students, constituting twenty-five percent of the African American student body, stayed out of the Boston Public Schools. That morning students reported to St. Mark's Social Center (which served as the logistical nerve center for the boycotts) where buses transported them to one of six freedom schools located throughout Roxbury, the South End, and Dorchester—St. James Episcopal Church, Freedom House, South End Settlement House, St. John Church, St. Cyprian Church, and St. Mark's Social Center. Stayout organizers' careful planning paid off. The freedom schools proceeded smoothly with relatively few logistical glitches, despite the efforts of some school officials to intimidate parents into abstaining from the Stayout with threats of truancy prosecutions.[183]

The freedom school curriculum was rooted in a progressive, libratory model of education with a focus on African American and Third World history and the tactics and ideas of the black freedom movement. The pedagogical framework for the freedom schools grew out of the model of the citizenship schools and a deeply rooted tradition in African American history of education as a pathway to liberation. Drawing upon this tradition, Noel and Peggy Day created the curriculum for the Freedom schools. "Noel was sort of an amazing person," Breeden said. "He was a social worker and his typical style of writing was he would go into his room at 8:30 in the evening and come out with a

[183] Edgar M. Mills, "Brooke on Race: 'Take Legal Path,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 August 1963. Several members of the Boston School warned that children who attended Freedom Schools rather than their regular Boston Public Schools could be prosecuted on charges of truancy. This position was supported by Attorney General Brooke's statement that they Stayouts were illegal. Stayout organizers rejected this assessment, asserting that the Stayout was a matter of just civil disobedience. Brooke publicly called for activists to utilize solely "legal" methods to achieving equality and called for Black Bostonians to "win allies, not conquer adversaries." Brooke faced critiques from some in the African American community for his position on the boycotts and the civil rights movement generally. He acknowledged that he had not personally participated in the direct action protests taking place across the city at this time, but he had supported the cause in other ways.

proposal at 2 or 3 a.m. So he and Peggy did that, and it was not a big deal for them to produce this much stuff in one evening."[184]

Students at freedom schools took part in lessons on African American history, discussed the meaning of citizenship, studied the Constitution, and sang Freedom Songs. A diverse group of over 150 community people served as freedom school "faculty" including Boston Celtic star Bill Russell, several Harvard Professors, and activists including Barbara Elam, Reverend Breeden and his wife Jeanne Breeden, and Paul Parks. In addition many parents led classes in the freedom schools.[185] Freedom school organizers also offered evening classes in African American history for students who did not participate in the day program.

Despite the rousing community response to the Stayout and several more efforts at negotiations in the wake of the boycott, the Boston School Committee continued to refuse to recognize the segregation in the schools.[186] Tensions rose to the boiling point during one meeting in August when Boston School Committee member Joseph Lee argued that the Boston Public Schools did not provide an inferior education to African American students rather African American students were intellectually and culturally inferior.[187] In a public statement in response to Lee's comments Reverend Breeden said,

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[184] Breedens interview.

[185] *Freedom's Journal,* Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools" Folder E, MAAH.

[186] The two groups met on August 13, 1963 and August 15, 1965 to discuss the issue of school segregation. The NAACP Public School Committee continued to press the Boston School Committee to admit to the presence of de facto segregation in the schools. The Boston School Committee became increasingly intransigent in their refusal to admit to and ultimately even to discuss this issue. For example, the second meeting on August 15th only lasted fifteen minutes before Hicks abruptly cancelled and requested that NAACP activists leave the building when they again raised the issue of de facto segregation. Jeanne Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 67; Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 104a

[187] "Is Your Child Inferior?" *Freedom's Journal*, Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools" Folder E, MAAH. This statement by Lee not surprisingly enraged African American activists, parents, and students and became a rallying point for the rapidly growing movement and widespread resentment towards the Boston School Committee specifically.

"In the face of irresponsibility of this magnitude, we have but two alternatives: either to meekly accept the indictment of this man or, carry our grievances to those political and religious leaders in the city who share our concern lest the liberal image of Boston be smeared across the nation with the mud of inhuman treatment to minority groups."[188]

Following up on the Stayouts, an expanding coalition of activists launched a series of direct action protests in the summer of 1963. The core of this effort was a campaign led by the group Citizens for Boston Schools to vote out the most outspoken opponents of school integration on the Boston School Committee—Louise Day Hicks, Joseph Lee, and William O'Connor—and replace them with a slate of racially progressive candidates. Candidates endorsed by community activists included Mel King, current School Committee member Arthur Gartland, Velia Dicesare, John F.X. Gaquin, and George H. Parker. [189] During the summer and fall of 1963, Citizens for Quality Education staged protests on the Boston Common, sit-ins and marches at the Boston School Committee offices, and a ten thousand person march through Roxbury in protest of segregated and inferior education.[190] These protests greatly increased the visibility of the movement among both the largely white city and state leadership as well as among

[188] Reverend James Breeden, Box 38, Folder 1309, FH, Northeastern.

[189] In addition to his 1963 bid, King also ran for Boston School Committee (unsuccessfully) in 1961 and 1965, and has remained a fierce advocate for racial and social justice throughout his life. Gartland was the only member of the School Committee that supported addressing the issue of segregation and discrimination in the schools in the early 1960s, however, he held little influence within the committee because his fellow members were so firmly opposed to addressing these issues. Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 76a.

[190] Batson, *Black Educational Movement.* On August 29 thousands of African American members of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks marched on the Boston Common (just steps away from the Boston School Committee offices) in protest of school segregation and in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. On September 5 a group of activists led by Harvard Law School student Thomas Atkins began a sit in at the Boston School Committee offices which lasted through September 6 when Melnea Cass, Ruth Batson, and NAACP President Kenneth Guscott joined the sit-in. Batson's daughter Susan was also one of the founding members of the sit-in. Thomas Atkins went on to play a pivotal role in the Black education movement in Boston for the next decade—he served as Executive Secretary of the Boston NAACP in the mid-1960s, the first African American member of the Boston City Council in 1967 and Associate Trial Counsel for the plaintiffs in *Morgan v. Hennigan*.

black Bostonians. Despite their efforts, none of the progressive candidates won a seat and in addition, Arthur Gartland, the only racial moderate on the school committee lost his seat. In the wake of the 1963 election, the school committee emerged stronger—having withstood a direct challenge from black activists—and even more hostile towards the black education movement.

Despite this, there were clues in the summer of 1963 that the first Freedom Stayout and the subsequent protests had caught the attention of state political and education leaders. On June 17, 1963, the night before the first boycott, Governor Endicott Peabody issued a statement admitting to the presence of de facto segregation in state schools and that state officials had a responsibility to address these educational inequities. On August 19, 1963 State Commissioner of Education Owen Kiernan publicly called for the elimination of so-called "racial imbalance" in the public schools. Kiernan consciously introduced the term "racial imbalance" as a substitute for segregation in hopes that this shift in rhetoric would ease the escalating tensions between activists and the Boston School Committee. Although the NAACP and other activists rejected this language, arguing that it was vital that the language of "segregation" be used publicly, the phrase "racial imbalance" was widely adopted.[191]

On January 14, 1964, Reverend Breeden, with the support of a diverse coalition of organizations, announced plans for a second boycott to be held on February 26.[192] Breeden declared, "The crisis in the schools remains unsolved. Our children are damaged

[191] King, *Chain of Change*, 32.
[192] Phyllis Ryan, "Statement of the Freedom Stay-Out Committee," 1 February1964, Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools," Folder D: Press Releases, MAAH. The boycott was originally scheduled for February 11, 1964 but was rescheduled because that date conflicted with scheduled final exams for students. It was students who urged the change in date so that they could participate without jeopardizing their academic record.

daily, and their hurt and pain remain untended. We have prayed, we have talked, we have picketed, we have patiently attended one well-meaning conference after another." He continued, "We have been met with insult, misunderstanding, and ineffective sympathy. What must we do to be heard? We have decided that, on February 26th, our children will attend freedom schools instead of public schools."[193]

The second Freedom Stayout, like the first, relied upon political alliances with civil rights agencies within the city, but expanded upon this through more extensive collaboration with national racial justice organizations and leaders. Breeden and Day rallied an impressive list of local and state level supporters to their cause including the Boston NAACP (led by the Public School Committee), the Massachusetts branches of CORE, SCLC, and the newly formed Boston Action Group. Major national civil rights organizations and figures also threw their support behind the 1964 freedom schools including the Northern Student Movement (NSM), Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Reverend James Bevel, a key aide for Martin Luther King, Jr.[194] In addition to support from national civil rights organizations, the Stayout also secured the support of many public officials including President Kennedy, Governor Peabody, and Mayor Collins. The second Stayout differed from the first in that it garnered the support of many predominantly white and interracial organizations such as Americans for Democratic Action, the American Veterans Committee, American Civil Liberties Union of Boston,

[193] "To Secure These Rights: Documentary Review of Boston School Desegregation," 24 February 1964, WGBH-Boston, Box 39, Folder 1357, Box 39, FH, Northeastern.
[194] Robert Levey, "8000 Boycott Schools Today," *Boston Globe*, 26 February 1964.

and the American Friends Service Committee. Local and national media, including the *Globe*, *Herald*, and *Christian Science Monitor* also endorsed the boycotts.[195]

With the experience of the first boycott, more time for planning, and this broad coalition of supporters, Freedom Stayout organizers rallied 20,000 students to participate in the 1964 Stayout—more than six times the number that had taken part in 1963. The inclusion of elementary students and the participation of significant number of white and black students from the surrounding suburbs explain this significant increase.[196] These numbers necessitated a significant expansion in the number of freedom schools—from six to thirty-five—held at community centers, social service organizations, and churches including St. Mark's Social Center, St. Cyprians Episcopal, Shaw House, and Freedom House. Stayout organizers drew upon the deep ties which had been forged between grassroots racial justice organizations like Freedom House and the Shaw House beginning in the early 1950s to enlist this significant local institutional support.[197]

The 1964 Stayout featured an extensive curriculum which led students in lessons in local, national, and international African diasporic history. A lesson on ancient Africa began, "In one lesson it would not be possible to mention all of the peoples and cultures of ancient Africa. We will, therefore, tell something of only three of the more important cultures: Egypt, because it is the oldest and best known; Ancient Ghana because it was one of the great West African Empires; Mali because it was the home of many American Negroes." Students of all ages discussed the legacy of pivotal African freedom fighters

[195] "NAACP statement on organizations supportive of the boycott", Box 3, Folder 2, Ryan, Northeastern. Other organizations which included the Episcopal Society for Racial and Cultural Unity and the Brookline Committee for Civil Rights.
[196] Batson, *Black Educational Movement.*
[197] "Freedom School Locations," *Freedom's Journal*, Box: Civil Rights Boston, 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools," MAAH.

such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, and contemporary freedom fighters such as Martin Luther King Jr. and James Farmer. "Frederick Douglass was born a slave on February 14, 1817. He learned to read and write by himself for there were no schools for slaves. He had a great desire to help other slaves become free—and a wish to serve America. He became a great writer and orator. He published a paper and wrote stories telling why Negroes should be freed." The Freedom Stayout curriculum guide suggested potential activities to engage students. "A god suggestion would be to have different children role play moments in history, such as Douglass's refusal to be whipped and his consequent removal to another plantation. Have one child play the part of the slave owner, another part of Frederick Douglas." Faculty also led students in lessons on the history of slave resistance. "Many slaves used what is called passive resistance; that is they found ways to avoid working for the master, not because they were lazy, but because they did not want to work as slaves. Sometimes they worked slowly, sometimes they damaged crops or broke tools; sometimes they pretended to not understand what they were supposed to do. The slave owners came to think that all Negroes were slow and lazy; the joke was on the master."[198]

Freedom school teachers led discussions on national black freedom movement. A curriculum guide suggested teachers begin this discussion with questions like, "How are the Negro people working for equal rights and freedom today?" "Have you heard about the Freedom Riders of the South?" "Do you know the names of organizations working for freedom today?" "Can you name one great leader of the Freedom Movement today?" Teachers wrote the names of major civil rights organizations like the NAACP, SCLC,

[198] Freedom School Curriculum and Handouts, Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools"; Folder: B: Freedom School Curriculum and Handouts, MAAH.

CORE, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and movement leaders including Dr. King, James Farmer, and Whitney Young on the blackboard and discussed their contributions to the movement. [199] Freedom schools also included an extensive lesson on the history of social welfare in the United States and the current welfare rights movement and its relationship to the fight for educational justice. "Perhaps the most important date in the history of American welfare services is 1935. This was the year that the first Social Security Act was passed, under F.D.R. The first Social Security Act was a sign of a change in the American people's attitude to people in need of financial help." The lesson continued, "The solution to the problem of poverty is better schools, fairer hiring practices and fairer renting practices, not punishment of people already discouraged because of lack of opportunity."[200]

The core of the 1964 freedom school curriculum was a discussion of the current racial discrimination and segregation in the Boston Public Schools and the efforts of black Bostonians to challenge this educational status quo. Lessons began by outlining the role of the Boston School Committee and its relationship to students and parents. "Again, role playing would be excellent—Children representing school board; children representing civil rights organization; children representing parents. This would again bring the children to the question of WHY AM I HERE?" This background on the operation of the Boston Public Schools and its major stakeholders laid the groundwork for the central point of the lesson, and the freedom schools as a whole. "By attending a Freedom School in Boston today you are writing another big chapter in the freedom story. It is a chapter that tells how the Negro people of our city, supported by a growing

[199] Ibid.
[200] "Lesson on Welfare Services," Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools"; Folder: B: Freedom School Curriculum and Handouts, MAAH.

number of white citizens, are working together for integrated schools in Boston and all the inequalities that result from unequal schools for Negro and white."[201]

Freedom school students also took part in lessons on the philosophy and practice of racial and social justice protest. Lessons often began with group discussions to define the meaning of key terms such as freedom, equality, justice, segregation, de facto segregation, Negro minority, and prejudice. Teachers asked students questions such as, "What do you think the word boycott means?" Curriculum guides offered the following definition of the meaning of a boycott, which they encouraged teachers to unpack with their students. "A boycott means something when a lot of people do it at the same time. It doesn't mean much if only one person does it by himself—if you stayed out of school on another day just because you were not satisfied with something that happened at school, you might be hurting yourself." Teachers also led older students in discussions of the effectiveness of different methods of direct action protest such as media campaigns, public marches, and boycotts.[202] Likewise, a lesson welfare rights teachers aimed to teach students "that no one should be denied his rights as a citizen to fair legal treatment and opportunities to better himself simply because he is poor."[203] Teachers asked questions such as, "Do you think people can have freedom if they cannot have the same rights as other people have? Have the Negro people had equal rights since they were freed from slavery? In jobs? In places to live? In the kind of education they got?" Freedom school lessons also offered students with concrete information about how they could claim their rights as first-class citizens. In a lesson on "Citizenship Education", instructors provided

[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] "Outline for Lesson on Welfare Services," Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools"; Folder: B: Freedom School Curriculum and Handouts, MAAH.

high school students with a list of likely questions they would asked by registrar officials and gave them instructions on how and where to register to vote. "Your vote is your voice…Speak up today for a better city and a better world." Curriculum also encouraged youth to write to their congressman to express their political views and provided sample letters.[204]

Freedom Stayout organizers envisioned the schools as an opportunity to teach youth the importance of self-determination and to spur them broader political activism. "Many times young people have vital and unique ideas but they feel that no one wants to hear what they have to say…Many have come to accept certain inadequate conditions as unchangeable facts of their lives." Emphasizing the important role that the Freedom Schools could play in this process of empowerment and discovery, the guide concluded, "Youth do have a very important role to play in this world wide struggle for Freedom and Human Dignity. Let us help to make the Freedom Schools worthy of their name!"[205] Another curriculum guide for teachers wrote, "It is our hope that the Freedom Stayout will be just a beginning in working to eliminate de facto segregation in the schools as well as other bad conditions," a curriculum guide for instructors stated. "Perhaps several parent, student, and neighborhood committees will result."[206]

Parents, students, and community members embraced the Freedom Stayouts—bolstering organizers' dreams that the boycotts would boost the broader movement. Community support for the Stayouts and the black education movement is clearly highlighted in letters written by parents and students to *Freedom's Journal*—a grassroots

[204] "Citizenship Education," Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools"; Folder: B: Freedom School Curriculum and Handouts, MAAH.
[205] "Guide for Discussion Leaders and Workshop Leaders," Box: "Civil Rights Boston 1963-1964, Files on School Segregation and Freedom Schools"; Folder: B: Freedom School Curriculum and Handouts, MAAH.
[206] Ibid., 2.

publication of the Massachusetts Freedom Movement which reported on the black freedom movement in Boston and its national connections.[207] *Freedom's Journal* published key information such as the times and dates of local protest events, describing the vision and objectives of the Stayout, and through insightful analysis of the nature of racial inequity in the schools.[208] In a letter featured in *Freedom's Journal* Jamaica Plain High School student Ramona Baker wrote, "I strongly feel that now more than ever integration is necessary. I don't agree with others who say that it is wrong to 'use' children. Who goes into these run-down classrooms? It is the children." She continued, "So why shouldn't the children take part in the boycott; we can tell better than the parent what is going on in class."[209] African American mother Mrs. Constance Lew wrote, "As a community mother, I am willing to go to jail with the leaders. What makes Mr. O'Connor [William O'Connor—chair of the Boston School Committee] think that the rest of the Freedom Movement will fall apart if he arrests Rev. Breeden and Noel Day?" She continued, "We're all in this fight together." Lew also drew an astute connection between the current battle over the schools and the longer arc of African American freedom struggles. "My children's great-great-great-great grandfather fought for freedom in 1776,

[207] Box 3, Folder 16, Ryan, Northeastern. The Massachusetts Freedom outlined its purpose as the following: "The Massachusetts Freedom Movement is a non-sectarian inter-racial organization committed to non-violent direct action to bring about social change in order to create an open society by the elimination of barriers based on economic, political, and social separation, prejudice and discrimination. Massachusetts Freedom Movement shall initiate and conduct freedom schools and other educational and cultural and research programs consistent with its aims. Its primary areas of concern shall be employment, justice and health, housing, and family life. The activities of the Massachusetts Freedom Movement shall be primarily in the commonwealth of Massachusetts. However, since political boundaries cannot limit our concern for a humane society, we may engage in sympathetic action or other appropriate measures in order to support groups with similar aims elsewhere."

[208] See *Freedom's Journal* articles, "Instructions to Parents for the Freedom Stayout," Vol. I, No. 4, 1964; "Mass. Freedom Movement Organizes Parents in Roxbury Schools; "Program for Freedom Stayout Day; "School Protests in Ten Other Cities." Every issue of *Freedom's Journal* included an "advertisement" which called on parents to speak out against racial inequality in their schools: "If you have complaints about your school call 436-1568—the Massachusetts Freedom Movement will record your complaint."

[209] "Letter from a Student," *Freedom's Journal,* 1964, 6.

before most of the School Committee's ancestors even heard of America." She continued, "Yet here I am almost 200 years later still fighting for freedom and equality."[210]

Racial Imbalance

The increased size and visibility of the second Freedom Stayout brought about bold action at the state level. On March 6, 1964, just over a week after the February 26 Stayout, the Massachusetts State Board of Education—in response to the directive of the State Education Commissioner Owen Kiernan—created a special advisory committee to investigate the presence and impact of "racial imbalance" in the state's public schools. Over the course of the next year the twenty-one person committee gathered data about the racial demographics of the public schools and compared the curriculum, instruction, and physical conditions in the system's predominantly white and black schools. On July 1, 1964, the committee released an interim report which found that segregation existed in a significant percentage of the state's public schools and must be eliminated. [211]

[210] "Local Mothers Still Support Stayout," *Freedom's Journal*, 1964.
[211] "Racial Imbalance Disputes and Act," Box 954, Folder 4, Series V, NAACP Papers, LOC, 15-6. Members of the committee included influential business, political, educational, and religious leaders in the community. Members included: Mrs. Bruce B. Benson (President, League of Women Voters), Rev. John M. Burgess (Suffragan Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts), Mr. Erwin D. Canham (Editor of Christian Science Monitor), Dr. Harold C. Chase, (President of Boston University), Dr. Ernest Caverly, (Superintendent Emeritus, Brookline Public Schools), Richard Cardinal Cushing (Archbishop of Boston), Rabbi Bruce Ehrmann (President of Massachusetts Board of Rabbis), Mr. Carl J Gilbert, Chairman of Board of Gillette Corporation), Honorable Edward O. Gordon (Associate Justice, Massachusetts Superior Court, Oscar W. Hausserman, Esq (Chairman, Massachusetts Committee of Catholics, Jews, and Protestants), Thomas M. Hennessey (Vice President, New England Telephone and Telegraph Company), Dr. Asa S. Knowles (President, Northeastern University), Francis E. Lavigne (Director, Department of Education and Research, Massachusetts State Labor Council, AFL-CIO), Mr. John S. Laws (Principal, Dix Street School, Worcester), Ralph Lowell (President Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company), Edward J. McCormack, Jr. (Former Massachusetts State Attorney General), Mrs. Robert L. Putnam (President, Scholarships for Negroes, Inc.), Honorable Herbert E. Tucker (Assistant Attorney General), Michael P Walsh, S.J. (President of Boston College), Lewis H Weinstein, Esq. (Member Presidents Committee on

On April, 1965 the committee released its final report, titled, "Because it is Right, Educationally", generally referred to as the Kiernan Report. It stated, "Our conclusions are clear. Racial imbalance represents a serious conflict with the American creed of equal opportunity."[212] The report found overwhelming evidence of segregation in the state's public schools and moreover, that an extremely high percentage of these segregated schools were located in Boston. The Kiernan report documented that many predominantly non-white schools suffered from very poor physical conditions, a lack of educational resources, and questionable instructional practices. Most importantly, the report asserted that segregated education was injurious to both African American and white students and called for its elimination from the schools. The report suggested several potential solutions for eliminating "racial imbalance" including avoiding the construction of schools in residentially segregated neighborhoods, placing greater responsibility on school committee's to prevent and eliminate segregation, transportation of students beyond their neighborhood schools, and the withholding of state fund's from schools which failed to meet desegregation benchmarks.[213]

On August 18, 1965, less than four months after the release of the Kiernan Report, Governor John Volpe signed the nation's first voluntary state-initiated school desegregation law, the Racial Imbalance Act, into law. The act defined the nebulous term "racial imbalance" as "a ratio between non-white and other students in public schools which is sharply out of balance with the racial composition of the city or town in which

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Equal Opportunity in Housing), Dr. Nils Y. Wessel (President of Tufts University). Less than a month before Kiernan's creation of the advisory committee, the Boston School Committee voted to oppose a bill which called for the creation of just such a committee to study the issue of racial segregation in the Boston Public Schools.

[212] Ibid., 18.

[213] King, *Chain of Change*, 40-1.

non-white children live." The Racial Imbalance Act required school committee's statewide to conduct immediate and subsequently annual reviews of the racial distribution of students, and in the case that "racial imbalance" was found create a plan for its elimination within the year. If the school committee either failed to conduct this survey or to take timely action to eliminate segregation, the state Board of Education had the power to withhold funds.

Although an important accomplishment for the movement, the RIA also contained a number of stipulations and loopholes which supported the BSC's efforts to evade implementation. These included a stipulation that the BSC could appeal decisions made by the Board of Education regarding its findings of segregation and the effectiveness of its plans. The RIA also allowed the BSC to request an unlimited number of extensions for the creation and implementation of desegregation plans.[214]

Although state leaders undoubtedly played a critical role in the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act, they were not the sole actors driving the growing state support for the black education movement. Behind the scenes, grassroots African American educational activism played a pivotal role in securing state support for the cause of racial justice in the schools. The 1963 and 1964 Freedom Stayouts brought significant attention to the issue of racial inequality in the Boston Public Schools and sent a clear message that black Bostonians would not tolerate this continued denial of their educational rights of

[214] "An Act to Eliminate or Reduce Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools of the Commonwealth," Box 34, Folder 1185, FH, Northeastern. The act gave the Board of Education responsibility to determine the time line for the school committee's elimination or reduction of racial imbalance. It also stipulated that if the school committee did not agree with the Board's determination of racial imbalance, the committee could request a hearing within thirty days to challenge this ruling. In the instance that these appeals failed, the Racial Imbalance Act included detailed guidelines for the termination of state education funding to any city or town if they did not adequately address the racial imbalance. Even after a determination of termination of funding was made however, towns and cities still possessed the right to appeals—making the actual elimination of funding a time-intensive, logistically complicated, and overall unlikely outcome.

citizenship. The 1964 Stayouts, with their huge numbers and extremely well-coordinated media and public relations operation, forced city leaders to sit up and take notice of the black education movement. Ten years after Ruth Batson reported incidents of racial inequity in her daughter's Roxbury school, state educational leaders appeared to be finally taking seriously African American parent's charges of segregation and educational inequity.

Legislative action within the African American community played a major role in driving the Kiernan Report and Racial Imbalance Act. In December 1963, African American State Representatives Royal L. Bolling, Sr., Alfred S. Brothers, and Lincoln G. Pope proposed five petitions and bills addressing the problem of segregation and racial inequity in the public schools which represented an early version of the Racial Imbalance Act.[215] Taken together, these petitions called for the elimination of state funding to racially segregated school districts, for school committees to take greater responsibility and affirmative action to eliminate segregation, and for greater public information about the racial demographics of the schools. Representative Beryl W. Cohen of Brookline also filed a co-petition for the creation of a special commission to investigate the presence and impact of racial imbalance in the Boston Public Schools. Less than four months later after their introduction, the bills died in the House. Although the 1963 version of the Racial

[215] Royal L. Bolling (1920-2002) was the patriarch of one of Boston's most prominent African American political families, highly decorated WWII veteran, and successful businessman. In 1961 Bolling was elected to the House of Representatives where he served for twelve years. He was elected to the state Senate in 1982. In addition to his authorship of the Racial Imbalance Act, he was a strong supporter of educational and economic equality and helped secure the funding for Roxbury Community College and the METCO program. Two of his sons also followed in his political footsteps. His eldest son, Royal L. Bolling Jr. became the youngest African American elected to the House of Representatives in 1972. His second eldest son, Bruce C. Bolling, was Boston's first African American City Council president. Lincoln G. Pope was elected as a state representative from Boston in 1958—making him the first African American state representative in the twentieth century. Alfred Brothers was also a veteran, state representative, and community leader from this period.

Imbalance Act proposed by Bolling, Brothers, Pope and Cohen was defeated early in the legislative process, it laid the groundwork for the successful passage of the legislation in 1965. However, only Beryl Cohen's name appeared on the final version of the Racial Imbalance legislation.[216]

The period from 1959 to 1965 was one of mass mobilization in black Bostonian's quest for educational justice and community empowerment. The strides made by community activists in this period depended directly on the institutional, inter-personal, and intellectual foundation laid by dozens of African American parents and community activists in the 1950s.

[216] Un-passed legislation of House Resolve No. 3339, Legislative Records, Massachusetts State Archives. These five petitions and bills were filed almost simultaneously in early December 1963. They were: Petition accompanied by Bill House No. 2550: Bill Giving the Commissioner of Education the Power and Duty to Report Findings of Racial Imbalance to the General Court; Petition accompanied by Bill House No. 2549: Act Prohibiting Payment of School Aid to Towns Having Racial Imbalance in Schools; Petition accompanied by Bill House No. 2548: An Act Making Refusal of an Educational Institution to Furnish Information or Take Action with Regard to Certain Racial Matters an Unfair Educational Practice*;* Petition accompanied by Bill House No. 2298: An Act Requiring School Committees and Towns to Select School Sites So as Not to Create Racial Imbalance in the Student Body*;* and Petition accompanied by Bill House No. 2297: An Act Giving School Committees the Power and Duty to Eliminate or Reduce Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools. Representative Cohen's petition was "for an investigation by a special commission (including members of the General Court) relative to the question of racial imbalance in the school system of the city of Boston. On April 13, 1964, the Committee on Rules of the Two Branches (to whom the 5 petitions and resolve were referred) referred the resolve to the next annual session—which was the beginning of the end for any piece of legislation.

Chapter Three: "We're doing it our way": Evolving Visions of Community Control and Educational Justice, 1965-1971

"We must remember that school buildings are public buildings. I own them; you own them. The people of Roxbury own them. We pay taxes. We are citizens. They are our buildings. We have a right to see them used in a way that benefits our community."

