

Reclaiming the Narrative: Black Community Activism and Boston School Desegregation History 1960-1975

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RECLAIMING THE NARRATIVE:
BLACK COMMUNITY ACTIVISM AND
BOSTON SCHOOL DESEGREGATION HISTORY 1960-1975

Dissertation
by

LYDA S. PETERS

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ABSTRACT

RECLAIMING THE NARRATIVE: BLACK COMMUNITY ACTIVISM AND BOSTON SCHOOL DESEGREGATION HISTORY 1960-1975

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Dennis Shirley, Chair

This research study is a historical analysis of Boston school desegregation viewed through the lens of Black Bostonians who gave rise to a Black Education Movement. Its purpose is to place Boston's school desegregation history in a markedly different context than many of the narratives that evolved since *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974). First, it provides a historical connection between the 18th and 19th century long road to equal schooling and the 20th century equal educational opportunity movement, both led by Black activists who lived in Boston. Second, it provides a public space for the voices of 20th century activists to tell their accounts of schooling in Boston. The narrators in this study attended Boston public schools and became leaders and foot soldiers in the struggle to dismantle a racially segregated school system.

Ten case studies of Boston's Black activists provide the foundation of this study. They recount, through oral history, a community movement whose goal was to save children attending majority Black schools from a system that was destroying them. Two theoretical perspectives, Critical Race Theory and Resiliency, inform the research design and findings. The findings shed light on agency from within the Black community, what changes were expected in the schools, the range of views regarding the intent of desegregation, and how systemic racism was the force that drove this community to dismantle a system that violated the 14th Amendment rights of Black students.

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To my dear friend, Dr. Mary Harvey, who helped me look at the taped interviews to find meaning in the words and the work of these activists, along with the special encouragement that always came when we spoke. I thank-you.

I dedicate this dissertation to the twenty-two activists who opened their doors to me without question and shared their stories of schooling and living in Boston. I am forever grateful to you for your kindness. I thank each and everyone of you.

This dissertation is in honor of the many Boston activists who are not mentioned or who are no longer with us. I am forever indebted to them.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF
MY MASTER TEACHERS
PEGGY PETERS AND RUTH BATSON

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A Personal Story—Context and Background

On November 4, 2008, Senator Barack Obama of Illinois was elected the 44th president of the United States. This historic event disrupted our country's collective vision of a standing social and political norm – that of white, male presidents, reinforced by 220 years of presidential electoral history and 43 white, male presidents. On that historic day and the weeks to follow, the conversations in many Black communities shifted from a generalized discussion of where Black Americans would fit in a larger political agenda to a more focused analysis of what it means for America to have a Black president.

Many friends visited the graves of their parents and left Obama memorabilia at the gravesites. Others questioned the possibilities of this historic election and the significance of race in America. For many who lived in segregation and whose ancestors suffered the legacies that resulted from enslavement, this election posed the hope of better days for Black Americans, as if a door had opened to an emboldened future. Questions about the history of Black Americans surfaced as I thought about my family and those with whom I had worked, marched, and picketed against segregation. What was personally a powerful reflection on November 4, 2008 was the realization that prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, all Black Americans were born into a constitutionally sanctioned “separate but equal” America and subject to racialized policies and practices specific to the states in which they lived. Before *Brown*, we all were born into a segregated society (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537).

The election of Barak Obama felt personal. I thought about my parents who struggled to financially sustain our family and our extended families during the 20th century. I thought about my father and uncles who were waiters on the segregated New Haven & Hartford railroad, where they served whites in white-only dining cars. I thought about my early memories of a mother who worked for white families and then came home to support her sisters, my cousins, and me. When I entered elementary school in the late 1940s, she found a job in a Revlon factory. Sometime during the 1950s the factory moved to New Jersey. We lived in New York City. The memory of a childhood where my mother left home at 4 am to travel daily from one state to another for employment in order to provide a living wage for our family remains with me. I thought about members of my community and my many friends who were part of Black freedom movements throughout the country during the 60s and 70s. This 2008 paradigm shift elevated for me the significance of racism, the wonders of Black resilience, and the critical nature of Black freedom movements.

Liberation and education are concepts so interconnected in the Black experience that many families embraced the belief that education was a way out of poverty and the gateway to a better life. “Get a good education” was the message from Black elders in so many places in my young life. I heard it in my home and from my neighbors. I heard it from adults on the streets of New City and Roxbury, Massachusetts. Because of this fundamental belief, my mother led her sisters, my cousins, and me to a local Catholic church where we were baptized and I subsequently began my education in a Catholic school. In the case of my cousins, they transferred from the New York public schools to the Catholic school. This was a purposeful act meant primarily to gain admission into a

more advantaged school. It was a sacrifice, as there was an added financial burden on my mother and my aunts who were poor, yet working class. They would forgo personal needs in order that the children in our family would start life with a decent education. Other families who lived in our apartment building and on my block replicated this conversion. It was by doing this that the pathway to better educational opportunities began for many Black and Latino children who lived on 159th Street in New York City's Washington Heights.

Becoming a Boston teacher.

After moving from New York to Roxbury and graduating from a predominantly white Catholic high school and then from a predominantly white Catholic college, I began my teaching career in the Boston Public Schools in September of 1965. I chose to teach in my neighborhood, a section of Dorchester, which was predominantly Black. As a college student, I located a Boston school, the Quincy E. Dickerman, where I could have a supervised practicum experience. I learned to teach under the supervision of a wonderful, caring third grade teacher, Mrs. Bethel, who was one of too few Black teachers in the city. She graduated from Boston Teacher's College. Only graduates from this college could find employment in the Boston schools and those few Black teachers who were employed by the Boston schools knew that this was the primary route to a teaching position in the city. Although I did not graduate from Boston's Teacher's College, the principal, whose wife graduated from the college I was attending, offered me a position as a first grade teacher at the end of my practicum. I eagerly accepted.

To be employed by the Boston School Committee, however, a prospective teacher was personally interviewed and approved by a member of the Boston School Committee.

My principal, Mr. Hart, told me the name of the committeeman and the date and the time of the meeting. He said he called ahead and that I would be hired. When I entered the school committee member's office, I was asked a couple of personnel questions. My memory of the meeting was that it was very short; it seemed to be no more than about five minutes. He confirmed that I was assigned to the Dickerman, as requested by my principal. I was twenty-one years old, a newly minted first grade teacher, and entered my first grade classroom that September. It had an enrollment of nearly 40 five and six year olds. I loved teaching and soon came to understand personally the institutional challenges within the schools that the Black community and its children faced.

A glimpse at segregated schooling.

The Quincy E. Dickerman elementary school was in the Phillips Brooks district. It was an 8-minute walk from my home. Built in 1915 and named after a schoolteacher who taught in Boston for half a century, the Dickerman was the feeder school for children living on Magnolia Street and the surrounding area in Roxbury. This was a densely populated, residentially segregated, low-income Black neighborhood. Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Massachusetts State Board of Education established an advisory committee to assess the racial composition of student populations in school systems throughout the Commonwealth. The advisory committee submitted a report on "non-white" enrollment in the Commonwealth's public schools. A close examination of the 159 elementary schools in Boston in 1964 continued to show a preponderance of non-white enrollment concentrated in Black residential areas (*Morgan v. Hennigan*, 1974).

The Dickerman was one of forty-nine racially imbalanced schools in Boston and one of the twenty-five elementary schools with an enrollment of between 81% and 100% non-white students, according to the advisory committee's report. During the 1966–1967 school year, the Dickerman's total student enrollment was 5 white students and 452 Black students (Boston School Committee, 1967, p. 21) and two Black teachers. With a 99% Black student population in a predominantly Black, low income neighborhood, this elementary school, grades kindergarten through six, had a nearly all white teaching staff and a completely white administrative and support staff, which included custodians. The Boston Public Schools Department of Statistics Collection, which contains student and teacher files from 1967 to 1973, did not keep racial statistics of faculty prior to 1968. The School Committee did, however, list racial data of students in their 1966-1967 Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in the Public School (Boston, MA: Boston Redevelopment Authority Library, 1967, 21). I taught at the Dickerman School from 1965 through 1968 and can provide first hand testimony of the faculty's racial composition. Each year throughout my tenure, there were no more than two Black teachers. I was included in this count.

On Friday, May 17, 1968, on the fourteenth anniversary of the *Brown* decision, Jacqueline, a seven year-old first grader, was left in a cloakroom on a Friday afternoon after school was dismissed. Her teacher confined her to the cloakroom shortly after lunch, with tape placed across her mouth, as punishment for talking. All students in the school were dismissed for the weekend, leaving, as the only adults on the premises, three teachers and the school janitor. I was one of the three teachers.

We entered the first grade classroom to look at the dolls the first grade teacher had the children paint. These china-white, faceless dolls decorated with black eyebrows, black eyelashes, blushed cheeks, and red lips were lined up side-by-side in a row across the front of the room facing the first graders. It was as if these dolls were to be a mirror, for each child who had been tasked with painting a doll, of what they could never become. Thus, when this all-Black classroom of first graders looked at the dolls looking back at them throughout their day, they were not looking at replicas of themselves or their artwork. They were facing white symbolic representations of a larger society within and without the building. Not one doll reflected any part of them. These first grade faces were shades of brown. The number of dolls equaled the number of children in the room. These dolls appeared to visually remind these children that they were not the norm in America but rather they were one of the “others.”

Borrero, Yeh, Cruz, and Suda (2012) write that, “Schools are cultural contexts that have the power and potential to promote students’ cultural assets or “other” youth in a way that keeps them from creating meaningful academic identities” (p. 1). At the Dickerman, their “otherness” was reinforced in their art work, through their majority white teachers and staff, in the use of the racially insensitive second-hand books they read, and in their reading readiness tests administered in 1965 that held a 1942 copyright date. They learned in one of the oldest and most decrepit school buildings in the city.

While looking at the dolls, we heard a whimper coming from the cloak closet and found Jacqueline. It was about 4:30 p.m. Jacqueline was sent to the cloakroom by her teacher and forgotten. Frightened but still, Jacqueline was an obedient first grader who never left the cloakroom, even when she saw all of her classmates retrieved their coats

and leave for home. She never moved, as alone as she must have felt. School was over for the week and we questioned what would have happened had we not stopped in the classroom. The response from within the school building was that the school janitor said he would have found Jacqueline and sent her home. We took Jacqueline to her mother who was frantically searching for her in the neighborhood because school had been dismissed for the weekend. Her mother asked what she should do and we told her to contact the NAACP. She did and the Quincy E. Dickerman joined the other schools that had become public examples of discriminatory schooling in Boston.

The teacher denied taping Jacqueline's mouth, although she did admit to using tape to silence talkative children, and responded that Jacqueline could have walked out of that cloakroom at anytime. Her mother reported publicly that Jacqueline was frightened and felt imprisoned (Eure, 1968; McCain, 1968a, 1968b, 1968c, 1968d). This experience, unfortunately, was typical of how too many Black children were treated in the Boston schools. The Quincy E. Dickerman was one of many examples that gave the Black community the impetus to organized and gain a political voice in the education of Black students.

In a Boston Sunday Globe article McCain (1968d) questioned the larger issue involved in the "Cloakroom Case." How did Black parents feel about a largely white school system educating their children? Paul Parks (1923–2009), a member of the Education Committee of the NAACP, vice-president of the Citizens of Boston Public Schools, a member of the Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Executive Director of Boston Model Cities Administration, and a Dukakis appointee as Secretary of Education from 1975 to 1979, issued a report on behalf of the

committee. *A Statement on the Education of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools* answered this question, in part, by noting, “Nothing but a radical change in the thinking of the Boston School Administration can provide the opportunities which Negroes demand” (Parks, 1963). Further, the report cites concerns that Black children were not being prepared to compete in an evolving society. As the city moved through the second half of the 20th century, too many children were receiving a substandard education within a crumbling infrastructure, in underfunded schools with minimal resources, and little political attention from the city.

An emboldened Black community.

The promise of *Brown* has yet to be realized (Bell, 2004; Ogletree, 2004; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Yet, *Brown* mattered (Balkin, 2002; Green, 2004; Klarman, 2004; Kluger, 1975; Minow, 2010). V. P. Franklin (2005), Distinguished Professor at the University of California, Riverside, Graduate School of Education and Department of History wrote:

I would argue that it was the agency and activism of African Americans that laid the groundwork for the ruling, that it was African American agency and activism that spawned the Civil Rights Movement which sought to move the area directly affected by the decision beyond public education to public transportation, accommodations, housing, voting, and employment. And to the extent that one concludes that the promises of the *Brown* decision remain unfulfilled, I must conclude that it will take agency and activism among African Americans to bring these promises to fruition, not just for people of African descent in the U.S., but for poor and oppressed people in this society and people of color throughout the world. (p. 2)

The Assistant Principal of the Dickerman called my home to question my involvement with activists in Roxbury who were challenging the schools. He did not understand why “my people” would be dissatisfied with the Boston schools, as many had attended them and received a good education. He warned me about my newspaper

interviews, reminding me that this was my third year of teaching. The next year I would have become a permanent employee of the Boston Public Schools. Shortly after this conversation, Mrs. Ruth M. Batson (1921– 2003), one of the most outspoken leaders for racially balanced schools and the co-chair of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) called to schedule me to provide formal testimony before the MCAD. She and Fr. Robert Drinan, co-chair, asked for an account of the events at the Dickerman. Fr. Drinan, S.J., a lawyer, human rights activist, and Democratic U.S. Representative from Massachusetts from 1971-1981, was the first Roman Catholic priest to serve as a voting member of Congress.

Ruth Batson was a lifetime resident of Boston, living the majority of her life in Roxbury. She and her three daughters graduated from the Boston schools. During the 1950s, she discovered disparities between white classmates and her daughter in home assignments. She approached Lionel Lindsay, the President of the Boston Branch NAACP in 1953 to question whether the organization had knowledge of the conditions and administration of the schools. As a result of that inquiry, she was asked to chair a newly formed NAACP sub-committee on schools. This committee, led by Ruth Batson, emerged as the principal agency maintaining a laser focus for more than two decades on 20th century unequal schooling. By many in the community and the city of Boston at large, Ruth Batson came to be known as a leader of many of Boston's historic battles.