Ellen Jackson, Ford Hall Forum speech, 1972[217]

More than fifteen years of fighting for educational racial justice in the face of unrelenting opposition, came with considerable physical, psychological, and financial costs to participants. These struggles also provided activists with invaluable lessons about the operation of racial and educational politics in their city, state, and nation which they applied with increasing savvy. The most significant development during the late 1960s was an embrace of protest strategies and educational outcomes operating with substantial independence from the Boston Public Schools and city school officials. After years of struggling against school officials, many activists concluded that it was neither possible nor desirable to create schools within the BPS which were simultaneously integrated, academically rigorous, and valued the involvement of the black community. Given this, they refocused their energies on the creation of majority black community controlled schools which were led by black teachers and administrators, and had high-caliber educational materials, a culturally relevant curriculum, and administrative autonomy from the BPS. The most direct applications of this were the alternative community controlled schools such as the Roxbury Community School and Highland Park Free School. This philosophy also manifested itself in battles over the naming of a new school

[217] Ellen Jackson, Speech at the Ford Hall Forum: "What's Wrong with the Boston Public Schools", 21 November, 1972, Box 3, Folder 39, Ryan, Northeastern.

in Roxbury and the creation of community governing bodies at the King and Timilty middle schools. Activists in this period experimented with methods of protest operating outside of formal avenues of educational reform such as appeals to school officials for formal policy changes or lobbying for legislative or judicial reforms. Rather than trying to influence the actions of school officials, activists' pushed aside school officials, intervening directly to create new educational structures and programs to improve the experiences of black youth in the Boston schools.

These shifts in the local movement were driven by substantial changes in the nature of local politics in the mid-1960s. Black Bostonians faced an increasingly hostile and bleak educational and political landscape by the mid-1960s. The inability or perhaps unwillingness of state education authorities to force the Boston School Committee to comply with the Racial Imbalance Act showed activists the weakness of the state as an ally and the ineffectuality of the legislative process.

The movement also evolved thanks to a shifting national political climate in the mid-1960s which drove activists to turn more often to the federal government for support. Activists turned to the federal government both because they had so few supporters at the local level and because the federal government demonstrated a greatly expanded commitment to protecting the civil rights of its black citizens through the passage of major civil rights legislation such as the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act. Black Bostonians' quest for community control in education also received a tremendous boost from the federal government through the Johnson administration's War on Poverty.[218] Among the flurry of new legislation passed through the War on Poverty's Economic

[218] In 1964, President Johnson announced his vision for an "unconditional war on poverty", taking up a decades-long liberal political project to achieve economic security, which dated back to the New Deal. http://presidentialrecordings.rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/essays?series=WarOnPoverty

Opportunity Act perhaps the most significant was the Community Action Program (CAP). CAP put the force of the federal government behind the community control movement with its mandate for the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in crafting community initiatives and in the administration of these programs. In this way, CAP offered a radical re-imagining of municipal governance in which even the most marginalized citizens were equal partners with elected officials. Activists in Boston also received aid through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which provided financial support for educational programs for poor and minority youth in urban areas.[219]

Although the mid-1960s marked a moment of unprecedented federal support for the black freedom movement, it was not without its limitations. The Civil Rights Act offers an excellent example. While a major boon for the black freedom movement, the Civil Rights Act also safeguarded northern school desegregation through a carefully placed loophole in its Title VI, which prohibited racial discrimination in institutions receiving federal aid, distinguished between "de jure" segregated school systems and so-called "racially imbalanced" schools. While Title VI enabled the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) to withhold funds from "de jure" segregated school it prohibited the use federal funds to compel compliance from "racially imbalanced" schools. Boston's status as a "racially imbalanced" school system protected it from the threat of lost federal funding.

[219] The ESEA also bolstered Boston activists' efforts to gain more independence from city school officials in that it granted state departments of education the authority to administer federal funds. While the Massachusetts Department of Education was not a perfect ally they provided substantially more support to black activists than city school officials.

These close ties between the local movement and national politics were also reflected in the evolving relationship between Boston and the national black freedom movement. The mid-1960s marked a period of tremendous change in the national movement with the rise of Black Power. Black Power's embrace of cultural and political nationalism and racial separatism, both in the process and outcomes of activism, strongly influenced the Boston movement. This was particularly reflected in activists' demands for direct community control of schools, black studies courses, and increased hiring of black faculty, staff, and administrators.

The movement also demonstrated significant continuity from earlier stages. Activists drew upon the grassroots organizing tradition forged by activists in the late 1940s—particularly the formation of institutions and the forging of alliances amongst them, the centering of personal experiences, and the leadership of local people. Institutions like Freedom House and St. Mark's Social Center continued to serve as anchors in the movement as did a core group of activists including Ruth Batson, Muriel and Otto Snowden, Reverend Breeden, and Mel King. Activists also built upon these traditions to grow their movement in new directions. The movement's tradition of institutional formation prompted the emergence of new organizations like Operation Exodus, the King-Timilty councils, and the Black Student Federation. The tradition of parent-led grassroots activism fueled the emergence of new parent-led protest campaigns such as the Boardman Parents Group and the commitment to empowering people as decision-makers drove the emergence of a powerful student movement.

However, the movement was not without its share of struggles in this period. Activists faced significant financial challenges in their efforts to secure more

independence from the Boston Public Schools and city officials. Although the federal government provided key financial support, these funds were rarely sufficient to keep programs afloat permanently and many programs failed to secure such support at all. With little possibility for city and state support, activists had no choice but to rely on their local communities. Although well-organized and eager to support the movement, it was beyond the reach of the black community to meet the financial needs of the dozens of community racial justice organizations on its own. Educational racial justice organizations operating outside of the Boston Public Schools also faced challenging questions about the reach of their programs and their systemic impact. For example, even the most successful programs of the independent community schools served a small percentage of Boston's black youth because the majority remained enrolled in the Boston Public Schools. Although remarkably closely-knit, the movement was not without its internal tensions. In their efforts' to adapt to rapidly changing political climate and incorporate the lessons they had learned, activists did not always easily agree on what was the best strategy or philosophy. In some cases financial crises promoted cooperation as activists rallied together to keep a program alive, but in other cases sparked ill-feelings. After more than fifteen years, many activists also felt frustrated with the slow pace of change particularly in instances in which educational challenges remained despite the appointment of a black principal or the creation of community school governing bodies.

On the Bus: The Boardman Parents Group and Operation Exodus

Dating back to the 1950s, student assignment policy had been a flashpoint for conflict between activists and school officials. Historically, the Boston School Committee used its power over student assignments to manipulate the racial makeup of schools and school districts. Black parents fought back against this practice at an individual level by arranging frequent transfers between schools in an effort to provide their children with the best possible education.

In the mid-1960s parent activists' drew upon their years of experience navigating this complex system to launch a more collective challenge of these discriminatory practices. African American parents in Roxbury created two programs which transferred black students from chronically over-crowded and under-performing majority black schools to majority white and better resourced schools elsewhere in the BPS. The Boardman Parents Group and Operation Exodus, created in the fall of 1964 and the summer of 1965 respectively, illustrate activists' unwillingness to sit back and wait for school officials to make change but rather to implement the changes they sought themselves.

Both the Boardman Parents Group and Operation Exodus demonstrated the continued importance of the movement's grassroots organizing tradition—particularly the strong role played by parents, the reliance of institutional formation, and the strong influence of personal relationships and experiences. Specifically, the Boardman movement and Operation Exodus grew out of a small predominantly black neighborhood of upper Roxbury which was home to several key community organizations including Freedom House and a number of parent movements since the early 1950s, including the

Concerned Higginson parents' movement and various campaigns at the local William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School.[220]

During the summer and fall of 1964, a group of African American parents of students at the William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School built a movement in protest of the Boston School Committee's decision to transfer their children from the Garrison to the W.L.P. Boardman Elementary School. When school officials refused to reverse their decision, despite considerable efforts by activists, parents decided to take matters into their own hands. From September 1964 through September 1965 parents organized a program which transferred former Garrison students to open seats in schools elsewhere in the BPS, rather than attend the Boardman.

The movement got its start on June 16, 1964 when the Boston School Committee sent out notices to Garrison School families that their children would attend the Boardman School starting in September. Boston School Committee members argued that the transfer was necessary to relieve over-crowding at the Garrison School and that the reassignment was only temporary until the completion of a new school to be located on nearby Humboldt Avenue.[221] Garrison parents opposed the transfer because, although the two schools were located less than one mile apart, it would require students to walk

[220] Kaufman, "Building a Constituency for School Desegregation," 621. In the late 1950s Erna Ballentine Bryant, a key player in the Concerned Higginson Parents Group, brought about the dismissal of a teacher who was excessively and discriminatorily disciplining her son. The teacher alleged that Bryant's son was misbehaving in class. Bryant had her son tested and found that he had an extraordinarily high IQ of 140 and that any misconduct likely stemmed from his intellectual boredom.

[221] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 162. School officials told parents that the new school, referred to at this time as the Humboldt School, would open in 1967 and be open to all former Garrison School Students. The naming of the Humboldt School provoked a significant conflict between school officials and black activists in the months prior to its opening.

through an active construction zone which as Ruth Batson described it, "was a serious distraction" and "affront to children's educational environment."[222]

Garrison parents established the Boardman Parents Group. Within days a group of very seasoned activists joined the Boardman Parents' cause including Ruth Batson, Paul Parks, Thomas Atkins, State Representative Royal Bolling, and Reverend James Breeden. Early on, activists focused their energies on pressuring school officials to reverse their assignment decision. On June 17 and again on June 24 Boardman parents met with Deputy School Superintendent Marguerite Sullivan to request that their children be allowed to remain at the Garrison. Perhaps not surprisingly, activists did not find a sympathetic ear in Sullivan, who had taken a very hard line in her opposition to the Higginson mothers' movement just eighteen months earlier. Stonewalled by Sullivan, the Boardman Parents Group appealed directly to the Boston School Committee in a meeting on July 27 who promptly rejected their appeal.

In July, 1964 as the Boardman parents considered next steps, there was evidence of growing state support for eliminating school segregation as the momentum built towards the passage of the RIA. Seeing the possibilities for the utility of the legislative process, on August 3, African American State Representatives Royal Bolling Sr. and Alfred Brothers distributed a letter to Garrison School District parents encouraging them to file suit against the Boston School Committee. Bolling and Brothers had also sponsored the legislation which ultimately became the Racial Imbalance Act. The Boardman Parents Group filed suit against the Boston School Committee for a temporary injunction to prevent the transfer, represented by Attorney Harry Elam, the husband of Concerned

[222] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 162a. The schools were located just seven-tenths of a mile apart. The Garrison School was located at 20 Hutchings Street, Roxbury while the Boardman was located at 20 Munroe Street.

Higginson Parents' leader Barbara Elam. Once more, the tightly-knit nature of the activist community shaped its development. Unfortunately, at their hearing on August 13, the court refused to take action against the Boston School Committee and set a date for another hearing on September 14.[223]

The court's delay prompted the Boardman Parents Group to consider alternative means of protest less dependent upon the actions of school officials. On September 9, the day before the first day of school, the Boardman Parents Group held a press conference in which they announced that they would not send their children to the Boardman School and would picket the Boardman until they were successful in re-enrolling their children at the Garrison. On the first day of school only seven children arrived at the Boardman. From September 10 through 17, sixty students held unofficial classes at the Garrison School, while parents and other students held marches, including a mother's sit in, at the Boardman.

The movement suffered two major blows in mid-September. On September 17 Superintendent Ohrenberger issued a statement demanding the end of the protests at the Boardman and the unofficial classes at the Garrison. On September 28, after nine days of hearings, the court ruled in favor of the Boston School Committee's decision to transfer the Garrison students to the Boardman School.[224]

The intransigence of school officials, city leaders, and the courts did not end the Boardman Parents Group, but rather drove an evolution in its methods and goals. Boardman Parents Group began plans to transfer former Garrison students themselves to the Peter Faneuil and Edmund P. Tileston Elementary Schools located in the

[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid.

predominantly white upper-class neighborhood of Beacon Hill and the racially mixed neighborhood of Mattapan respectively.[225] Parents rented a bus to transport students and within three weeks approximately 110 children were participating in the program.

The transfer program reflected activists' keen understanding of BPS policy and practice and their increasing savvy. Officially, the Boston Public School had a policy of Open Enrollment program which was created in 1961 and allowed students to transfer to schools outside of their assigned district, as long as space was available. But African American parents knew from first-hand experience with their own children that school officials routinely manipulated this policy by denying Black parents transfer requests to send their children to predominantly white schools while at the same time approving white parents' applications to move their children out of schools in African American, and racially transitioning neighborhoods. Throughout the 1960s and early-1970s the Boston School Committee used Open Enrollment to maintain racial segregation in the midst of rapid demographic shifts in the city's neighborhoods. [226]

Meanwhile, activists continued to rely upon grassroots organizing traditions. The nascent busing program relied heavily upon the support of a network of local and national civil rights organizations. Supporters included Ruth Batson, Reverend Breeden, Thomas Atkins, and the Boston branch of the NAACP which provided initial funding for the bus rental.[227]

Funding the program was difficult. Despite the fact that the transfer program was in direct compliance with the BSC's own policy of Open Enrollment, the BPS refused to

[225] The Faneuil School was located at 60 Joy Street, in the heart of Beacon Hill and the Tileston School in Mattapan, which at the time was still a largely Jewish community but had begun a process of racial change that would result in Mattapan becoming predominantly black by the 1970s.
[226] Box 954, Folder 4, Series V, NAACP Papers, LOC, 65-72.
[227] Batson, *Black Educational Movement,* 162a.

provide resources and state authorities did not force them to do so. Although the NAACP supplied some financial support, it was not sufficient to keep the program afloat permanently. The *Banner* reported, "Parents are also busy raising money. This is not easy and involves fund raising events, such as concerts and soliciting individual donations." The financial situation was further strained by the fact that the BPG did not charge a fee for participants because they wanted to ensure that the program was financially accessible for all families--asking only for a one dollar donation per week per child.[228] Ultimately the lack of funding forced the Boardman Parents Group to halt the program after nearly two years in the spring of 1966.[229]

In the late summer of 1964 another group of black parents from the neighborhood of upper Roxbury and North Dorchester formed Operation Exodus. Operation Exodus began as an organization which, like the Boardman Parents Group, coordinated the transfer of black students from majority black, under-performing, over-crowded schools to open seats in better-resourced schools elsewhere in the BPS. Within just a few months Exodus developed into a significantly larger racial justice organization offering a variety of educational and racial justice programs.

The roots of Operation Exodus lay in the community activism of black parents. Beginning in the early 1960s, parents of students at the Christopher Gibson, William E. Endicott, Atherton, and Greenwood Elementary Schools—clustered within two miles of each other—came together to craft a plan to address the problems of overcrowding and poor resources at their schools. Like their counterparts at the Garrison, parents at these schools had attempted to use Open Enrollment to transfer their children for several years

[228] "Boardman Parents Keep on Rolling," *Bay State Banner*, 26 February 1966.
[229] "Boardman School Parents on TV," *Bay State Banner*, 4 December 4 1965; "Roxbury Parents Groups Grow," *Bay State Banner*, 11 December 1965.

but their efforts were blocked by the School Committee. Gibson, Endicott, Atherton, and Greenwood School parents all formed parent groups at their respective schools and also worked in close concert—pooling resources, sharing their experiences, and developing a strategy to improve conditions. Parents of the Atherton and Gibson schools for instance, worked closely together in their capacity as "sister" schools and met frequently at the Shaw House.[230]

Although longstanding discontent drove parents' activism in this community, the formalization of their protest in the summer of1965 was also propelled by the firing of a young white teacher, Jonathon Kozol, from the Gibson School in June 1965. Kozol had only been a fourth-grade teacher at the Gibson for a year when the Boston School Committee fired him for assigning students a Langston Hughes poem, "The Ballad of a Landlord." Kozol, concerned about the lack of updated and culturally relevant books, brought in a book of Hughes poetry, which resonated powerfully with the children. A week later, the School Committee fired Kozol, ostensibly for assigning literature outside of the official course of study.[231]

In 1964 the Boston School Committee, in response to the publication of the Sargent Report in 1963 which outlined the racial inequities in the Boston Public Schools, pledged to transfer Black students from these schools to predominantly white and under-utilized schools in Dorchester and Brighton.[232] Hoping to leverage the apparent growing commitment of state education bodies to eliminating segregation, black parents petitioned the School Committee to reduce overcrowding in the short-term by transferring some

[230] "Roxbury Parent Groups Grow," *Bay State Banner*, 11 December 1965.
[231] Jonathan Kozol, *Death at an Early Age: The Destruction of the Hearts and Minds of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967).
[232] King, *Chain of Change*, 219.

students to less crowded elementary schools elsewhere in Dorchester. They also asked the School Committee to build new schools in their neighborhood as a permanent solution to the issue of over-crowding.[233] The School Committee however, ignored activists' demands, prompting parents of the Gibson, Endicott, and Greenwood Schools to file a complaint with the MCAD in August 1965 demanding that the School Committee halt its segregative practices.[234]

As it became increasingly clear that the School Committee would not budge, even under pressure from state authorities, activists turned once more to their grassroots base. In an effort to increase the power of their movement, parents from the Endicott, Gibson, and Greenwood schools joined with parents from fourteen other nearby schools to form the Roxbury-North Dorchester Parents Association (RNDPA) in August 1965,which was the basis for Operation Exodus.[235] The RNDPA expanded its base quickly beginning with parents whose children were participating in Head Start programs in the local community. RNDPA leader Ellen Jackson said, "These were parents with little kids who were concerned about what they were going to do for the fall for their kids. They decided they wanted to stay together and talk about the educational concerns so we started meeting at the Shaw House. Parents started telling other parents. Parents from all different communities in terms of the black community at that time started coming to our meetings, our rallies. And it grew and grew and grew."[236]

Ellen Jackson and Elizabeth Johnson were the heart of RNDPA and Operation Exodus. Both Jackson and Johnson were longtime residents of Roxbury and North

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[233] Ibid., 185.
[234] Box 954, Folder 4, Series V, NAACP Papers, LOC.
[235] King, *Chain of Change*, 218-9; "1965: Year of Disappointments," *Bay State Banner*, 1 January 1966; Ellen Jackson interview, BWOHP, Schlesinger.
[236] Ellen Jackson interview, BWOHP, Schlesinger.

Dorchester and mothers of young children attending the Boston Public Schools. In addition to their first-hand experiences with the schools as parents, both Jackson and Johnson had worked in community organizing prior to their work at the RNDPA.

Ellen Jackson, nee Swepson was born in 1935 to David and Marguerite Swepson and grew up in the "Sugar Hill" neighborhood of Roxbury—a predominantly Jewish community in the 1930s and 1940s. Jackson, like many other activists of this period, attended the Boston Public Schools. As a teenager, in the 1940s and 1950s, Jackson was active in the Youth Branch of the Boston NAACP. In 1953 she graduated from the elite and predominantly white exam school, Boston Latin, and then enrolled at Boston State Teachers College in 1954. That same year she married Hugh Jackson and they had her first child in 1955. After completing her degree at Boston State in 1958, Jackson began her activist work. From 1962 to 1964 she served as Parent Coordinator for the Boston Office of NSM, a student-led civil rights organization which ran educational support programs in urban areas throughout New England. Jackson's experience with the NSM was particularly key to her political education in that it provided experience in generating parental advocacy and engagement and introduced Jackson to the broader national civil rights movement—knowledge which she would draw upon heavily in years to come.[237] After leaving NSM in 1964, Jackson worked as Social Services Supervisor for Headstart, where she further developed her understanding of educational racial politics at the national level.[238]

Elizabeth West was born in Boston in 1937, attended the Boston Public Schools, and remained in Boston for her entire life. After the formation of the RNDPA and

[237] Jackson interview, 137.
[238] Interview records for Ellen Jackson, BWOHP Box 2, Schlesinger.

Operation Exodus, Johnson continued her work on behalf of low-income and minority students in several organizations including METCO and Freedom House. Johnson's activist career was cut short by her death in 1980, at the age of 43.[239]

With the base for their protest well-established, Jackson and Johnson focused their efforts on the issue of the implementation of Open Enrollment. As parents and community activists, Jackson and Johnson had first-hand knowledge of the School Committee's practice of manipulating and concealing school census information and student assignments to promote segregation. Jackson and Johnson pressured the School Committee to share the census which included detailed information about student enrollment but the Committee refused. Jackson and Johnson had a stroke of luck when an individual from an unnamed organization contacted them, offered to give them a census but also warning that they would deny their involvement if their identity was made public. Jackson said, "This was really the document…" "It gave us our first insight as to how the school system ran…We see that in School A, there were five classrooms and classroom one had twenty-seven seats but there were only sixteen kids assigned. We went through school after school, tallied up on the junior high level, and we tallied up on the senior high level, and we were able to tell how many vacant seats there were in the city. And those numbers were startling."[240]

The RNDPA was shocked however, when school officials informed parents that they would implement double-sessions and the use of mobile classrooms at overcrowded

[239] "Elizabeth Johnson, 43, desegregation leader," *Bay State Banner*; "Tribute Paid to Elizabeth Johnson: 'She loved every person in need,'" Box 2, Folder 86, FH, Northeastern.
[240] Ellen Jackson interview, BWOHP, Schlesinger; Kathleen Fitzgerald, James Fraser, and Ellen Jackson, "Building Character From Diversity: Neighborhoods, Northeastern, and Boston School Desegregation," in Linda Smith Rhoads, ed., *Tradition and Innovation: Reflections of Northeastern University's First Century*, (Boston: Northeastern University Publications, 1998).

Roxbury and North Dorchester schools rather than transferring students to predominantly white and under-utilized schools as promised. Officials also announced plans to purchase a building in Dorchester—to which they would assign excess students from the Gibson, Endicott, Greenwood, and Atherton Schools. The decision to purchase the thirty-two year structure incensed black parents because the cost of purchase, renovations, and staffing would total upwards of $275,000—far more than the cost of transferring students to open seats in predominantly white schools, which black parents now knew specific details of thanks to the census.[241] Jackson said that parents were concerned by the School committee's decision because their neighborhood was "an economically low area. This means parents have to work. This means that if children were divided up into a double session day that babysitting fees would have to be paid."[242]

The Committee's actions sent a clear message that they had no intention of implementing Open Enrollment fairly or of upholding their promises to parents. Given this, activists felt they had no choice but to take matters into their own hands. On the evening of the Committee's announcement, nearly 800 parents and community activists gathered in the auditorium of the Jeremiah Burke High School in Roxbury to strategize their response. The meeting brought together many leading figures in the movement including Muriel and Otto Snowden, Batson, and NAACP branch President Kenneth Guscott, as well as hundreds of parents. Otto Snowden delivered a rousing speech and called Jackson up onto the stage to share what the RNDPA had learned about the school transfers. During her speech Jackson called on parents and other community members to transfer children to the empty seats themselves. She reminded parents that they had the

[241] Belknap, "To Chip Away at the Walls", Snowden, Northeastern; King, *Chain of Change*, 218-9.
[242] Jackson interview, BWOHP, Schlesinger.

right to transfer their child to any other open seat in the system and it was up to them to claim that right. Two-hundred fifty parents signed up for the program on the spot.

Again, grassroots traditions were applied to a new strategy. In the days after the meeting, Jackson and other activists including the Snowdens and Batson spent several nights in marathon strategy meetings to iron out the logistical details. Jackson recounted their breakthrough, "I can't recall which one of us said it. Let's take the damn kids to their school. Get a motorcade going. We've got friends who've got a beach wagon. I know so-and-so, and he's got two cars in his family, and my car seats six people." Jackson, Johnson and other parents posted flyers at barber shops, hardware stores, and other community spaces urging parents "interested in your child attending a different school than the school he attends at the present time to the Roxbury-North Dorchester Parents' Council's Office."[243] A study conducted by Harvard University and the Veterans Administration attested to the efficacy of this organizing tradition—particularly the influence of interpersonal relationships—in kick-starting Exodus. The study found that seventy-four percent of parents heard about Exodus either because they "helped formulate the project" themselves or because they "heard from a friend.[244] The breakdown of the remaining twenty-four percent was as follows: "Read in Newspaper": 4 percent: "Read in Leaflets": 5.8 percent; "Heard on Radio": 8.7 percent; "Heard on T.V.": 4.9 percent; Other: 2.8 percent.

The Exodus transfer plan sparked direct conflict between activists and school officials. In the days prior to the first day of school, when Operation Exodus would begin,

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[243] Ibid.

[244] Dr. James Teele, Ellen Jackson, and Dr. Clara Mayo, *Family Experiences in Operation Exodus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967). This study examining the experiences of Operation Exodus families was led by Dr. James Teele of Harvard School of Public Health and Dr. Clara Mayo of the Veteran's Administration Hospital.

Jackson had a contentious run-in with Louise Day Hicks. Hicks paid a surprise visit to the offices of Operation Exodus and informed Jackson that if she did not present the formal paperwork for students—so called "transfer cards"—school officials would prohibit the students and Exodus workers from entering the schools. Jackson said, "I remember I was getting ready to say something to her, and one of the parents, she pushed up, and came between the two of us. She said, 'We tried it your way. Now we're trying it our way,' and turned around and said, 'Come on Ellen. We gotta go.'…That particular statement got heard all over the city, that 'we're doing it our way.'"[245]

Exodus grew rapidly. After initially transporting children in private cars, Exodus leaders hired a bus to transport students. By the end of September 1965, 300 students participated in Exodus. By the end of the 1965-1966 school year that number had grown to 475. Exodus continued to grow by leaps and bounds during the 1966-1967 school year—transferring 876 students to eighteen elementary and seventeen junior high schools in neighborhoods throughout the city including Jamaica Plain, Brighton, Allston, Hyde Park, and West Roxbury.[246]

Exodus embodied the strategic and ideological shift taking place in the movement towards community-based operation of educational reform. In 1970 Jackson wrote, "As a creation of concerned parents, as an authentic representative of the community, as a community-led and community staffed organization which has developed the creative capacity to innovate and operate programs, EXODUS has become a major resource in the total community effort to cope with the many inadequacies of current public programs."

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[245] Jackson interview, BWOHP, Schlesinger.
[246] "Parents Group Expands Exodus," *Bay State Banner*, 25 September 1965; "Exodus Busing Program: Vital Statistics", Box 4, Folder 53, FH, Northeastern. Exodus organizers contracted with the Arnold Bus Company of Newton, MA to transport students from their homes to the newly assigned schools.

She continued, "By putting authentic, highly-skilled, 'grass roots' community people in key staff positions, EXODUS creates a far more relevant environment for meeting the educational needs of the people it serves. EXODUS provides the outlet for these energies and the channel through which these concerned community people can plan and operate the programs they want."[247]

Emboldened by the early success of their transportation program Exodus took bold steps to increase their organizational influence and that of black parents in educational policy-making. In late 1966 Exodus announced the creation of a new "educational complex." The complex had a range of offerings including tutoring, parent-led recreational programs, psychological testing and support services, a "cultural revival" series, art gallery, educators' training, and cultural enrichment program. Highlighting the ties between Boston and the national black freedom movement, civil rights leaders including Fannie Lou Hamer, Stokely Carmichael, and Julian Bond headlined the events.[248]

The Exodus educational complex was located on a stretch of Blue Hill Avenue in upper Roxbury and Dorchester which by the late-1960s had become the nerve center of the city's black freedom movement. This neighborhood was home to key local racial justice organizations including Freedom House and Shaw House and a number of schools with strong traditions of parental activism including the Higginson, Garrison, and Ellis

[247] Ellen Jackson, "A Proposal for Operational Support for a Community-Based Educational Center," June 1970, Box 41, Folder 1468, FH, Northeastern.

[248] "A Bird's Eye View from Within—As We See it," Box 41, Folder 1460, FH, Northeastern; Description of Exodus programs, Box 4, Folder 53, Ryan, Northeastern. The Exodus Cultural Enrichment Program brought Black youth to cultural activities such as theater, museums, and concerts. The recreational program, managed largely by African American fathers, offered recreational programs such as basketball, softball, and volley ball to approximately 300 African American youth after school. Exodus Psychologist testing service paired Exodus youth with psychologists from Harvard and Boston University. The Institute for Teachers program offered lectures and educational sessions for educators to support their instruction of topics related to Black history and culture.

Elementary Schools. Nearly every major national civil rights organization also had offices in this neighborhood including CORE, SCLC and NSM. This physical centering of the movement began with the establishment of Freedom House in the 1940s and developed slowly over the next decade until picking up steam in the 1960s because of major demographic shifts in the city. As the city's African American population became more concentrated in Roxbury and Dorchester, civil rights organizations and community centers established themselves in these communities.[249]

The Exodus educational complex offered a tutoring program which provided academic support to approximately 400 students in math, reading, art, and drama. The tutoring program highlighted the ties between Boston and the national civil rights movement in that Jackson drew upon her experience with the Northern Student Movement by modeling the Exodus tutoring programs after similar programs within that organization. Exodus activists also reflected their keen awareness of shifts in federal politics in this period by securing funding from a War on Poverty program grant. The Exodus tutoring program also employed Peace Corps and Vista program volunteer.[250] Through their tutoring program, Exodus faced head-on one of the major challenges of educational activism in this period—that of reach. The majority of black youth remained enrolled in the Boston Public Schools to which they were assigned by the School Committee. Despite its expansion, the Exodus transportation program could not accommodate more than a small percentage of these students. Exodus addressed this

[249] Press Information sheet, 19 December 1966, Box 4, Folder 53, Ryan, Northeastern.For instance, the Shaw House relocated to this area from the South End during this period. Other community institutions in close proximity to the Exodus Complex included the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts and the Charles Street AME Church.
[250] Operation Exodus Development Brochure, 1966, Box 41, Folder 1463, FH, Northeastern.

limitation through the expansion of its services at the educational complex which offered its services to all Boston youth.[251]

Exodus was not immune from internal tensions and challenges. In an interview with the *Banner* in 1966, Jackson praised parent activists for their collaborative approach in the same breath that she criticized the movement's more established leadership cadre. She said, "This kind of spirit is like a breath of fresh air among the civil rights community in Boston. Jealousies and petty bickering, normal fair among the civil rightists, have been reduced to a bare minimum in the Parents Committee. The civil rights leaders themselves after initially attempting to halt the parents plan, have now accepted the role of professional consultants, a role in which they have served wisely and well."[252] But by January, 1966, statements from Jackson hint at increasing tensions about the role of parents in the organization as well. Speaking to the *Banner* again she said, "There are hundreds of parents whose children are involved in tutorial programs, recreational programs, and job training programs who never make the effort to find out what these programs are really doing and how much they need the help of parents to continue their work."[253] While these tensions were relatively minor in Exodus' first months, a letter to parents in the spring of1968 reflected a significant breakdown in the relationship between Exodus organizers and parents. "During these past three years we have attempted to maintain lines of communication throughout the community because, as we saw it, it was necessary as far as implementation of programs. We are sorry to say that this procedure seems to have backfired and become a one way thing." It continued, "We support, but are not supported. Our intention and purpose was that we use each other whenever and

[251] Ibid.
[252] "Parents on the Move," *Bay State Banner*, September 25, 1965, 4
[253] "Exodus Leader Urges Parental Involvement," *Bay State Banner*, 1 January 1966.

however, necessary and feasible, to fight THE opposition, not to find and have to contend with it in our midst." The letter concluded, "From now on, Exodus is going to be operating not only on its own, as before, but for its own. You judge yourselves; we've got work to do."[254]

Like many other grassroots racial justice organizations, Exodus faced significant financial challenges which undoubtedly played a significant role in driving these fissures and undermined its institutional stability. After raising nearly $150,000 dollars from private sources to fund the first year of programming, organizers struggled to meet financial needs.[255] Throughout its tenure, Exodus remained engaged in a fight for financial survival. Exodus relied heavily on the local community for donations to keep them afloat. Activists organized dozens of fundraising events including cabarets, rallies, and fashion and talent shows. On September 15 and 19, 1965 Exodus held a rally and "Mother's March" in Roxbury which raised 2,000 dollars. On October 19, Exodus held a fundraising rally entitled, "Parents, are you Committed?" at the Burke School headlined by James Farmer of CORE.[256]

Grassroots fundraising, although valuable as a way to mobilize community support, could not meet all of Exodus' financial needs, driving activists to look for support from the city and state. Activists argued that school officials' failure to fairly implement their own policy of Open Enrollment had forced parents to step in to transport the students themselves, and therefore the city should bear the cost of Exodus'

[254] "Communications Follow-Up," 2 April 1968, Box 41, Folder 1458, FH, Northeastern.
[255] "Operation Exodus Statement of Purpose", Box 41, Folder 1460, FH, Northeastern. Exodus raised $149,912 from private sources to fund the transportation program in its first year.
[256] "Exodus Cabaret," *Bay State Banner*, 23 October 1965; "Farmer Lauds Exodus," *Bay State Banner*, 16 October 1965. In his speech at the rally Farmer likened Exodus to the Freedom Rides and stated that this type of organization and movement was needed throughout the North. Farmer told the crowd that he was hopeful that Exodus would launch a national movement of like-minded activist initiatives.

transportation program. The School Committee refused to provide any funding and also stepped in to block Exodus' efforts to secure support from other city agencies or the state. As it became increasingly clear that they had little chance to securing funds from either the city or state, Exodus turned to the federal government for aid. Jackson and her fellow organizers demonstrated considerable political savvy in their efforts to leverage federal support. In early October 1965, Jackson led two busloads of parents from Boston to Washington D.C. to meet with Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy, Commissioner of Health, Education, and Welfare Francis Keppel, and Office of Economic Opportunity Head Sargent Shriver to request federal aid for Exodus. Jackson and the Exodus parents called on Shriver and Keppel to pledge the same level of support to tackle the problems of segregation and discrimination in northern cities as they did in their Southern counterparts. Speaking to the *Banner* before their trip Jackson also invoked the specter of recent urban unrest to pressure the federal government to support the movement in Boston. Jackson said, "The thing that happened in Watts, Los Angeles could happen in Boston if some steps aren't taken to help us. There are people in our community who are fed up and none of the leaders could be held responsible for what they might do if they get angry enough."[257] Thanks to these efforts, in 1966, Exodus received $70,000 in federal funding from Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

A major financial crisis in the fall of 1966 highlights the close ties that existed between activists and institutions in this movement, as the black community mounted a major fundraising campaign to save Exodus. Federal funding was not enough to prevent Exodus from falling into deep financial trouble and on November, 1966, Exodus announced that their transportation program would cease within days if they were not

[257] "Exodus Parents Leave for Capitol," *Bay State Banner*, 16 October 1965.

able to raise funds to settle a $12,000 debt to the bus company. This effort was led by Otto Snowden and Harold Burg, owner of the Roxbury grocery store, Blair's Food Land. Burg and Snowden formed a "Citizens Committee to Save Exodus" made up of community leaders including Attorney Harry Elam and Kenneth Guscott. Within days, the Committee launched a sophisticated fundraising strategy complete with a comprehensive public relations and marketing plan, and hosted many public events including rallies headlined by leaders in the national civil rights movement and famous entertainers.[258] The Committee also launched a campaign asking individuals to "adopt" an Exodus student by donating three dollars per week to cover the cost of their transportation.[259] Committee leaders also secured funding from a number of white community leaders and social service institutions, thanks in large part to the Snowden's longstanding ties with white leaders and community organizations, particularly in the Jewish community. The committee's work paid off—within ten days they had raised $24,000 ensuring Exodus' survival, for the short-term at least.

Exodus survived through the early 1970s, leaving an impressive legacy to the movement. At its peak Exodus served 3,000 students through its transportation, tutoring and other educational programming. While it may be tempting to point to Exodus' constant efforts to expand and bold political style as a cause of its challenges and ultimate demise, it was precisely these attributes that ensured Exodus' vitality and continued

[258] "Letter from Otto Snowden to Members of Citizens Committee to Save Operation Exodus", 6 November 1966, Box 41, Folder 1461, FH, Northeastern. The fundraising campaign designed by Snowden and Burg included five sub-committees, a slate of fundraising events, and a careful consideration of marketing and public relations. Newspapers covering the Exodus fundraising campaign included the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Boston Globe*, *Boston Traveler*, the Boston-based tabloid *Record American*, the *New Bedford Standard-Times*, the *Lawrence Morning-Eagle Tribune*, and the *Worcester Gazette*. For information on Muriel and Otto Snowden's longstanding political relationships with Boston's Jewish community and organizations see Snowden, Northeastern, especially Boxes 6-7.

[259] Otto Snowden, "Citizens Rally to Help Exodus press release", Box 41, Folder 1458, FH, Northeastern; Citizens Committee mailing list, Box 41, Folder 1461, FH, Northeastern.

relevance in the movement. As educational conditions, obstacles, and the educational needs of the Black community shifted in this period, so too did Exodus' strategies. This flexibility and willingness take risks with new ventures—like their educational complex—served Exodus well in this politically tumultuous period.

Community Schools

Decades of opposition from city school officials, the growing support for community controlled education in the national black freedom movement, and expanded federal support all fueled the development of a spate of independent community controlled schools in Boston beginning in the mid-1960s. These included the Roxbury Community School, New School for Children, Highland Park Free School, and St. Joseph's Community School which were established in 1965, 1966, 1968, and 1971 respectively. The blatant racial hostility of city school officials prompted a growing number of black parents, teachers, and activists to conclude that their children could not have a quality education within the Boston Public Schools. Instead parents, activists, and educators turned to the creation of alternative independent schools governed directly by black Bostonians which sought, as community school leader Dr. Phillip Hart put it, "to show that quality education could be provided to these children in a community controlled setting."[260]

School founders drew heavily upon prior experiences including the Freedom schools and community-run tutoring programs. Community school leader Dr. Phillip Hart said, "Those Freedom Schools and tutoring academies became the New School for

[260] Jeanne Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 71; "There is Always Another Way: A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste," (Episode 1009), Say Brother, 23 November 1979, WGBH Media Library and Archives.

Children in 1966 and the Roxbury Community School also in 1966."[261] These programs spurred many parent and community volunteers to action in that they demonstrated the educational failures of the city's segregated schools by in that organizers saw how far behind grade level many students were. They also provided black Bostonians hands-on experience operating their own educational institutions including curricular development, hiring and training staff, coordinating logistical details such as transportation and building maintenance, recruiting students, and securing financial support. The freedom schools and community controlled schools were connected in that many of the leaders of the Freedom Stayouts, including Reverend Breeden and Noel Day, also played critical roles in the independent schools. The community controlled schools and freedom schools shared a common heritage in that both grew out of black parents' dissatisfaction with the Boston Public Schools and their determination to provide their children with a better education.

These four community schools shared a similar trajectory of development, structure, and student demographic profiles. All had small student bodies, with enrollments ranging between seventy-five and 200 students from Kindergarten through sixth grade.[262] Although focused on serving black students within their communities, the schools also prided themselves on their ability to attract a racially and ethnically diverse student body. All of these schools were located in the racially mixed or majority black

[261] "There is Always Another Way: A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste," (Episode 1009), Say Brother, 23 November 1979, WGBH Media Library and Archives. For instance, Cecilia Ware, a fourth grade teacher at Roxbury Community School worked as a tutor at St. Ann's Parish before becoming a founding member of the RCS team.

[262] "Development Proposal on Behalf of Roxbury Community Schools", 1982, Box 39, Folder 1302, FH, Northeastern. Roxbury Community School had an average enrollment of 132 students between 1971 and 1980; "Community School to Open in Fall, New School for Children Organized by Local Parents' Group", *Bay State* Banner, Box 38, Folder 1314, FH, Northeastern. Enrollment at the New School was approximately eighty students in its first year. King, *Chain of Change*, 93. Highland Park enrolled 117 students in its first year and by 1974 that number had grown to 175.

neighborhoods of the South End, Roxbury or Dorchester.[263] Each of the schools had a majority black faculty including black principals. The New School for Children and Roxbury Community School were the most similar in terms of the demographics of their parent and student community in that they attracted black and white working and middle class families, while the students at Highland Park Free School were more likely to hail from more economically disadvantaged backgrounds. St. Joseph's was the most different from the other alternative schools of this period in that it began as a Catholic School of the Archdiocese of Boston. When the Archdiocese announced its intention to close St. Joseph's in 1970, a group of black parents asked to keep it open as a community school.

The community schools also shared a common political and educational philosophy which was rooted in a commitment to forging deep and equal partnerships between educational institutions and their communities. New School Board Chairman Noel Day said, "The parents and founders of the New School for Children desire to share their hopes and dreams with others by building a school that is truly 'public'—that is responsive to the public its serves. In other words, the founding parents are not ashamed of their community—they are concerned with building and strengthening it."[264] Highland Park Principal Luther Seabrook echoed this sentiment when he wrote, "The community dominates its decision-making process; the community has selected the staff; the community helps to support the cost of the school; the community provides much of the staff and the focus for much of the curriculum; the community's *total educational needs*

[263] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 268. Many of these schools moved frequently during their existence. For instance, the New School for Children was housed at 48 Rutland Avenue in the South End when it opened before moving to 413 Shawmut Avenue, which was located less than one-quarter of a mile away. The school relocated to 27 Dudley Street in late 1966 before moving again to 6 Bradshaw Street in North Dorchester in 1968.
[264] Noel Day, Box 38, Folder 1309, FH, Northeastern.

are served by the school; the school is concerned with, and involved in, all the social, physical, political, and economic factors which contribute to the community's educational health."[265] School leaders built relationships with the broader community in a variety of ways including serving as a space for community events such as art exhibits and hosting services such as a dental screening program and remedial reading courses.[266] Highland Park Free School created a position of "community coordinator" who was focused on cultivating these school- neighborhood relationships.[267] Teachers frequently invited representatives from local community resource centers in to speak to students to "expose children to the positive things happening in the community." Other programs included a birthing class for expectant mothers offered at St. Joseph's.[268]

The schools applied this vision of community, and specifically parental, involvement in education in concrete ways. Highland Park Free School and the Roxbury Community School created a "community teachers program" which recruited and trained neighborhood residents to work in classrooms as teaching assistants. Community teachers, Mel King wrote, "worked not only in the classroom but also with parents and other community groups to foster the maximum feasible participation in the school's life, and, in turn, to maximize the school's participation in the community's life." The Board of Directors of the Roxbury Community School and St. Joseph's both consisted primarily of parents.[269] Parents played a critical role in all aspects of school governance at St. Joseph's including setting tuition rates, establishing school policy, developing

[265] *King, Chain of Change*, 93.
[266] "Development Proposal on Behalf of Roxbury Community Schools", 1982, Box 39, Folder 1302, FH, Northeastern.
[267] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 307.
[268] "There is Always Another Way," WGBH.
[269] King, *Chain of Change*, 93

curriculum, and leading in fundraising efforts. Describing the school's philosophy founding principal Sister Sylvia Thibodeau said, "We find that if parents take a more active part in how their children learn and what they learn, they feel more ownership."

The curriculum and pedagogy of the community schools also reflected a commitment to educational self-determination and racial pride. Schools involved community people in curricular development by encouraging them to make suggestions for issues they would like the school to address. It was not unusual for community businesses to donate materials, such as a cash register offered by a local convenience store which a math teacher used to create a "store" in his classroom to teach children about currency.[270] Lessons also focused on instilling in students pride in African and African American heritage—pushing students to grapple with questions of "identity, who I am, where I come from, and what role I play in society." For instance, St. Joseph's Community School evaluated students based on their proficiency in the seven principles of Kwanzaa, which included self-determination and unity.[271] In addition to the so-called "three R's" many of the schools, including Highland Park Free School and St. Joseph's, offered courses in African and African American literature, language, and seminars in community organizing work.[272] The influence of the national climate of Black Power and Black Nationalism sweeping was clearly demonstrated in the physical appearance of the schools. Many of the schools hung African flags and posters of black freedom fighters like Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Angela Davis.

[270] "There is Always Another Way: A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste," (Episode 1009), Say Brother, 23 November 1979, WGBH Media Library and Archives.
[271] J. King Interview.
[272] Batson, *Black Educational Movement,* 272b, 370.

Like many other grassroots organizations, financial challenges plagued the community controlled schools. Greater independence from the Boston Public Schools had significant advantages, but also brought with it economic difficulties because the schools did not receive funding from the city or state like traditional BPS schools. Before even opening its doors, the New School faced significant financial pressures—calling for donations from the community to help them meet their $100,000 annual operating costs. Because the New School did not secure either federal or foundational support, they were forced to charge an annual tuition of $250 which although not an exorbitant sum, was beyond the reach of many of the community's poorest families.[273] By the fall of 1969 ongoing financial challenges had escalated to the point of a full blown fiscal crisis when school leaders announced that the school would close within two weeks if they could not raise twenty thousand dollars and urged the community to pitch in to save the school. The school had recently purchased a larger space to accommodate their growing student body, but failed to secure a much needed bank loan leaving them in a very precarious position.[274]

Highland Park Free School experienced similar financial difficulties. Unlike the Roxbury Community School, Highland Park did not charge tuition, in an effort to ensure that the school was accessible to families of all economic backgrounds. The school faced its first major financial crisis just one month after opening it lost a source of anticipated funding. Prior to the schools' opening, the Educational Development Center (EDC) in the nearby suburb of Newton had agreed to provide seed money for the school as well as

[273] "Community School to Open in Fall, New School for Children Organized by Local Parents' Group", *Bay State* Banner, Box 38, Folder 1314, FH, Northeastern.
[274] "The New School to Close its Doors," Press release of the New School for Children, Box 38, Folder 1314, FH, Northeastern.

future financial support. Although EDC made good on its pledge of start-up funds, they decided not to provide future financial support which left Highland Park without funding. The school experienced a number of financial crises throughout its tenure after its fall-out with EDC, including a near eviction in 1972, before closing its doors in 1976.[275]

The Roxbury Community School was the most institutionally stable community school of this period in large part because of its ability to secure external funding. Highlighting the shift in the movement regarding the role of the federal government, the RCC received funding through the U.S Office of Education and Titles I and IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, making it one of only two schools to do so in this period. In addition, the school received funding from private sources such as Polaroid, Christian Science Fund, the First National Bank of Boston, and the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. This measure of financial stability and security enabled the Roxbury Community School to survive for nearly twenty years—a tremendous feat given the fact that the average independent school of this period lasted for eighteen months. [276]

These difficulties in achieving financial or institutional stability prompted leaders to consider alternative governing structures for the community schools. Drawing upon a deeply ingrained tradition of institutional alliance formation, Roxbury Community School, New School for Children, and Highland Park Free School joined together to form the Federation of Boston Community Schools. Speaking on the occasion of their founding on March 13, 1970, federation leader Harvey Pressman wrote, "We the parents

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[275] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 370; Breedens interview. Highland Park succeeded in ensuring the financial accessibility of its school—leaders reported that ninety-six of 117 students attending the school in its first year came from families with annual incomes below $1,000.

[276] "Development Proposal on Behalf of the Roxbury Community Schools," Box 39, Folder 1032, FH, Northeastern, 1982. The U.S. Office of Education funded the Roxbury Community School through a program called "Follow Through" which sought to build on the educational gains made by students enrolled in Head Start in the later stages of their education.

and members of the governing bodies of the Highland Park Free School, the Roxbury Community School and the New School for Children agree to associate together in a Federation of Schools for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching in our schools and making a greater impact on education in Boston. We believe that such a federation should permit each school to retain its governing body with control over its own staff and curriculum. We agree to send equal numbers of representatives from each school to a planning session charged to design a program, structure and staff for our Federation. All work of the planning group will be submitted for approval to the governing board of each school before implementation."[277] Although the schools were born out of a fierce desire for autonomy and local control, their struggles in their early years had shown school leaders that this type of structure and unity was necessary for the independent schools' survival.

"A good name means a lot": The Monroe Trotter School

A contentious battle over the name of a proposed new elementary school in Roxbury highlights activists' efforts to claim educational autonomy within the Boston Public Schools in the late 1960s. In December 1967 school officials announced the construction of a new school on Humboldt Avenue in Roxbury, which would be the first new school in Roxbury in more than fifty years.[278] Although residents were thrilled at the prospect of a new school in their community, protests broke out when officials announced that the school would be named the Joseph Lee Elementary School, in honor

[277] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 246c.
[278] "Magnet School Draws Controversy," *Bay State Banner*, 7 December 1967; Belknap, "To Chip Away at the Walls", Snowden, Northeastern.

of the father of longstanding School Committee member Joseph Lee.[279] Black community residents were outraged by this proposal to name a school in a heavily black neighborhood after Lee who had been an opponent of the black education movement for decades. Black residents of the neighborhood called for the school to be named instead in honor of nineteenth century freedom fighter and Bostonian William Monroe Trotter.

The protests over the school's name were symbolic of a broader ideological shift in the movement in this period as activists embraced the possibility of majority black, community controlled schools. The conflicts over the naming also reflected a growing spirit of racial pride in black heritage and culture in the black freedom movement locally and nationally in this period. In an editorial on the naming debate the *Banner* wrote, "After a flirtation with the hopes of school integration the community has begun to despair of this approach." The article continued, "Somewhat reconciled to the reality of 'de facto' segregation, the community was looking forward to the construction of the new Humboldt Ave. elementary school. The Humboldt Ave. school should be controlled by blacks for black children. With pride the community wanted the new school to be named after a local hero."[280] Community residents echoed the *Banner's* sentiment. Roxbury resident, Mrs. Margaret Booker told the *Banner*, "The building of a new school is tremendous, but I feel strongly against naming it after a person who doesn't identify with the community." Michael Leroy told the *Banner*, "they should name it after a black man seeing how this is a Negro neighborhood."[281]

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[279] Joseph Lee (1901-1991) was elected ten times to Boston School Committee intermittently between 1937 and 1971, including three terms as committee chairman. Lee's father, for whom the school was proposed to be named, also had a long career of public service in the city including a seat on the Boston School Committee. Lee, along with Louise Day Hicks, was the most notoriously outspoken opponent of racial reforms in the Boston Public Schools throughout the 1950s and 60s.
[280] "Good Name Means a Lot," *Bay State Banner*, December 7, 1967, page 4.
[281] "Education Council Wins School Name for Trotter," *Bay State Banner*, 21 December 1967.

The protest drew upon past traditions of civil rights protest. The calls for the school to be named after Trotter highlighted the deep connections between postwar black educational activism in Boston and its turn of the century antecedents. This campaign also drew upon more recent history of educational activism. Beginning in the 1950s black activists, led by the Snowdens and Freedom House, had campaigned for the construction of new schools in Roxbury as part of the city's plans for urban renewal. For instance, during the mid-1950s Ruth Batson, in her capacity as chair of the NAACP Education Committee, arranged a meeting with Mayor Hynes to request the construction of new schools in Roxbury and the South End.

Despite their efforts through the mid-1960s, activists fell short in their effort to bring a new school to their community.[282] Likewise, when school officials announced the proposed name for the school, residents turned to the movement's established activist networks, leaders, and institutions for support. Within days of the School Committee's announcement, representatives of thirty-seven black community agencies gathered at Freedom House, which was located less than half a mile away from the proposed school site, and established the Community Education Council (CEC) to oversee the opposition to the proposed naming. The CEC brought together a wide range of racial justice organizations, several of which traced their roots back to the early twentieth century, including the NAACP, New Urban League, Operation Exodus, Trotter's Equal Rights League, and the League of Women for Community Service. A who's who of movement

[282] The Snowdens and Freedom House achieved substantially greater success in shaping urban renewal programs as they impacted Roxbury and North Dorchester in areas not related to education including the construction of the Roxbury Boys and Girls Club and the Melnea Cass Skating Rink and numerous neighborhood building renovation projects. Their campaign focused on forging closer partnerships between the people of Roxbury and the Boston Redevelopment Authority. These efforts suffered however when Logue left the position in 1967. "Freedom House United Black Citizens," *Bay State Banner*, Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern.

activists threw their support behind the Trotter movement including Melnea Cass, Ruth Batson, Paul Parks, and Ellen Jackson.

At a meeting between the CEC and the Boston School Committee, activists articulated their demands for a school, and a school system more broadly, which embraced black heritage and culture and empowered community people in school governance.[283] In a statement to the School Committee Paul Parks said, "There are 24,000 black children in this city crying out for identification. Will you deny it to them?" Prior to the meeting, the CEC had posted flyers around Roxbury and North Dorchester urging community residents to attend to express their opinions. One attendee, Mrs. Myrtle Adams, who identified herself as a "representative of parents of Roxbury, the South End, Jamaica Plain and Dorchester" told the Committee, "The black community, which has no representation on your committee must have the right to participate in educational matters which will affect it. And a school in a black community, its names, its staff and its curricula, must reflect the people." Old and new traditions of black racial politics in Boston came together in the meeting when members of the National Equal Rights League, the organization which Trotter created in the early twentieth century, testified to Trotter's contributions to the Black freedom movement and their city. The School Committee agreed to name the new school in honor of Trotter before the meeting adjourned, making it the first school in the city's history to be named for an African American when it opened its doors in September 1969. [284]

Community Control at King and Timilty Schools

[283] Community Education Council, Folder 1256, Box 38, Freedom House Papers, Northeastern.
[284] "Education Council Wins-School Named for Trotter," *Bay State Banner*, December 21, 1967, 1.

From 1963 through 1969 activists at the Patrick T. Campbell Middle School (renamed the Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in 1967) and James P. Timilty Junior High School, located within two miles of each other in North Dorchester and Roxbury respectively, led a campaign for total community governance of their schools. [285] Faced with the unrelenting hostility of school officials and buoyed by the spirit of Black Power and the expanded support of the federal government, activists at the King and Timilty pushed for the creation of community governing councils to control the King and Timilty Schools. Both schools had struggled with low student achievement and unrest for many years, and activists and parents believed that community governance offered a solution. The protests at the King and Timilty School highlight many of the key shifts of the movement in this period including the growing influence of cultural nationalism in black educational politics, the expanded partnership between the Boston movement and the federal government, and the movement's internal tensions.

Parents were the catalyst for the movements at the King and Timilty Schools much as they had been for various protest campaigns since the 1940s. Parents at both schools were very concerned with the poor educational conditions at their schools including the lack of school supplies and athletic equipment, high rate of teacher turnover and proportion of long-term substitutes, outdated educational materials, and the poor physical condition of the school. Data gathered by the NAACP Education Committee and the Boston Public Schools showed that reading and math scores for King and Timilty students were consistently far below the system-wide average—and lower than the scores

[285] The Campbell (King) School was located at 77 Lawrence Avenue in Dorchester, in the same neighborhood as many other majority black schools with a history of parental activism, civil rights organizations like Shaw House, Operation Exodus, and Freedom House, and countless grassroots education campaigns in this period. The Timilty School was located at 205 Roxbury Street in Lower Roxbury Street.

for other predominantly Black schools. Parents also pointed to the low acceptance rate of their students into the city's examination schools. [286]

Parents turned first to established channels of educational reform, but quickly encountered fierce resistance from school officials to community-initiated change. During the 1964-1965 school year King Teacher Alan Clarke worked closely with the school council to design curricular reforms and was hopeful they would have a positive impact. However, administrators refused to approve the new courses and Clarke resigned shortly afterwards. School activists tried again to implement curricular reforms during the 1965-1966 school year when they enlisted the support of the Educational Development Center in the development of a Black history course. Although students responded enthusiastically to the course, school administrators removed it from the curriculum after a year on the grounds that it was "too controversial."[287]

Building tensions between the community and school officials exploded into open conflict at the graduation ceremony for the King School on June 16, 1966. Chaos broke out at the ceremony when Louise Day Hicks arrived to deliver the graduation speech, despite warnings from community leaders not to attend. Just moments after Hicks took the stage, SCLC activist Reverend Virgil Wood burst onto the stage, pointed at Hicks and shouted, "Mr. Principal, would you have invited Hitler into a synagogue? We don't want that woman here. She is the Hitler of Boston. We don't want you Mrs. Hicks. We don't need you here. You want to have a political path on the backs of our dear children. Well we won't let you do it." The audience began to chant "Go Home," and "Get her out." King Principal Francis Harrington stepped on to the stage and urged Reverend Wood to

[286] "Statement for Parents: Some History on the Present Conditions of Education at the M.L. King School," New Urban League, 1967, Box 38, Folder 1305, FH, Northeastern.
[287] Ibid, 2.

stop his protest and leave the school. Woods refused to comply, telling the audience, 'The principal of this school—who doesn't live in this community—just asked me to leave. Who should he asked to leave?" The audience replied, "Mrs. Hicks!" Several police officers attempted to remove Woods and a scuffle broke out when Woods resisted. After Woods made his way back onto the stage African American Representative Royal L. Bolling interceded and convinced Woods to vacate the school on the condition that Hicks would also leave.[288] Although this marked the end of the immediate conflict, Woods continued to articulate a vision of direct community control in education after the graduation. In an editorial in the *Banner* he wrote, "Our goal must be to gain power—power for the whole community. Today any method of working with the community which short-circuits the development of community power is inadequate, illegitimate and unacceptable."[289]

School officials' decision to send Hicks to speak at the graduation sent a clear message that collaboration was impossible. Parents immediately took steps towards claiming independent control of their schools. On June 22, community activists in support of Woods' protest held a "Freedom Graduation" at St. Hugh's Catholic Church in Roxbury. A number of activists from the community participated including Ellen Jackson, Reverend Vernon Carter, Reverend Virgil Wood and Boston Celtics star and activist Bill Russell.[290]

With the continued support of Exodus and Jackson, parents at the King School joined with parents of the Timilty School to form the King-Timilty Coalition.[291] The

[288] "What was Wrong at Graduation?" *Bay State Banner*, 25 June 1966.
[289] "Reverend Wood Replies," *Bay State Banner*, 25 June 1965.
[290] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 232.
[291] New Urban League, "Statement for Parents," Box 38, Folder 1305," FH, Northeastern.