Derrick Jackson, columnist for the Boston Globe, wrote:

Batson fought for the proper reading of history and made plenty herself. The educator, civil rights activist, philanthropist, and historical preservationist ... [i]n a 1963 letter to the editor, she responded to critics of school desegregation by saying, 'Raising educational standards without eliminating the basic problems of segregation in fact is no more than separate but equal' ... Batson said in 1995: 'Busing was worth it. In Boston, we had schools with no libraries, schools in

dilapidated condition, schools with inadequate numbers of teachers, and a school administration with no blacks in key positions.’ (2003)

Following my MCAD testimony, Mrs. Batson called, once again, to offer me employment in a newly funded program of “urban-suburban exchange,” which she would direct. It was the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO), a voluntarily program where Black Boston school students could attend one of seven suburban school systems. It was in its second year and my responsibility would be to interview elementary students, select the schools to which they would be assigned, and develop programs for METCO students, as needed. The staff was small and we worked in concert. In addition to Ruth Batson, as Director, there was Elizabeth “Betty” Johnson, Assistant Director, and one of the founders of Operation Exodus, a parent led community organization. It used Boston’s open enrollment policy to transport Black children to white schools by bus where there were empty seats. Along with Ruth Batson and Betty Johnson, there were two support staff members and me.

The Problem

The issue is not whether children should be bused to school. Forty percent of all pupils in American public schools ride a school bus each day. Only five percent of them are bused for the purpose of desegregation. Indeed for generations, black and white students were transported past each other’s schools – and before the invention of buses, the segregationists used buckboards. The issue is not the method of transportation, but the reason for it. Or in the words of the Reverend Jesse Jackson, “The issue is not the bus; the issue is us.”

Senator George McGovern, D.S.D.
National Democratic Issues Convention, November 23, 1975

2014 signaled the 40th anniversary of the decision issued by W. Arthur Garrity, District Judge of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, which concluded “...that the rights of the plaintiff class of black students and parents under the

Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States have been and are being violated by the defendants in their management and operation of the public schools of the City of Boston” (*Morgan v. Hennigan*, 1974). The Equal Protection Clause was the basis for dismantling segregated education in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). That clause provides that no state shall, “...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (U.S. Const. amend. XIV, § 1). In law, Judge Garrity’s decision guaranteed the constitutional rights of a class of children, their parents, and by extension the Black community. These litigants had been denied equal educational opportunities in the Boston Public Schools.

The Court ordered that the School Committee, its Superintendent, and all who were in positions to effect any changes in the operation of the schools “be permanently enjoined from discriminating upon the basis of race.” One remedy ordered by the court was that at the start of the 1974 school year, some school children from predominantly white neighborhoods and predominantly Black neighborhoods would be transported between racialized communities in school buses to achieve desegregation (*Morgan v. Hennigan*, 1974). The response to transporting these students, particularly at South Boston High School in the fall of 1974, mirrored a similar response to desegregation that was seen at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in the fall of 1957. It was an ugly response from a northern public school system. It left searing images of angry white mobs and victimized school children, as race and class became the prevailing themes. Boston’s legacy was one of a city fraught with race and class warfare as its segregated schools and corresponding neighborhoods were widely exposed.

Master narratives.

Cox & Stromquist (1998) discussed the universal and complex approaches social historians have used in unmasking the “assumption of consensus” that is central to the historical tradition. This assumption of consensus, as is often captured in the rhetoric of public history, often constitutes a “master narrative.” “Forced busing” is Boston’s master narrative. The unexamined context of “forced busing” in Boston is a problematic narrative of *resistance* to school desegregation, constructed by white residents and politicians who challenged the 1974 court order. The “forced busing” narrative has heavily influenced popular opinion about the period surrounding the court order to desegregate the public schools. Yet, “forced busing” generally is not the accepted narrative used by many Black citizens of Boston following the Court order. Racial balance and school desegregation were concepts more often interrogated by Black activists. Yet, it is the “forced busing” assumption of consensus that permeates Boston’s school desegregation history.

One prominent social historian, the late Julian Bond, unpacked a master narrative that flows through all stories about the southern civil rights movement. He made explicit those beliefs that are “so familiar as to constitute almost a form of civic religion” (Payne, 2007, p. xiii). He proposed that as a result of a faulty master narrative, the stories of the southern movement included themes that acknowledge racial oppression and prejudice, but then foreground the 1954 Supreme Court decision as the inspiration that spurred courageous Black and white citizens to protest with “sit-ins, bus boycotts, and Freedom Rides.” That narrative, he maintained, added a layer of governmental sympathy, as it partnered Dr. King with John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and “a born-again” Lyndon

Johnson. It historicized those relationships as the means by which America began to understand that racial discrimination was a moral issue. It then presumed that a quick establishment of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 came about to redress societal inequities because of these political allies. It continued with a belief that even though King was assassinated, the country had changed in some fundamental ways and that there were many civil rights victories. Bond further provided an added contention that instead of acknowledging differences in political ideologies and recognizing the emergence of a call for self-determination, the narrative shifted blame to “many Black Americans, under the banner of Black power, [as they] turned their backs on American society” (Payne, 2007, p. xiii).

These are the generally held interpretations of the southern freedom movement that are sprinkled with myths and peppered with selective truths. The corrected record is a more authentic account published by the veterans of the southern civil rights movement. They wrote:

We, too, challenge this false and simplistic "master narrative" of the Freedom Movement to which we dedicated our lives. We want to set the record straight. The gains made by the Freedom Movement were won by the courage, determination, and activity of hundreds of thousands of men and women of all ages in cities, towns, and hamlets across the South. It was their blood, sweat, and tears that **forced** change up from below, and without them there would have been no Freedom Movement, no famous leaders, no court rulings, no new laws, and no change (<http://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhome.htm>).

Similarly, Boston has a master narrative centered in “white resistance” and “forced busing.” The stories of resistance, selectively chosen, interpreted, and historicized by some writers (Buell, 1982; Formisano, 1991; Lukas, 1985; Lupo, 1977; Taylor, 1986) evolved into a unique master narrative of Boston’s response to court ordered desegregation of its public school system. The history that dominates school

desegregation begins on September 12, 1974, as students board buses on the first day of school following the *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974) decision. The themes identify South Boston residents and similarly situated white communities as frenzied protagonists who actively fought against racial balance in the public schools.

However, even as protagonists defying a United States federal court order, these white residents are often portrayed as sympathetic victims of an overreaching judge and a liberal constituency of suburban outsiders. On the death of Judge Garrity, the New York Times' obituary led with this sentence: "W. Arthur Garrity Jr., the Federal judge whose school desegregation order led to the racial turmoil that tarred Boston as a place of busing infamy in the 1970's, died ..." (Goldberg, 1999). This exposes Boston's master narrative as more than a local observation but a shared consensus regarding the cause of the anger and hatred seen in the faces of white resistance.

The narratives about Boston promoted the Judge and the court order as the cause of the turmoil. They acknowledged white resistance from the residents who lined the streets in defiance of a federal court order, but do not leverage the systematic violation of the Fourteenth Amendment rights of Black children who attend segregated schools in Boston. The subtext to the narrative was that the damage occurring from segregated education was not the central issue, that white and Black citizens of Boston were equally victimized, and that Boston's elite power structure manipulated both groups. The liberal Garrity and the cowardly Boston politicians, it was assumed, were the causes of the antagonistic responses of resistance from the affected white communities.

The shift in public focus from "desegregating the public schools" to "anti-busing" was purposeful. Busing, the means of transporting school children to and from segregated

schools, ordered by the court, took on a new meaning. “Anti-busing” and “forced busing” became sympathetic expressions to many in the public and code words to those who supported segregation. This was dog whistle politics joined Louise Day Hicks’, one of the volatile anti-busing leaders, message, “You know where I stand.” Had this extent of resistance to desegregation been in a southern state, the narrative in this northern city and throughout the Commonwealth would have been one with much less sympathy towards white resisters. There would have been, as demonstrated by those whites who went south to march in the southern movement, an intense focus on the rights of Black school children. The racism inherent in the response to segregated education would have been made more explicit. In many of the accounts and scholarly works on post-*Brown* school desegregation, Black Bostonians too often are viewed as victimized, disengaged, or reactive, and seldom centered as agents of change.

Reframing the narrative.

The Black community in Boston has always had a vibrant, yet seldom acknowledged, community of working class Black Americans who made claim to the city in which they lived and to its schools for which they paid. These were the public schools that Blacks who lived in Roxbury, the South End, and Dorchester attended during the 20th century, as did their children. It was because of their personal experiences and the adverse effects that the schools had on a community of children that leaders in the Black Education Movement brought the *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974) case to federal court. This movement had its roots in the late 1950s and continued through the 1960s and 1970s.

This community also has a long history of activism, well known to politicians and publishers. Many actively supported court ordered desegregation. However, because of

this lawful shift towards enforcing equality and the unholy reaction by some against it, the Black community's activism was rendered nearly invisible in the public space. The dynamics of Boston's segregated school system should have been interrogated in the context of segregated living spaces with a laser focus on the largely unmet needs of all children, both Black and white, in a segregated public school system. It could have examined the history of segregation in Boston more rigorously, acknowledged more actors, and widened its focus beyond white resistance to expose white power structures that influenced this resistance to change. The greatest failure of the Boston busing narrative is that with few exceptions there was an imbalance in problematizing Boston's history of school desegregation. The narrative neglects Black community leadership and grass roots activism, which has a deeply rooted political history challenging segregation in Boston in all of its forms.

Boston activists join with the veterans of the southern civil rights movement to contest a faulty master narrative. The problematic narrative of "forced busing" leading to "white resistance," obscures the work of Boston's Black community in its long walk towards equality. All who were part of the struggle lived in a democracy with more than half a century of constitutionally imposed racial segregation. In spite of the vestiges of racism, many vehemently fought for the court order. With active fervor they contested those who would obstruct the promise of *Brown*. They became leaders and foot soldiers in organized movements for change.

Yet, the master narrative that is advanced today foregrounds busing and white resistance to school desegregation. It ignores the history of agency and activism in the Black community. This newly minted desegregation history of busing in Boston starts in

1974 when Black students are transported across racialized boundaries and segregated spaces. It overlooks the primary purpose of school desegregation, which was to provide equal educational opportunities for all of the students in the Boston schools. Many wrote about school desegregation leading up to Federal District Court Judge J. Arthur Garrity's order to desegregate the Boston schools, but too few acknowledged the Black community's history of leadership.

2014 was the 40th anniversary of Garrity's decision. Yet, 40 years later the narrative remains one of "forced busing," the transporting of Black and white students to schools outside their "neighborhood schools." There seems still to be little understanding of the unsuitable conditions in the "neighborhood schools" that Black children attended, nor any acknowledgement of the persistence of racism within the school system. More importantly, there is little memory of a Black community who, over decades, worked to disrupt segregated education. On July 3, 2014, after reading so many reports of the 40th anniversary of Boston's "busing crisis," I authored a letter to the editor that was published in the Boston Globe. It summarized the sentiments of many activists in Boston. The Boston Globe titled it the "*Legacy of busing should herald long, hard work of black community.*" It read:

The Boston narrative should not be one of a city traumatized because of buses. Black children were being transported away from public schools that were already traumatizing, overcrowded, and ill-equipped and on to schools throughout the city with better resources. This was done to give them a fair shot at better educational opportunities. There is a much deeper, more authentic history of desegregation than what is written in J. Anthony Lukas's "Common Ground." Leadership came from those who were most seriously affected by Boston's segregated schools — the Black community. Leaders in this struggle included Ruth Batson, Paul Parks, Mel King, Thomas Atkins, Royal Bolling, Sr., William Owens, Kenneth Guscott, Ellen Jackson, and hundreds more, black and white, young and old. There were organized movements of Boston high school students, parents, and alternative schools, all pushing back against segregated education. Boston school

desegregation history must herald the long, hard work of Boston's Black community. In 2014, the legacy should be about a Black community steeped in pride and purpose. We were saving our children from schools that were killing them. (p. A14)

Purpose of the Study

This study uses historical research to describe and analyze a Black Education Movement. Its purpose is to place Boston's school desegregation history in a markedly different context than many of the narratives that evolved since *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974). First, it will provide a historical connection between the 18th and 19th centuries long road to equal schooling and the 20th century equal educational opportunity movement, both led by Black activists who lived in Boston. Second, it will provide a public space for those 20th century activists, who were leaders and foot soldiers in the struggle to dismantle a segregated public school system, to provide a history of this significant education movement.

Too often works that center on Boston and its racial and ethnic divides foreground white resistance and its opposition to forced busing as the dominant narrative. By deconstructing this narrative and using first person accounts from activists, this research study centers Black voices and decenters white narratives – those stories of white resistance, forced busing, and class warfare. African Americans who were born into a segregated society will provide first person accounts of agency and activism. Those who were most seriously affected by segregated education will detail the challenges that Black children faced in the Boston schools.

Importance of the Study

Using oral history and case study as research methodologies, Blacks who lived in Boston, attended its public schools, and moved between segregated spaces will provide a

more complete understanding of northern segregated education and the road to desegregation. Yow (2005) identifies oral history research as crucial to obtaining the picture of a total society. It is a public space for the voices of the “nonelite who do not leave memoirs or have biographers” (p.11). Because this narration of desegregation shifts from the popular account of “forced busing” to the broader narrative of Black leadership and agency, this research study will provide a more authentic understanding of the relationship between early school desegregation and the role of the Black community. Case studies of activists who consented to share their stories of racism, schooling, and school desegregation will open a door to an underreported social justice movement and those who championed equal educational opportunity.

There is substantial historical evidence from the late 18th century through the early 20th century of Black agency as Boston confronts Jim Crow (Douglas, 2005; Horton, 1976; Jacobs, 1970; Levesque, 1979; Levy & Phillips, 1951; Mabee, 1968). Yet, there are too few scholarly manuscripts discussing mid 20th century Boston that center Black Bostonians as educational leaders advancing the 1974 court order to desegregate the public schools. Some notable historians have, however, placed emphasis on Black community agency in the context of the northern civil rights struggles and the history of Boston’s schools. They provided spaces for those activists’ voices to open a window into how the distribution of resources in the public schools was reordered (Cronin, 2008; Green, 2003; King, 1981; Peebles, 2007; Theoharis, 2003, 2005; Vrabell, 2014). These struggles for equal opportunity in education, as well as access to fair housing, jobs, economic and political power were part of a long freedom movement that took the energy and commitment of a cadre of Black residents whose families lived in the City of Boston,

many beginning in the early 20th century. This research study will interrogate race and resilience in the context of Black heritage, Black and white living spaces, and Boston and its schools.