King-Timilty Coalition received $500,000 in federal funds through Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provided funding to community-governed educational programming for economically disadvantaged youth. The Title III grant provided the funding to build a library in the school, hire parents as classroom aides and in organizational leadership positions, and a series of conferences. This funding provided an enormous political and financial boost to parents' efforts to claim administrative control of the schools.[292]

Building on the coalition and bolstered by their newfound financial support, King-Timilty parents took another step towards total community governance with the creation of the King-Timilty School Cabinet in the fall of 1967. The sixteen person cabinet, made up of parents, teachers, and community residents, announced that it would assume control of both schools on a temporary basis in the wake of recent disorder among students. The Cabinet drafted a plan for the school designed to reduce student unrest, increase student engagement, and improve educational performance guided by the philosophy that "children learn best when they are working in areas that provoke their interest."[293]

However, within just two days, the Boston School Committee stepped in to prevent the cabinet's attempted takeover barring Cabinet members from school grounds. Both Cabinet parents and students expressed their outrage over the decision. Cabinet leaders wrote, "The School Committee has attempted to divide parents from interested or concerned community residents by barring from school only the community residents on the cabinet." Students announced their refusal to accept "business as usual," at the

[292] Interview with Queen Powell, CHPAOH, UMB; "Community Demands Black Principals," *Bay State Banner*, August 1968; New Urban League, "Statement for Parents," Box 38, Folder 1305," FH, Northeastern.
[293] "Statement for Parents," Box 38, Folder 1305," FH, Northeastern.

schools and the "outmoded and irrelevant educational approaches currently being forced on them by the school department."[294]

The Cabinet responded by asserting its position as the "legitimate body responsible for the administration of the school." They demanded a number of major changes including the appointment of black principals at both schools, the provision of every student with a tutor, and educational support services for "over-age" students to help them graduate.[295]

Activists at the King and Timilty, much like their counterparts at the Gibson School, were particularly focused on the appointment of a black principal. A contentious battle unfolded over the selection of new principals for the schools when the School Committee announced the appointment of two white men—John J. Kelly and Cornelius Cronin to the King and Timilty Schools respectively. Activists from Operation Exodus, the CEC, and the Educational Development Center voiced their opposition to the appointment of Kelly and Cronin. They wrote, "We wish to express our extreme indignation and outrage in regard to the racist decision of the school committee to appoint new white principals to the King and Timilty schools."[296] Community residents also voiced their support for the appointment of black leaders. Charles Dickerson said, "It would give inspiration to the kids coming up. It will be good for them to see a black leader day by day," and Mr. Walter Green said "Black principals would understand the black kids better than any white man could."[297] In the fall of 1968 activists achieved their

[294] Ibid., 3.
[295] Ibid., 3.
[296] "Community Demands Black Principals," *Bay State Banner*, 1 August 1968.
[297] Roving camera on King and Timilty Principals, *Bay State Banner*, 22 August 1968.

goal when the School Committee appointed an African American man, John Joyce, as acting principal of the King School.

However, continued challenges at the King School highlights the complicated, and sometimes tense, internal political dynamics of the movement. Despite high hopes that greater community control and black leadership would solve the long-standing educational problems at the King, student unrest increased during the 1968-1969 school year. In late October and early November physical conflicts amongst students and between students and the administration regarding disciplinary issues had become so frequent that the school was forced to shut down temporarily. The school was also plagued by extremely high teacher-turnover rates.[298] In the face of mounting criticism from school officials, students, and parents Principal Joyce pointed the finger of blame at parents. In an interview with the *Banner* on November 5, 1968 Joyce said, "There is a seeming lack of parental interest in what goes on here. This can, perhaps, be explained by social and economic conditions in some sections of the black community. Those parents who are interested have withdrawn their children from the school rather than fight for improvement. This has stripped the school of some of its best brain power."[299] Joyce resigned as Principal before the end of the week—replaced by Louis Baltangia. Likewise, the New Urban League said, "While none of these conditions, nor the low educational level of the school are the fault of the parents or students, it is the responsibility of parents and students to work to correct these ills. It is important that parents participate in

[298] "King Principal Faces Problems," *Bay State Banner,* 5 November 1968.
[299] "King School to Reopen this Week," *Bay State Banner*, 21 November 1968.

and follow the leadership of the cabinet, for black people have an unfortunate history of failing to following their own black leaders."[300]

In the face of these challenges activists' continued to invest in expanded community governing power as the key to turning around the King and Timilty. On October 31, 1967 cabinet members announced the appointment of Gerald Hill as director of a newly created King-Timilty Advisory Council. Hill had deep roots in Boston's black community as a graduate of the Boston Public Schools, direct ties to the King as a former teacher, and experience in community organizing. The Council functioned in much the same way as the King-Timilty Coalition and Cabinet with a focus on reforming curriculum, easing student unrest, and improving academic outcomes through a community-centered governing model. Despite this, student unrest at the King continued, forcing the school to close for a week starting on November 14. Based on the struggles of previous principals to control the school, activists concluded that the King could not be successfully administered by any one individual and created the King School Cabinet as the school's governing body. Like its predecessors, the Cabinet was made up of teacher, student, and community representatives.[301] The Cabinet never succeeded in claiming control of the school because the School Committee, which retained ultimate power over the school as long as it was within the BPS, refused to grant permission for the plan. Ultimately, it proved very difficult to find a solution to the challenges at the King and

[300] "Statement for Parents," 5-6.
[301] "King School to Have Cabinet Administration," *Bay State Banner*; "King School to Reopen this Week," *Bay State Banner*, 21 November 1968.

Timilty Schools.[302] The King particularly was plagued by student unrest, low academic achievement, and unstable leadership through the early 1970s.[303]

Black Students on the Move

From the late 1960s through the early 1970s African American students from across the city further shaped the movement by pursuing their right to control their schools. Although black youth had played a critical role in the movement since its origins, protests of this period were marked by an unprecedented intensity of student activism, the citywide coordination of their protests, and the emphasis on black students' directly shaping educational practice. Students pushed for the addition of black studies courses, hiring more black staff and faculty, right to wear traditional African clothing on campus, and revision of school disciplinary codes. While the specific goals of the protests evolved over time, student activists retained a laser-like focus on transforming the power structure underlying the school system to grant real decision-making power to students.

The political engine and institutional base for student protests were a series of black student groups and unions. Beginning in 1968, these groups evolved from organizations based within a single high school, such as the Black Student Union at English High School, to the formation of the Black Students Federation—a city-wide coalition of student activists operating independently from the Boston Public School system. These organizations, although loosely knit, fostered the development of strong

[302] "King School to Reopen this Week," *Bay State Banner*, 21 November 1968.
[303] "In the News: King School," *Bay State Banner*, 17 February 1972; "King School Problems Remain Unsolved," *Bay State Banner*, 19 March 1972. In the early 1970s, community activists and black educators attempted to enlist the aid the Model Cities Program to turn around the King School, but their application for funded was stalled and there was minimal parental support for the initiative. Even when the Model Cities program was implemented at King in March, 1972, it struggled to effect change. Leaders cited the lack of strong parental involvement but parents rejected these characterizations, pointed to student disciplinary issues and poor leadership.

personal and political ties among youth activists and ultimately a citywide network of black youth activists.

Black student activists drew heavily upon the political foundations which had been laid in previous decades. Although described by the *Banner* as "a new dimension of leadership" student protest of this period built upon a strong foundation of youth political involvement prior to the late-1960s.[304] The Freedom schools were particularly critical in promoting the development of an independent youth movement in that they gave thousands of black youth their first formal taste of educational activism and connected black students citywide. Thousands of black youth gained entrée to the movement and formed bonds with fellow students through formal programs and organizations like Operation Exodus, Freedom House, Shaw House, Norfolk House, the Boys Club of Roxbury, and St. Mark's Social Center. Student activists of this period relied on time-tested protest strategies such as the school boycott, institutional formation, and the centering of personal experiences and commitment in movement-making. Personal experiences were critical in that many students joined this fight because of their own incredibly painful encounters with racism in the schools.

Yet student activism also took new directions. Black student protest of this period was heavily influenced by the emergence of a national Black Power movement—particularly its emphasis on racial pride and political and cultural self-determination. This wave of black student activism also highlighted an important shift in the internal power dynamics of the broader black education movement in that youth became the drivers of political action while older activists were more likely to play a supporting role.

[304] *Bay State Banner*, "Lessons to be Learned," 3 October 1968.

Black student activism in Boston was closely tied to the rising tide of black youth activism in high schools and college campuses across the country during the 1960s inspired by the emerging Black Power movement. On college campuses across the country black students demanded a radical reconstruction of their educational experience through the creation of Black Studies programs and black student groups. The early 1960s also give birth to an explosion of civil rights activism among black youth in high schools and even elementary schools across the country. Not only did black youth contribute to the movement through organizations like SNCC, but also through freedom schools which were popping up across the country in the mid-1960s and countless grassroots campaigns led by students within school walls. Although the passage of national civil rights legislation such as the Civil Rights Act was monumentally important, it was thanks to the efforts of thousands of grassroots freedom fighters, like the black student activists in Boston that these changes became a lived reality.

These events and political climate set the stage for an outburst of black student protest at English High School, an all-boys school and the nation's oldest public high school, in the fall of 1968. The fact that this movement began at English High was not coincidental, rather student unrest was driven by rapid and significant demographic changes at the school in this period. From 1967 to 1972 the percentage of black students at English High increased from nineteen to eighty-one percent because of the School Committee's alteration of student feeder patterns.[305] Despite these rapid shifts in the

[305] These actions on the part of the School Committee were a blatant violation of the Racial Imbalance Act which prohibited school officials from taking affirmative action which increased "racial imbalance." Thanks to actions like this, the number of racially segregated schools in the system increased, rather than decreased in the period from 1965 to 1972.

student body, the school continued to employ just three Black teachers—highlighting the lack of power held by blacks in the school and driving students to demand change.[306]

In early September English High senior Glen Grayson and a group of approximately thirty other Black students began meeting to discuss their discontent with the lack of black faculty and staff, the school's mandatory dress code, and the absence of Black history courses. As a public protest, Grayson and his classmates wore dashikis rather than their school uniform to school on September 19, 1968. News of their attire spread like wild fire through school that morning and within hours Headmaster Joseph Malone had suspended the two young men. Within hours of their suspension African American students at English High formed a Black Student Union which became the institutional base for students' protests.

The following morning students and community activists gathered for a protest rally in front of English High School where BSU activists presented Headmaster Malone with a list of demands which reflected the local movements' growing emphasis on racial pride, solidarity, and autonomy. In addition to the reinstatement of Grayson and his co-protestor, the BSU called for the right to wear traditional African clothing, a formal apology from Headmaster Malone to the black student body for "the insult of such an act, which in essence denounced their right to be proud of their heritage, culture, and black identity." Activists also called for official school recognition of "Black Student Liberation Day" and the creation of a review board made up of school officials and BSU representatives to evaluate current school regulations which were, in students' words, "a direct insult to the Black man. If the students of English High are men, we expect to be

[306] Michael T. Tierney, *Fire at the Door: The Black Student Union Movement at Boston English High School, 1968-1971* (William Monroe Trotter Institute, University of Massachusetts Boston, 1987), 10. Black faculty at English High included two full-time teachers and one part-time music teacher.

treated as such."[307] Students' demands for curricular revisions also demonstrated a shift towards a more racially-conscious educational model. Denis Irving, President Boston Latin Afro-American Society told the *Bay State Banner*, "We would like the school system to relate to us and be relevant to us. We'd like courses in black history and Swahili, rather than Latin, French and German. Another Black student, Stewart Thompson, said, "We want to be educated. Not schooled to be middle class white kids, confident and satisfied to know that all we ever were, were slaves."[308]

The community expressed significant support for the students' stance regarding the dress code, signaling a broader shift in racial cultural politics. Mrs. Patricia Callender of the Columbia Point Housing Project in Dorchester told the *Banner* that she supported the students' demands for the right to wear Dashikis "because it shows that the new ideal of beauty is shown." Mrs. Grace Smith echoed Callender's sentiment saying, "I see nothing wrong with the new conception of wearing African attire. America is supposed to have freedom of speech, so what about wearing clothes?"[309] Mr. Thomas Johnson of Roxbury said, "To wear a tie or not to wear a tie cannot possibly have the same emotional significance for a white student as to wear a dashiki or not to wear a dashiki has for the black students."[310]

When Headmaster Malone refused to meet with student protestors personally to discuss their demands, students had no choice but to call upon the support of older activists, including former Freedom School leader Reverend Breeden to negotiate on their behalf. And yet, even with the support of a seasoned activist such as Reverend Breeden,

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[307] Ibid., 12.
[308] "Roving camera on Black youth revolt", *Bay State Banner*, 3 October 1968.
[309] "Roving camera on Black student dress", *Bay State Banner*, 26 September 1968.
[310] "Roving camera on Black youth revolt", *Bay State Banner*, 3 October 1968.

black youth faced significant opposition from school administrators in their efforts to influence school policy. After several hours of negotiations with Reverend Breeden, Headmaster Malone conceded to student demands for the right to wear dashikis to school and for official recognition of the Black Student Union but refused to issue an apology.[311] However, this apparent solution unraveled within days. The following Monday, September 23, Associate Superintendent Louise Welch assumed control of English High and reversed Headmaster Malone's decision to recognize the Black Student Union. In protest of Sullivan's actions, 100 Black and 200 white students gathered in protest outside English High the next morning and violent protests broke out in eight other schools before the end of the day.

In the face of the failure of a negotiated settlement, a group of adult community activists stepped in to support the students. On September 25 the newly formed Roxbury Leadership Group, a coalition body of community groups, called a press conference in which Mel King urged students to boycott the Boston Public Schools. The group expressed its support for "the attempts of black high school students in Boston to wear African dress and to organize black student groups in the public schools." Later that day the Leadership Group held a rally in Franklin Park in Dorchester to build support for the proposed boycott at which Glen Grayson told the crowd, "We want black power in the schools and we can do this by forming a Black student union."[312]

At its peak on September 27 just over 6,000 students stayed out of the city's high schools. The boycott was called off on October 1 when headmasters' citywide agreed to students' demands to wear "ethnic dress" to school. School officials skirted the issue of

[311] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 13.
[312] Ibid.

the recognition of the Black Student Union however, stating that the decision would have to be made by higher-ranking school administrators at an undetermined point in the future. When students returned to school on October 2 they did so with the support of a newly created 200 member Black Parent Union. After they returned to school, Grayson and other student activists continued to fight for administrative recognition for the Black Student Union, but administrators never ceded to this demand. The momentum of the student protest declined somewhat after many of the student activists graduated in the spring of 1969.[313]

Students took up the issue again during the following school year. In December, 1969, just prior to the winter holiday, a group of Black students at English High met with Headmaster James Dailey to press again for a Black Student Union. Dailey agreed to recognize the Afro-American Society as an official student group, but only on the condition that they did not exclude interested white students.

Black students very reluctantly accepted Dailey's stipulation. Their hesitancy to accept white students into the newly formed Afro-American Society speaks to a shift in the nature of black politics in the late 1960s in its increasing wariness of interracial organizing and the embrace of a more racially separatist model of civil rights politics. The debates among the Afro-American Society mirror those unfolding nationally, as SNCC and CORE ejected its white members in 1966. Group leader Eddie Crowder said, "We will give it a try and see what happens and once [and] for all we will know if the so-

[313] Ibid.,16-7.

called black militants are right that you let 'whitey' in and you be worse off than you were before you started."[314]

The Afro-American Society focused on promoting racial pride and unity among black students and acting and articulating and promoting the interests of black students. Their statement of purpose declared their intention to "bring black students together in Brotherhood where we can define and express our cultural values" and "act as a sanctuary for black students." The Society's compiled a recommended reading list focused on the history of the African Diaspora which included Floyd McCissick's *Three Fourths a Man* and John Hope Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom*. The Society newsletter included regular columns on black history such as an article titled, "Brother Marcus Garvey, the Father of Black Nationalism."

The Afro-American Society focused on this work, apparently without incident until disciplinary action against black students sparked another outburst of student protest. On April 8, 1970 Principal James Dailey suspended eleven African American students—all of whom were members of the Afro-American Society—for inviting an "un-authorized" speaker to the school to present to the Society. Students asserted that Dailey used the issue of the authorization as a pretense to repress black student political activity pointing to the fact that Dailey had not taken issue with previous invited speakers—most of whom were college representatives and were also not officially authorized. This student speaker however, was an open advocate of black power and black student organizing.[315]

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[314] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 20. The previous fall white students at English High had threatened to form an "Anglo Saxon Society" in response to the creation of the Black Student Union, although this group was never actually formed.
[315] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 21.

Seeing no possibilities for cooperation with school administrators, more than 500 black students walked out of classes at English High the next day, April 9. Rather than attending classes, 400 white and black students marched from English to Northeastern University where they held a several hours-long meeting from which white march participants were barred. The meeting proved a powerful spark for the student strike moving forward. The following week only 400 of English High's 1,100 students attended classes. Student protests also broke out at Jamaica Plain High School in support of the movement at English forcing the temporary closure of the school.[316]

Like their predecessors, student protestors demanded the reinstatement of suspended students and called for the revision of school policy with the abolition of the rule requiring pre-authorizing of "outside" speakers. The issue of black student organizations figured centrally in the protests, much as it had for activist in 1968, although in this wave of the movement it was not the recognition of the organization which was at stake but rather its political independence. Protestors publicly asserted their claims that English High administrators sought to weaken the Afro-American Society through disciplinary action such as the recent suspensions.

Similar to the student protests of 1968, activists faced stringent, although uneven, opposition from school officials. High-ranking school officials, much as they had in the past, took a hard line position issuing an official statement that any disruptive students "shall be dealt with severely in the way prescribed in the Code of Discipline" and called for an expansion of headmasters' disciplinary authority by granting them the power to expel, rather than suspend students. English High administrators took a slightly more cooperative stance agreeing to demands to reinstate the suspended students but declining

[316] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 344-344a; Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 21-2.

to consider the issue of outside speakers. By the time the strikes subsided in the wake of the April vacation, students had negotiated the reinstatement of the students and blocked the School Committee's efforts to expand the disciplinary power of headmasters, but were unable to pressure school officials to alter school policy regarding speaker permissions.[317]

The challenges students faced in shaping school policy and withstanding the pressures of high-ranking school administrators in the fall of 1968 and winter of 1969 demonstrated their need for a longer term movement and a stronger institutional base in order to implement systemic change. The result was the formation of the Black Student Federation (also known as the Black Student Union)—a city-wide coalition of black student activists. It emerged slowly and informally beginning in 1969 under the leadership of former Boston Trade High School student Leon Rock and a small group of other students including Stephen Sutton, Anthony Banks, and Cheryl Borden.[318] Rock spent his formative years in Roxbury and attended some of the city's most infamously segregated and racially discriminatory schools during the late 1950s and 1960s, experiences which he credits with sparking his political radicalism at a very early age. Rock recounts the horrific conditions at the Garrison and Sarah J. Baker Elementary and Dearborn Middle Schools in Roxbury including corporal punishment, outdated school materials, poor instruction, the absence of black teachers, and a lack of discussion of any aspect of black history.[319] In spite of these horrific conditions, several role models played

[317] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 22.
[318] Cheryl Borden, interview with author, May 23, 2014 (hereafter: "Borden interview").
[319] Rock's experiences with corporal punishment were not unique to students in the 1950s and 1960s as corporal punishment was widespread in the Boston Public Schools. He describes the use of a rattan soaked in vinegar to discipline youth, particularly by white teachers against black youth, for "acting out." Leon Rock, interview with author, May 14, 2014 (hereafter: "Rock interview").

a critical role in shaping his sense of self and political consciousness, the most important of which were his mother and later, longtime activist Mel King. Black community institutions including St. Mark's Social Center, the Boys Club of Roxbury, and the church also provided a model of community organizing and racial uplift work.[320]

However, it was Rock's experience at Boston Trade High School for Boys in Roxbury which was the turning point in his political career as a young man. Although he enrolled at Boston Trade, a technical and vocational school, with high hopes Rock was dismayed to find that a deep racism pervaded the school, apparent in the "prison-like mentality" of the schools' teachers. The lessons Rock had learned from his mother and other community mentors about racial pride and self-determination, his experiences with discrimination in elementary and middle school, and the spirit of Black Power combined to drive Rock to confront racism at Boston Trade head on—a moment which changed the course of his young life. It was a regular school day in 1968 and Rock was attending his class in sheet metal work. He asked his teacher a question to which his teacher responded by calling Rock an "ink spot." When the teacher repeated the slur, Rock grabbed his teacher by the collar and ripped his shirt. Rock points to the broader climate of black politics in this period as a powerful force driving his decision to challenge his teacher's actions. He said, "This is just after all the turmoil with Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, Black Power, Black Panthers coming into existence, 'Say it Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud', all of that is going on and this is all the stuff that's spinning through my head." After the incident, Rock fled from the classroom terrified of the consequences.

[320] Rock credits his mother as a role model of racial self-determination and in impressing upon him and his siblings the importance of education and asserting one's right to a quality and equal education. He recounts a specific incident in which she confronted the principal of the Garrison School for forcing Rock and his sister to scrub chalk off the playground. Rock interview.

Within hours he was arrested and placed in jail overnight on charges of assault and battery. Although the charges were later dropped, Rock never returned to Trade.[321]

These experiences and the political energy of the broader black freedom movement drew Rock into full-time community organizing work after leaving Trade. In 1968, Rock joined the Boston Black United Front (BUF)—an organization founded in the wake of Dr. King's assassination which called for black control of all businesses and institutions operating within the black community. The BUF was an umbrella organization which brought together disparate segments of the Black community, ranging from the politically progressive to the radical and included the Black Panther Party, the New Urban League, CORE, Operation Exodus, METCO, and NAACP. The Black United Front, through its foundation, received hundreds of thousands in dollars of funds from black organizations and liberal white foundations which they distributed to social service agencies and community organizations in the black community. It specifically called for direct black community control in education including demands for the renaming of the Campbell Junior High School as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School; that all schools located within black communities should have entirely black staff and administration and that the black community should exercise total control over curricular development and human resources in these schools.[322]

Rock's experiences with the Black United Front played a key role in his political maturation providing him with knowledge about "how to involve people in the process of decision-making," and "make sure that people's voices were heard."[323]

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[321] Ibid.
[322] Black United Front Records, Roxbury Community College Library Special Collections.
[323] Rock interview.

Rock brought this skill set to the black student movement, motivated by both his personal experiences in the Boston Public Schools and a desire to prevent other black youth from having similarly traumatic experiences in the schools. Looking around the black community he saw that many of his peers shared his experience of being forced out of the Boston Public Schools when they stood up against the status quo. He remembers telling fellow students, "We need to really organize students because this is crazy! I dropped out of school, you dropped out of school, we're all dropouts! They forced us out and they forced out so many other black students. We've gotta do something!"[324]

With this call to action, the Federation began its campaign to organize black students citywide. Beginning in 1969 a group of several dozen black students had begun meeting informally to discuss the issues faced by black students. In late 1970 they launched a concerted effort to organizing black students at high schools across the city. Schools like English High School had a strong base of black student politics already in place, whereas other schools formed black student groups for the first time at the urging of the Federation.

The Federation developed slowly and adopted a purposefully loose-knit organizational structure because of students' fears that they would be targeted by the FBI like other black radical organizations of the period. In the earliest stage of the Federation's organization a group of black college students played a leadership role in the Federation, but after 1969 there was a conscious decision to limit involvement to black high school students. The Federation also tried to hide the identity of the leaders of the

[324] Ibid.

organization, with the exception of some figures like Rock who played a very public role, in an effort to avoid political persecution.[325]

The Federation developed with the support of several key community organizations and leaders including the Black United Front, the Bridge Fund and the Joint Center for Urban Change.[326] Adult activists in the community were largely supportive of the student movement, although not uniformly so. Mel King played a particularly supportive and hands-on role in the Federation as the first adult activist to support the Federation to offer his unequivocal political support for their movement. King invited students to the New Urban League to discuss the strategy and philosophy of their movement including how to expand their movement beyond the boycott and secure the support of the NAACP, which was slower to offer their support.[327] Other activists and community organizations including Ellen Jackson, Elma Lewis, Melnea Cass, Muriel and Otto Snowden, and community organizer Chuck Turner also lent their support to the student protestors. Once the boycott was under way a number of community organizations including Freedom House, Urban League, the United South End Settlements, and the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts also lent their support—opening up their institutions for striking students to study and meet as informal "freedom schools." Some members of the black community, including the Black Educator's Alliance of

[325] Rock interview. Several black students from Brandeis University played particularly important leadership roles in the Federation in this early period. Black students from a number of other area colleges and universities also participated including Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern, Boston State College (which later merged with the University of Massachusetts Boston), and University of Massachusetts.

[326] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 25; King, *Chain of Change*, 121.The Bridge Fund was a program created in 1965 which placed black students in area parochial and private schools rather than the Boston Public Schools. It expanded to include a number of other educational advocacy programs including tutoring services. The Joint Center for Urban Change was a partnership between Boston College and the Urban League created to analyze address challenges of urban life. Black activists involved in the group included Mel King and Bryant Rollins. The Federation likely also had the support of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute in this period.

[327] Rock interview.

Massachusetts, were not so eager to publicly pledge their support to the Federation immediately, but ultimately through long conversations with the students, came to endorse their movement.

On January 22, 1971 conflicts broke out between black student organizers and school officials at English High School, once more in response to disciplinary action by school leaders. English High administrators suspended five Black students on charges that they had damaged school property when they allegedly broke into the locker of a high school cafeteria worker. Black students at English High responded quickly with a 200-person occupation of the auditorium, followed by a walkout. The same day, students at Dorchester High School staged a sit-in in the wake of an alleged incident in which a white teacher hit a black student. Within days 300 black and 250 white students also walked out of Brighton High School. Sustained black student protests at English forced school administrators to close English for the next five days.[328]

By the time this recent wave of protests broke out the Federation was firmly established, representing eleven black students groups citywide, and had a clear spokesperson in Leon Rock. From this position, the Federation played a critical role in enabling the movement to develop quickly and with a clear direction in 1971. In the wake of the protests at English, Dorchester, and Brighton High Federation leaders turned to a time-tested technique, the school boycott, as a strategy to pressure school officials to address black students' concerns, calling for all black students and supportive whites to boycott the BPS beginning on February 4. The Federation oversaw the creation of a Citywide Coordinating Strike Committee made up of representatives of affiliated black

[328] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 348; Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 24. Black students at Brighton High School occupied their school cafeteria in protest and support of the events at English High.

student union groups affiliated to direct the boycott. To kick off the boycott the Federation and Coordinating Committee held a rally at English High and protest march on February 4. 600 students marched from the rally to Northeastern University, where they met to discuss strategy in space provided to them by the university's Afro-American Institute. Students continued to meet to discuss strategy, facilitated by the Federation and Strike Committee, for the remainder of the week. Thanks to the efforts of the Federation and the Strike Committee, more than 2,500 students stayed out of the Boston Public Schools on February 5. The following week students still boycotting their regular schools met at the New School for Children to attend classes in African American history and culture. The action at English High motivated walk-outs at other high schools including Hyde Park where a group of 300 Black students staged a spontaneous walk-out.

Attempting to build off the momentum of the boycott, the Federation presented their demands to school officials. Unlike previous demands which sought changes at individual schools, the Federation called for these changes to be implemented system wide. Their demands included the hiring of "more qualified" black faculty and staff (including guidance counselors), an end to the harassment of Black students by white students and school staff, the creation of Black studies courses, amnesty for striking students, and "an evaluation of the Boston school system by the Bridge fund." While the demands related to black studies courses and black faculty had been present during previous boycotts, the call for oversight by a community organization such as the Bridge Fund highlights an important evolution of students' activism in their focus on securing independent school governing for the black community and students.[329]

[329] Ibid., 29. By this time, the Bridge Fund had expanded to become an umbrella group of at least fifteen community groups working in the field of education and racial justice.

School administrators followed a similar pattern in their response to student activism as they had in 1968 and 1969, likely believing that they had succeeded in stamping out activism in previous school years and could do so again. English High administrators' took up a stance that appeared at once cooperative and hostile. They suggested that the school switch to an "open-campus" plan and the creation of a council made up of student, community, parent, and faculty representatives. This council, the authority of which remained undefined, was a far cry from students' calls for oversight by the Bridge Fund. Moreover, these recommendations only specifically addressed one of the students' demands head on—suggesting a hiring goal of a fifty percent black faculty. Lastly, administrators asked students to sign a statement prior to returning to school agreeing to "abide by the rules and regulations of the school" and pledging their understanding that they would be removed from school "if his conduct disrupts the education of others."[330] BPS authorities also followed a similar pattern—taking up an increasingly hostile stance in an effort to stamp out the boycott. The School Committee ordered the placement of police in the schools and, in a direct reference to the formation of black student groups, prohibited racially-specific student groups. In addition, they expelled two black student protestors at English High students and called for the State District Attorney to investigate Leon Rock for charges of truancy.

Whereas school and system administrators had success with these tactics in the past, the student movement had become much more resilient by this time thanks in large part to the Federation and was not so easily suppressed. In the face of English administrators' recommendations and the actions of the School Committee, Federation leaders called on students to continue their boycott until the School Committee removed police and school

[330] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 29.

officials met *all* of their demands. Students responded with a flurry of action. During the week of February 11, 1971 close to fifty percent of Black junior and senior high school students stayed out of school.[331] On March 1, a spate of spontaneous student walk-outs occurred including at Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park, and Dorchester High School where hundreds of students boycotted classes. The tumultuous day concluded with a fire at English High School.[332]

In the face of the escalation of student protests, the School Committee announced a public hearing, to which students were invited, to discuss the school boycott and discuss potential resolutions to the conflict. Any hopes that this hearing might produce a resolution were dashed, when the Committee members banned twenty student activists from the meeting on the grounds that they were truants. The School Committee members did however, listen to statements South Boston High School students, one of the few high schools not involved in the boycott, who renounced the actions of the student protestors. Speaking at the hearing, Rock told the School Committee that in order to end the boycott, school officials had to make concrete changes in the schools including hiring more black teachers and guidance counselors and providing black schools with up to date books and educational materials, and address the issue of the high number of black student drop outs.[333] If they were not able to address these issues, students would continue the boycott indefinitely.

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[331] "Black Students, School Department Meet on Grievances," *Bay State Banner*, 11 February 1971.
[332] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 30. Only 130 of 700 students attended classes that day at Jamaica Plain High School. At Hyde Park High School, white and Black students led a 600 student walk-out along with 300 students at Dorchester High.
[333] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 30; *Bay State Banner*, "NAACP Blasts School Committee," 11 March 1971; Rock interview.

The unproductive School Committee hearing prompted elder leaders in the movement to take a more active role in the now two-month-long conflict. In early March, student activists agreed to have State Representatives Royal L. Bolling and Carter Kimbrel act as their representatives in formal negotiations with the Boston School Committee. During negotiations the Committee assured Bolling and Kimbrel that they would hire more Black staff, crack down on harassment of Black students by white students and staff, and offer more Black studies courses, and that striking students would have amnesty when they returned to school.[334]

This progress quickly dissipated in the days after the negotiations when the Committee rejected a request from students and community leaders for a meeting to discuss the details of these school reforms. School committee members' refusal to meet to speak directly with community people incensed student and community activists because it so clearly conveyed their contempt towards black Bostonians and their unwillingness to share educational governing power.[335] When the committee denied several subsequent requests by community leaders and student activists to come to Roxbury to meet, students announced their intention to continue the strike indefinitely.[336]

On April 28, the majority of the School Committee finally agreed to meet with Black activists in Roxbury to discuss the future of the schools, but this meeting too proved to be a disappointment. Despite having previously agreed to each of student demands, Committee members now refused to vote to implement these changes. The

[334] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 351; Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 31.
[335] *Bay State Banner*, "School Committee Invited to Roxbury," 18 March 1971; *Bay State Banner*, "Police Patrol Troubled Schools," 25 March, 1971; "'Change' Demands School Hearing," *Bay State Banner*, 1 April 1 1971.
[336] Tierney, *Fire at the Door*, 31.

meeting ended without a resolution and activists reasserted their intention to continue the boycott as long as necessary.

Although students announced their intentions to continue their protests the momentum of the boycott declined as the end of the school year approached and greater numbers of students, especially graduating seniors, were eager to get back to school. Additionally, many parents, concerned about the impact of the boycott on their children's education, urged students to return to class. The School Committee, for their part, responded to students' demands by withdrawing police from the schools and largely abided by their informal agreement not to punish striking students when they returned to class.

Student leaders understood and described their protest as part of the longer arc of Boston's black education movement and the national black freedom movement. Student movement leader Anthony Banks told school officials, "We realize that many of our lives will be made harder because we are fighting for the same things our parents fought for over 10 years ago right here in Boston, but we will not bow down to the threats from the Mayor or the School Committee…The die is cast."[337] Likewise, looking back on the movement Rock said, "We were doing essentially the same thing that happened five years prior at the sit-ins at the Woolworth's counters in Greensboro. We were just doing it our style in Boston."[338]

Their organizing in the late 1960s proved an enormously valuable learning experience for youth activists and the movement more broadly and brought about substantive educational changes, many of which were not fully apparent until several

[337] *Bay State Banner,* "'Change' Demands School Hearing," April 1, 1971, page 1, 20.
[338] Rock interview.

years later. It resulted in the creation of a citywide network of black youth activists and an independent political base in the Black Student Federation. Rock also credits the student movement with calling public attention to the issue of the extremely low numbers of black teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators in the Boston Public Schools and forcing the NAACP to include the issue of racially discriminatory hiring and assignment of teachers in *Morgan v Hennigan*. Rock served on the board of the Boston NAACP from 1971 to 1972, during which time he personally urged the NAACP leadership to address the issue of black faculty and staff in its suit. He also credits student activists' demands regarding the hiring of black faculty with the creation of the "one-for-one" hiring policy in both the Boston Police and Fire Departments so that the racial composition of the BPD and BFD reflected that of the general population.[339]

Through the formation of organizations like the Boardman Parents Group and Operation Exodus, independent alternative schools, struggles over the name of the new Humboldt Avenue School, and the governing structures at the King and Timilty activists' experimented with new methods in pursuit of their goal of educational self-determination. These ventures demonstrated the value of administrative and political autonomy at the same time that they highlighted the financial and political challenges that they presented—lessons which would prove enormously useful in the years to come.

[339] Rock interview.

Chapter Four: "We couldn't count on anybody else to do it": Activism in the Era of Desegregation 1972-1977

"Let no one think that this fight began here, today. It began many years ago with many people who are present here today, in the vanguard of that endless army of people who still believe in the brotherhood of man."

Jack Robinson, President Boston Branch NAACP, 1972[340]

This chapter examines the efforts of a coalition of community activists and racial justice institutions to ensure educational equity, empowerment, and safety for black Bostonians during the period of court-ordered desegregation from 1972 to 1977. Far from sitting back and waiting for the courts to shape their fate, activists took a proactive role in asserting the interests of their children and communities through the formation of institutions and on-the-ground community programming. While many accounts of this period in Boston's history focus on white resistance to school desegregation and accompanying violence, little scholarship has examined the massive effort launched by black Bostonians to protect their children and shape the city's politics and its schools.

Institutions including Freedom House, Roxbury Multi-Service Center, Lena Park Development Center, and the Clarendon Street YMCA were joined by newly formed groups such as Black Advocates for Quality Education and the Crisis Intervention Project at Boston University to offer a broad range of educational support services including tutoring, recreational, and mental health programs. Standing at the center of these efforts was the newly formed Freedom House Institute for Schools and Education (FHISE). Established in 1973, FHISE played a critical role in coordinating the political activities

[340] "Press Release by Jack E. Robinson, President Boston NAACP", 15 March 1972, Box 954, Folder 4, Series V, NAACP Papers, LOC.

and resources of dozens of individual agencies and initiatives across the entire movement. In this way, the Institute played the role of the project manager for black educational activism in this period earning it the moniker the "Black Pentagon of Boston". This formal synchronization of grassroots activism under the umbrella of FHISE—known to many within the movement as the "alliance—was the defining characteristic of activism in this period. The alliance built upon longstanding traditions of this movement—its reliance on institutional formation and the forging of strong networks among individuals and organizations—to lead the community through this unprecedented period of educational and political change.

The Freedom House Institute and its alliance was the central space through which activists waged their ongoing battle for educational self-determination in the era of court-ordered desegregation. While activists retained this commitment to securing greater power for black Bostonians in the BPS, this vision took new strategic and ideological form in this period. In her announcement of the formation of FHISE, Muriel Snowden aptly summarized this strategic and ideological shift in the movement when she said, "In recent years the movement to obtain quality education for minority children has been to go around Boston school officials through alternative schools and suburban busing programs. The creation of the institute is recognition of the reality that (our) focus must be redirected back on the public school system, upon which the great majority of these children must depend."[341] Rather than devoting their resources and energies to ventures outside the BPS and autonomous from school officials, black educational activists'

[341] "Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education Brochure", 15 May 1974, Northeastern http://www.lib.neu.edu/archives/freedom_house/full_text/edu_1.html. Accessed January 5, 2014.

fought for a voice in shaping the process of desegregation and to ensure that the integrated, reformed school system included substantive roles for black citizens.

Activists' decision to refocus their energies on affecting change within the BPS rather than outside it was shaped by the lessons they had learned in more than two decades of grassroots organizing, and more particularly in the last five years, and the shifting local and national political climate. Events in local and national politics in the early 1970s suggested an increased likelihood that the Boston Public Schools would be desegregated. Beginning in the early 1970s, the BSC found itself under increased federal pressure to desegregate thanks to an investigation by the Office of Civil Rights at the HEW and HUD.[342] The early 1970s also brought a flurry of legal challenges to desegregation in federal courts which suggested that desegregation was likely in Boston. In April 1971 the Supreme Court issued its landmark decision in the case of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* upholding the transportation of students by bus in order to desegregate the schools—a particularly significant precedent for *Morgan* and the desegregation plans in Boston. Other major Supreme Court rulings which suggested a rising tide of judicial support for school desegregation included *Bradley v. Richmond School Board*, *Keyes v. School District No. 1 Denver*, and *San Antonio Independent School District v Rodriguez*.

[342] "NAACP Files New School Suit," *Bay State Banner*, February 10, 1972; http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Boston%20Desegregation%20Timeline.pdf, accessed May 26, 2014.The Boston Public Schools had been under periodic investigation by the HEW to determine whether it operated a dual school system in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 since June, 1965. The BSC resisted complying with the ongoing investigations—often cancelling meetings with investigators, appealing rulings, and publicly voicing their opposition to federal oversight. On March 3, 1973 federal courts found that the BPS operated a dual system in violation of the Civil Rights Act and ordering the cutoff of eight million dollars in federal funds. BSC Chairman Paul Tierney immediately announced his intention to appeal the ruling.

The movement's strategic reorientation was also driven by a significant decline of federal support for community-controlled social program with the end of the Johnson administration in 1969. The combination of the escalation of the conflict in Southeast Asia and President Nixon's effective dismantling of the Office of Economic Opportunity in the early 1970s amounted to a dramatic drop off of federal aid to community-controlled reform programs. Without this aid, it became increasingly difficult for programs like Operation Exodus and the King-Timilty School councils to survive. Among the important lessons activists had gleaned from their experiences in operating independent schools and educational programs outside the BPS in the late 1960s was the importance of financial stability to creating viable educational programs. The loss of federal backing played an important role in convincing activists that it would become increasingly difficult to sustain independent school programming and that the smartest strategy was to work to make change within the BPS.

Ongoing battles between the State Board of Education and the BSC over its refusal to comply with the RIA convinced many activists that they could not rely on either the legislative process or the authority of the State to support their movement. Given this many activists turned to a federal suit as their best and last resort. The State's struggles to control the BSC were the product of a clause in the RIA that allowed local school committee's to appeal State's rulings regarding their desegregation plans (which the BSC did with great regularity throughout the 1960s and 1970s) and constant legal appeals by the BSC challenging the constitutionality of the RIA. These actions eviscerated the RIA by delaying its implementation indefinitely and preventing the State from exercising its power to withhold funding from the BSC for its non-compliance. It

was not until 1972—after seven years of non-compliance, that the State first withheld funding (in the amount of fifty-two million dollars) from the Boston School Committee. A complex series of appeals, orders, and counter-orders in the spring of 1973 typified the increasingly hostile and gridlocked state of educational politics. On June 25, 1973 the State Board of Education ordered the Boston School Committee to submit a long-overdue desegregation plan in accordance with the RIA. Rather than submitting a plan, the BSC filed a suit in state court challenging the constitutionality of the RIA. Even after the court rejected the suit and ordered immediate compliance, the BSC continued to delay for six more months. When the BSC finally submitted its plan in December, 1973, the State rejected it because it had a minimal effect in reducing segregation.[343] Although the BSC was largely responsible for the ineffectuality of the RIA, the State was not entirely without blame. From 1965 through 1974 a general pattern emerged in which the State Board of Education turned a blind-eye to the actions of the Boston School Committee rather than hold their feet to the fire to desegregate. For instance, the State approved BSC desegregation plans in 1966, 1967, and 1969 which did not reduce segregation to a meaningful degree. Additionally, thanks to the efforts of the Boardman Parents and Operation Exodus, they were aware of the BSC's manipulation of open enrollment at least as early as 1966.[344]

Activists' efforts to claim a space for black Bostonians in the schools bore considerable fruit in this period. Decades of black educational activism was reflected particularly clearly in *Morgan*, demonstrating the powerful impact of grassroots organizing on more established civil rights organizations such as the NAACP. The

[343] Box 954, Folder 4, Series V, NAACP Papers, LOC.
[344] Box 954, Folder 7, Series V, NAACP Papers, LOC.

arguments and evidence presented by plaintiffs regarding the segregative and discriminatory practices of city school officials relied heavily upon the evidence and work of activists over the past three decades. For instance, it was black parents like Barbara Elam and her fellow Higginson district activists who gathered clear evidence of the massive inequities in educational resources between white and black schools and who brought citywide attention to these problems. The impact of black activists' long fight for community-centered schools can also be seen in the outcomes of *Morgan* including the reconstruction of the administrative structure of the BPS with the creation of eight "community school districts" and the creation of the Citywide Parents Advisory Council—a network of citizen oversight bodies which afforded community people direct supervisory authority in the BPS. These developments challenge the standard narrative of Boston by drawing attention to the outcomes of the court case beyond desegregation and demonstrate the power of grassroots action to affect major change in educational and municipal governance.

Phase II desegregation brought about a significant expansion of community involvement in the schools through its mandate for a structure of pairings between business, religious, and higher educational institutions and school districts. The courts intended these pairings to provide much-needed logistical support to the schools and to increase general public engagement in the desegregation and buy-in in the success of the desegregation process. Institutions which volunteered their services offered support in curricular and program development, research, and instruction. Partnerships between local colleges and universities and school districts included Boston University and the Brighton/Mission Hill Community School District, Harvard University and Roxbury

High School, and Northeastern University and Madison Park Community School District. A substantial number of businesses also volunteered as participants including Blue Cross Blue Shield, John Hancock Insurance Company, Gillette, State Street Bank, and Stop and Shop Companies. [345]

But these accomplishments did not come without their challenges and setbacks. The violent and vocal opposition of some white Bostonians and the lack of positive leadership offered by city officials including the Mayor meant that the burden fell almost entirely on black Bostonians to ensure the safety of their children and to retain even a modicum of focus on their education. The court's ruling, although tremendously important, did not on its own guarantee change in the Boston Public Schools, and certainly not the types of changes that black Bostonians had fought for since the 1940s. Real change in the role of black Bostonians in their schools required concerted and collective action by community organizers and agencies. Activists' struggles to shape the process of desegregation and the future of the BPS were most clearly shown in the fact that court-ordered desegregation plans were designed by educational "experts" to the exclusion of black Bostonians. In tackling these challenges, activists turned time and again to the foundations of their movement—its institutions, strong networks, and the leadership of community people.

The Lee School and the Origins of *Morgan v. Hennigan*

[345] "Memorandum of Decision and Remedial Orders", *Morgan v. Kerrigan*, 5 June 1975. Blue Cross Blue Shield partnered with Occupational Resource Center; John Hancock partnered with English High School; Gillette partnered with South Boston High School; State Street Bank partnered with Roxbury High School; Stop and Shop Company partnered with Charlestown High School.

These developments on the local and national political scene convinced many activists that nothing short of a suit in federal court would affect meaningful change in BPS. Activists found their opening to seek legal redress in 1971 when conflict broke out at the newly constructed Joseph Lee Elementary School in Dorchester over the Boston School Committee's assignment decisions.

Shortly after failing in their bid to name the Humboldt Avenue School in honor of Joseph Lee, the BSC announced plans to another new school in Dorchester for Lee. From the outset, the State Board of Education pushed the Boston School Committee for assurances that the Lee School, which would be located in a racially mixed neighborhood near Blue Hill Avenue, would comply with the Racial Imbalance Act with a student body that was no more than fifty percent black. In return for their promises that the Lee would be a racially balanced school the State agreed to fund sixty-five percent of construction costs, which totaled nearly eight million dollars. The willingness of the State to take the BSC at its word and provide substantial funding, despite its record of non-compliance with the RIA over the past decade, was representative of the pattern of behavior by the State. Soon after securing state funding the BSC took clear and bold steps to ensure the segregation of the student body. In June, 1971, the BSC sent school assignment notices transferring 350 white students from the predominantly white Fifield and O'Hearn Schools to the Lee School, but also offered parents the option to remain at Fifield and O'Hearn; despite the warnings of school officials that this would guarantee that the Lee had a majority black student body. The vast majority of white parents chose to keep their children in their current schools—virtually guaranteeing that the Lee would be segregated.

Committee members' decision to continue to pursue segregative policies to appease white parents, even in the face of direct orders from the State, clearly demonstrated to activists' their vulnerability to a federal suit. In late August, the BSC responded to the State's threat of the curtailment of funds by removing the option for children to remain in their current school. But unrest at the Lee on the first day of school, and significant pressure, drove the BSC to reverse course once more. On the first day of school the vast majority assigned to the Lee refused to attend and approximately 180 African American students who had not been assigned to the Lee School registered illegally using false addresses. In the face of this unrest, the School Committee held a community meeting on September 17 to hear the concerns of white residents regarding their children's assignment to the Lee. At the conclusion of the meeting the Committee voted to approve, once again, the measure to allow students to remain in their former schools and additionally, to allow the illegally registered black students to attend the Lee. This ruling amounted to a guarantee that the Lee would be racially segregated in clear violation of the RIA and conveyed the BSC's clear contempt for the authority of the State.

This decision had major political implications for the School Committee and the Boston Public Schools.[346] Shortly after the Lee conflicts in November, 1971 the national and Boston branch of the NAACP joined forces to begin preparations to file suit. On March15, 1972 the NAACP and the Harvard Center for Law and Education filed a suit

[346] "Racism Called Root of Lee School Dispute," *Bay State Banner*, 16 September 1964; "Boston Schools Go to Court," *Bay State Banner*, 4 November 1971. In addition to the NAACP suit, the BSC's actions sparked a flood of political and legal action. Almost immediately after its reversal of the assignment decisions, the State Board of Education cut off fourteen million dollars in aid to the Boston Public Schools and refusing 200 million dollars in bonds for new school construction. Suits by both the Boston School Committee and Mayor Kevin White against the Board of Education for the return of these funds and the approval of the bond measure failed. BSC actions also prompted a suit by the State Assistant Attorney for Civil Rights.

against both city and state school officials in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts in the case of *Tallulah Morgan v. James W. Hennigan.*[347] The legal team included Boston Branch NAACP President Jack E. Robinson, Boston Branch NAACP Legal Department Chair, Thomas Simmons, NAACP General Counsel Nathaniel Jones, and Stephen Rosenfeld of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law. In the suit, filed on behalf of fifteen African American parents and their forty-three children, plaintiffs argued that defendants' were guilty of "racially discriminatory policies, practices, acts, and customs resulting in the segregation of the Boston public schools." Plaintiffs cited extensive evidence in support of their accusations of segregative intent, specifically highlighting the recent actions of the BSC at the Lee School.[348] The plaintiffs argued that the BSC's actions, "constituted affirmative action resulting in a segregated school, and was unconstitutional." The suit outlined a myriad of intentionally segregative practices employed by the city and state defendants in the areas of student assignments, school districting, transportation, staff and faculty, and instructional resources. A wide range of community organizations publicly threw their support behind the suit including Freedom House, the Dorchester Council for Community Schools, and the Boston University Mental Health and Retardation Center.[349]

All parties in the case agreed that the Boston Public Schools were racially segregated. The point of contention lay in the issue of intent. The Boston School

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[347] City school officials included the Boston School Committee, the individual members of the Committee, and the Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. State school officials named as defendants included the Massachusetts Board of Education, the individual members of the Board, and the State Commissioner of Education. Named defendant James Hennigan was the Chair of the Boston School Committee at the time of filing. Named plaintiff Mrs. Tallulah Morgan was a parent.

[348] *Morgan v. Hennigan*. 166 of the 197 schools in the system during the 1971-1972 school year had enrollment of more than seventy percent of one race. 118 out of 197 schools had more than ninety percent enrollment of one race.

[349] "Complaint pleadings", *Morgan v. Hennigan*, March 15, 1972;Newspaper clippings, 1970-1989, Box 1, Folder 5, Batson, Schlesinger.

Committee insisted that the segregation of the schools was not a result of purposeful action, but rather a "natural" consequence of the fact that they had a long-standing policy of assigning students to schools closest to their homes—so called "neighborhood schools"—and housing was heavily racially segregated. They insisted that they had no control over such residential segregation and that therefore any school segregation was an unintended but uncontrollable product of city life. The plaintiffs firmly rejected these arguments, outlining a long list of purposeful actions taken by the BSC to exploit, and indeed promote, residential segregation to create and maintain segregated schools.[350]

Black Mobilization

Activists relied upon their institutional homes and organizing traditions to ensure that they had a direct role in shaping the future of the Boston Public Schools during this period of tremendous possibility and upheaval. While the emergence of a myriad of grassroots organizations in the 1960s undoubtedly energized the movement, the formation of so many different organizations also ran the risk of de-centering the movement. In the face of the tremendous changes in the city's schools and its politics, activists' labored to merge the resources and experiences of dozens of grassroots racial justice organizations to construct a united front of the black education movement.

These efforts began in late 1972, when a diverse group of grassroots activists came together to establish Black Advocates for Quality Education (BAQE)—an informal educational advocacy group in which activists came together to shared ideas and experiences and shape a unified political agenda for the movement going forward. Group members included a slew of veteran activists including Muriel and Otto Snowden, Ruth

[350] "Plaintiffs Answers to Interrogatories of the State Defendants'" June 22, 1972 *Morgan v. Hennigan*, Box 954, Folder 7, Series V, NAACP Papers, LOC.

Batson, Ellen Jackson, Betty Johnson, Elma Lewis, Toye Brown of the New Urban League, *Boston Globe* reporter Dexter Eure. Ellen Jackson described the efforts of the BAQE to, "foreact instead of react in a more positive posture," to the proposals of policy makers and city leaders which were, "not at all sensitive to the plight of the black child in this large system, both financially and politically, and educationally." Reflecting on whites' response to BAQE's efforts to assert a common vision of black educational power Jackson said, "They really had some problems of us planning ahead, to get together and talk policies and do our own research. It was frightening to them because they knew that we would possibly begin to identify, uncover, information that we could use in a positive way, and challenge some of them."[351]

Defining a quality education on their own terms had always been a central part of black Bostonians' effort to shape their own educational destinies and the BAQE took up this important work in this period. In a 1973 working paper BAQE member Bob Hayden wrote "A quality education must operate within the value and cultural system of the student and hence the values and culture of the learner must be recognized and used so that each learner has an internal identity with his/her own ethnic group." A quality education for black youth, Hayden wrote, had the power to "bring about the conditions for genuine/legitimate economic, educational, social, and political liberation and control for ourselves and for our participation in the total society."[352] The BAQE laid the foundation for the formation of the Freedom House Institute for Schools and Education in the spring of 1973. Beginning in the winter of 1972, as the momentum around desegregation began to build; activists began to discuss the possibility of creating an

[351] Jackson interview, BWOHP, Schlesinger.
[352] "Memorandum to Black Advocates for Quality Education from Bob Hayden", 18 December 1972, Box 34, Folder 1194, FH, Northeastern.

organization to formalize the collective strategy work initiated by BAQE. On May 15, 1973, Muriel and Otto Snowden announced the formation of the Freedom House Institute with Ellen Jackson as its head. Jackson brought with her more than fifteen years of experience in grassroots organizing and national politics including a stint as Title IV Project Director for the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare at the Massachusetts Department of Education.[353] Establishing the Institute within Freedom House immediately connected it to the long and rich history of black organizing in the city and the movement's prior early institutional underpinnings. Announcing the creation of the Institute, the Snowdens wrote, "This is not a new concern for Freedom House by any means. As an organization we have long been dismayed by the failure of the Boston Schools to meet the educational needs and aspirations of some 36,000 Black and other minority children in the city of Boston."[354]

Leaders identified the goals of the Institute to include, "initiating methods of increasing the general access of Black parents to the kind of information necessary for them to make intelligent decisions about their children's education" and "developing new and better lines of communication among those who want to achieve quality integrated education for all of Boston's children."[355] Speaking to the *Globe* Jackson said, "Even more than a third of Boston's public school students are black, black people play a most minor role in the system's organization and control."[356] Her statement highlights the

[353] Jackson interview, BWOHP, Schlesinger. After Exodus, Jackson pursued academic training which further developed her expertise in the field of education including a Masters of Education from Harvard and a one-year fellowship at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.
[354] Ellen S. Jackson and Otto and Muriel Snowden, Freedom House Institute for Schools and Education brochure, 15 May 1974, FH, Northeastern.
[355] Muriel Snowden interview records, BWOHP, Schlesinger.
[356] Stephen Curwood, "Mrs. Jackson Calls for Black Role in Schools," *Boston Globe*, 16 May 1974, Box1, Folder 81, FH, Northeastern.

multi-faceted nature of the vision of educational self-determination and demonstrates that community control and integration were not mutually exclusive goals in the movement.

Throughout 1973 FHISE leaders mobilized their resources and shaped their strategy in preparation for the court's anticipated ruling ordering the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools. On June 21, 1974 that moment finally arrived when Judge Garrity issued a strongly worded and painstakingly detailed decision, in which he found that city school officials had intentionally created and maintained a racially segregated school system and ordered the immediate and complete desegregation of the Boston Public Schools to begin in September, 1974. The courts orders were implemented in two phases in this period—Phase I in September 1974 and Phase II in September, 1976. Judge Garrity did not find in support of the plaintiff's arguments that the state defendants had violated the constitutional rights of Black students in their failure to ensure the city's to compliance with the Racial Imbalance Act. Rather he concluded that the State had done everything within its power to prompt city school officials to comply with the RIA and the Constitution, but had failed in these efforts because of the intransigence of city school officials and the limited authority granted to them by the Racial Imbalance Act itself. "The state defendants," Garrity wrote, "were simply out maneuvered by the city defendants and frustrated by their intransigence and frequent bad faith."[357]

[357] *Morgan v. Hennigan*. Regarding the plaintiffs' arguments regarding the State Board of Education's approval of desegregation plans which did not meaningfully reduce segregation, Garrity stated that "each plan, if it had been executed in good faith, might have made a substantial contribution to the elimination of racial segregation in Boston's schools. The failure of these plans was uniformly the result of the city defendants' failure to carry them out promptly and to take steps necessary for a particular proposal to have been effective." Garrity detailed the substantial efforts of the state defendants to force city school officials' compliance with the RIA and bring about desegregation including forcing modifications of city officials' desegregation plans, withholding funds, and offering suggestions for non-segregative educational practice related to student assignments, feeder patterns, and transfers. Moreover, Garrity noted that the state educational authorities' only real authority over school officials lay in the threat of withholding funding

Garrity's decision was deeply influenced by black educational activism. He referred frequently and specifically to the protests and arguments of black activists in his detailed recounting of the unconstitutional actions taken by city school officials in six principal areas: school districting practices; open enrollment and controlled transfer programs; controlled feeder patterns; the assignment and hiring of staff; vocation and examination programs and schools; and facilities utilization. Prominent activists included Ellen Jackson and Ruth Batson, among many others, testified at the trial recounting the decades-long history of segregative actions taken by city school officials. In his discussion of the BSC's practices in regards to both open enrollment and the utilization of facilities, Judge Garrity specifically noted the efforts of Operation Exodus and Ellen Jackson to challenge the pattern of overcrowded majority black schools and the segregative intent of their administration of open enrollment. The impact of black activism can also be seen in its findings regarding the segregation and discriminatory hiring of faculty and staff. Judge Garrity found that the defendants took purposeful action to segregate the faculty and staff of the Boston Public Schools, employed racially discriminatory practices in recruitment, hiring and promotions of minority faculty and staff, and that they assigned less experienced and qualified teachers to predominantly black schools.[358] These findings closely echoed the demands of black student protestors

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which was not an adept tool for forcing compliance and that moreover, that the often slow-moving judicial system further weakened the state's authority.