Research Questions

Despite the extensive media coverage and the scholarly works that seek to define the causes of Boston's "busing crisis," there are few published first person accounts that provide a historical perspective from the affected Black community. This research seeks to advance insider accounts into the history of Boston school desegregation and foreground a grassroots social justice movement whose goal was equal educational opportunities for Black school children. It is supported by interviews from 20th century activists who were born before *Brown* and who were in the vanguard of the movement. It uses oral history and case methods to interrogate the research questions. It is bound by 1960 and 1975, a period of sustained growth in education activism. It addresses Boston's segregated school system through the lens of Black Bostonians who attended Boston schools during the first half of the 20th century. It analyzes the sources of resilience in a people who were born into a constitutionally segregated democracy. The interrogation of this movement by those who were driven by a sense of urgency to disrupt racial segregation is guided by these questions:

Central question.

In what ways did the Black community demonstrate agency and activism in response to segregated education?

Sub-questions.

How was race prominent in the Boston Public Schools?

What were the sources of resilience that nourished the Black community as they fought against segregated schooling?

Theoretical Framework

Coates (2015) writes:

Americans believe in the reality of “race” as a defined, indubitable feature of the natural world. Racism—the need to ascribe bone-deep features to people and then humiliate, reduce, and destroy them—inevitably follows from this inalterable condition. In this way, racism is rendered as the innocent daughter of Mother Nature, and one is left to deplore the Middle Passage or the Trail of Tears the way one deplores an earthquake, or tornado, or any other phenomenon that can be cast as beyond the handiwork of men. But race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming “the people” has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy. (p. 7)

Race and racism.

This research study is examined through the lens of race/racism and resilience.

One question it seeks to answer is, “*How was race prominent in the Boston Public Schools?*” Coates (2015) poignantly speaks to the connectedness of race and racism to elicit both a feeling and an understanding of these concepts. He writes, “But race is the child of racism, not the father.” Race is an anthropological distinction between groups, yet given such power as to “show the superiority or dominance of one race-in particular, Whites-over others” (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 61). The significance of race is in its social construction and the power within societies to categorize people. The subjugation of groups based on skin tone is the manifestation of the dominant group’s power to control the lives of other groups. According to Franklin et al. (2006) racism is a complex convergence of individual, institutional, and cultural behaviors that negatively impact the lives of Black American men, women, and children.

Race matters (West, 1992). Race mattered in Boston and in its public school system. Structural racism mattered even more as was evidenced in Boston's political, economic, and social systems throughout the 20th century. Understanding the positioning of race and its systemic power in Boston's institutions and in the larger society is a critical lens through which segregated education can be examined. How race-based decisions purposely marginalize Black children is key to understanding the emergence of a Black Education Movement and the concurrent community response to unequal educational resources in Boston. This research study uses critical race theory as a theoretical framework through which Black lives are explored on the road to *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974). It will interrogate race and racism themes that flow through all research, but have a special significance in education.

Critical race theory (CRT).

CRT is a movement of activist scholars who extend racism scholarship beyond the limits of theories in law to broader perspectives that question "the very foundations of the liberal order including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 3). It is scholarship originating in legal theory that criticizes liberalism as an illusion. It posits that the theories addressing race in society are overly dependent on individual rights and American liberalism (Bell, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT has an activist approach urging scholars to interrogate societal constructs that address race, racism, and power. It requires continuing analyses of liberal social policies that, in the case of school desegregation litigation, can lead to a more focused examination of federal court decisions on school desegregation. Derrick Bell, Jr., the first tenured Black professor of

law at Harvard Law School who litigated school desegregation cases in the South as a lawyer for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund is largely credited as one of the originators of critical race theory.

CRT spread to other disciplines including literature, education, cultural studies, and political science, to name a few. It is used in education to understand the relationship between racism, race, and power in hierarchies, curriculum, and history. Its basic tenets are that racism is ordinary, not aberrational, that it is difficult to address or cure because of its normality, that it advances the interests of lower and upper class whites, and that society creates races and endows them with “pseudo-permanent characteristics” (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). These characteristics flow directly into public policies and are so ingrained in systems of government that judiciary findings do provide conflicting messages. Bell (2004) writes:

Carter¹ suggests that the [Brown] Court failed to realize the depth or the nature of the problem, and by attempting to regulate the pace of desegregation so as to convey a show of compassion and understanding for the white south, it not only failed to develop a willingness to comply, but instead aroused the hope that resistance to the constitutional imperative would succeed. (p. 95).

The three CRT tenets that guide this research are identified as follows.

Interest Convergence.

This tenet posits “the majority group tolerates advances for racial justice only when it suits its interest to do so” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 153). Bell (1995) theorizes that liberal whites tend to agree, in principle, that Black children are entitled in law to constitutional protection against racial discrimination. However, what they fail to recognize, he argues, is that racial segregation is so insidious and ingrained in

¹ Judge Robert L. Carter was the former NAACP General Counsel.

institutional structures that for these rights to be exacted, the status of white privilege must be altered. The departure from the principal of equality under the law can be seen in responses to affirmative action, housing integration, as well as school desegregation orders following *Brown*. Examples are massive resistance from state and local governments and southern members of Congress, along with messages from President Eisenhower in response to the *Brown* decision. These actions and statements stalled its implementation. Following this landmark decision, President Eisenhower's public statement sent a clear message to the country. He said, "And I personally believe, if you tried to go too far, too fast in laws in this delicate field that has involved the emotions of so many millions of Americans, you are making a mistake ... you cause trouble rather than benefit" (Eyes on the Prize, Fighting Back Transcript, 1957-1962).

Knowledge as property.

Knowledge as Property is a tenet that examines the intersection of knowledge, property, and ownership and its relationship to segregated education. Undertheorized in education, scholars introduced CRT to sharpen the analysis of race and schooling (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009; Vaught, 2011; Dixson, & Rousseau, 2006). Knowledge is analyzed in this research study as property with an economic value that determines who has access to intellectual capital. It seeks to unpack how race was a "profound determinant" (Omi & Winant, 1994) over access and opportunities in the education of children in the Boston schools. To the extent that limitations in educational advancement were purposeful, that Black children were targeted, and that power and privilege were used to establish ownership of the houses of knowledge, the schools, and the interconnection between race, knowledge, and property will be explored.

As members of the Academy we value the production of knowledge codified in shared agreements regarding intellectual property. However, CRT scholarship can push the boundaries further to explore how people and institutions “hold and house” knowledge. Public schools are primary centers where access to knowledge should equally be available to all residents. Ladson-Billings (2009) writes, “...we refer to the curriculum as the official knowledge ... that schools advertise and sanction as a part of their courses of study” (p. 154). To distribute that knowledge, the buildings, the costs related to establishing and maintaining a school, the land where the learning centers are placed, and the resources necessary to provide an adequate learning environment also must be included.

Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) examined the intersection of CRT and citizenship, more specifically that of the “property issue.” They illustrate how, among many privileges franchised to white males, property was one of the more significant. Ladson-Billings (2009) assert, “The significance of property ownership as a prerequisite to citizenship was tied to the British notion that only people who *owned* the country, not merely those who *lived* in it, were eligible to make decisions about it. The salience of property is missed in our understanding of the USA as a nation” (p. 25). Harris (1995) further explores the construct of “whiteness” as property. She posits that whiteness, too, is a form of property with the right of “use and enjoyment, reputation and status—and the absolute right to exclude” (p. 59).

Therefore, when we see the images of residents in white neighborhoods, throwing bricks at buses carrying Black children to desegregated public schools, CRT becomes a useful framework to interrogate Boston schools and its consequential Black Education

Movement using the construct of “*knowledge as property*.” Racism was a powerful force against social and systemic school change and could be seen in the faces of the resisters as they screamed, “This is our neighborhood. These are our schools. You don’t belong here. Go back where you belong.” With the federal court’s finding of intentional segregation caused by the Boston School Committee in the case of *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974) all public officials including then President Gerald Ford, the Mayor of the City of Boston, Kevin White, the elected Boston School Committee, and the Boston City Council chose to appease the white citizens of Boston. They issued public statements that either outwardly disagreed with the federal court order or were openly reluctant to enforce the decision. Ruth Batson stated that she never heard one public official say “this is the right thing to do.” She added that schools were not the property of any one group in the city but rather that public schools belonged to all Boston residents (Interview, 1998). *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) found segregated schools unequal and unconstitutional. *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974) found that the School Committee of the City of Boston intentionally and purposely had maintained a segregated school system in Boston for a number of years. Yet, a culture of racism, along with the question of who owned “the property” of schooling, continued to permeate the school system after the court order.

Production of counter-narratives.

This tenet challenges false assumptions and beliefs emanating from accepted premises advanced by the majority. Following the 1974 federal court decision, resistance to the court order in the form of an anti-busing movement became the focus of attention. Anti-busing was the rallying cry of white resisters. CRT argues that dominant groups create narratives to determine majority reality and that counter-narratives from silenced

voices can uncover relatively unexplored events and people. It proposes that insiders use counter-narratives to tell their stories. Bell (2004) posits that existing legal models are not useful tools for understanding systemic oppression of Blacks and new models outside traditional liberal approaches are necessary. Blacks must seek to define Black experiences. Doing so, he asserted, will provide a public space for those outside of the mainstream to “name one’s own reality.” Naming one’s reality will be yet another tenet of the CRT framework to counter dominant narratives of “forced busing,” “resistance,” and “classism.” The Black Education Movement history was one of an active social justice movement that was explicitly identified as a movement against racism, opposing segregation, and demanding equal educational opportunities.

Theoretical intent.

CRT will structure an understanding of the phenomenon of segregated schooling and race in Boston. It will use interest convergence, knowledge as property, and counter-narratives to explain how segregated schools evolved and were structured over two centuries of schooling in Boston. It challenges the “forced busing” response to the *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974) court order. The analysis will use:

- 1) Transcripts of the narrators;
- 2) Opinions and writings found in the City of Boston archives, the school committee secretary desegregation files, and Northeastern University special archives collections;
- 3) Reports from the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights;
- 4) Digital archives at the Henry Hampton University Film and Media Archive Collection, Washington University; and

- 5) W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. papers on the Boston schools desegregation case at the Joseph P. Healey Library.

It will interrogate contrasting views of what critical race theorists describe as idealists, realists, and economic determinists. These differences are central to the examination and elimination of structural and institutional racism. CRT posits that for those who hold that because race is a social construction, a matter of thinking and not a biological reality, the solution to its pernicious effects is a change in “mental categorization, attitude, and discourse.” For realists, racism’s power lies in society’s ability to institutionalize privilege and status and to demonize and exploit those without means. Economic determinists argue that social and political structures in society are arranged around economic relationships. Whether one is the owner or the worker, the capitalist or a member of the proletariat, one’s status determines one’s power and privilege in society. At the core of the racial divide is the will to achieve equality beyond our system of jurisprudence by addressing the advantages of economic privilege and institutional power.

Delgado & Stefancic (2001) write, “Moreover what is true for subordination of minorities is also true for the relief of it: civil rights *gains* for communities of color coincide with the dictates of white self-interest. Little happens out of altruism alone” (p. 17-18). Exploring CRT tenets challenge the myth that a liberal constituency, Boston outsiders, and the judge who found in favor of the plaintiffs were solely responsible for the decision. Instead, whenever the interests of the courts, policymakers, community activists, and city and state government merge to support the constitutional rights of children and their families, then equal educational opportunities can be attained.

Resilience theory.

Resilience theory is the second theoretical frame used to understand the histories narrated by Black Bostonians during school desegregation. It seeks to answer, “*What were the sources of resilience that nourished the Black community as they fought against segregated schooling,*” by examining how individuals, families, and communities adapted to their challenging life events (Black & Lobo, 2008; Brown, 2008; Carter-Black, 2001; Franklin, 1999b, 2007b, 2009; 9, 1998; Harvey, Mondesir, & Aldrich, 2007; McAdoo, Thompson, & Futrell, 1995; McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson & Futrell, 1998; Norris, Sherrieb & Pfefferbaum, 2011; O'Connor, 2002; Payne, 2008; Todd & Worell, 2000; Van Breda, 2001). Thus, the theoretical scholarship of critical race theory and resilience theory can be insightful, by way of narrated oral histories, into how individuals and groups can overcome societal racism while maintaining a healthy balance of personal resilience and group agency throughout their lives.

Institutional racism has such a profound impact on a city, its residents, and its school children, that those who are subjected to its destructive forces must find resources to both survive and thrive in its path. This research study focuses specifically on segregated schools with its attendant injustices. The narrators who are central to this research spent a lifetime working to disrupt an insidious system of education that existed in the Boston schools prior to *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974). They became of age in *de juri* and *de facto* segregated cities in a pre-*Brown* America. They attended public schools either in Boston or in the segregated south. Their life circumstances were contextualized in a constitutionally segregated America. Resilience theory is used as a framework to identify personal and communal strengths in individuals, families, and communities that

sustained these Boston activists as they battled a lifetime of systemic oppression and inequality.

As schooling evolved in 1619 and continued through to emancipation in 1863 and then throughout the 20th century, a system of white privilege was institutionalized (Anderson, 1988; Cornelius, 1983; Cronin, 2008; Moss, 2007, 2009; Schultz, 1973). The marginalization of Black children and adults expanded through public policy and in the structure of schooling. School systems, in general, and the Boston schools, in particular, systematically distributed knowledge to the benefit of white males and eventually white females while subjugating Black children to less resources, older learning structures, and an undervalued social identity of “otherness.” This tradition continued as cities grew while inequality flourished in spaces where Blacks were concentrated. The meaning and place of resilience in this research study is to uncover the nourishing sources of Black agency and the means by which healthy resistance to institutionalized racial aggression is sustained, as individuals and their community fought against the powerful forces of segregation and segregated schooling. Thornton (1998) writes:

The key to understanding how Blacks have forged powerful family ties lies in the adaptive capacities they have constructed from culture and experience. They have not simply reacted to the abuses of institutions in their lives or lay down to await their inevitable fate. Instead, they make choices from several possible ways of responding. The elements of adaptation, culture, and choice are important in understanding how Blacks resist oppression. Foremost has been the development of a kinship system that has persisted even against great adversity. (pp. 50–51)

So, too, the key to understanding how Blacks forged a powerful movement to disrupt the distribution of unequal education in the Boston schools lies in an understanding of the connectivity of people and agencies and the determination of a community to fight for equality in education. Resilience theory examines the ways in which individuals,

families, and communities use their strengths as protection from adversity and to achieve personal and cultural agency.