[358] *Morgan v. Hennigan.* In the 1972-1973 school year, 244 of the 356 black teachers in the Boston Public Schools taught in the city's 59 majority black schools. The evidence also showed that the percentage of black teachers stationed to majority black schools steadily increased from 1967 to 1972 from sixty-seven to seven-two percent. Judge Garrity wrote, "as of 1972-1973 no black classroom teacher, permanent or provisional, had ever been assigned to 81 of Boston's 201 schools." Judge Garrity's decision also outlined substantial evidence in support of the plaintiffs' arguments that the city defendant's denied black students of their right to equal educational opportunity by assigning less qualified teachers (provisional or uncertified) to schools with heavy black student enrollments. Evidence presented by the plaintiffs demonstrated a clear pattern as Judge Garrity put it that, "the blacker the school, the larger the percent of

who, in the late 1960s, were the first group to highlight this issue. Federation leader Leon Rock described how during his time on the board of the Boston branch NAACP just prior to the *Morgan* filing he advocated for the NAACP to include the issue of the discriminatory practices in the assignment and hiring of black educators in the case.[359]

Judge Garrity also tackled the issue of the relationship between segregation in housing and the public schools. He dismissed the argument made by city school officials that segregated schools were the natural and unavoidable outcome of residential segregation and the substantial growth of Boston's black population. He also rejected the School Committee's claims that they had adhered to a model of neighborhood schools in shaping policy which was constitutionally valid regardless of any segregative outcomes because they had established this practice prior to the development of widespread residential segregation. Garrity cited a laundry list of purposeful actions taken by officials, identified by grassroots activist and the NAACP, to promote residential segregation and take advantage of these patterns to promote a dual school system.[360] He

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provisional teachers." Garrity's decision cited evidence presented by the plaintiffs that during the 1971-1972 schools with more than eighty percent black enrollment staffed more than four provisional teachers while schools with less than twenty percent black enrollment employed less than one provisional teacher. Judge Garrity's decision also noted the high turnover rate of faculty and staff at predominantly black schools as additional proof of the inferior quality of education afforded to black students. The judge also found that the facts supported the plaintiffs' claims of the segregative and racially discriminatory intent of the city defendant's practices in recruitment, hiring, and promotions

[359] Rock interview.

[360] *Morgan v. Hennigan.* Garrity cited evidence presented by the NAACP which showed the city school officials possessed an extensive knowledge of the precise patterns of residential segregation as a result of the Sargent Report, a 1962 study of city housing patterns commissioned by city school officials, which predicted with near perfect accuracy the racial housing patterns of the 1970s. Boston school officials were not surprised by demographic residential patterns then, as they claimed, but rather had precise knowledge of them and utilized this knowledge to ensure the maintenance of a dual school system. Garrity's decision cited a number of cases which presented such evidence and established a strong legal precedent in regards to this issue including *Swann, Felice v. Board of Education of New York City, Higgins v. Board of Education of Grand Rapids.* Garrity wrote, "We shall not dwell upon the point beyond stating that in this respect Boston is not unlike other major urban areas, and that defendants may not disclaim responsibility for segregated schools because of population shifts which they themselves may have contributed to bringing about." Moreover, Garrity noted that the defendants' claims in these regards did not address the three areas of their conduct for which there was the most substantial evidence of segregative intent; faculty

found that school officials made such frequent exceptions to their policy of neighborhood schools—through extensive busing, redistricting, feeder patterns, and citywide schools—in order to maintain and create segregated schools and that this defense hardly merited consideration by the court. Garrity found that despite their vehement opposition to the use of "busing" as a tool of desegregation, school officials had no qualms about using buses historically to transport students to schools far distances from their homes when it was in the interest of maintaining segregated schools. Approximately 30,000 students utilized public transportation to get to school and that many students walked as far as three-quarters of a mile to attend school.[361]

It was, as Judge Garrity put it, "time to turn to the future." The court ordered city school authorities to take affirmative action to completely and immediately desegregate the Boston Public Schools. Included in the court's remedial guidelines was a requirement to adopt any and all tools of desegregation including busing, re-districting, student and faculty re-assignments, no matter how "distasteful" to the public or administratively complex.[362]

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and staff, open enrollment and controlled transfer, and feeder patterns. Moreover, citing *Keyes* and *Swann* Garrity found that the actions of city school officials to incorporate patterns of residential segregation into school policy for more than a decade were clearly unconstitutional.

[361] *Morgan v. Hennigan.* School authorities constantly redrew the boundaries of school districts which became increasingly irregular and jagged with the result that students often attended schools at a great distance from their home on the opposite side of their district, rather than attend the closest school, in order to maintain racially homogeneity in the school. Garrity's decision cited the irregular school district which included the Emerson, Clap, Fenwick, Everett, Dickerman, and Mather Schools in which students routinely attended schools which were not the closest to their home to maintain racial segregation. Adherence to segregated education also took precedence over neighborhood schools in ways that ran counter to the principles of educational equity and quality. "White students," Garrity wrote, "Who found themselves in predominantly black schools because of their residence were practically guaranteed a right to transfer under open enrollment or one of the exceptions to the controlled transfer policy—regardless of overcrowded conditions at the receiving schools."

[362] *Morgan v. Hennigan.* The decision included five remedial guidelines. In addition to the stipulations regarding the uses of buses and the issue of public opposition they were: that the primary criterion of the acceptability of a desegregation plan lay in its effectiveness in eliminating segregation; that the Boston School Committee bore the primary responsibility for desegregation; that desegregated schools should aim to match the overall racial composition of the entire school system two-thirds white and one-third black);

For "Phase I" of desegregation, as it was called, the court called for the implementation of the desegregation plan designed by Charles Glenn, Director of the State Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity. Glenn had designed the plan under commission by the State Board of Education in 1972 in the face of the continued failure of the Boston School Committee to design an adequate plan. The central mechanism by which the plan integrated the schools was through a pairing of predominantly black and white schools in which students from predominantly black schools would be reassigned to majority white schools and vice versa. These pairings immediately provoked widespread resistance. In an effort to reduce the distances students would travel from home to school, the plan paired adjacent racially segregated schools—including, most notably South Boston and Roxbury. The pairings, particularly between South Boston and Roxbury, immediately sparked widespread anger and fear and became a rallying point for the anti-desegregation movement going forward. The plan also called for the elimination of feeder patterns as well as the standardization of all grade levels, both of which the BSC manipulated in order to create and maintain a dual school system. Phase I desegregation also exempted the neighborhoods of East Boston, the North End, and Charlestown from the desegregation plan entirely—citing their physical distance and relative geographic isolation from other sections of the city.

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and that the school committee comply with the court's orders with great haste and that any delay would be considered a violation of the plaintiffs' rights. Moreover, the court specifically enjoined city school officials from undertaking any new school construction or expansion, faculty or staff transfer, student transfers, or redistricting which would increase the segregation of the Boston Public Schools. The court cited a number of cases in its remedial guidelines including *Green v. County School Board* (1968), *Raney v. Board of Education* (1968), *Keyes*, and *Swann.* Citing *Swann* regarding school officials' responsibility to take any and all steps necessary to eliminating segregation, the court stated, "The Supreme Court has recognized that 'the remedy for such segregation may be administratively awkward, inconvenient, an even bizarre in some situations and may impose burdens on some; but all awkwardness and inconvenience cannot be avoided when remedial adjustments are being made to eliminate the dual school systems."

Veteran activists, many of whom had worked in education for more than two decades by the time of Judge Garrity's decision, were deeply disappointed and hurt by Garrity decision to use the Glenn plan because it had not solicited the input of black Bostonians in its design and did not afford the community a role in its implementation. The Glenn plan's lack of engagement with the black community was particularly apparent in the pairing of Roxbury and South Boston High School because black residents had expressed considerable displeasure for this plan in community forums held in 1972 to solicit community feedback regarding the proposed plan.[363] Similarly, the plan for Phase II desegregation, known as the "Masters Plan" was also designed by formally credentialed educational experts. This four-person team, known as the "masters", included former Attorney General Edward J. McCormack, former Massachusetts Supreme Court Judge Jacob J. Spiegel, former U.S. Commissioner of Education and Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education Francis Keppel, and Charles V. Willie, Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Speaking to the *Christian Science Monitor* Muriel Snowden said, "The most galling thing about Boston is the attitude toward blacks—a subtle looking down on us. This stirs me up. A blatant example is the Boston School Committee, which is not using available black talent to plan a smooth desegregation of schools next September."[364]

Freedom House and its newly formed Institute for Schools and Education was more than ready to face the challenges and opportunities presented by the court's orders. The court's ruling marked the formal start of a massive, inter-agency organizing

[363] Lukas, *Common Ground*, 219.
[364] Luix Overbea, "'Unadjusted' Snowdens Eye Future," *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 May 1974, Box 1, Folder 81, FH, Northeastern.

campaign with FHISE at the center.[365]This movement had always been defined by its interconnectedness, but the Institute brought this organizing tradition to a new level of professionalization and effectiveness with the creation of what was informally referred to as the Freedom House "alliance" which came together in the weeks surrounding the judge's ruling. The alliance brought together a diverse group of social service agencies and activist groups in the alliance—a who's who of activists in the fields of education, housing, law enforcement, electoral politics, politics, religion, business, mental health, the arts, and recreation. Describing the work of the alliance, YMCA director Barbara Burke said, "The whole network had been set up because if we didn't do it, we couldn't count on anybody else to do it. And they were our kids."[366]

Standing at the helm of the alliance was the Institute leadership team—Muriel and Otto Snowden, Ellen Jackson, and Senior Consultant Toye Lewis. The alliance relied heavily on two of the most influential social service agencies in the black community—Roxbury Multi-Service Center (RMSC) and the Lena Park Community Development Center (LPCDC). Both organizations had deep experience in addressing the varied challenges facing black Bostonians and their staff worked closely together.[367] Another institution which played a major role in the alliance was the Clarendon Street YWCA and its director Barbara Burke. Also at the table was Elma Lewis and her organization, the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts which was the central arts institution in the black community. Veteran activist Ruth Batson played a pivotal role in the movement in her

[365] Theoharis, "We Saved the City", 75.
[366] Burke interview.
[367] Leadership at RMSC included Director Percy Wilson, Legal Advisor Rudy Pierce, and staff member Herb Jackson. Lena Park Director Patrick F. Jones, Jr, a close friend of Wilson and Pierce, also played a key role in the alliance. Other settlement houses which played a key role in the alliance included Norfolk House, headed by Mike Haynes, who was well-known for his on the ground work mentoring a generation of black male youth in Roxbury.

capacity as Director of the Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center and its Crisis Desegregation Project at the Boston University School of Medicine. More broadly, Batson brought with her an invaluable store of knowledge of city politics and education which she had accumulated in her activist work over the past two decades. Major players active in the alliance from the faith community included Reverend Virgil Wood and Minister Don Muhammad of Temple No. 11. Other key figures and organizations included Boston Branch NAACP activists Paul Parks and Kenneth Guscott, Harvard Graduate School of Education leaders Kenneth Haskins and Ron Edmonds, Leon Nelson of the Roxbury Chamber of Commerce, and various members of the Massachusetts Black Caucus.[368] Additionally, black parents were active participants in the alliance, attending community meetings at Freedom House.

The work of the Institute and the networks developed through the alliance were especially crucial given the lack of leadership from the city officials and the vocal and violent opposition of some white Bostonians to desegregation. Weak leadership from city officials and the threat of violence also had a significant impact on the types of resources and programs which FHISE and the alliance offered.

In the face of violence and unrest which broke out in the immediate aftermath of the judge's orders and escalated steadily throughout the summer, activists, particularly within the Institute, labored to create a plan to protect their children and communities. Black parents in Roxbury were particularly fearful at the prospect of sending their children into South Boston, as required by the court's desegregation plan, given that the neighborhood was notoriously hostile towards African Americans and that only three

[368] Lewis had formerly worked with the New Urban League and also with Black Advocates for Quality Education. At the time of the formation of the alliance, Johnson had left her position at METCO to work with the Education Collaborative of Greater Boston (EDCO).

black students had attended South Boston high school since the1960s.[369] During the first several years of court-ordered desegregation, when these threats of violence all too often became a reality and city officials failed in their duty to protect, black Bostonians rallied the resources of their communities to protect black youth and their communities.

The lack of support offered by the city's political leaders, including Mayor Kevin White, shaped the political work of the Institute and alliance and further illuminates its significance. While black activists' labored during the summer of 1974 to build a support network for black students poised to enter fiercely defended white schools in the fall, Mayor White, elected with ninety percent of the city's black vote in 1967, spent countless hours meeting with white parents opposed to desegregation to allay their fears. White also appropriated $200,000 in city funds to an appeal of the Racial Imbalance Act in the early 1970s. At the same time that White devoted himself to convincing the white electorate that he shared their outrage over busing, he publicly emphasized the importance of adhering to the law, resulting in a complete absence of leadership at the top which further necessitated a strong coordinated response from the black community.[370]

The extent of the black community's mobilization was also driven by the vocal and vehement opposition of city officials—most notably the Boston School Committee and the City Council. The BSC formalized its longstanding hostility to black educational equity through its leadership role in the group Restore Our Alien Rights (R.O.A.R) which was formed in 1974 and became the institutional base for the so-called "anti-busing" movement. ROAR, whose membership was made up of BSC and Boston City Council members and white Bostonians, staged a series of large anti-desegregation protests in

[369] Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 73.
[370] Ibid., 75.

downtown throughout the summer and encouraged white parents to boycott integrated schools. At the behest of ROAR, overwhelming numbers of white students stayed out during the first days of the school year. Although 941 black and 1,604 white students were assigned to South Boston High School, only forty black and twenty-five white attended on the first day, and similarly few reported for class at Roxbury High School.[371] The most public well-known figure in the anti-desegregation movement and ROAR was longtime BSC member Louise Day Hicks, whose opposition to the court's orders catapulted her to national prominence.[372] She became well-known for her phrase, "You know where I stand" which she repeated in nearly every political appearance during this period which relied on racially coded language to express her segregationist views without stating them outright.[373] Black Bostonians were not fooled. As Tom Atkins put it, "We knew where she stood. She was trying to stand on our neck." State Senator William Bulger and State Representative William Flaherty also played significant and very public roles in the anti-desegregation movement.[374]

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[371] Ibid. Roxbury High School saw much higher numbers of attendance among black students—400 of the 453 assigned black students—but similarly low levels of white students thanks to the boycott

[372] Louise Day Hicks Papers, Boston City. Hicks had deep roots in Boston—born and raised in South Boston and a graduate of the Boston Public Schools and Wheelock Teachers' College. She earned her B.S. and J.D. from Boston University and established a private practice with her brother, John Day, in Boston. She began her long career in politics in 1961 at the age of 45, winning a seat on the Boston School Committee, at a time when the black education movement was gaining greater momentum and conflict between the NAACP and the Boston School Committee was growing. From 1963 to 1965 Hicks served as the Chair of the Boston School Committee. Hicks narrowly lost her bid for mayor to Kevin White in 1967, before being elected to Boston City Council in 1969 where she served a two-year term. Hicks was then elected to the State House of Representatives, where she served from 1971 to 1973. After being defeated by Joseph Moakley for re-election in 1973, Hicks returned to Boston City Council in 1973 during which time she became the first female president of the Council. She served on the Council until 1977 when she lost her bid for re-election, but then returned to fill an empty seat in 1979. After losing her final bid for elected office in 1981, Hicks retired from public service, in large part due to mounting health issues.

[373] Tom Atkins interview, Eyes on the Prize Interview, interview by Jackie Shearer, October 11, 1988.

[374] Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 76. In the weeks prior to the start of school, State Senator William Bulger and State Representative William Flaherty joined Hicks to co-author an incendiary public statement which played on base racial stereotypes to insist that desegregation posed a major threat to white youth. They wrote, "It is against our children's best interest to send them to school in crime-infested Roxbury."

The Institute and alliance's efforts to provide for the physical safety of black youths were also shaped by the fact that the Boston Police Department took a public stance in support of the anti-desegregation movement. When Mayor White called on the Boston Police to quell the escalating violence in the schools on September 13, 1974 the Boston Police Patrolman's Association, the union for the BPD, informed the Mayor that they were not legally obligated to make arrests. Additionally the Patrolman's Association took out an ad in opposition to desegregation in a ROAR publication, provided financial support for efforts to overturn the court's decision in *Morgan*, and participated in anti-integration protests.[375] Given this refusal of the city's law enforcement bodies to ensure the safety of its black citizens, black activists rallied its resources to do this work itself.

The abilities and preparedness of the alliance and the FHISE were put to the test on the first day of school—September 12, 1974 when more than 1,100 black parents called the Freedom House Institute with questions about desegregation plan and to express their concerns about their children's safety. Parents were connected to Project Aid in Desegregation (AID)—a telephone hotline, manned by volunteers, which provided information about all aspects of desegregation and answered questions from parents, students, and the community. Callers asked hotline volunteers questions such as, "Where will my child be picked up by the bus?" and "What protections will my child have at his new school?" and "I don't want my child going to South Boston High but since they're going to make him go to a white school, how am I going to be sure he won't get beat up?" Institute staff reassured parents that they were well-prepared to protect and support

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Citing wildly false statistics they continued, "There are at least one hundred black people walking around in the black community who have killed white people during the past two years."

[375] Ibid., 73. Additionally, during a ROAR-led public demonstration against desegregation during the summer, a number of Boston Police officers, assigned to the protest in an official capacity, had demonstrated their support for the anti-desegregation movement by pinning ribbons to their handle-bars.

black students and that they were working closely with agencies citywide to ensure the safety of their children, but many parents, understandably, remained fearful of what their children would face. The hotline encouraged greater community engagement in the educational decision-making process by providing people with current and accurate information about the conditions in the schools.[376] Additionally the program sponsored guest speaker programs on various topics related to the experiences of black youth in the schools and desegregation which were open to the public.

The Institute also disseminated information about school conditions and desegregation orders through its Community Protection, Rumor Control, and Information Center which combatted rumors about school conditions by providing prompt and accurate information to the public. Misinformation about the conditions in the schools thanks to the lack of strong leadership from school and city officials ran rampant, escalating racial tensions and the potential for violence. Rumors about episodes of violence in the schools and communities spread like wildfire and created an emotionally and educationally damaging climate for students and families. Through their relationship with its alliance member organizations the Institute recruited more than 100 volunteers to staff the center's telephone hotline, working in three hour shifts. The hotline was an important piece of black educational politics during this period not only because of its practical value in providing the people with information but also by empowering

[376] "Hotline Buzzes with Questions of Busing," *Bay State Banner,* 8 August 1974. The hotline addressed a huge range of questions and complaints related to the schools including issues such as student injuries, truancy, buses, lost children, and school assignments.

volunteers by providing them with active, leadership roles in the desegregation process.[377]

The Institute, with the support of its alliance, issued a huge volume of publications related to desegregation designed to increase community understanding of and involvement in the desegregation process. These included maps of new school districts, graphs of the racial makeup of districts, and scripts to help parents and students have challenging conversations with school staff and officials or to make presentations to the court and other state bodies. Jackson and the Freedom House staff released several reports which included: *Boston Desegregation: Questions and Answers*, a list of the sixty most frequently asked questions by black parents; a critical review of the desegregation plan offered by the Boston School Committee entitled, *Boston School Committee Student Desegregation Plan: A Response;* and *What's Going On—A guidebook on student's rights for parents and students involved in desegregation.* In addition, the Institute also published a monthly newsletter on current events and issues related to desegregation.[378]

Black activists and students who had experienced the endemic racial discrimination in the schools sought to re-center the issue of race in the conversation through the use of the media. Recognizing the critical role which public perceptions of the courts' orders and black Bostonians played in shaping the desegregation process, locally and nationally, activists working within the Institute launched a media-public relations campaign to ensure the racially balanced coverage of black activism in the

[377] "Freedom House, Inc. Institute on Schools and Education," NAACP Annual Awards Banquet, Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern.
[378] Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education: Fact Sheet," Box 1, Folder 1, Freedom House Papers, Northeastern, page 1-2. Other publications released by the Institute included, "Boston Desegregation: The First Term—An assessment of the first months of school desegregation from the black perspective" (1974); "Hear the Parents! Report of a Survey on Desegregation Services and Needs in Boston's Black Community, 1975"; "QED: Quality Education Demanded; and Coordinated Social Services Council Directory of Services, 1975".

media. The anti-desegregation movement, led by ROAR, was very successful in controlling the public discourse related to discourse through the language of "forced busing" and effectively erased the issue of race and racism from the public view. Hosted by Institute Media Coordinator Dennis Roach, Freedom House sponsored a weekly radio program, "From the Black Perspective", which aired interviews with black community leaders discussing education. The program encouraged broad community engagement in the desegregation process by inviting community members to call in to the program with questions or comments about education for guests.[379]

Activists at Freedom House called on longstanding allies within the press that they were confident they could trust to present their story fairly. By the mid-1970s many black activists did not believe that it was in their best interests to be fully open to the white media because in the past the press had demonstrated heavy racial bias in their depictions of the black education movement and its goals.[380] In their twenty-five year career in the movement, the Snowdens especially had learned the tremendous power of the media to both help and hinder the movement, had devoted considerable energy to fostering positive relationships with specific elements of the media such as the *Globe*, *Monitor*, and *Banner*, and had mentored younger activists like Jackson on the strategic political value of such work. The city's only major black owned newspaper, *The Bay State Banner*, run by longtime Bostonian Melvin Miller, played a major role in this effort, providing extensive coverage of the movement. Other trusted allies in the media included

[379] "Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education: Fact Sheet," Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern. "From the Black Perspective," aired weekly on Sunday evenings on local radio station WRKO.
[380] Activists who expressed this hesitancy towards the media and its role in the movement included Barbara Burke, Ellen Jackson, Jean McGuire, and the Snowdens.

Dexter Eure at *The Boston Globe* and Lewix Olgesby of *The Christian Science Monitor*.[381]

Freedom House drew upon community resources to develop educational support programs such as the Occupational and Educational Guidance Program & Educational Counseling Service in 1975. The pre-cursor to this initiative was a program known as Talent Search, which operated at Northeastern University under the U.S. Office of Education's Model Cities program. Directed by community activists Barbara Burke and John D. O'Bryant beginning in the late-1960s, the Talent Search Program provided educational and financial resources and guidance to black youth in the public schools to help them apply to and graduate from college. At the Institute, activists' expanded on this program to focus on improving and expanding minority student involvement in integrated schools, provide general academic support, and assist students' in their applications to Boston examination schools. The program addressed the concerns of many parents and activists that the educational needs and interests of black students had been lost in the chaos of desegregation.[382]

The Institute and its partners opened up Freedom House for various public meetings in which community people could come together to share their experiences, gain information, and share questions and concerns. During the trial and the desegregation process itself, community people, including parents, students, and activists, met with the plaintiffs' legal team at Freedom House to discuss the progress of the case.[383]

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[381] Burke interview.
[382] Burke interview.
[383] "Freedom House, Inc. Institute on Schools and Education," NAACP Annual Awards Banquet, Box 1, Folder 1, FH, Northeastern.

Among the most important work of the Institute was an initiative which paired alliance member organizations with particularly troubled schools. Through these pairings, activists working within organizations like the Roxbury Multi-Service Center or YWCA monitored conditions within schools to help maintain stability and provide general educational and social support. Given the lack of support, if not outright opposition of, school and city officials, alliance member organizations took the initiative to enter the schools to support the needs of students and reduce conflict in an effort to maintain a modicum of educational stability. These organizations' longstanding presence as neighborhood centers provided them with the respect and status in the black community necessary to be a significant stabilizing force in the schools. Organizers going into South Boston likened the experience to that of entering an enemy-occupied territory during war. For instance, the intensity and unpredictability of white resistance to integration in South Boston made it impossible for black students, activists, and staff to enter the community on their own, so a "staging area" was created in nearby Columbia Point where buses gathered to take black Bostonians into South Boston High under police escort.

Staff members, such as those from RMSC and LPCDC, partnered with South Boston and Hyde Park High School respectively, focused on attempting to prevent or lessen violence through their presence with the schools. Reflecting on his work in South Boston High School RMSC activist Rudy Pierce spoke of this daily work to prevent an explosion of total chaos in the schools. "I was in the high school for two minutes when a Black kid knocked on a white kid, and this police officer and I got him in a room and I said to him, 'What the hell is that about?'" Pierce continued, "He said, 'The kid called me a brownie.' And he took it that the kid was calling him a nigger and he knocked him out.

There was enough hostility. You couldn't get caught in the stairwell in South Boston High."[384] In many cases, activists working inside the schools took on the role of protecting black students and overseeing emergency safety procedures. Wilson described how he and fellow community agency workers were forced to step in to prevent a scuffle between a white and black student at South Boston High School from exploding into a full-scale school riot. "The cops had thrown up their hands and said they couldn't do anything about it. The parents were up and arms and we were all at Columbia Point, and the parents were, 'Okay you community leaders…you all got us into this so get us out of it.'"[385]

South Boston High School was not the only high school plagued by significant violence and unrest. Black students attending predominantly white schools on the first day of school in September, 1974 were met by mobs of angry white protestors spewing racial epithets, eggs, bottles, and bananas. Crowds of anti-desegregation protestors peppered buses carrying elementary students with stones, damaging eighteen buses.[386] Although most accounts of school desegregation in Boston focus on the intensity of resistance among the white working-class in South Boston, considerable violence and unrest also took place in the more middle-class white neighborhoods of Hyde Park, Roslindale, and West Roxbury including a race riot at Hyde Park High School on September 19.[387] The violence in the schools also spilled over into the streets. On

[384] Rudy Pierce interview with Lyda Peters.
[385] Percy Wilson interview with Lyda Peters (hereafter Wilson interview).
[386] Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 76. Twenty-five of the 523 white students assigned to Roxbury High School attended on September 12.
[387] "Hyde Park High School Blacks Charge Mistreatment," *Bay State Banner*, 7 October 1971. In October, two men were arrested for carrying Molotov cocktails outside of Hyde Park High School. Similar racial violence (and its threat) took place in the nearby community of Roslindale where a group of whites ran two black youths out of a restaurant. Violence and racial tensions were not new to Hyde Park High School. The number of black students at the school had expanded significantly since the late 1960s, thanks to the

October 7, 1974, a riot broke out near a public housing project in South Boston in which a mob of whites attacked and critically injured Haitian man, Andre Yvon Jean-Louis.[388] Pierce and other community organizers working with the FHISE alliance within the schools labored to prevent or minimize such outbursts and bring a modicum of stability back to the schools.

The importance of the alliance monitoring program was clearly illustrated in a violent conflict at South Boston High School on December 11, 1974 when a young black man, James White, stabbed Michael Faith, a white student. News of the stabbing spread like wildfire through South Boston and a mob of angry white Bostonians quickly amassed outside of the high school trapping more than 125 black students inside. When police and school authorities failed to disperse the growing crowd which was threatening to push into the building, activists stepped in. Activists, led by RMSC workers stationed at the school, formulated a plan to pull decoy buses up to the front of the building to distract the mob while black students were quietly loaded into buses at the back of the school and taken to Freedom House. The plan worked—black students escaped South Boston High unharmed and the crowd dissolved. Meanwhile, black activists working

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migration of large numbers of black residents to the bordering neighborhood of Mattapan Black Hyde Park High students, organized by the newly formed Black Student Union, reported escalating racial unrest and mistreatment by students and staff and demanded action from Boston school officials. A statement from the Black Student Union declared that, "For the past three years—1968, 1969, 1970 and now 1971—it seems that the issue at Hyde Park High is not more police dogs or police officers, but racism, bigotry and prejudice in the administration, faculty, and student body." Black students reported numerous incidents of racial violence including an attack by white students on a bus carrying black students which resulted in the hospitalization of one black student and constant restroom fist fights. Black Student Union leader Leon Rock recounted an extremely tense and violent brawl involving weapons between white and black students, police, parents, and community members which required the emergency evacuation of black students from the school.