Franklin (1999a, 1999b) identified an invisibility syndrome in African American men who sought counseling for psychological struggles. Invisibility was defined as “an inner struggle with the feeling that one’s talents, abilities, personality, and worth are not valued or even recognized because of prejudice” (p. 761). Black men, women, and children struggle psychologically and culturally in the face of racism and racial aggressions. Prejudice pierces the very being of too many people and most especially Black children. It is a destructive force in the daily lives of so many, that Blacks, from childhood and throughout their lives, either react instinctively to its harm or learn strategies to support their health and their community’s well being. Pierce (1970) exposes America’s system of education to be one of the primary institutions in society, along with law enforcement, that relegates Black children through “collective micro-offenses by the majority” to second-class citizenship (p. 266–268). These offensive behaviors often materialize in the form of micro-aggressive actions, which require defensive maneuvers to sustain a psychological balance. Anxiety and stress are examples of inner responses to “these subtle blows [which] are delivered incessantly ... the cumulative effect to the victim and the victimizer is of unimaginable magnitude” (Pierce, 1970, p. 266).

Because of its length, its consistency, its micro- and macro-aggressive nature, visibility, “the counterforce to invisibility” is critical to achieving personal and cultural agency (Franklin, 1999b). There are components to visibility that may provide added insight into how a community of Black Americans began their pursuit towards equality of opportunity from a three hundred and fifty-five year old institution with a history of

discrimination against Black school children. This theory speaks of spirituality as a cultural source of personal nourishment to offset the toxicity of racism. Haight (1998) places spiritual socialization as central to the healthy development of African American children. The church, as an institution, has provided spiritual, emotional, and social service support to Black families. It is a place of comfort, a home away from home, where relationships are developed, friendships are formed and healthy socialization often occurs. Research also shown that there was a positive developmental connection between educational attainment and church involvement for adults (Brown & Gary, 1991 as cited in Haight, 1998, p. 214), that unemployed school dropouts who attended church “had relatively low levels of alcohol and drug abuse” (Zimmerman & Maton, 1992 as cited in Haight, 1998, p. 214), that African American adults report that the religious beliefs they learned as children still helped them in later life (Seaborn-Thompson & Ensminger, 1989; as cited in Haight, 1998, p. 214), and that participation in church communities is positively related to self-esteem in African American adults (Ellison, 1993; as cited in Haight, 1998, p. 214).

Resilience research shares rich and insightful themes across the literature that identify healthy responses to adversity by individuals, families, and communities. Brown (2008) identifies themes of racial socialization and African American social support networks as protective developmental factors to bolster resilience for Black children in the face of adversity. African American children are more likely to live in impoverished, violent neighborhoods with higher mortality rates, and are generally at risk. Black parents and Black extended kinship who share in the formation of Black children are two of the primary sources of racial socialization. Brown (2008) writes:

Racial socialization is a set of behaviors, communications, and interactions between parents and children that address how African Americans ought to feel about their cultural heritage and how they should respond to the racial hostility or confusion in American society (Stevenson, Cameron, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2002). Racial socialization can include specific messages and practices that provide information concerning the nature of one's racial status as it relates to personal and group identity, intergroup and interindividual relationships, and one's position in the social hierarchy (Thorton, Chatters, Taylor, & Allen, 1990). Through this process, families can shape a child's beliefs and attitudes of race and how they fit into this context (Murray & Mandara, 2002). (p. 33)

There are explicit rules that children learn from a young age. They learn about place and space in relation to where they live and attend school. They learn the terms of the power relationships between the police and the Black community and what their responses should be. They learn the importance of education and its connectedness to liberation. Family members, admired adults, and cultural institutions within communities teach successful life rules through behavioral and cultural modeling. Youth learn through intention, with specific messages, and through exposure to productive environments. Research also suggests that emphasizing racial pride results in positive self-esteem, positive academic outcomes, and positive mental health outcomes (Hughes et al., 2006 in Brown, 2008). The research assessing the receipt of messages emphasizing the existence of racism and racial barriers was mixed, suggesting complexities with relationship to youth outcomes (Coard & Sellers, 2005; Hughes et al., 2006 in Brown, 2008).

Social support networks have always been a staple in the Black community as they have been indigenous sources of self-support. Families, extended families, the community itself and its Black churches have existed as a means of self-help during very challenging times. The Black communal supports crossed towns, cities, and states and were developed to surmount adversity in a segregated America (McAdoo, Thompson, & Futrell, 1995). These are cultural patterns that grow within Black networks as protective

mechanisms. Outside the familial system, African American children and adults also create bonds within the community that serve as powerful support systems (Franklin, 2002; Griffen, 2000; Payne, 2008; Van Breda, 2001). Links to additional resources to enable positive growth often can be found within structured adult supported networks, creating new opportunities for social and educational growth delivered by community-based organizations (Carter-Black, 2001).

As resilience theory evolved, it expanded from individual and family levels to community levels. The community, as an entity, has been seen as “a source of protective factors” (Van Breda, 2001, p. 141). Blackenship (1998) addresses the issue of race directly as she highlights that being Black makes it more likely that there will be a need for protective factors because of the intense exposure to adversity. Van Breda (2001) writes, “The literature on thriving and resilience has indicated that resilience comes to the fore only in the face of adversity” (p. 157). The Black community and its individual members all experience a disproportionate share of adversity. There has always been an overwhelming need for resources to transform it. What can “communities” do? Bandura (1982) notes “members within the community who have experienced success in the face of adversity are the most able to initiate group and political action against the oppression” (as cited in Van Breda, 2001, p. 159). Blackenship (1998) argues that in the face of a community-level stressor, such as inequality, the use of the “community” is to direct “attention to community variables and away from additive individual variables” (as cited in Van Breda, 2001, p. 158). Sonn and Fisher (1998) argue that the community exposed to systemic discrimination can be strengthened as a result of this adversity. They termed them ‘resilient communities’ (as cited in Van Breda, 2001, p. 154).

Resilience research is a necessary lens for this research study in its coupling with critical race theory. Franklin (1999a) argues:

Racism is a form of adversity that requires a capacity to be resilient, particularly when well-being is at serious risk... the disruptive nature of a racial encounter can force individuals into a “sanity check,” ... This corroboration and validation from a fellow African American regarding the legitimacy of one’s reaction to a racially provocative incident is an ethnic/cultural practice for African Americans that bolsters protective factors against racism and serves as a device of personal resilience that helps one bounce back from an emotionally injurious encounter that threatens self-esteem. (p. 781)

To live as empowered citizens in a society that relegates Blacks to a second-class status requires a strong racial identity, kinship networks, and a resilient community.

Definition of Terms

This research study uses terms that may need background knowledge to contextualize the study. Many terms are common knowledge to those who lived in Boston, but may not be properly understood by those who did not. Others terms are historical events and landmark court decisions that were foundational to Black liberation. It is important to have a shared understanding of what is meant by all terms referenced in this research study. The following are the terms used throughout the study:

Activism.

A conceptual framework that addresses social justice, education, and protest politics. It is meant to bring about changes in institutions, and in the case of this research study, the schools. *Activists* are the actors, the primary agents who made long term commitments and, in most cases, a lifetime commitment, to bring about institutional, structural, and societal equality.

Black education movement.

An educational justice movement, primarily in the Roxbury, North Dorchester, and South End communities of Boston whose goal was to disrupt segregated schools and institutionalize equal educational opportunities for all children in Boston's public schools. Ruth Batson chronicled this movement in her collection of documents, accounts of history, and personal recollections that she compiled. The manuscript was produced for distribution by Northeastern University School of Education. Her papers are archived at the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute along with the many other contributions she advanced on behalf of civil rights and social justice.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

A landmark case first argued in 1952 by NAACP lawyers before the United States Supreme Court on behalf of Black children and parents in five schools systems – Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. On May 17, 1954 the decision of the Court was that the “segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of any state solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment – even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors of white and Negro schools may be equal” (p. 486-496). The Court concluded that in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. With this decision no public school system should, by law, maintain a dual school system. The Court determined that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

Brown v. Board of Education, 349 U.S. 294 (1955).

Often referred to as *Brown II* (1955), *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) on April 11-14, 1955 was reargued on the question of relief with the opinion and judgments

announced May 31, 1955. This case reaffirmed that racial discrimination in public education is unconstitutional and all provisions of federal, state or local law requiring or permitting such discrimination must yield to this principle (p. 298). It reversed *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 and declared this decision to be unconstitutional. The decision from the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case was remanded to the District Courts of the states that had segregative laws prior to the order to enter new orders for enforcement of the *Brown* decision. The following selected provisions of *Brown II* decision are provided to sharpen the reader's understanding of the Boston School Committee and the Massachusetts District Court's responsibility in *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974). They were that:

- School authorities have the primary responsibility for elucidating, assessing and solving the varied local school problems which may require solution in fully implementing the governing constitutional principles and
- The District Courts that originally heard these cases will consider whether the action of the school authorities constitutes primary responsibility for elucidating, assessing and solving the varied local school problems, which may require solution in fully implementing the governing constitutional principles. (p. 299)

Community Controlled Education.

Described by King (1981), this was a reaction from a frustrated Black community to the unresponsiveness of the Boston School Committee to their concerns and demands. As a result of an intransigent school committee, the Black community established community controlled busing. *Operation Exodus*, a parent operated program,

clandestinely bused their children to white Boston schools where there were vacant seats, under the School Committee's open enrollment policy. *The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)*, an outgrowth of the urban/suburban, Black/white coalition that lobbied for the 1965 Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Law, was a metropolitan school plan that bused Black students to certain suburban schools. A magnet school, named after *William Monroe Trotter*, was a direct result of Black parent activists. There were *Community Schools* established by parents including the *New School for Children*, the *Gibson Liberation School*, and the *Highland Park Free School*. These were school movements outside of the public school system, with the exception of the Trotter, led by parent and community groups to control and be responsible for Black children who live in Boston and attended second class schools.

De Facto Segregation.

The Legal Information Institute, Cornell University School of Law, defines this term as “a situation in which legislation did not overtly segregate students by race, but nevertheless school segregation continued” (https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/de_facto_segregation). *De facto* racial segregation in public schools is enforced “by fact,” as identified by a court, rather than by a legal requirement. *De jure* racial segregation in public schools is enforced “by law,” as in states that were governed by Jim Crow laws.

Equal Schools / Equal Schooling.

These were the terms used by 18th and 19th century Black activists in Boston who petitioned for a separate education facility for their children. During the 1840s and 1850s the Black schools deteriorated and the community organized with petitions for better

schools for their children. Their cry was for equal schools, a precursor to the 20th century movement for equal educational opportunity.

Morgan v. Hennigan, 379 F. Supp. 410 (D.C. Mass., June 21, 1974).

This was the school desegregation case brought by Black parents and their children to the US District Court for the District of MA. Plaintiffs sought for themselves and on behalf of their class declaratory and injunctive relief against the defendants for a myriad of acts that allegedly *violated the constitutional rights of the plaintiff class*. Defendants were the Boston School Committee, its individual members, and the Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, and the Board of Education of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, its individual members, and the Commissioner of Education. On June 21, 1974 the US District Court for the District of MA concluded that:

- The School Committee of the City of Boston intentionally and purposely had maintained a system of racial segregation in the Boston Public Schools.
- The defendants had knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation affecting all of the city's students, teachers and school facilities and had intentionally brought about and maintained a dual school system.

Thus, *the Court found that the entire school system of Boston was unconstitutionally segregated* and contemporaneously with the opinion filed a partial judgment permanently enjoining the city defendants from discriminating upon the basis of race in the operation of the Boston schools. The Court immediately ordered that the Boston School Committee begin to formulate and implement plans *“to secure for the plaintiffs their constitutional rights.”* The following is a summary outline of the remedial guidelines:

First, that the defendants were under an 'affirmative obligation' to reverse the consequences of their ***unconstitutional conduct***;

Second, that the primary responsibility for desegregation lies with the school committee;

Third, that "school authorities" are clearly charged with the affirmative duty to take whatever steps might be necessary;

Fourth, that awareness of the racial composition of the whole school system is likely to be a useful starting point in shaping a remedy to correct past constitutional violations.

Fifth, such time as the court allows for formulation and implementation of plans to desegregate Boston's schools ***will not be granted at the cost of continuing the denial of the plaintiffs' rights under the Constitution.***

Narrators.

Oral history is a collaborative relationship. Oral history researchers use this term to describe the people who are the sources of information for study. By using this term, the researcher shifts the power relationship in an interview to the person who is telling (narrating) the story. It is a common identifier, similar to interviewee, when using oral history as a research methodology.

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

As a United States Supreme Court decision, this upheld the constitutionality of state laws requiring racial segregation in public facilities under the doctrine of "separate but equal." The doctrine originated in ***Roberts v. City of Boston, 59 Mass.198, 206 (1850)***, which upheld school segregation. It was argued on behalf of Black parents and

their children as being violative of a state constitutional guarantee of equality. Segregation in Boston schools was legally enforceable under this decision but was eliminated in 1855 under *Mass. Acts 1855, c. 256*. But elsewhere in the North, segregation in public education persisted constitutionally until *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

Race / Racism.

Used in this study these terms are meant to center an understanding of their importance and power in categorizing Black citizens and determining their access to education and civil rights based on skin color. This study addresses the effects of race/racism only on Black or African American persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa as defined by the U.S. census data. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the “racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically.” In addition, the census definition recognizes that the categories of race include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups.

Racism is defined as a set of ideas and attitudes that can be recognized in the actions of people and institutions. Race matters to poor people who need services but are denied or treated differently because of skin color. It matters to working-class people when refused opportunities in the workplace because of skin color. It matters to the middle and upper class when denied business or home loans because of skin color (Hacker, 1992; West, 1992). Omni & Winant (1994) suggest that “race and racial dynamics in the U.S. have been theoretically understood by relying on one of three

central categories: *ethnicity, class, or nation*” and that by subordinating race to these broad categories the fact that “race has been a *fundamental* axis of social organization in the U.S.” is lost (pp. 11-13).

Racial Imbalance Act, Mass.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37C and 37D.

This legislation, passed on June 30, 1965, outlawed racial segregation in all schools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The requirements of the state statute moves the Commonwealth further than the Fourteenth Amendment as the statute commands affirmative action to eliminate racial imbalance in public school systems whatever its cause.

Resilience.

Because of the physiological and psychological impact of racism and discrimination on individual life histories, narratives that address stability and responses to adversity that are empowering and enduring are important to this study. Demonstrating resilience in the lives of Boston narrators that can be traced to events that “are best understood in the ecological context of human community” is defined as a community empowerment model in community psychology (Harvey, 2007, p. 280).

Overview of Chapters

The first three chapters of this dissertation establish the context of this study. Chapter I is designed to introduce human stories about the life experiences of a people whose ancestors were owned by others. This legacy empowered many to define freedom for their children through acquiring constitutional rights and accessing a quality education. Their collective beliefs were to disrupt the dehumanizing vestiges of racism.

Chapter II is the literature review. It pays homage to the recorded history of an organized Black community in Boston who petitioned the Massachusetts legislature in 1787 to include their children in plans for public education. The history of demanding equal schooling by Black residents of Boston is recorded in archival documents, academic publications, dissertations, and manuscripts. However, the intent here is to examine the many historic struggles and subsequent successes that connected 18th, 19th, and 20th century Black communities in Boston in their quest for equal schooling. More importantly, it is intended to show that the demand for equal education was inextricably linked to full citizenship. That connectedness between Black Bostonians in the struggle for equality in schooling is their legacy to generations of children.

Chapter III outlines the research method and design of this study. This is a study in which the major approach is historical research. It includes a discussion of insider research. The scope of the study also is included. It outlines the research design, which combines oral history and case study methods, and includes a discussion of data collection and analysis.

Chapter IV introduces the narrated lives of Boston activists, their life histories leading to their activism in school equalization and their roles in the Black education movement.

Chapter V addresses the study's findings. The history of this 20th century movement, themes of community agency and activism in response to segregated education, the prominence of race in the schools, and the sources of resilience within Boston's Black community will be explored.

Chapter VI ends the study with a summary of the study and its conclusions and implications for further studies. It proposes that interrogating Boston's journey toward school equity should move beyond narratives of busing, resistance, and white dominance towards a more complete accounting of all the actors. It must foreground the role of Boston's Black community.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

We are a government of laws, and not of men – John Adams

Introduction

For more than half a century, Black and white Americans lived in a legally sanctioned, racially divided democracy. It was quite a peculiar institution. This white and Black America was visibly separate and inherently unequal. The recorded history of American democracy promoted visions of a free society with rights firmly implanted in its Constitution. The irony of the great American experiment was that the freedoms identified within the Constitution at its signing did not apply to those who were enslaved.

This literature review introduces a history of Black agency promoting equal schooling in Boston beginning in 1787 shortly after the end of the American Revolutionary War. It seeks to provide a link between the 18th, 19th, and 20th century Black community's struggle for equal schools. Further, these connections will help to unpack the arguments surrounding the legal rulings that drove the decision in *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974). The research study will interrogate race and resilience in the context of Black heritage, Black and white living spaces, and Boston's schools. It will document the long and historic road to equal educational opportunity in Boston, while foregrounding the Black community and its leadership in educational justice movements when confronting racial inequality. The history of legal segregation is an important backdrop to 20th and 21st century schooling. It contextualizes the structural inequality we see as we walk through centuries of schooling and observe the visible separateness of children who remain divided by race.

The Road to Brown

The United States Supreme Court codified state-imposed racial segregation in *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, 1896. The precedent used in that decision was *Roberts vs. Boston*, 59 Mass. (5 Cush.) 198 (1850). This case has its roots in Boston, Massachusetts, the city where I centered my research. All subjects were either born or lived in Boston. All were education activists seeking equality in schools. Even though the *Roberts* case was argued in 1849, it is this historic link that connects Boston and all Black Americans to the segregative effects of the *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, decision and to the history of institutional segregation in America's schools.

***Plessy vs. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896).**

The plaintiff's attorneys, Robert Morris, one of the country's first Black lawyers and a twenty-five year old Boston activist teamed with Massachusetts Senator and abolitionist Charles Sumner to argue for nondiscrimination in the city's schools (Sumner, 1849; Daniels, 1914; Douglas, 2005; Ficker, 1999; Horton & Moresi, 1976; Jacobs, 1970, 1971; Kendrick & Kendrick, 2004; Levy, & Jones, 1974; Schneider, 1997). Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court upheld that segregated schools in Boston, Massachusetts could be separate and equal. Using the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, which lacked an equal protection clause,² Shaw upheld the primary school committee's decision requiring that black and white children should attend

² The Fourteenth Amendment of the U. S. Constitution was ratified by Massachusetts on March 20, 1867. Section 1 is identified as the Equal Protection Clause. It is "the most commonly used" and "frequently litigated" phrase, guaranteeing all citizens born or naturalized in the United States "equal protection of the laws." See: www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv

separate schools (Levy, & Jones, 1974, p. 217–231). The committee's decisions were responses to petitions submitted by Black citizens in 1840, 1844, 1845, 1846, and 1849 opposing segregated schools. Horton & Moresi (1976) wrote:

Justice Shaw, ignoring the moral issues involved, narrowly focused on the question of whether separation by race in public schools violated Roberts's right to political, social, and civil equality. When he reasoned that separation of the races does not perpetuate class distinction since existing prejudice in society "is not created by law, and probably cannot be changed by law," he foreshadowed the racial philosophy basic to 20th-century segregationist law. (p. 16)

This decision established the precedent used in the 1896 *Plessy* decision to uphold racial segregation as a constitutionally just imperative for the United States (Atkin & Seay, 1975; Bell, 1989, 2004; Birnbaum & Taylor, 2000; Daniels, 1914; Douglas, 2005; Ficker, 1999; Horton & Moresi, 1976; Jacobs, 1970; Kendrick & Kendrick, 2004; Klarman, 1998; Levy & Phillips, 1951; Levy, & Jones, 1974). The *Plessy* decision remained the law of the land from 1896 to 1954 leaving Black Americans subjected to some of the most heinous and horrific acts, solely because of the color of their skin. This period of time institutionalized second-class citizenship.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

This decision is also known as *Brown I*. In the 1930s, Charles Hamilton Houston, attorney, graduate of Harvard Law School in 1923, and the first Black to become the editor of the Harvard Law Review, earned the reputation as “the man who killed Jim Crow.” He launched the legal assault on *Plessy* (James, 2010; Irons, 2002; Kluger, 1975; McNeil, 1984; Williams, 1998). His strategy was to represent cases that would chip away at the foundational structure of the separate but equal doctrine. To do this he prepared a cadre of lawyers to become social engineers – “to use the law to change the law ... and that we could and should no longer depend on high-powered white lawyers to represent

us in this effort” (Kluger, 1975, p 128). The team included Thurgood Marshall, a favored law student in Houston’s third-year class at Howard Law. These “social engineers” continued presenting “separate but equal” cases in state courts to challenge the *Plessy* doctrine until it reached the United States Supreme Court (James, 2010; Klarman, 2004; Kluger, 1975; McNeil, 1984; Ogletree, 2004; Williams, 1998). Success was achieved on May 7, 1954 when *Plessy* was reversed by the Warren Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). This constitutional decision, which upheld the rights of Black children under the Fourteenth Amendment, provided the legal foundation to challenge segregated schooling in the United States.

Houston died in 1950 without seeing the results of a lifetime of work that culminated in this decision. However, the decision delivered by Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court gave hope to those who lived in segregation that:

Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, modern authority amply supports this finding. Any language in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* contrary to this finding is rejected. We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This disposition makes unnecessary any discussion whether such segregation also violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. (Syllabus, 483)

Plessy, the doctrine of separate but equal, was found to be unconstitutional.

However, it was not the end of an era of segregation, but rather the beginning of “massive resistance” toward the court order. Coined by Senator Byrd of Virginia, this resistance was “heard on the floor of Congress, on national television, and in public forums” as a concerted effort to denounce the decision as a “clear abuse of judicial power” (Ogletree,

2004, p. 126). President Dwight Eisenhower, although acknowledging that he was bound by the decision, neither endorsed it nor spoke against the “Southern Manifesto,” a document that purported to use “all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation” (Patterson, 2001). The manifesto, signed by 90 percent of the southern congressional delegation, helped generate massive resistance to *Brown* (Balkin, 2002; Irons, 2002; Ogletree, 2004; Patterson, 2001; Williams, 1998).

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (349 U.S. 294) (1955).

The May 31, 1955, the *Brown II* decision followed the 1954 decision (*Brown v. Board of Education, 349 US 294–1955*). Implying a sense of urgency, the decision ordered that school districts in the 17 states that required segregation, the four that allowed segregation, and the District of Columbia to integrate their school systems with “all deliberate speed.”³ The Court’s reasoning was that to institute the new Constitutional principle of equal educational opportunity for students who lived under a separate but equal doctrine would require local school authorities to implement changes in public schools (James, 2010; Klarman, 2004; Kluger, 1975; Ogletree, 2004; Williams, 1998).

However, *Brown II* took an even more cautious and disappointing approach to the implementation of its order by not setting a time frame to desegregate schools. The Court ordered that the local district courts that heard the initial cases would determine if there was “good faith implementation of the governing constitutional principles” (*Brown v. Board of Educ.*, 1955. p. 300). Leaving enforcement of the order to district judges,

³ AZ, KS, NM, WY permitted local communities to segregate. AL, AR, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, OK, SC., TN, TX, VA, WV, D.C. required all schools to segregated.

coupled with a lack of strong leadership from the President and the federal government, state sponsored segregated schooling, without the endorsement of law but with a *de jure* standard of practice, continued through the 1960s.

The ruling came without court ordered enforcement powers. It left it to the states that could take as long as each deemed necessary or could use massive resistance against the decision, as many did. In fact, as Carson (2004) confirmed, “the Court's initial unwillingness to set firm timetables for school desegregation undercut *Brown's* immediate impact” (p. 26) and without enforcement, it forced Black Americans to collectively challenge the resistance through mass movements. Blacks grew impatient with a remedy that did not require immediacy in its implementation (Bell, 2004; Carson, 2004, Irons, 2002; Klarman, 1994; Ogletree, 2004; Orfield & Eaton, 1997).

Institutionalized resistance was easily codified at the state level as laws and constitutional amendments were created to evade desegregation (Klarman, 2004, 2007; Ogletree, 2004). Maintaining control over local segregation practices by instituting policies and procedures became the primary means of resisting the decision. For example, the Virginia legislature disallowed one of their county's right to elect school board members as their response to the school board's vote to desegregate, sending a message to the rest of the counties. The Texas legislature required local referendums before instituting desegregation and each locale that defied this requirement would lose state funding. Some states, which were considered moderate, promoted “token” desegregation. As a final resort, there were some legislatures that threatened to close all schools within their jurisdiction (Klarman, 1994, 2004, 2007). Patterson (2001) writes that southern segregationists would say, “As long as we can legislate, we can segregate” (p. 99).

In the matter of Brown.

Klarman (1994, 2004, 2007) argues that although *Brown* mattered, the court was not the incentive for the civil rights movement. Rather it was Black veterans returning from fighting in World War II who helped launch the postwar Black freedom movement. Ten thousand veterans who died for “World Democracy” were subjected to racialized practices in the United States in spite of their patriotism. As a result, many joined the NAACP and other civil right organizations that held liberal reform agendas both in the north and the south. They, along with family and community members, ignited the modern Black freedom movement. For more than a half century, southern Black Americans lived in a *de jure* segregated society and northern Black Americans lived in a *de facto* segregated society as second-class citizens, many of whom were unable to get decent employment and were subjected to Jim Crow laws, policies and practices. Their movement would attack massive resistance and inspire generations throughout the country to secure their citizenship rights in a free society as American citizens.

Boston and Its Schools

Although there has been some research on Boston, its city and state government, and the citizen response to a court order to desegregate its schools, much of the popular scholarship starts with the 1974 court order to desegregate an unconstitutionally segregated school system and is skewed towards the reactions from disaffected white members of the city who questioned and defied the decision (Buell, 1982; Lukas, 1985; Lupo, 1977; Taylor, 1986). Often scholars explain the reaction of resisters by vilifying the federal judge or attributing the disruption to manipulative politicians. In contrast to this study, they situate the hotly contested responses within the disaffected white

communities, have few first person accounts from the Black community, and rationalize these changes in a liberal “plot initiated by social engineers, whether misguided or otherwise, to destroy stable white ‘ethnic’ communities in Boston” (Ross & Berg, 1981, p.14).

Contrast these accounts to the accounts of southern resistance to school desegregation and we discover that northern disaffected whites that did attempt to defy the court order are seldom identified as segregationists, the common and acceptable description used to describe southern resisters to desegregation. They are too often viewed as equal victims of a school system and city that pitted poor communities against one another, manipulated by liberals who reside outside the boundaries of the city. However the decision is argued, what is noticeably absent are the first person voices of those Blacks living in Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End prior to the Court Order and whose history can serve as a fundamental understanding of 20th century public education.

How Boston structured schooling.

Boston, often heralded as the cradle of liberty, with its renowned colleges and universities, is a city of neighborhoods. On June 16, 1818 the school committee appointed three men from each ward in the town to form a Primary School Board that made the case for neighborhood schools. It “required” students to attend school “not far from home” (Ernst, 1912; Levesque, 1979; Schultz, 1973, p. 41–42). As Boston organized and reorganized its schools during the 17th and 18th centuries, children attended “specialized schooling.” These schools were located throughout the city in

neighborhoods or wards. They were identified as “writing schools” or “arithmetic schools” or “grammar schools.”

A shift took place in the 19th century as Boston “structured” a system of schooling that gathered children together under single buildings. The schools were no longer locally controlled with a specialized curriculum. Nonetheless, Shultz (1973) described Boston in 1850 as a compact, walking city, “barely exceeding a two-mile radius from City Hall” (p. 104–111). Even through the reorganization of the schools, all were still within walking distance. Although there was a shift in the organization of public instruction, schools still remained “the bastion of neighborhood sovereignty” (Shultz, p. 115). Boston’s neighborhood school history seems to elucidate the extraordinary connection between the 18th and 19th century free schools and 20th century public education, as it seems to have morphed into a compelling message of neighborhood “ownership” and a constant challenge to city government regarding who is in charge of its schools.

A divided city.

Race, ethnicity, and class too often segregated Boston communities. Further there is evidence that this separation was by design and intent as the town and city grew with immigrant populations (Jennings, 2004; O’Connor, 1993, 1997; Schultz, 1973). These divisions developed over time because of city and state institutions that structured disparities in public parcels, leading to less fluidity within the city.