[388] Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 80-81. Jean-Louis had driven into South Boston to pick up his wife from her job when he was pulled randomly from his car by a group of whites and beaten within an inch of his life before a police officer interceded. He later slipped into a coma but eventually recovered from his injuries. Later that day black teens in Roxbury responded to the attack on Jean-Louis by attacking several white drivers.

with the Freedom House Institute alliance who had been stationed in the school to monitor the daily conditions, remained trapped in the school. Wilson recounted the terror that he and fellow Roxbury Multi-Service Center staff member Herb Jackson experienced as they fled to their cars in hopes of escaping back to Columbia Point.[389]

Community agencies allied with the Institute alliance quickly also took proactive steps to prevent unrest in the broader community. The Institute alliance drew upon personal and political ties in the black community to coordinate a violence prevention program through the city's Youth Activities Commission (YAC). The Youth Activities Commission was a city agency which provided a range of educational, social, legal, psychological, and economic support services to troubled youth. The YAC's Youth ("Street") Workers Program provided an especially key resource to the alliance during desegregation by providing direct advocacy services to youth on a very local scale. The Youth Worker program assigned individuals to work within specific neighborhoods to advocate for youth and to generally be aware of potential problems in local communities in order to prevent potential unrest. The official guide describing city departments emphasized the importance of youth workers' local knowledge. "Most workers have grown up in the areas in which they work. They have knowledge of the area and also speak the particular language of that area." It stated that "Youth workers combine an educational background in social work with an understanding of what goes on 'in the streets.'"[390] Speaking to the important role that the Youth street workers played during the implementation of desegregation Barbara Burke said, "Those people, they were from the neighborhoods. They knew who the trouble-makers were. They knew who the good

[389] Wilson interview.
[390] Mayor's Office of Public Service, Departmental Descriptions, City of Boston, 1976, Boston Public Library.

guys were. If there was something brewing, we would know about it before it hit. The street workers could then go to the tactical police force. We could hit it, before it hit." She described the coordination between different segments of city services to prevent unrest through the youth workers, "All those Street Workers worked the city and they worked in shifts, and they worked the juvenile justice system also. They worked the courts. It was coordinated."[391]

As Burke noted, the Youth Worker's program to prevent community violence was made possible by support from a branch of law enforcement known as the Tactical Police Force 2 (TPF 2). Although there was significant resistance to the court's orders within the Boston Police Department and many activists believed the BPD failed in its duty to protect black youths during desegregation, the TPF 2 had a more positive relationship with the black community. The TPF 2, formed in November 1971 in an effort to reduce crime in Boston's predominantly black neighborhood by increasing patrols of these communities, also known as the "Soul Patrol" or "Black Tack" because it was made up of approximately thirty black police officers. The formation of a high-profile black majority police unit was a very significant moment in the city's racial politics because Boston's Irish had dominated the force (along with most municipal and service positions) to the exclusion of black Bostonians. Although not formal partners in the Freedom House alliance, Black police officers at the helm of the Soul Patrol including Sargent Earl Bolt, Herbert Craigwell, and John L. Wells, Sr. played a critical role through their support of the YAC and its effort to maintain stability in the communities.[392]

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[391] Burke interview.

[392] "Boston Starts 'Soul Patrol' Unit," *Lakeland Ledger*, 12 December 1971; "Downturn in Boston Crime Attributed to Soul Patrol," *The Telegraph*, 9 December 1971; Burke interview.

The Youth Activities Commission's involvement in the black education movement during this period was due in large part to the work of Clarence "Jeep" Jones. A lifelong Roxbury resident, Jones graduated from the Boston Public Schools, and taught at the Dearborn School and physical education instructor at Roxbury's Norfolk House during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1965 he continued his work with youth within the Department of Youth Services as a youth probation officer before going on to oversee the Youth Activities Commission during the period of school desegregation. Jones formed very deep emotional bonds with many Roxbury youth during his time as a teacher and Norfolk House volunteer, serving as a mentor to a new generation of young black men that included future activists and education professionals who played critical roles in the Freedom House alliance such as Albert Holland, Rudy Pierce, Percy Wilson, and Peter Parham.[393] These mentees called on their mentor again during court-ordered desegregation for his help in maintaining peace and stability.

Institute alliance members understood that in addition to educational and social support within the schools, black students were also desperately in need of support during the after-school hours. The Clarendon YWCA, under the directorship of Barbara Burke, stepped in to provide these vital services. Beginning in September, 1975 the Clarendon Street YWCA, provided comprehensive after-school educational, social, and emotional support services to thousands of black youth. The Y was crucial as a safe space where black youth could come to recover from the trauma of their school day through programming and connecting with their peers and community leaders. The Freedom

[393] Jones was born in Boston in 1933. "Back in the Day when Hoops was King," *Bay State Banner*, 11 May 11 2006; http://forthillhistory.tumblr.com/post/31707743947/who-is-jeep-jones (accessed on December 12, 2013); For information on Jones' work as a mentor see interviews with Peter Parham, Albert Holland, Rudy Pierce, and Percy Wilson by Lyda Peters.

House alliance, at Burke's urging arranged for many black students to be transported directly to the Y after school. There, Freedom House Institute alliance coordinated their resources to provide students with access to social workers and psychologists to address the mental trauma of their chaotic school day, free food, recreational activities, and even medical services for injuries sometimes sustained during the school day or bus rides.

Like many leaders in this movement, Burke's activism was shaped by both professional experiences in community organizing and personal experiences and commitments as a native Bostonian and parent. Burke was born and raised in the South End and Roxbury where she participated in myriad neighborhood centers such as the Norfolk House, Hecht House, and Shaw House. After graduating from the Boston Public Schools and attending college in Ohio, Burke began her career in the field of community uplift and youth welfare in Boston. Before assuming the directorship of the YWCA she gained crucial experience working in a number of local educational agencies made possible by the War on Poverty including Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Model Cities program.[394]

Although the YWCA program offered students some psychological support services, many activists were convinced that there was a need for more comprehensive and formal mental health programming to support the black community during this tumultuous period. Drawing upon her decades of experience in education politics and community organizing and deep relationships within the black community, Ruth Batson stepped in to lead this effort, forming the Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center, the city's first comprehensive community mental health center and its Community Crisis Intervention Program (CCIP) which focused on psychological support services related to

[394] Burke interview.

desegregation. Housed within Boston University's Mental Health and Retardation Center, the Fuller Center and CCIP offered key psychological supports to the black community during this moment of tremendous social and political unrest.

Black leaders' formation of the Fuller Center, and particularly CCIP, demonstrated their desire to claim ownership of the experience and outcomes of black Bostonians through the period of school desegregation, recognizing that they could not afford to depend on city officials to provide, or even recognize the need for, these key services. It also illustrated the ways in which the education movement acted as a springboard for black Bostonians' claims for expanded services and governing power in city life more broadly, in that CCIP asserted the rights and expertise of citizens, without formal credentials of medical expertise, in mental health services. This initiative also sheds light on black Bostonians' broad and flexible definition of educational activism and justice which extended far beyond the school walls and desegregation.

After accepting the position as Director of the Consultation and Education Program in the Boston University Medical School in 1970, Batson immediately set to work developing new mental health services targeted at Boston's minority and low-income communities. These included a newsletter, information and resources for living a healthy lifestyle, training programs for community people aspiring to careers in health care, and cultural and recreational events. However, Batson, with her characteristic determination, decided that individual programs were not sufficient and in 1972 she established the Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center, designed and operated with considerable input from community agencies and people.[395]

[395] Ruth Batson, "Presentation on Mental Health and Desegregation" at School Desegregation Conference, Cleveland, Ohio, 1 November 1978, Box 5, Folder 10, Batson, Schlesinger; untitled papers, Box 1, Folder

As it became increasingly clear in the spring of 1974 that the court would rule in the plaintiffs' favor and that desegregation would begin, Batson began to advocate for the creation of a mental health program focused on desegregation. The goal of the Community Crisis Intervention Program was to provide all parties affected by desegregation with the tools to navigate the psychological minefield of desegregation. Initially, Batson faced opposition from her colleagues in the Division of Psychiatry at Boston University who argued that desegregation was outside of the purview of a mental health facility and that the Fuller staff, which consisted mostly of community organizers and activists, lacked the "expertise" to administer such a program. Psychiatry faculty also expressed their hesitancy to become directly involved in the political conflicts surrounding desegregation. Batson strongly rejected these arguments stating, "We cannot pick and choose the areas in which we intervene. Any issue which impinges on the lives of the people we serve should be our business."[396] Challenging neat definitions of mental illness she said, "When you're jobless or haven't a babysitter to care for your children while you work, you have a problem that can corrode your mental health just as surely as if you had a neatly classified disease."[397] After a fierce campaign, Batson eventually convinced her doubters and the Crisis Intervention Program was born.

8, Batson, Schlesinger. Describing the ways in which her two decades of experience as an educational activist shaped her advocacy in mental health Batson said, "As a faculty member [BU Dpt of Psychiatry], with all of the experience I have had with the public school protest movement, and having experienced first-hand the resistance during the 1960s to any changes in the system, I went before our Division of Psychiatry Executive Committee and made the following proposals: I pointed out that our mental health center serviced the bulk of the students who would be bused—Black, poor White and Hispanic. I asked that the center immediately develop a program which would meet the needs of the families affected as a result of the resistance which was destined to take place. My experience with METCO, a suburban busing program, urged me to advise sessions for receiving communities, identifying of people willing to be advocates in these communities, and I urged the establishing of a coordinating program with the community mental health centers servicing the other areas such as South Boston and Charlestown."

[396] Ibid.

[397] Barbara Dwyer, "credentials lie with the people," Box 1, Folder 5, Batson, Radcliffe.

Batson wasted little time in launching a pallet of programs to support black youth and families with the beginning of court-ordered desegregation in September, despite continued opposition from department leaders who blocked her efforts to secure university or state funding for CCIP. In its first several months, Batson ran the program on a shoestring budget staffed largely by volunteers. Volunteers accompanied students on their school buses to monitor conditions and offered general counseling services to the community. It quickly became apparent that CCIP could not meet the enormous demand and need for these services with such a limited budget and in the spring of 1975 Batson secured "emergency funding" for the Crisis Intervention Program from the National Institute for Mental Health.

With this support Batson was able to launch a full-scale mental health-desegregation program in the fall of 1975. Batson and her staff created support groups for youth and parents, recreational programs which offered a healthy means of stress reduction, and academic tutoring programs—all held at the Fuller Center. The key initiative of the expanded Crisis Intervention Program was to station teams of mental health professionals and trained community people within schools, community centers, police stations, and other high-conflict spaces within the community. Working closely with organizers from alliance organizations such as RMSC and LPCDC also stationed in the schools "crisis teams" monitored conditions and in the case of conflict intervened to prevent significant verbal and/or physical conflict, documented events, and facilitated resolution. Crisis teams' ultimate goal was "to reduce and control situations which, if allowed to build, would have a negative effect on the goal of a peaceful and orderly

implementation of the desegregation order."[398] In case of extreme circumstances, crisis teams were also trained in first aid and riot control techniques.[399]

The crisis teams and FHISE as a whole worked closely with other community agencies through the Freedom House Institute alliance, making use of the full spectrum of resources offered by its members and the strength of these relationships. The interconnectedness of the Crisis Intervention Program was in large part a reflection of the depth and breadth of Batson's personal and political relationships across the black community fostered over the past twenty years. In the case of school emergencies students, crisis team members were instructed to contact the Rumor Control Hotline at Freedom House which in turn, would spread this information to the alliance leadership. In the case of student arrests, Batson and staff sought out legal support from Attorney and RMSC staff member Rudy Pierce and Laura Morris of the Family Services Association. The Crisis Intervention Program's particularly close relationship with the RMSC was due in large part to the fact that RMSC Director Percy Wilson was a former member of the Fuller Center Board of Directors. The placement of crisis teams within neighborhood centers, including RMSC, Lena Park, the Clarendon YWCA, and the South End Resource Center, illustrates the breadth of these relationships within the black community at the same time that their presence helped to strengthen these bonds.[400]

The Crisis Intervention Program reflected the continued importance, and evolution of, the concepts of self-determination and community empowerment in the

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[398] "Ruth M. Batson, Lyda S. Peters, and James J. Darr, "Community Crisis Intervention and the Boston Desegregation Effort: Case Study of a Training Program," Crisis Intervention Program of the Boston University School of Medicine, Division of Psychiatry/Solomon Carter Fuller Mental Health Center, 1976, Boston University Medical Library, Boston University.

[399] Joan Vida White, "The Impact on Women on Desegregation in Boston, 1965-1975," (Ed.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1977), 138.

[400] "Ruth M. Batson, Lyda S. Peters, and James J. Darr, "Case Study of a Training Program," Boston University Medical Library; White, "The Impact of Women," 139;

black education movement. Batson's appointment to the status of Associate Professor of Psychiatry along with her position as Director of the Consultation and Education Program represented a major challenge to the privileging of traditional markers of expertise such as academic degrees. Batson's ability to claim this position of considerable status without such credentials represented a major accomplishment in black Bostonians decades' long movement to claim greater power in their city. As a profile of Batson's work at Boston University put it, "her credentials lie rather with the people she has long worked with and knows well; with the experience she has acquired from the community by living there…And with an impressive administrative background." As the article noted, Batson understood her background as a community activist as a strength rather than a liability. "By way of explanation rather than apology, Mrs. Batson said she knows little about the 'professional' aspects of mental health…her expertise penetrates into areas that professionals know little or nothing about simply because they haven't been exposed to them—community people and their gnawing day-to-day problems."[401]

CCIP also emphasized the self-determination of local people by employing community people as mental health workers. Community people, after going through an extensive training program, worked alongside more traditional mental health professionals throughout the Crisis Intervention services—most notably within the crisis teams. Batson specifically sought out community people because she believed that they offered unique and valuable understanding of the needs of their communities through lived experience. "Neighbors have been treating one another for years by finding jobs, listening to problems and so on," Batson said. "They've reached out. Understood. Helped. That kind of know-how should not be shrugged off." She continued, "We're

[401] Barbara Dwyer, "credentials lie with the people," Box 1, Folder 5, Batson, Radcliffe.

searching for people with such skills and combining their talent with that of professionals to bring comprehensive mental health services right into the community not only to treat mental disorders but also to help prevent them."[402] Local people, Batson noted, were in many ways better equipped to provide community mental health services because the people they served because they did not mistrust them in the same way as they did professional mental health workers. A commitment to community control ran was also central to the administration of the Crisis Intervention program. For instance, all staff members had to be approved by both a committee of community representatives in addition to the faculty of the Division of Psychiatry prior to hiring.[403] While most activists had moved away from an application of community control in the formation of separate schools, educational self-determination took new form in the creation of initiatives like the Crisis Intervention Program which asserted the right of all citizens to hold real power in the delivery of municipal services.

Although the city's political leadership was largely ambivalent, if not openly hostile towards the black education movement, activists had allies in key positions within city government which they drew upon in their effort to create an equitable and safe desegregation process. Shortly after taking office as Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools in 1975, Marian Fahey hired longtime Roxbury native Peter Parham to fill the newly created position of special administrative assistant. Contrary to the Boston School Committee's expectations that Fahey would toe the line of resistance to the court orders, she took significant steps to facilitate a peaceful desegregation process and increase the involvement of black Bostonians. Fahey believed that forming a closer relationship

[402] Ibid.
[403] Ibid.

between the Superintendent's office and black Bostonians was crucial to reducing violence and instability in the second year of desegregation and to that end sought a staff member with deep community ties who could act as her liaison.

Parham fit this description perfectly. Born and raised in Roxbury to a family with deep community roots, Parham attended the Boston Public Schools, was mentored by an older generation of black male community leaders in institutions like St. Mark's Social Center and the Norfolk House, and attended neighborhood churches. Parham began his career in educational advocacy directing educational programming at the Roxbury Boys and Girls Club where he gained critical experience working with black youth and developed relationships with a broad swath of the black community.

Once on the job Parham took full advantage of his position to take an active and far-reaching role in the reform of the schools. In addition to facilitating a stronger relationship between Fahey and black communities, Parham worked to increase the recruitment and advancement of black faculty and staff, increasing black parents' access to the superintendent's office, and keeping abreast of the various and very frequent court orders. Parham encouraged Fahey to go to black communities to meet with the movement and leadership and parents, organizing frequent meetings at Freedom House during the 1975-1976 school year. Making the most of the freedom granted to him by Fahey, Parham made frequent visits to conflict-ridden schools like South Boston, Hyde Park, and Charlestown High School to monitor and report on conditions both to the Superintendent and to Ellen Jackson and the Institute leadership.[404]

[404] Parham cited Mike Haynes and "Jeep" Jones as major influences in his emotional, educational, and professional development from his youth through young adulthood. Peter Parham interview with Lyda Peters (hereafter Parham interview).

Parham quickly found that he could not manage this school monitoring work on his own which prompted him to recruit another Roxbury native and community youth advocate Albert Holland. Holland took on the role of patrolling the schools as a representative of Superintendent Fahey and the School Department. Holland took a very hands-on role within schools like South Boston High School working to protect the educational interests and safety of black youth. Coming from the Department of Youth Services, Holland had experience working with troubled youth and the black community, but nothing could have prepared him for the chaos, violence, and sheer animosity that he encountered in these schools. Holland however, adapted quickly to the role and became a critical asset to the Superintendent. When Parham left his post in 1975 to join the staff of Senator Ted Kennedy, Fahey promoted Holland to the position of Special Administrative Assistant and continued the work of promoting safety and equity in the schools during desegregation.[405]

Citizen Monitoring and Community Districting

Activists' efforts caught the attention of the courts resulting in dramatic reconfigurations in the structure and practice of educational governance. Beginning in the fall of 1974 Judge Garrity and the court created a three-tiered structure of citizen advisory bodies, known collectively as the Citywide Parents Council, which granted authority to community people to oversee implementation of the court orders. Garrity charged the CPC with the task of increasing community involvement in the BPS and holding school

[405] Holland remained in the school department in various roles for thirty-three years, from 1975 to 1998. After Fahey's term ended (she was not re-appointed by the Boston School Committee), Holland served as Assistant Headmaster at South Boston High School for eight years. He also served as Headmaster of the Jeremiah Burke High School and the Boston Public School High School Superintendent. Albert Holland interview with Lyda Peters.

officials responsible for providing a quality education to all students through adherence to the court's orders and desegregation plan. The court also adopted the movement's longstanding goal of greater local community control of education through the division of the BPS into eight "community school districts." The greater inclusion of black and white citizens in school policymaking through the CPC and the community school districts represented a truly revolutionary shift in the operation of the Boston Public Schools.[406] One citizen oversight manual wrote, "It was very common to hear a principal make reference to "his" or "her" school when s/he was speaking about the school…Now parents that are utilizing Judge Garrity's Desegregation Plan can assert themselves in a positive manner and rightfully state that these are OUR SCHOOLS.[407]

In many ways the creation of the CPC and the re-configuration of the BPS districts represented a culmination of a three-decade long battle by black Bostonians for real decision-making power and greater community control in the BPS. Black community activists testified before the courts in 1974, just prior to the court's orders, as to need for the creation of a multi-racial citizen oversight body.[408] National currents also shaped Garrity's decision to create the CPC. During the late 1960s and early 1970s cities nationwide were experimenting with multiracial citizen monitoring bodies to aid in the process of desegregation and a number of similar court cases successfully utilized citizen bodies to facilitate implementation.[409]

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[406] The CPC operated as an autonomous entity within the Boston Public Schools until 2004, when it became a volunteer-run organization funded by grants rather than state funds.
[407] "These Are Our Schools: A Monitoring Manual for Parents and Others Concerned with the Boston Public Schools," Citywide Parents Advisory Council, Box 1, Series III: Citywide Parents Advisory Council, Citywide Parents Council, Boston City (hereafter: "CPAC").
[408] Letter from Ellen Jackson to Judge Arthur Garrity, June 4, 1975, Box 4, Folder 5, Boston Schools Case: Citywide Coordinating Council, Papers of Arthur J. Garrity, UMB.
[409] "Memorandum of Decision and Remedial Orders", *Morgan v. Kerrigan*, 5 June 1975. In his orders creating the CPC and CCC Judge Garrity cited a report from the Community Relations Service of the U.S.

During the 1974-1975 school year the court established five major citizen oversight and advisory bodies, The Citywide Parents Advisory Council (CPAC), the Community District Advisory Council (CDAC), the Racial Ethnic Parent Council (RPC), the Racial Ethnic Student Council (RSC) and the Citywide Coordinating Council (CCC). The court began its development of this initiative in October 4, 1974 when Judge Garrity issued a court order establishing the CPAC, RPCs, and its close partner the RSCs. In two additional court orders on May 10 and June 5, Judge Garrity established CDAC and CCC.

In orders on October 1974 and June 1975 Judge Garrity ordered the creation of CDAC, CPAC, and REPC to oversee the orderly implementation of the court's orders and promote greater citizen involvement at the city, district, and school level respectively. CPAC consisted of twenty-two elected parent members representing each school district in the system and was required to follow specific guidelines mandating racial balance. The courts granted CPAC members the authority to monitor conditions in regards to the desegregation orders in nearly every aspect of the school system including student and faculty assignment, transportation, safety, and discipline.[410] On June 5 the court mandated the creation of CDAC which was tasked with overseeing compliance with court orders at the school district level. The judge's order in October also mandated

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Department of Justice which concluded as to the value of citizen monitoring groups in the implementation of desegregation as well as specific court cases including Keyes v. Denver which had successfully utilized citizen bodies. Judge Garrity's court commissioned this report from the CRS to evaluate the effectiveness and structure of community monitoring groups nationwide in the fall of 1974. In addition to *Denver v. Keyes*, Garrity cited the example of *Singleton v. Jackson Municipal School District* (1970) as a model for the creation of a citizen oversight structure in the Boston Public Schools.

[410] CPAC, Boston City. Each district could elect one white and one black member and there must be two members of Asian and Hispanic descent each on the council at all times. In addition to its oversight of assignments, transportation, safety and discipline, CPAC had monitoring power regarding school capacities and program locations, "special" desegregation measures, special education, bilingual education, vocational and occupational education, construction and closure of school facilities, and institutional pairings.

the creation of REPCs at every school. The REPCs were specifically responsible for facilitating community involvement and compliance with the court orders at the individual school level and like CPAC were required to be racially integrated. Describing its vision for the REPC the court expressed its hope that "by meeting regularly to talk frankly and deal only with racial problems, parents and students of one race can share common concerns of parents and students of other races than their own, and can understand differences in views that have racial roots."[411]

REPCs afforded black parents with official power to have a say in their children's schools which had been a central goal of the movement and a major point of contention between parents and school officials since its origins. Many REPC members asserted their newfound authority by observing classes in their children's schools—a right which they had been denied for decades. Although a seemingly simple act, the presence of black parents within schools and classrooms represented a dramatic shift from the status quo of previous decades in which school authorities went to great lengths to limit black parents' knowledge of what was happening inside the schools as a way to maintain power over the schools more broadly. RPC members also asserted their right to shaping school practice by monitoring transportation and the racial makeup of staff and faculty and acting as a liaison between parents, teachers, and administration.[412]

On May 10, Judge Garrity ordered the creation of the CCC to promote public awareness of and support for the court's orders and the implementation process. The court hoped that the CCC would reduce unrest and opposition to desegregation by

[411] Handbook for Racial Ethnic Parent Councils and Racial Ethnic Student Councils, Box 1, Racial Ethnic Parent Council and Community District Advisory Council [hereafter: "RPC and CDC"), Citywide Parents Council Papers (hereafter: "CPC", Boston City.
[412] "Letter from the members of the Monroe Trotter School Association to the CPAC District IX," 18 June 1979, Box 1, REPC and CDAC, CPC, Boston City.

increasing the public's understanding of what desegregation actually entailed and diminish the enormous amount of misinformation related to the court's orders. The court's mandate for the CCC was quite broad and loosely defined. In addition to acting as a general informational body, the court called on the CCC to monitor implementation, identify and resolve problems in the implementation process, and to facilitate conflict resolution between various groups.[413]

Of the five major bodies created by the court during the first year of school desegregation, the CCC proved to be the most problematic but in many ways also the most promising. Unlike most of the other citizen monitoring bodies, membership to the CCC was appointed by the court and Judge Garrity took full advantage of this opportunity to appoint several seasoned movement activists. Recognizing the importance of Freedom House, Judge Garrity appointed Institute Director Ellen Jackson to the CCC Executive Committee and as Chairperson of the Education Sub-Committee. Additionally, he placed Batson on the Public Information Sub-Committee. Other key appointments to the CCC included but were not limited to RMSC activist and longtime community leader Hubert Jones, Lena Park Director Pat Jones, and Harvard Graduate School professor and key Institute alliance player Ron Edmonds.[414] The involvement of so many key members of the activist community raised the hopes of many that the CCC offered a real opportunity for black Bostonians to shape the schools.

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[413] "Memorandum of Decision and Remedial Orders", *Morgan v. Kerrigan*, 5 June 1975.

[414] Other members of the black education movement appointed to the CCC by Judge Garrity included, Gloria Joyner, a former student movement leader active in the citywide protests in 1971 who went on to serve on the Board of the RSMC and the Haitian Multi-Service Center; and Mildred Griffith, longtime black educator and the wife of Rollins Griffith who served as President of the Massachusetts Negro Educators Association in 1968 and was at the time the highest ranking African American in the administration of the BPS. Membership List, Folder 1, Box 4, Boston Schools Case: Citywide Coordinating Council, Papers of Judge Arthur Garrity (hereafter: "Garrity", UMass Boston Archives.

But very shortly after formation the CCC began to run into problems. Members expressed concerns that the organization lacked a well-defined purpose and members struggled to agree as to what that objective should be. Some suggested that the CCC should serve as a mechanism for parents and students to relay their concerns and questions to the court, while others argued that its focus should be on ensuring the safety of youth. Others still suggested that its sole function should be to distribute information.[415] Additionally, the CCC was plagued by low levels of member engagement conveyed by the high levels of absenteeism in many sub-committee meetings and the fact that only twenty percent of CCC members even responded to program evaluation questionnaires sent out by the executive committee.[416] The CCC, and the efforts to build a bridge between grassroots activism and the courts, suffered a major blow when Ellen Jackson unexpectedly announced her resignation from the Executive Committee. In a letter to Judge Garrity explaining her decision, Jackson expressed her desire to focus on her commitments to the Freedom House Institute and to "devote whatever talent, knowledge, and expertise and skill I had to helping community people on a full-time basis to cope with the multiplicity of educational problems, including public school desegregation." Garrity implored Jackson to stay, eager to retain her skills and concerned that her departure would undermine the committee's public standing, but Jackson ultimately left the CCC. Shortly after her departure, Jackson and the FHISE leadership wrote to the CCC, calling for greater responsiveness to the black community through the

[415] Untitled document, Box 4, Folder 1, Boston Schools Case: CCC, Garrity, UMB. In a letter to Judge Garrity on October 26, 1975, CCC member Louise Bonar expressed concerns that the lack of clear focus undermined the efficacy of the body. She wrote, "There seems to be confusion about the aims and purposes of the CCC, and there seems to be little substantive accomplishments in return." Folder 1, Box 4, Boston Schools Case: CCC, Garrity, UMB.
[416] Citywide Coordinating Council Evaluation Committee," May 6, 1976, Folder 3, Box 3, Batson, Schlesinger.

appointment of a black deputy director to the CCC, monthly meetings with the community, and an increase in the number of minority members.[417]

Black Bostonians participating in RPC, CDAC, and CPAC also encountered difficulties in the way of resistance from school officials in their efforts to assert their newfound authority. In a letter to their local CPAC, Gloria and Gilbert Moore reported that school administrators at the Trotter School refused to allow them to observe the classroom that their child would likely be assigned to in the following year and demanded an investigation. The courts' orders did not, on their own, guarantee a meaningful and lasting role for community people in educational governance. In addition to structural changes, a real shift in the balance of power in the schools required purposeful and collective action by the people. Community members of the citizen advisory bodies also faced the very real challenge of asserting the place in school leadership given the long history of racial oppression on the part of school officials. Rayleen M. Craig, CDAC IX member and parent wrote that many parents "are still intimidated by administrators and teachers" as a "result of years of conditioning—years of peripheral contact with a system that did not want parents looking over teachers' and principals' shoulders. Parents were made to feel stupid and were treated like intruders."[418]

In orders in May and June, 1975 the court announced its plan for the de-centralization of the BPS into a community district model. Each of the eight community school districts and the one citywide district, which included magnet schools and other

[417] The letter written to CCC Executive Director Arthur Gartland was signed by Ellen Jackson, A. Robert Phillips, Maria Rivera, Myrtle Adams, Maceo Dixon, Lois Dauway, Charles Cheng, Steven Moss, and John F. O'Brien.
[418] "Statement of Rayleen M. Craig, parent of children attending the Blackstone Square Community School and member of CDAC IX," CCC Hearings for District VII, 3 February 1976, Box 4, Folder 6, Boston Schools Case: CCC, Garrity, UMB.

specialty programs available to students from across the city, was responsible for "developing its curriculum and activities in response to the concerns of the parents and the students within the District." In an effort to more equally distribute governance authority, each district was to be overseen by a district superintendent selected with input by and subject to the evaluation of citizen monitoring groups. The court explicitly mandated that the district administration, including the community superintendent and all school headmasters, work closely with and be very available to community residents. Judge Garrity expressed his hopes that the community district structure would enable local people to have a larger role in their schools and that it would prompt school leaders to be more accountable to the needs or residents and create a more relevant educational program.[419]

Although not without their challenges, the creation of the CPC and the community school districts marked a major sea change in the power dynamics of school governance in Boston. Activists like Batson and Jackson, among many others, pushed for the creation of citizen monitoring bodies because they knew that court-ordered desegregation alone did not ensure that the schools would become more open and community-centered. Moreover, they were determined that local people must have a say in shaping the process of desegregation if they hoped to play meaningful roles in the schools in the future.

The power of black activists was made apparent in increasing unrest at South Boston High School sparked by a series of student walkouts took place South Boston

[419] "Memorandum of Decision and Remedial Orders", *Morgan v Kerrigan*, 5 June 1975. The judge's order included a detailed map of each school district which included geographic boundaries, a list of schools included in each district, the racial makeup which each school and district would adhere to, and special considerations for each of the nine districts.

High School in early October. On October 8, 1975 black students at South Boston High School presented a list of demands related to the rights and treatment of black students to Headmaster Reid. Black students described several incidents of white student violence and alleged that police officers and school officials handed out harsher punishments to minority students. Black students, represented by the Black Student Caucus presented Headmaster Reid with a list of demands which echoed those made by black student activists in the late1960s, but also reflected the ways in which the advent of desegregation had shaped their politics. They included the appointment of a black headmaster, greater equity in suspensions, an increased number of black faculty and staff. In an illustration of the heightened safety concerns of black students, they also demanded greater representation of black students on athletic teams, protection during their transportation to and from practice and games, and greater numbers of police officers to be stationed at SBHS. White students quickly presented Headmaster Reid with their own set of demands on October 10. In their letter to Headmaster Reid they wrote, "We are aware of the conscious effort of the Black Community and the Black students to create incidents to provoke the closing of South Boston High School." They demanded the installation of metal detectors, to read the Pledge of Allegiance daily, the right of white students to leave school when they felt endangered, the removal of black students to Freedom House or Lena Park when they were "restless", access to the school by "community representatives", and an "end to double standards."[420] When Headmaster Reid failed to address the students' demands to the satisfaction of either group, both staged walkouts. Just over two weeks later, on October 27 ROAR organized a National Boycott Day which left schools in South Boston and Charlestown virtually empty. Less

[420] Batson, *Black Educational Movement*, 414b.

than two months into the school year, tensions between students threatened to boil over at South Boston High School with no sign of resolution in sight.

The intensity of unrest in South Boston prompted the courts to single out South Boston High School as in need of significant intervention. On December 9, 1975, Judge Garrity took South Boston High School into receivership and it remained so until August 1978. Given the Boston School Committee's continued open opposition to desegregation and their refusal to lead the implementation of the court's orders, it was increasingly apparent to the court that the only path to desegregation was to take the school out of the control of the Boston School Committee and grant governance to the Superintendents' Office. The court ordered the reassignment of all faculty and staff, including Headmaster Reid, citing their inability to implement desegregation. The order sent a clear message that Judge Garrity was determined that desegregation would take place and that he would take any steps necessary to achieve that goal.

Although the decision to place South Boston High in receivership officially came from the courts, pressure from black activists behind the scenes played a major role prompting his decision. In a late night brainstorming session in the fall of 1974 leaders in the Freedom House alliance, including Jackson, the Snowdens, Batson, Pat Jones, and Ron Edmonds agreed to request that Judge Garrity place the school in receivership. Although activists had made significant progress in asserting a role for the black community in the desegregation process, Batson and others recognize that the schools could never become truly inclusive as long as they were controlled by the same city school officials who had led the charge for segregated schools for decades.

The NAACP called for the courts to either close the school or place it in receivership. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights echoed the recommendations—calling for the court's to place the entire school system under receivership if the School Committee's non-compliance continued. Testimony from black activists including Tom Atkins played a key role in shaping these recommendations. Atkins said, "The biggest vacuum was one of leadership, leadership from officials and leadership from the white community. The black community, throughout the period from last summer through now, has had to bear the burden of leading the whole city."[421] The pressure from black activists in combination with the court's growing frustration with the School Committee's actions prompted Judge Garrity to take action. In his order on December 10, Garrity concurred with activists' argument that black students at SBHS were subject to extreme racial discrimination and harassment and that such abuse constituted a violation of their fourteenth amendment rights.[422] Black activists' role in driving the receivership did not go unnoticed by opponents of desegregation. Just ten days later, the NAACP Boston office was firebombed.

This chapter explodes a myth of *Morgan* as the singular moment of black educational activism in Boston. While the NAACP strategized their legal assault, grassroots community activists drew upon well-established institutional and interpersonal networks and decades of movement experience to mount a massive network of programs through the Freedom House Institute for Schools and Education and its expansive alliance of activists.

[421] Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 82.
[422] "South Boston High School put in receivership by court," *The Morning Record*, 10 December 1975.

Conclusion: Accomplishments and Continuing Struggles, 1977-1985

"You never stop. It's unending, unending. The struggle never ends."

Marie Allen, Concerned Higginson Parent, 1988 [423]

By the fall of 1977 a feeling of hope had begun to build amongst activists. Three years after the start of court-ordered desegregation, a modicum of stability and peace appeared to have come to the city and its schools. Activists and supporters of integration pointed to the decline in violence in the streets and schools, the appointment and election of African Americans to prominent positions in the school and city administration, improvements in the quality of education, and the continued commitment of the courts to the full implementation of its orders. Muriel Snowden expressed her "cautious optimism that in this crucial third year of desegregation, Boston may be rounding the corner and heading for the goal, which has always, from the very beginning of desegregation and years before, been that of a fair chance at a decent education for everybody."[424]

Despite recent progress, seasoned activists like Snowden were under no illusions that the movement had succeeded. Although violence in the schools and streets had declined, racial violence, or its threat, was still present in many schools. Most importantly, although progress that had been made towards the implementation of the courts' orders, the movement remained unfinished in 1977 because desegregation had never been its sole goal. The goal of the movement, as Snowden's statement suggests, was to create an educational system which provided all students with a quality education and in valued the input of community people and school officials. Moreover, thirty years

[423] Allen interview, CHPOHA, UMB.
[424] Muriel Snowden, "Freedom House statement to community at large and black community specifically," 9 September 1976, Box 38, Folder 1300, FH, Northeastern.

of experience had shown activists that a court order or the passage of legislation was no guarantee of meaningful change in the lives of people, rather real change required passionate and focused community action.

While undeniably a major accomplishment, the court's ruling also presented challenges. Although desegregation had never been the sole objective of the movement, it was largely perceived as such by the public and the conflicts over the court's orders drowned out conversations about the more nuanced and complicated goals of black activism. Given this, the public assumed that the court's orders marked the end of movement and that grassroots black activism would now be a thing of the past. Incorrectly assuming that the movement had achieved its goal, the public perceived continued activism then was perceived as excessive and overreaching.

The court's orders also presented internal challenges for the movement. The Freedom House Institute and its alliance lost some degree of vitality when the situation in the schools was not as pressing by 1977. While the increased stability and security in desegregated schools was a major accomplishment for the alliance, the weakening of this network was problematic as black parents and students faced new and continued challenges in the schools.

Phase III Desegregation

On May 6, 1976 Judge Garrity released a plan for Phase III school desegregation to begin in September. The plan reflected the sense of cautious optimism felt by many activists that desegregation was working and placed an emphasis on continuity and stability. It also marked the beginning of a long discussion about lessening the court's involvement in the schools. Above all, Phase III sought to build on the progress that had

been achieved during Phase I and II in terms of balancing racial demographics and promoting community involvement. The plan addressed the need for qualitative educational reforms in the Boston Public Schools through the introduction of a bilingual education program and the creation of a United Facilities Plan to outline plans for the construction and closure of schools. Although the court's June 1974 orders had called for the closure of a number of schools in poor physical condition and an end to the practice of manipulating school construction in order to promote racial segregation, progress on this front had been limited since 1974. The court hoped that the UFP, which would be overseen by the School Department, would bring greater efficiency and clarity to these efforts.

However, parents and community members expressed concerns that the UFP did not sufficiently integrate community input. By the late 1970s, an increasingly empowered and engaged parent and community body was quick to challenge school governance practices which did not involve the community and had a strong institutional base through which to make these concerns heard in the citizen monitoring bodies. During the late 1970s, parent members of the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Community District Advisory Committee from District VIII spoke out against the UFP. Black parents were particularly upset by the UFP's recommendation of the closure of Roxbury High School and several predominantly black schools in the neighborhood of Jamaica Plain. They argued that the plan was racially discriminatory because it called for the closure of a disproportionate number of schools in the black community. CDAC member Patty Garnette summarized a sentiment shared by many parents when she said, "Do not make the mistake of developing a plan and then asking the parents it they like it, of deciding to

close a school and then asking parents if they like it." [425]Judge Garrity came down on the side of the parents, rejecting the plan and ordering officials to create a new facilities plan which incorporated community input.

Rather than waiting for the next plan, parents submitted a plan to the School Department which called for a much larger role for parents in the development and approval of facilities plans. School officials did not approve the plan but were also careful not to reject parental involvement outright, citing their continued commitment to parental involvement while also stating that some schools would be closed and that these decisions would be made after careful consideration.[426] Faced with the resistance of city school officials parents continued to challenge facilities plans which excluded them from the planning process. In November, 1979 CPAC and the Boston Teachers Union joined forces to host a citywide hearing to discuss the School Department's plan to close sixteen schools as of July 1, 1980. In a flyer advertising the hearing organizers invited community members to come to discuss concerns related to the "lack of meaningful participation in the planning process." The flyer pictures an African American woman holding a flyer which reads, "THESE ARE OUR SCHOOLS." Likewise, parents of District I CPAC held a hearing in October to discuss the planned closure of several schools exhorting parents to make their voices heard before the plan was finalized.[427]

[425] Michael Fields, "Decision on school closings to have input from parents," unnamed newspaper, undated, Box 3, Melnea Cass Interview records, BWOHP.
[426] Ibid.
[427] "School Closings!" Box 1, Series III: CPAC, CPC, Boston City.

Figure 6. These Are Our Schools, 1980.

Phase III called for the desegregation of kindergarten classes, which had been excluded from Phase I and Phase II plans in response to the protests of parents and therefore remained segregated. By 1977 the court was ready to push these concerns aside and incorporate kindergartens into the desegregation plans. In addition to integrating kindergartens, Phase III also included measures for increasing access to kindergarten among black Bostonians, among whom enrollment was generally much lower than their white counterparts.[428] Additionally, the court created the Department of Implementation to oversee all aspects of the implementation of the court's orders. This order transferred all monitoring authority from the troubled Citywide Coordinating Council, which was dissolved in 1977. Once more, the orders were a step towards enabling the court to reduce their involvement. A crucial part of the work of the department was to collect data

[428] "Press conference on Phase III desegregation order", 6 May 1977, WGBH Media Library and Archives.

on the racial demographics of schools to compile into annual reports to monitor progress towards desegregation.[429]

The citizen monitoring bodies continued to exert considerable influence in the implementation process and serve as an important base for community involvement in this period, even as they underwent significant changes.

The CCC, which had struggled to find its way during Phase II, continued to experience challenges. In September, 1976 the court appointed Freedom Stayout leader Reverend James Breeden to lead the body, replacing Reverend Michael Groden. Community ties brought the movement veteran and former to the CCC. Breeden became involved in the implementation process through his work at the Harvard Graduate School of Education which was partnered with Roxbury High School under Phase II orders. Breeden recalls that when the position at CCC opened, close friends Hubie Jones and Melvin Miller, editor of the *Bay State Banner*, encouraged him to apply. Judge Garrity jumped at the opportunity to appoint Breeden to the post, given his considerable leadership experience and mounting pressures from Freedom House to increase the number of black Bostonians in leadership positions on the CCC. Breeden reflected that

[429] Abstract of Department of Implementation, Department of Implementation, Desegregation Era Records, Boston City. The creation of the Department of Implementation had been several years in the making. During the summer after the initial ruling, the court created an "implementation team" made up of teachers and administrators within the Boston Public Schools who worked as a volunteer committee towards compliance with the court's orders. The effectiveness of the "implementation team" was several restricted early on by the fact that it fell under the jurisdiction of the Boston School Committee which was openly antagonistic towards the court's orders. In September, the "implementation team" developed into the Office of Implementation, increasing its numbers of part-time staff, but remaining initially under the control of the School Committee. It quickly became apparent that the office, with its limited budget and part-time staff, lacked the necessary resources, organizational structure, and institutional power to perform the extensive work of ensuring compliance with the court's orders. In December 1975, the court intervened, stripping the school committee of all authority over the Office of Implementation and granting Superintendent Fahey with the authority to reconstruct the office as a permanent body with full-time staff and increased funding. Fahey undertook a significant restructuring of the office with a focus on centralization and transparency. With his annual orders in May, 1977, Judge Garrity ordered the creation of the Department of Implementation as a permanent unit under the supervision of the Associate Superintendent.

although he and Judge Garrity had an excellent working relationship they understood the function and potential of the CCC somewhat differently. While Judge Garrity intended the CCC to distribute information to the public about the schools and desegregation process in order to increase support for implementation, Reverend Breeden believed that the body was best suited to gathering information about conditions in the schools and the actions of school officials and reporting this to the courts.[430] Despite Breeden's efforts, the CCC was disbanded in 1977.

More sweeping changes came to the citizens monitoring bodies in 1982 in response to a comprehensive internal evaluation and ongoing community feedback. Among the criticisms leveled against the citizen monitoring bodies were that they lacked a clear purpose, lacked sufficient funding, members did not receive adequate training, and that continued hostility from the school committee and home and school associations undercut its effectiveness. In light of these criticisms and continued commitment to establishing a permanent role for the community in school governance, Judge Garrity dismantled the existing network of citizen monitoring bodies and created three new bodies in their place—the Citywide Parents Council, District Parent Councils, and School Parent Councils.

The Citywide Parents Council, like its predecessor the Citywide Parents Advisory Council, held jurisdiction at the city level and was tasked with promoting parental involvement and soliciting community feedback on all aspects of school governance. The CPC sought this feedback from the community through frequent public events, publications, and sponsorship of a weekly television program. The CPC was comprised

[430] Breeden interview.

of parents elected from the School Parent Councils in each district, and like CPAC, was required to have a racially integrated membership body.

The District Parent Councils were responsible for citizen oversight for each of the nine community school districts created under Phase II. DPCs were comprised of the chairs of the SPC Executive Committees. School Parent Councils (SPC) were responsible for coordinating community involvement in ensuring compliance with the court's orders. The work of the SPCs included; circulating information related to the schools and court orders, assisting in the creation of student assignment and transportation plans, creating conflict resolution programs for the public, empowering parents to advocate for curricular reforms, and generally promoting an open flow communication between school stakeholders.

The late 1970s brought a significant increase in the numbers of African Americans in official positions within the school and city administration. Undeniably a huge achievement in terms of access, the appointment and/or election of black Bostonians to prominent positions within the very systems they had fought so hard against also raised questions about the long term political impact of black elected officials. Among the most significant of these was the election of John D. O'Bryant to the Boston School Committee in 1977, making him the first African American member in the twentieth century. His election marked the culmination of a long fought campaign by black Bostonians to gain a voice on the committee that began with Ruth Batson's bid in 1951. The victory held special symbolic importance as O'Bryant occupied the seat formerly held by Louise Day Hicks. Just two months later, another major victory came when Governor Michael Dukakis appointed longtime NAACP activist Paul Parks as the

first black Secretary of Education in the state. Unimaginable just a decade prior, in 1985 Dr. Laval Wilson was appointed as Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. He was the first African American to serve in this position in the 354 existence of the school system.

These accomplishments, however, were met by continued challenges by proponents of the status quo of Boston racial politics. After O'Bryant was elected to the school committee in 1977, several other black members were elected including longtime METCO Executive Director Jean McGuire. But, the increased representation of the black community on the board proved to be short-lived. In 1989 Boston voters approved a non-binding ballot question asking if the school committee should become an appointed rather than election body. The question proposed that members would be appointed by the mayor from a list selected by a nominating panel and subject to the approval of the City Council. 37.3% voted in favor of the measure and 36.2% against and in January 1992 the first appointed School Committee took office.

While the late 1970s were a time of greater optimism in the movement, racial violence continued to be a very real part of life. Five years after the first year of court-ordered desegregation, Darryl Williams, a fifteen year old African American student and football player at Jamaica Plain High School was shot while standing on the field at Charlestown High School on September 28, 1979. Williams was shot in the neck by three white teens, Steven McGonagle, Joseph Nardone and Patrick Doe, perched on the roof of the nearby Bunker Hill Housing Project. Although he survived the shooting, Williams was permanently paralyzed from the neck down and lived the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

Born and raised in Roxbury, Williams was a promising athlete with dreams of a career as a professional football player. Williams' visit to Charlestown High was the first time he had ever entered the predominantly white neighborhood of Charlestown, a testament to the continued racial divisions in the city's landscape despite the desegregation of the schools. The incident shocked spectators and fellow athletes. The relative stability that appeared to have been achieved quickly evaporated as underlying racial tensions and animosities flooded back to the surface. In the hours after the shooting Mayor White and other school officials publicly declared the incident to be a racial hate crime and launched a massive manhunt for the shooters and vowed to secure justice for the Williams family. The White administration was particularly desperate to arrest the shooters and avoid a full-scale race riot because Pope John Paul II was due to visit the city in less than seventy-two hours. The manhunt proved successful as less than forty-hours the police arrested McGonagle, Nardone, and Doe. The three, who were all residents of the nearby Bunker Hill Housing Project, claimed that they had been shooting at pigeons and had not intended to hit Williams. However, thanks to a plea bargain involving previous crimes, two of the three youths were convicted of assault and battery with a deadly weapon and given a ten year sentence. The police and school officials accepted the youths' claims that the shooting was unintentional and reversed their earlier statements declaring the shooting was racially motivated, much to the outrage and disbelief of many in the black community and Williams' family.[431]

[431] "Nobody Won," *Boston Globe*, Dan Shaughnessy, 30 September 1990, http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/magazine/articles/1990/09/30/nobody_won/, accessed on February 13, 2014; "Darryl Williams Lived a True Hero's Life," ESPN, Richard Lapchick, 2 April 2010, http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/commentary/news/story?page=lapchick/100402, accessed on February 13, 2014.

In the wake of the shooting black students and activists citywide mobilized quickly. Days after the shooting, the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM) released a statement condemning the violent attack and calling for substantial changes in the schools to address the underlying issue of a culture of racial violence and hostility in the schools. In their statement, BEAM argued that the Williams' shooting was one in a long list of hate crimes against black Bostonians in recent years and argued that although the arrest of the perpetrators was important it did not attack the underlying culture of racial hatred that persisted in the city. BEAM demanded the relocation of all extracurricular events from "high risk areas" (defined as Charlestown, East Boston, South Boston, and Hyde Park to neutral sites). They also called for a four-fold increase in the number of black administrators and teachers in all high-risk neighborhoods. To accomplish this goal, they called for cooperation from the Boston Teacher's Union to revise seniority policies which reduced the number of black educators in these positions. Additionally, BEAM advocated a fourfold increase in the number of security personnel in these neighborhoods with special attention to the protection of black students and staff. BEAM also supported an expanded role for the community in addressing these issues with its proposal for the creation of a task force to review the concerns of black students in high-risk schools, comprised of members selected by black parents and students.[432]

Black students also rallied together in the wake of the shooting to voice their outrage and demand change. On September 30, students of the Black Student Union submitted a list of demands to Superintendent Robert Wood outlining changes they wanted to see in the schools to prevent racial violence in the schools. On October 3, the

[432] Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts, "A Statement on the Shooting and Attempted Murder of Darryl Williams and the Boston Public Schools," Batson, *Black Educational Movement,* 430a.

same day which the Pope arrived in Boston, students also participated in a "Darryl Williams Rally." More than 1,800 people walked peacefully to the Holy Cross Cathedral in the South End where the Pope held a service, chanting "justice for Darryl" as they marched. Two days later, hundreds of black students walked out of English, Boston Technical, and Madison Park High School and led a demonstration in City Hall, and the following day 100 students also walked out Hyde Park High School.[433]

Despite this surge of activism, city and school officials maintained their position that the shooting was unintentional rather than a racially motivated attempted murder and as a result made few changes in school policy and offered limited support to Williams and his family. After a flood of assurances of support in the initial aftermath of the attack, Williams' family found itself largely on its own financially and politically. Williams' filed a civil suit against the city which failed because the court found that the crime was not racially motivated. The community mobilization surrounding the incident also largely faded away within several months.

The court and activists also faced continued challenges in their efforts to integrate faculty and staff and increase the numbers of black educators and administrators. By the early 1980s the schools had failed to meet the benchmark set by the court that black educators should comprise twenty-five percent of the staff and administration. In 1974 black teachers made up eleven percent of the teaching force and by 1981 that number had climbed to nineteen percent. Although also falling short of the court's guidelines, the school system had made slightly better progress in their effort to increase the numbers of black administrators with an increase from thirteen percent in 1976 to twenty-one percent

[433] "Another Conversation with the Next Generation," (Episode 1010), Say Brother, 30 November 1979, WGBH Media Library and Archives.

in 1981. To remedy the lack of black educators as a result of racially discriminatory hiring practices, the court required the school department to increase the number of minority teachers and administrators by 1.5 percent annually to continue until the proportion of minority faculty and administrators had reached twenty-five percent. [434] As the activism in the aftermath of the Williams' shooting demonstrates, a desire for greater numbers of black teachers and administrators remained a focal point of black community activism during this period.

While the court provided substantial support for the expansion of community involvement and authority in the schools, activists pressed parents to take full advantage of their newfound power and responsibility. While the creation of the citizen oversight bodies provided a huge boost to parents' position in the schools, their existence did not guarantee that parents would exert a meaningful role in the schools in practice. In order to turn their vision of a school system in which parents held equal power to school officials required widespread parental involvement, which a number of schools struggled to achieve. Encouraging parents and students Muriel Snowden said, "And to the black community, we want you to know that there are organizations, agencies, groups, and individuals who stand ready to assist parents and students in every way possible. You are not alone." She continued, "We also urge you to take advantage of the chance to have a say in what and how your children learn—go to parent-teacher meetings, participate in the Community District Advisory Councils, make your views known by becoming members of the Racial Ethnic Parent Councils. Again, if you do not know how to become

[434] "Fact Sheet—Desegregation Orders," 1981, Box 37, Folder 1273, FH, Northeastern; Breeden interview.

involved or to function in these groups, we are all here to assist you."[435] As Snowden notes, increasing knowledge of the opportunities available to community people was another major obstacle which the movement had to overcome.

Although parents and community organizations like Freedom House played a major role in building community centric schools, they faced substantial structural and ideological obstacles in their bid to do so. The relationship between school officials and black parents and students had been defined for extreme hostility and distrust for decades. This painful history made it difficult to convince some black parents that they could and should become involved in the schools and work with the very people who had fought tooth and nail to exclude them. Parent activist Rayleen M. Craig grounded the challenges faced by the newly re-organized CPC within the contentious history of minority parent-school relations. "Most are still intimidated by administrators and teachers. This is not the fault of parents. It is the result of years of conditioning—years of peripheral contact with a system that did not want parents looking over teachers' and principals' shoulders. Parents were made to feel stupid and were treated like intruders. It will take work to undo that kind of conditioning."[436] Although the creation of spaces like the CPC from which parents could launch their activism was important, there was still much work to be done in terms of creating a culture of openness and responsiveness within the schools.

Judge Garrity was determined to shift the court from the expansive and direct supervisory role it had occupied in the schools for the past five years. Despite his efforts to implement lasting changes in the schools through the Phase III orders, the court's

[435] Muriel Snowden, "Freedom House statement to community at large and black community specifically," 9 September 1976, Box 38, Folder 1300, FH, Northeastern.
[436] "Statement of Rayleen M. Craig, parent of children attending the Blackstone Square Community School and member of CDAC IX," CCC Hearings for District VII, 3 February 1976, Box 4, Folder 6, Boston Schools Case: CCC, Garrity, UMB.

withdrawal proved to be a lengthy process. In June, 1979 Judge Garrity released a formal list of criteria by which the federal court withdraw from the case and in 1981 request permission from all parties in the case to officially end the court's involvement. It was not until 1983 that the court took the next major step, in transferring the bulk of monitoring responsibility to the State Board of Education. Judge Garrity's final orders in the case in September, 1985, marked eleven years of involvement which made the case the longest running school desegregation case in the nation's history. As the court pressed ahead, a number of activists expressed concerns about what would happen to the schools and the role of community people in the schools, after Judge Garrity ended his involvement. Although black activists and the courts had occasionally butted heads over the details of desegregation plans, Judge Garrity was a strong and consistent supporter of the movement for more than a decade and fought hard to expand the role of citizens in educational governance. Craig said, "The next year or two will be crucial for education in Boston. Judge Garrity will not be in the picture forever. Because of his intervention, there is now some accountability on the part of the Boston public school system. The next step must be to prepare parents so that the schools are accountable to them. And that step must be taken now."[437]

The Meaning of the Movement

Black Bostonians' campaign to claim a role for black citizens in educational governance was one of slow progress and significant opposition, but ultimately of significant payoffs as well. Evidence of the expansion of black community power in the

[437] Ibid.

schools was readily apparent in the culture, institutions, and politics of the city by the 1980s.

The citizen monitoring bodies provided a formal, institutional space in which all Bostonians could participate in school governance by sharing their experiences and aspirations for the schools. The creation of these bodies speaks to the expanded power of black Bostonians in the educational sphere by the mid-1970s through their ability to drive state action, in that it was the persistent demands of activists like Ellen Jackson and Ruth Batson that prompted the court's decision to create the monitoring bodies and to support them for more than two decades. Although not without their challenges and limitations, these bodies were a testament to the enormous progress that had been achieved in the movement for black community power in the schools since the 1950s. Whereas in the early 1960s school authorities ejected mothers like Barbara Elam from their children's classrooms in the Higginson District by the mid-1970s the highest court granted parents the right and responsibility to oversee the schools. The citizen monitoring bodies represented a significant step towards the creation of a school system in which school officials and community people were equal partners in educational delivery. Likewise, the court's restructuring of the schools into "community school districts" reflects the power of grassroots activism to influence state policy as well as the shifts towards a more community-centric educational and political culture.

The creation of the citizen monitoring bodies and the community school districts did not only bring about greater opportunities for black Bostonians, but rather Bostonians of all races. While specifically aimed at opening up the school system to the city's black citizens, ultimately the movement smashed the culture of parochialism and exclusivity

within the schools which had rejected any community involvement, creating opportunities for white Bostonians to play more active roles in their schools as well. Movement leaders like the Snowdens and Batson, while focused foremost on the interests of black youth and families, understood an expansion of community school power across racial lines as a victory for their movement as well. Describing this shift in the racial politics of education as a result of the movement, Batson said, "I thought that a great education achievement had been made to show both white and black kids that they could go anywhere they wanted to. . . . I considered it an educational achievement that had taken place. I really did."[438] White opponents of school desegregation, driven by racial animosity, failed to see that school desegregation as a result of black educational activism, opened up greater opportunities for all Bostonians outside of the elite inner-circles, to have a say in the future of their schools and city. Although not every parent or student became involved in school leadership, the ability of community people to influence school practice represented a monumental shift in the racial and educational politics of the city and its schools.

The history of the black education movement in Boston is replete with examples of determined and well-organized grassroots activism which brought democracy and equality to institutions formerly ensconced in secrecy and exclusivity. These changes ranged from "local" victories such as the forced retirement of Principal Cloney in the Higginson School District to high-profile ones such as the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act and the ruling in *Morgan v. Hennigan.* Each victory was surely incremental, laying the stage for the next step along the way. The significance of each accomplishment lay not only in its immediate implications—such as a change in the

[438] Theoharis, "We Saved the City," 83.

leadership at the Higginson School—but in the message it sent that black Bostonians could and would make changes in their schools.

The most significant impact of the black education movement in Boston cannot be found in legislation, organizations, or demographic data but in the form of the ideas that it created and brought into the civic discourse of the city. While Boston's leaders were eager to point to its status as the "cradle of liberty" and tout its liberal credentials, it was the black educational activists who fought to make these principles of democracy a lived reality through their movement. Activists' put forward a vision of a school system and city rooted in the principles of self-determination, in which citizen's insights and needs were central to educational practice and policy. When city leaders ignored their duties to protect and advocate for *all* citizens, black Bostonians stepped up to assert their right to equal representation and power in city life and took whatever steps necessary to make their vision of justice a reality.

My research on the dynamic movement for educational justice in the Boston Public Schools suggests that "experts" would do well to consider the analyses and experiences of community stakeholders in their schools and cities. My work raises important questions about the potential of community action to bring about lasting political, social, and economic change through a study of the grassroots movement for racial equity and empowerment in the Boston Public Schools.

As Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has argued in her work on the long civil rights movement "the stories we tell about the civil rights movement matter" in that they directly shape institutions, laws, policies, and beliefs.[439] The busing narrative—with its focus on white resistance and court-ordered desegregation—presents efforts to achieve

[439] Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1239.

racial equality in the Boston Public Schools as an enormous failure and in doing so undermines political support for the goals of racial equality and community empowerment in the schools in the present. In its erasure of the activism of black Bostonians it contributes to a contemporary portrayal of poor minorities in urban areas, as politically apathetic, morally depraved, and dangerous—justifying their marginalization in the city. The conflicts over desegregation continue to be a major source of contention and racial animosity in Boston but efforts to reconcile the past are hampered by a limited understanding of the city's racial history.

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