At the threshold of the 21st century, Jennings’ (2004) addressed Boston’s demographic shift, as communities of color were the majority of the city’s population. His research explored the impact of Boston community activists’ challenges to governmental bodies when there are substantive changes to boundaries, services, and

ways of living that may be detrimental to community participation. He foreground these controversies in *The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan: Building a 21st Century Community of 2003*. Issued in 1999 by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the plan became “a laboratory for examining race and class relationships and tensions generated by proposals for economic development strategies based on benefiting powerful institutional players as a way of helping low-income neighborhoods” (p.12). Jennings (2004) cites Alice O’Connor’s “Historical Perspectives on Race and Community Revitalization,” which I borrow to characterize the plight and agency of Boston Blacks as they petitioned the town of Boston in the 18th & 19th centuries for equal schooling:

History "from the ground-up" is replete with examples of resistance to, as well as political and economic exploitation of, the spatial restrictions of the color line. It also shows that, for all their internal divisions, residents of "poor" urban communities have organized themselves most consistently as members of a racially conscious industrial, if not post-industrial, working class. The third insight from historical research has to do with the legacy of the racial past in creating opportunities, impediments, but especially in establishing imperatives for organized action to promote social change. (p.12)

In the late 18th century through the early 19th century, a period between 1795 and 1812, Boston schools were available to all children, both Black and white, “without distinction.” The Boston School Committee considered this a privilege (Boston Primary, 1846, p. 15). Yet, few Black parents saw the city schools of value to their children because of the severity of racial prejudice within them (Horton, 1976; Jacobs, 1970; Levesque, 1979; Mabey, 1968). As Blacks, immigrants, and other ethnic groups immigrated to Boston throughout the 19th century, spacial boundaries between populations solidified the chasm between Black and white Bostonians, as racial and ethnic parts of the city with their corresponding schools emerged (Blodgett, 1984; Pleck, 1974; Smith, 1970; Tager, 2001; Lupo, 1977). The following section explores the harm to

Black children, as formal and racially divided universal education became part of the fabric of the city. It ultimately demonstrates the resolve of a people to disrupt unequal schooling in order to prepare a path toward equal educational opportunities for future generations.

19th Century Black Quest for Equal Education

Boston's reputation as a center for social reform before the Civil War rested not only upon the efforts of well-known white families on Beacon Hill, but also upon the traditional involvement of black families who lived, then and in the pages of history, in the shadow of Beacon Hill.

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Freedom is an elusive ideal. It is easily identifiable when absent, as those who reached for it shaped its meaning in words and through actions. At the threshold of the 19th century, Black citizens knew there were rights and opportunities that white citizens had which were denied to them. Jacobs (1969) wrote, "in no state did the Negro possess more freedom than in Massachusetts; and of all the larger cities of the United States, the Negro was nowhere freer than in Boston" (pp. vii–viii). However, he acknowledged that there were limits. Black citizens were confined to the more menial occupations. Churches were segregated with "negro pews." Religious denominations had racially separate churches. There was a law prohibiting intermarriage. There were Jim Crow laws for railroads, stagecoaches, and steamboats. Jim Crow and miscegenation continued in law through 1843 and were rescinded only after Black and white abolitionists contested them through political, legislative, and judicial actions (Jacobs, 1969; Levy & Philips, 1951; Ruchames, 1956).

Using research that foregrounds Black community activism from 1787 through 1975, this literature review establishes a chronological road to equal educational opportunity, initiated by its Black citizens. It argues that the long tradition of challenging inequality in education, experienced by Black children in Boston, started in antebellum Boston and was led by Black activists who were joined by white Bostonians. This tradition resulted from generational values transmitted within Black families and throughout their community (Horton, 1976). Starting in 1787, school inequality was challenged in Boston through agency demonstrated by Boston's Black citizens.

An urgent need for Black activism.

The racial divide in schools began as free schools were initially instituted in Massachusetts. Knox (1947) writes, "in America the 'Negro school' is an instrument designed to deny a complete cultural heritage to a minority group" (p. 269). With the advent of nationalism in 19th century schools became political agencies. The "Negro schools" were separated by design and rendered entire communities and their children politically impotent. However, Knox adds that "the absence of laws or law enforcement" is what perpetuated this separatism.

While beginning its history as a city in the vanguard of publicly supported education, during the 18th and 19th centuries Boston developed a tradition of systemic racism and educational neglect. It harbored a dual school system, segregating Black and white children while institutionalizing policies that perpetuated separate and unequal schools. From its start, schools attended by Black children were substandard in resources and facilities to those attended by white children. There is substantial research that documents the continued growth of a racialized system of education (Kaestle, 1983;

Horton, 1976; Jacobs, 1970; Schutz, 1973). In Massachusetts by the early 1840s separate schools for Negroes were abolished in Salem, Lowell, New Bedford, Nantucket, and in the smaller towns but remained in Boston (Jacobs, 1969, 1970; Levy & Philips, 1951; Mabee, 1968, Moss, 2009; White, 1973). The ways in which Black citizens garnered the attention of school committees for equal schooling in the towns throughout the Commonwealth were by way of petitions and school boycotts (Aptheker, 1951; Horton, 1976; Jacobs, 1970; Kousser, 1988; Mabee, 1968; White, 1973). This was the start of a long equal school rights movement waged by Black citizens in their march toward freedom.

19th century Black activists.

Boston and its schools have a conflicting history. Known as a center for educational enlightenment, Boston existed paradoxically as a progressive yet racially divided city (Douglas, 2005; Levy & Jones, 1974; Schneider, 1997; Schultz, 1973). In the nineteenth century, Boston's reputation was once a sanctuary for those who were fugitives from enslavement. It was home to many prominent social reformers, including David Walker, a militant Black abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, publisher of the Boston-based *Liberator*, Charles Sumner, United States Senator and leader of the Radical Republicans opposing enslavement, and Robert Morris, the first Black member of the Massachusetts Bar to practice actively in the Commonwealth and who partnered with Charles Sumner to challenge segregation in Boston's primary schools (Gover & Da Silva, 2002; J. V. Horton & Moresi, 1976; Jacobs, 1969; Mabee, 1968). These were examples from the 19th century through generations to come of those who were heavily committed to the "maintenance of a free school in the community" (Schultz, 1978, p. 5).

There was also William Cooper Nell who in 1840 led the fight for school integration, seeking equal educational opportunities for Blacks. John T. Hilton, the most active Black in the Massachusetts Antislavery Society and the one elected president of the group organized to boycott the segregated Smith School, accompanied him. There was John Bailey of Charlestown, boxing master at Harvard University who also was active in school integration, along with Peter Randolph, who organized Blacks to support the struggle through petition drives (Horton, 1976; Maybee, 1968). These men were representative of Black leadership. They forced the city and its school system to attend to equal schooling for Black children, as Boston developed a model of public education for the nation.

Three centuries of Blacks in Boston.

Daniels' (1914) historical account of a census in Boston that includes Blacks begins in 1742 with a "rough" count of 1374, which was a combined count of the enslaved and the free. He writes that by 1752 the Black population grew to 1541 "forming about 10% of a total population of 15,731" (p. 16). He adds that in 1754 there was a special count of only those enslaved and 989 were listed in Boston and concluded that because of the decline in the slave trade and the high mortality rate in the mid 18th century, there was a decline in Boston's Black population throughout the remainder of the century.

In 1765 the Black population fell to 848 and in 1790 to 766. In 1790 Blacks were 1.5 % of 378,787 Massachusetts residents or 1 of every 70 persons. By 1795 the population increased to 1174 and remained at that count through 1800 (Daniels, 1914; Schultz, 1973; White, 1973). Daniels confirms that there was a "low but constant growth

... to 1174 in 1800, 1468 in 1810, and 1690 in 1820” (pp. 16–17). By 1840 Blacks were 1% of 737,700 Massachusetts residents or 1 out of 84 persons. In 1790 Blacks were 4.25 % of 18,038 Boston residents or 1 out of every 24 persons (Daniels, 1914; White, 1971). However, Cromwell (1994) cautions about the accuracy of the count “because of the general unimportance attached to the Negro” (p. 32). According to Jacobs (1968), Charles Stimpson who published Stimpson’s Boston Directory for the first time in 1789 included a partial listing of Boston residents while “none of Boston’s nearly 800 Negroes received any mention” (p. 39). Green argues (as cited in Cromwell, 1994, p. 32):

Of the known, Boston, throughout the entire colonial era, contained the largest numbers of Negroes; importation and natural increase sent the total from 400 in 1708 to 1374 in 1742. In 1742 Boston had about one-third of all blacks in Massachusetts; the largest population was in 1753 when there were 1541, which was one-fifteenth of the town’s population. By 1755, the Negro population had dwindled to 989, but still no other town had more than 100. In 1765 when Boston’s total population was 15,520, there were only 811 Negroes and mulattos.

Cromwell completes this account with the 1784 census that listed 4377 Black Bostonians with a ratio of 50 whites to one Black. In 1788 Massachusetts passed a law prohibited Blacks residing in Massachusetts who were not citizens of any state. They were required to leave within two months or be “apprehended and whipped.” Daniel’s account of the 1790 census shows a decline in Blacks residing in Boston. It is important to know the population count as well as the growth of this community during the 18th and 19th centuries in relationship to their historical contributions towards equal schooling. This table provides a view of a relatively small Black community concentrated community living primarily in Boston proper and Greater Boston.

Table 2.1**Boston's Black Population Between 1638 and 1970**

	Daniels⁴	Cromwell⁵ / Green⁶	Cromwell / Daniels	U.S. Census⁷
1638	A few enslaved Blacks were brought to Boston			
1708		400 Blacks		
1742⁸ (1 st Boston count)	1374 ("rough count" of combined enslaved & free at 9% of total Boston population at 15,008)	1374 (about 1/3 of all Blacks lived in Boston)		
1752 (2 nd Boston count)	1541 (about 10% of total Boston population of 14,190)			
1753		1541 (1/15 th of the town's population of 21,765)		
1754	989 (appears to be a special count of enslaved only)			
1755		Dwindled to 989 (no other town had more than 100)		
1765	Fell to 848 (6% of Boston population at 15,520 – decline in the slave trade & high mortality rate in mid 18 th century)	811 "Negroes and mulattos" (Boston's total population was 15,520)		

⁴ Source: Daniels, J. (1914). *In freedom's birthplace: A study of the Boston negroes*.

⁵ Source: Cromwell, A. M. (1994). *The other Brahmins: Boston's Black upper class 1750 – 1950*.

⁶ Source: Greene, L. J. (1942). *The negro in colonial New England*.

⁷ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Census of Population, 1998.

⁸ Between 1742 and 1865 the population count references Boston proper as geographically constituted in that year. Additions made through annexations had a practically negligible effect (Daniels, 1968, p. 457)

	Daniels⁴	Cromwell⁵ / Green⁶	Cromwell / Daniels	U.S. Census⁷
1784			4377 (MA ratio of 50 whites to one Black)	
1790 (1st US census)	Fell to 766 (1.5% of 378,787 MA residents or 1 of every 70 persons)		Census – More than 4000 MA Blacks, 2000 who were part Native American; 18,320 – total Boston population	766 (4.2% of 18,320 total <u>Boston</u> population)
1795	Increased to 1174 and remained at that count through 1800			
1800				1174 (4.7% of 24,937 total Boston population)
1804	Emancipation in all states north of MD & free Blacks formed 13% of the total population			
1810				1468 (4.3% of 33,787 total Boston)
1820				1690 (3.9% of 43,298 total Boston)
1830				1875 (3.1% of 61,392 total Boston)
1840	2427 –2.5% of 93,383 total Boston			2427 (2.6% of 93,383 total Boston)
1850	1999 –1.4% of 136,881 total Boston			1999 (1.5% of 136,881 total Boston)
1855	2160 –1.3% of 158,793 total Boston			
1860	2284 –1.2% of 177,840 total Boston			2261 (1.3% of 177,840 total Boston)

	Daniels⁴	Cromwell⁵ / Green⁶	Cromwell / Daniels	U.S. Census⁷
1865	2348 –1.2% of 192,318 total Boston 2572 –includes Black population in annexed districts during the decade: Brighton, Charlestown, Dorchester, Roxbury & West Roxbury			
1870	3496 –1.3% of 250,526 total Boston			3496 (1.4% of 250,526 total Boston)
1875	4969 –1.4% of 341,919 total Boston			
1880				5873 (1.6% of 362,839 total Boston)
1885	6058 –1.5% of 390,393 total Boston			
1890				8125 (1.8% of 448,477 total Boston)
1895	9472 –1.9% of 496,920 total Boston			
1900				11,591 (2% of 560,892 total Boston)
1905	11,948 –2% of 595,380 total Boston			
1910				13,564 (2% of 670,585 total Boston)
1920				16,350 (2.2% of 748,060 total Boston)
1930				16,350 (2.2% of 748,060 total Boston)
1940				23,679 (3.1% of 770,816 total Boston)
1950				40,057 (5.0% of 801,444 total Boston)
1960				63,165 (9.1% of 697,197 total Boston)
1970				104 707 (16.3% of 641,071 total Boston)

Social Protest, Black Institutions, and the Black Leadership Class

Although the colony of Massachusetts never officially abolished enslavement until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, in 1781 the Massachusetts Supreme Court found “perpetual servitude” unconstitutional. In 1783 following the American Revolution 793 free Blacks settled in the North End of Boston, near the wharfs of Boston Harbor in order to find housing and employment. Their section was identified as “New Guinea” (Cromwell, 1994, p. 27; Jacobs, 1969, p. 31; White, 1971, p. 41, 64).

By 1820, the largest concentration of Boston’s Black community of 1088 residents, settled in the West End of Boston. Located at the lower, back slope of Beacon Hill, farthest from Boston Commons, this section was disparagingly known as “nigger hill”⁹ (Cromwell, 1994, p. 27; Kendrick & Kendrick, p. 21; Maybee, 1968; Schultz, 1973, p. 161; White, 1973, p. 504). It was located about a mile away from the early Black settlement in the North End. Cromwell (1994) writes that the great majority of Blacks “lived behind the State House on Beacon Hill on such streets as Belknap, Southac, Myrtle, and the smaller intermediary alleys—May and Smith—and made their living in service to the larger community” (p. 37). By 1855, the hill had increased to 1,366. Another 69 Blacks lived about 2.5 miles away in West End of Boston (White, 1973).

Within miles of each other all suffered the dehumanizing characterization of a place they

⁹ See OMEKA at Brandeis for a brief history of the area known as “nigger hill.” It reads: “In 1789, after Massachusetts legally abolished slavery, a large African American population migrated to the cheap dwellings in the low-sunlight, high watershed north slope, from the north end of Joy Street over the entire slope. By 1810, the majority of black Bostonians--44% of Boston’s black residents in 1840 and 61% in 1860 were living in the West End neighborhood, an area that came to be known as “Nigger Hill” by white contemporaries.” From: <http://omeka.lts.brandeis.edu/exhibits/show/africans-in-boston/beacon-hill>

called home. However, the Black activist community had a “strong tradition of social protest and community action ... social protest was also a family tradition” (Horton, 1976, p. 242).

One of the acknowledged Black leaders, representing many who had fought honorably in the Revolutionary War was Prince Hall. During the war era he organized a Black leadership class in Boston (Jacobs, 1969; White, 1973). Horton (1976) writes that social reform “was not limited to white Bostonians. Generations of blacks had been deeply involved in social protest” (p. 255). Blacks were first to establish “black community institutions and organizations” in ante-bellum Boston. It is important to contextualize place and space in order to understand the positioning of the Black community as they walk the road to equal schools through the 18th and 19th centuries. It provides a foundational understanding of the challenges the Black community faced given the size of its population and the areas to which they were confined. Racial separation becomes quite evident when one gains a more complete understanding of how it was expressed throughout Massachusetts society, including its schools.

De Tocqueville, 19th century historian and political thinker, quite aptly observed that the racial prejudice against Blacks seemed more pronounced “in states that abolished slavery than in those where it still exists...” (as cited in Douglas, 2005, p. 22). Garrison, referring to northern racism, also wrote in the first issue of the *Liberator* on January 1, 1831, that he found in the free states, “and particularly in New England [more] than at the south ... contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen, than among the slave owners themselves (Jacobs, 1969, p. 88). Kousser (1988) added that “the most effective

opponents of integration in Massachusetts were not, as is often assumed, lower class whites, but members of the partisan and socioeconomic elite” (p. 948). Then in the 1830s Garrison and his anti-slavery society “profoundly affected the nature of black leadership” (p.249) as Black leaders merged with white abolitionists. Kousser (1988) notes “nearly all the arguments employed in post-World War II battles over school integration were made in the pre-Civil War period” (p. 947).

A View of 17th & 18th Century Public Schooling in the Black Community

Schooling began in Boston in 1635 when some wealthy Bostonians donated funds to the first public school, Boston Latin. By 1645 a formal schoolhouse was located and special levies were placed on merchants to maintain the school. This was followed by a land grant and tax support from the town (Schultz, 1973). Ernst (1912) writes that at a Boston town meeting on December 18, 1682 schools were established by vote and “open to boys only,” and was “the start of common schools in Boston” (p. 5). In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, the social and political capital derived from a quality education more often benefited boys rather than girls, the privileged rather than the poor, and was primarily available to white children. Cronin (2008) writes that Boston’s flagship school, Boston Latin, the oldest school in the United States, taught “only young puritan boys” for nearly fifty years and then only added white Protestant males. Elite white males were those deigned to receive the advantages of an education in the evolving city. With the start of common schooling, Boston institutionalized white male privilege in schools that stemmed from Puritan principles and privileged traditions (Cronin, 2008; Brayley, 1894; Kaestle, 1983; Schultz, 1973).

The battle for equal education began in the antebellum north during the 18th century and “rested not solely on the efforts of well-known white families on Beacon Hill” but upon the traditions of Black families, such as Prince Hall and his son Primus Hall, William G. Nell and his son William Cooper Nell, Attorney Robert Morris, activist Benjamin Franklin Roberts, to name a few (Aptheker, 1951; Douglas, 2005; Horton, 1976, Kousser, 1988; Levy & Jones, 1974; White, 1973). There were no laws specifically excluding Black children from common schools, yet conditions existed that were so deeply racial and unjust, that ignoring equal schooling for Black scholars appeared purposeful (Kousser, 1988). As a result, many Black parents would not send their children to Boston’s schools “because of discrimination, mistreatment, and ridicule by white students and teachers” (Horton, 1976, p. 245).

White schoolteachers, school officials, and students subjected children to insufferable indignities. Misbehaving white children were sent to the “nigger seat,” or were told they would become “poor or ignorant as a nigger” (White, 1973, p. 505, Schultz, 1973, p. 160). White (1973) writes that in 1837 a Black minister and abolitionist spoke of the daily insults that Black adults and children too often children faced. Teachers threatened white children with images of the “old nigger [who] will carry you off” and if you don’t behave, you will be “worse than a little nigger.”¹⁰ During the late 18th century through the 19th century Black families in Boston sought alternative routes to establishing schools for their children to attend. They used petitions for access, then for private African schools, and then for equal schooling. These 17th and 18th century Black

¹⁰ White, 1973, cites this source: Paul Cuffee, 1815, quoted in Chickering, Statistical View, p. 128.

activists began the long walk in Boston towards equal access and equal opportunity in education.

1787 Prince Hall petition

Following the Land Ordinance of 1785 by the Continental Congress reserving “one lot in every township for public education” (Schultz, 1973, p. 10), Prince Hall, a Methodist minister and founder of the Negro Masonic Order in the United States, headed a petition brought to the Massachusetts State Legislature on behalf of its Black citizens to include Black children in the establishment tax supported free schools. That petition, supported by more than 40 Black Bostonians, said, in part, that free Blacks were taxpaying citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts entitled to all the rights and privileges of free men (Aptheker, 1951; Schultz, 1973; White, 1973). On October 17, 1787, the voices of respectable and courageous 18th century Blacks petitioned the Commonwealth to include Black scholars in their plans for public education. They wrote:

...we are of the humble opinion that we have the right to enjoy the privileges of free men. But that we do not will appear in many instances, and we beg leave to mention one out of many and that is of the education of our children which now receive no benefit from the free schools in the town of Boston, which we think is a great grievance as by woful [sic] experience we now feel the want of a common education. We, therefore, must fear for our rising offspring to see them in ignorance in a land of gospel light when there is a provision made for them as well as others and yet can't enjoy them, and for not other reason can be given that they are black ... We therefore pray your Honors that you would in your wisdom some provisions may be made for the education of our dear children. And in duty bound shall ever pray.¹¹ (Aptheker, 1951, p. 19–20)

This petition was the first of many requesting that the Commonwealth and its towns be made aware of the rights of the Black citizens and the harm to their children. Black children were deserving of schools that were inclusive. The response was

¹¹ Manuscript in Massachusetts Historical Society

disappointing as the Commonwealth “turned a deaf ear” to their request. A decade later, in 1798, they petitioned the town to provide funds for a separate school for Black scholars, believing that the seven free schools, supported at the public’s expense, were prejudice, dispiriting, and intolerant of Black children (Jacobs, 1969; Levesque, 1979). Boston’s position was that if Blacks in Boston desired a separate school, they would not interfere with it nor would they provide funding for it. Jeremy Belknap¹² noted (as cited in Jacobs, 1968):

The same provision is made by the public for the education of their children as for those of the whites. In this town, the committee, who superintend the free schools, have given in charge to the school-masters to receive and instruct black-children as well as white; but I have not heard of more than three or four who have taken advantage of this privilege ... No schools are set up by the community, for the blacks exclusively; though sometimes they have had instructors of their own color and at their own expense. (p. 36)

With a license from the city, the Black community established the first separate school in Massachusetts at the home of Primas Hall, the son of Prince Hall¹³ (Kousser, 1988; Levesque, 1979; Jacobs, 1969; White, 1973). First it was supported by Black citizens and then by some "benevolent white gentlemen" and members of the Black community. The

¹² Jeremy Belknap (1744–1798), Congregational clergyman, historian, and one of the founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹³ The literature often confuses the two names, Prince Hall and Primus Hall, and their relationship along with the role the son had in using his home for the education of Black children. Primus Hall, the son of Prince Hall, who opened the African School in his house, is sometimes identified as Prince Hall, the father. The spelling of Primus Hall is often different in each source, sometimes spelled Primus and other times Primas. White’s (1973) footnote 14 provides a reliable and contemporary source that clarifies the relationship between the two, as follows: “Nell described Primus as the son of Prince Hall; William C. Nell, *The Colored Patriots of the American revolution* (Boston, 1855), p. 29.”

school opened with a white teacher, Elisha Sylvester, but closed after three months because of an outbreak of yellow fever in Boston (Levesque, 1979; White, 1973).

With the passage of the Massachusetts Education Act of 1789, requiring towns with 50 or more households to employ a teacher and provide support for schools, Boston began to establish the first comprehensive system of public education in the country (Ernst, 1912; Brayley, 1894; Schultz, 1973). The question that remained, however, was would these schools provide equal access and resources to Black children in Boston? Schultz (1973) writes, “[a]t the turn of the 19th century, there existed neither a written nor a tacitly accepted rule against Black children attending the public schools” (p. 159). Black children could attend the same schools as white children. Some attended the public schools and a few parents could afford to enroll their children in private school for “colored children,” often called African schools, without the support of the city. However, the vast majority of children could not attend schools at all because of poverty and “economic loss of whatever pittance the children might bring from streets begging or odd jobs” (Schultz, 1973, p. 159). Schultz further notes that there was never a school segregation law constituted in Massachusetts, but contends that this is the point when de facto schooling, the practice and policy of foregrounding race when determining schools and allocating resources to white and Black children, began in the Boston schools.

The Petitioners and the Petitions: A Plea for an African School

In 1800, George Middleton, African Society member and school teacher, along with sixty-six Blacks petitioned the School Committee for an African school funded with public money that would teach “reading, writing, and common arithmetic” (Kousser, 1988; Shultz, 1973; White, 1976, p. 508). It read:

...we have also been informed that in Philadelphia and in New York means have been adopted for the instruction of the people of Colour ... Gentlemen! our wish is, the establishment of a school within the town in which some of the branches of Education, such as a knowledge of which and common Arithmatick [*sic*] may be taught us & our children, a knowledge of which even in the Poorest occupation of life we presume would be found advantageous [*sic*] and so far from proveing [*sic*] dangerous, ... We have had Application made to us by several Gentlemen on the Subject of the management of a School, but we posess [*sic*] not the means to carry the plan into Effect-- we therefore heartily request your assistance in the promotion of what we doubt not you will conceive to be a laudable undertaking, and as ever in duty bound will pray. (Petition from George Middleton to Boston Primary, 1800, as cited in White, 1977, pp. 96 – 97)

Not unlike the 1787 Boston activists who fought in the Revolutionary War, these 19th century activists remained steadfast in their resolve to procure their rightful place in this new nation. They believed that education would advance this cause. This time the sub-committee to which the petition was assigned found in favor of their request and the Town issued a Warrant for a Town meeting. Funding the request for a separate school was rejected but influential whites lobbied for the African school. The group engaged wealthy Unitarians to join them. Blacks revived the private school in the house of Primus Hall and philanthropists paid for a teacher. The African school remained at Primus Hall's house until 1803 when it moved to an abandoned carpenter shop (Brayer, 1894; White, 1973).

The Reverend Thomas Paul founded the African Methodist Church in 1800 and converted it to the first African Baptist congregation along with Primus Hall and other Black community residents in 1805 (Cromwell, 1994; Horton, 1976; White, 1973). This edifice became the African Meeting House in 1806, which remains today on Boston's Beacon Hill. It is:

probably the oldest extant African American church building in the United States ... the first African Baptist church created north of the Mason Dixon Line ... the first house of worship built for people of African descent in Boston ... the largest

meeting space owned and controlled by people of color in the city for much of the nineteenth century, and as such it provided room for a school ... (Grover & DaSilva, 2002, p. 94).

Paul was an outspoken leader in the Black community, infusing the ideology of Black separatism into the school movement. He was quite influential in Boston, raising funds from “the state’s chief justice, lieutenant governor and five others” for his church with half the basement designated for an African school, which was completed in 1806 and where it remained for 27 years (White, 1973, p. 509). In 1808, the lower story of the African Meeting House became a schoolroom. The school in Primus Hall’s house was transferred to the Meeting House where they continued to be taught until March of 1835.

The Smith School

Primus Hall, parents, and Black seamen raised a little over \$400 to furnish the school (Brayley, 1894; Schultz, 1973; White, 1973). In 1812 the city agreed to provide \$200 annually to support the school through public funds by supplementing “donations from parents and a twelve and a half cents weekly tuition charged each child able to pay” (Darling, 1959; Grover & DaSilva, 2002; White, 1973, p. 510). Schultz (1973) wrote that with this pledge, the School Committee then “claimed the right to assume all future control of the school and any other schools that might become desirable” (p. 162). In 1815, Prince Saunders, a Black teacher and scholar, persuaded a wealthy white merchant, Abiel Smith, to grant revenue through stocks to the city specifically for the education of Black children. Smith died in 1816¹⁴ and the city was left with income from stocks to

¹⁴ 1815 and 1816 are contradictory years cited for the death of Abiel Smith as was the amount of his legacy for the education of Black children. The Museum of African American History, the National Park Service, and Brayley, 1894 cite his death in 1815. However, White, 1973, cites 1816 and appears to have the most authoritative sources

administer for Black education and for “twenty-five years the capital from the stocks and city taxes supported three African primaries and an African grammar school (Brayer, 1894; White, 1973, 1975, p. 527). Brayley (1894) provides a summary with some additional details of the road to Black schooling in Boston:

The Smith School for colored children of both sexes was established in 1812 ...The new building was built two years later on Belknap Street, at a cost of \$7,485.61. In 1815 Mr. Abiel Smith died and left a legacy of about five thousand dollars, the income from which was to be appropriated "for the free instruction of colored children, in reading, writing, and arithmetic. (p. x)

In 1819, Reverend Paul was paid rent for the basement schoolrooms that housed a primary school. Another African school was a short distance away and had 70 children attending. By 1820, the Black population increased to 1690 (Schultz, 1973, p. 189; White, 1973, p. 505) and Boston had “legally fixed the pattern of segregation through the establishment of a separate primary for Negroes” (Levy & Philips, 1951, p.511). The city opened another neighborhood primary school at “the request of a few Negro parents living remote from Nigger Hill” in 1820, (White, 1976, p. 510). Yet, they refused to open a Black high school, closed two African primary schools and were not teaching grammar to Blacks. In fact, “[t]he school committee forbid the colored children from learning grammar – they would not allow any but white children to study grammar” (Horton & Horton, 1979, p. 71). There was also a clear contrast between the health conditions of the white schools and the unhealthy conditions of the Black schools. In 1822, as schools were expanding, Black parents were discovering that many of their children, age 10 and 12, “knew nothing of the alphabet” (White, 1973, p. 510). At the request of parents living a

including Bigelow *et al.*, *Report*, [1849], pp. 20-21; William Minot, *The Address of William Minot at the Dedication of the Smith School House On March 3, 1835* (Boston, 1960), p. 5; Crowell *et. al.*, *Report* [1846], pp. 16, 18.

distance from the African primary school, the city opened another neighborhood school for “colored children.”

Institutionalizing Separate and Unequal Schools

During the mid-1820's Boston had “a year-round system of primary schools” (Ernst, 1912, p. 7; Schultz, 1973). By contrast as schooling expanded so quickly, the School Committee established Latin and English High Schools for Boys, expanded grammar school instruction, and established Girls High School in 1826. Girls High School had less of an emphasis on the classics and was abandoned in 1828 because enrollment was too high. Almost three hundred girls attempted to enroll, which was more than three times the number of candidates for Boys High School. Yet, Girls High School was short lived. Ernst (1912) and Woods (1865) noted that it closed because of its success, as it could not accommodate the number of girls applying. The city's poorhouse, known as the House of Industry, opened two classrooms. White (1973) wrote, “officials ended the bonanza by using segregation to socialize Blacks as an inferior caste” (p. 511).

School examiners, the mayor, and the school committee chair made annual visits to all Boston schools awarding medals to those who passed their examinations with distinction. In 1829 their visit included the African school in the basement of the Belknap-street Church on Beacon Hill, where several of Black scholars were acknowledged with only an inexpensive book, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*. The white scholars from other Boston schools, however, received the silver Benjamin Franklin medal for their academic achievements and were then invited to a special awards banquet in their honor given by the mayor of Boston (Mabee, 1968; Smith, 1970).

William Cooper Nell, son of William G. Nell, an abolitionist, was one of the Black scholars from the African school who was acknowledged as one of three outstanding scholars of merit. They, unlike their white counterparts were not invited to the scholars' dinner. Nell attended the dinner, though, by bargaining with a waiter to allow him, "to seem to serve others as the fee for serving myself ..." (Foner & Branham, 1998, p. 281). One of the examiners whispered to Nell that he ought to be at the dinner with the other boys. Nell respectfully did not reply but told others at a testimonial given for him in 1855 about his desire in 1829 to say to the examiner, "If you think so, why have you not taken steps to bring this about?" Nell became a Garrisonian abolitionist "by the time he was barely out of school" and was a steadfast leader in the school integration movement in Boston.

As the common school movement took hold in the 1830s, schooling essentially reflected the social and racial differences in society (Schultz, 1973; Reef, 2002; White, 1973). The condition of the Black schools and the discriminatory practices of the School Board activated a new generation of Blacks in Boston to organize to "equalize a dual school system" (White, 1973, p. 512). In 1831, there were three primary schools for Black children located on, near, and north of Beacon Hill, established by the city (Horton & Horton, 1979). A school for "colored children" was opened in the north end of the city and closed in 1835 because of poor attendance (Boston Primary, 1846).

A report prepared for the School Committee in 1832 addressed the poor attendance and extreme tardiness at the African school. Also, intermediate schools were being established for illiterate children over seven. These children, both Black and white, were too old to be admitted to the primary schools and under the Massachusetts

Education Act of 1789 they also could not be admitted to the grammar schools. There were a large number of black children over seven who, because of poverty, disinterest, and poor schooling, did not attend school (Brayley, 1894; Ernst, 1912; Levesque, 1979). There were 37 boys and 36 girls registered at the Black school and of these only 50% attended regularly.

There were “unequal and inadequate facilities” with classrooms that were “low and confined,” giving way to hot and stifling summers and extremely cold winters (Levesque, 1979). Yet, learning spaces for white children throughout the city were “convenient and healthful” (White, 1973, p. .511). Levesque (1979) wrote that that Black citizens “paid their fair share of taxes” and their “greatest objection” to the African School was the ‘obvious contrast’ between educational accommodations. It advantaged white children in stark contrast to the poorly maintained African school. This, the parents and activists complained, was the “principal cause of this school being so thinly attended.” They further contended that if any distinction was to be made between them, and others, it ought to be in their favor, and not against them.” Negroes paid their fair share of taxes and in this light it was only “just and expedient that a suitable building be ... provided, at the expense of the City, . . . for the accommodation of the African School.”(p. 120).

The School Committee commissioned another report on the African School in 1834. At this point, the school was structurally unsound and poorly attended. The report stated, “White indifference, reflected in the failure to provide adequate accommodations, had bred apathy on the part of both teachers and pupils and discouraged blacks from taking an interest in the school” (Levesque, 1979, p. 121). It had become evident that the

African School needed larger and improved quarters. At the same time, several cities in Massachusetts were eliminating their “colored schools.” Black Bostonians could see that Black scholars in other locales in Massachusetts were attending schools in their neighborhoods or “wards” alongside white scholars. Yet, Boston’s separate schooling continued to grow, “especially in the grammar school, which after nearly twenty years was still located in the basement of the African church” (Jacobs, 1969, p. 125).

Because the number and types of primary and intermediate Black schools grew at the same pace as white schools, the Committee felt that they had met their burden and that the Black community should be satisfied. But, they were not. In fact, the discrepancies between Black and white schools in quality and access fell far short of Boston’s responsibility to provide universal schooling. Following the petitioners of 1787 and 1800 requesting a school for Black children that would teach "reading, writing and common arithmetic" parents were still demanding equal facilities, quality teachers, and control over the schools that teach their children.

The School Committee responded with an “urgent memorial” for an appropriation from the City Council for a new African School. It was approved and the funds to build and administer it were allocated from Abiel Smith’s 1815 bequest. The city then took the Smith School under its jurisdiction and on Feb. 10, 1835, the school was named for its benefactor, Abiel Smith. March 3, 1835, the new Abiel Smith School opened its doors to “colored children” only as the first public primary and grammar school for African Americans in the United States. This is where all Black children in Boston were to be assigned (Brayer, 1894; Darling, 1959; Jacobs, 1969, 1970; Levesque, 1979). The school averaged about fifty-three children (Boston, 1946; Brayley, 1894; Horton, 2005). The all

Black intermediate school, the part of the school system designated for illiterate children over the age of seven, completed the institutionalization of separate schooling in 1837. It opened in one of the lower rooms of the grammar school that was now the primary school, to be used "for children too old for the primary school, and not qualified to join any of the classes of the Smith School" (Levesque, 1979, p. 123). The Primary School Committee now governed both the primary school and the intermediate school. By the mid-eighties, as the Boston school system evolved, neighborhood boundaries were established and cultural norms had solidified. The "modest request" for a Black school first made in 1800 "had grown into a three-tiered system of publicly-supported segregated schools" (Levesque, 1979, p. 120).

Equal Schooling: A Black Education Movement Takes Root

William C. Nell, son of William G. Nell, an abolitionist and founding member of the Massachusetts General Colored Association in 1826, emerged as a major leader by the 1850s in the campaign for integrated schooling. He followed his father's agency and became a Garrisonian abolitionist "by the time he was barely out of school" (Horton, 1976; Horton & Moresi, 2001, Mabee, 1968, p. 341). He attended the Smith School and was well aware of the harm segregation caused to this all-Black school and its students. The Smith School building housed one of the city's public primary schools for Black children. In the upstairs room was the only grammar school for Black children in Boston, aged eight to thirteen, no matter where they lived. There was no high school for Black children so if anyone insisted on attending high school, the scholar came to the Smith School.

The 1844 campaign to desegregate all of Boston's schools was centered at the Smith school (Mabee, 1968). Petitions against segregated education were the first forms of protest. This petition movement for equal access to schools started in 1787 and continued through the 19th century in 1844, 1845, 1846, and 1849, and it continued on through the century. It was Blacks who led this movement as they formally organized as "integrationists" and chose as leaders "the middle-aged barber Hilton as president, and two bright young men in their twenties Liberator assistant Nell and law student Robert Morris, as secretaries" (Mabee, 1968, p. 343). The group petitioned school authorities to end segregation, requested the removal of the white principal at the Smith School who punished children cruelly and demeaned their intellectual abilities. The school committee recommended that segregation be continued and exonerated the principal from all charges.

Following this, the group organized and urged parents to boycott the school (Mabee, 1968). So little is written about this remarkable boycott, its leaders, and its effectiveness. However, what is accomplished marked a change in segregated schooling in Boston. The boycott was effective as the attendance at the Smith School dropped from a number considered "normal" by the school authorities of "over 100 before the boycott began in 1844, to 53 in 1849; ... even lower by the spring of 1850 to 25" (Mabee, 1968, p. 352). However, not everyone in the Black community wanted integration. Some wanted the Smith School to be maintained in ways that the white schools were. They wanted Black teachers and a Black principal, believing that Black school personnel would "stimulate" their children to do better work.

Those who wanted integration felt the injustice in the lack of resources and the poorly maintained facility. Maintaining the status quo would only serve to continue unequal schooling and resource distribution between Black and white scholars (Mabee, 1968). This debate was also echoed with equal passion in the 20th century by those who did not fight for integration but rather for access to resources. They argued that a movement for equality in schools should followed the money to the white schools. Those who supported community control of the schools argued that where a community was predominantly Black and the schools reflected this, then money for hiring teachers, maintaining a facility, and purchasing books and supplies should be equally distributed between Black and white schools. However, the fight for integration, desegregation, racial balance, and equal educational opportunity prevailed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Starting with the 1787 petition and subsequent petitions thereafter, Black community activism launched a rallying cry for equal educational opportunity. It continued to be echoed by Black citizens of Boston in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries in the tradition of social protest. On February 6, 1846 Black citizens in Boston, some of whom were parents attending the “exclusive Primary Schools for colored children,” submitted a petition to the Primary School Committee of the City of Boston. This time it was that the school for Black children be abolished and these children be allowed to attend the Primary School in the district in which they lived. Their petition to *The Primary School Committee* (1846) read, in part:

...that the establishment of exclusive schools for our children is a great injury to us and *deprives us of those equal privileges and advantages in the public schools to which we are entitled as citizens*. These separate schools cost more and do less for the children than other schools, since all experience teaches where a small and despised class are shut out from the common benefit of any public institutions of learning and confined to separate schools, few or none interest themselves about

the schools – neglect ensues, abuses creep in, the standard of scholarship denigrates, and the teachers and the scholars are soon considered and of course become an inferior class. (p. 2)

The words of Black citizens, “deprives us of equal privileges and advantages in public schools to which we are entitled” resonate through two centuries of schooling, as Black activists in Boston challenged segregated schools.

Race Triumphs

The Primary School Committee responded that “[t]he children of colored parents are entitled to the benefits of free schools, equally with others” (p. 4). The Committee argued against the claim made by Black parents that it is a *legal right* for Black citizens to attend the same schools that white children attend. They wrote that the scholars were entrusted to the Committee by law and that, as such, they can classify and distribute these scholars using their “best judgment.” They continued that the law states that the School Committees of every town shall be in charge of the schools and, as such, the Primary School Committee decided that Boston is a single school district. This is significant because living within Boston and its single district meant that these children can attend either of the two schools for colored children, no matter the distance. However, the most egregious response appears to be the “ground of distinction” in the separating the races in schools. The Boston Primary School Committee (1846) wrote this as its reason for maintaining segregated schools:

It is one of *races*, not of colors merely. The distinction is one which the All-wise Creator has fit to establish; and it is founded deep in the physical, mental, and moral natures of the two races.¹⁵ No legislation, no social customs, can efface this distinction ... Now if, in the opinion of the School Committee, here is a race, not only distinct in respect to color, hair, and general physiognomy, but possessing

¹⁵ Used in the language of the *Plessy* decision

physical, mental, and moral peculiarities, which render a promiscuous intermingling in the public schools disadvantageous, both to them and to the whites, – what law of the Statue book it to prevent them from maintaining special schools for their instruction? (p. 7–8)

They continued that it is in the interest of both races that they remain separate and distinct because “Amalgamation is degradation” (Boston, 1846, p. 13).

In 1837, Horace Mann, the “father of the common school movement,” was appointed Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, the nation’s first board of education. In the fall of 1847, he introduced graded instruction at the Quincy grammar school in Boston, “the nation’s first multi-classroom public elementary school” (Brayley, 1894, 115-116; Cutler, 1989, Danna & Span, 2008, p. 267). He was Secretary of Education during the boycott of the Smith School. Kaestle (1983) writes that Horace Mann, fearing he would “never get another cent,” shunned school integration in Boston (p. 89).

These common school reformers came from different political and social groups and shared key middle class social beliefs. Horace Mann and most school reformers avoided school integration because of politics, prejudice, fear, and the evolving American culture, believing that Black children were intellectually inferior to white children. They theorized differences of birth, geography, and species, while using biblical text to support these theories (Kaestle, 1983, Mabee, 1968; Schultz, 1973, White, 1971, 1973). In a speech given by Horace Mann in 1852 to Blacks in Ohio, he said, “in intellect, the blacks are inferior to the whites, while in sentiment and affections, the whites are inferior to the blacks” (Kaestle, 1983, p. 89). This admonition gave voice to stereotypes that were perpetuated in the culture and classrooms of Boston schools.

Schultz (1973) adds to the controversy surrounding Boston when discussing white liberalism and Black agency. He characterized Wendell Phillips and Charles Sumner, both abolitionists and advocates for equal rights, as “white liberals involved in the desegregation cause” and ascribed to them the following motive:

Despite the participants’ humanitarian rhetoric, the whole affair smacked of opportunistic paternalistic. In calling for the end of school segregation the white champions of Black rights were on the side of morality and racial justice. But their performance lent credence to the often-repeated charge that liberal paternalism often masks a desire for social control. (p. 158).

This interpretation by Schultz appears to support the narrative that foregrounds movements for equal schooling waged “for” Black petitioners, not led “by” Black activists. However, Kousser (1988) characterizes Shultz’s interpretation of “leftist” castigation masking “social control” as a continuing theme of “conservative critics” from 1840 through the 20th century. He rejects it as “essentially empty” and defends his position, arguing that:

Representatives of every group want to structure “the social composition of American life along lines attractive” to them. That is, they would like their own preferences to prevail. Racists on the Boston School Committees sought to use government to preserve segregation; radicals, to dismantle it. If speaking for a majority of blacks makes one group the friend of the blacks, then ... the black and white abolitionists were the friends of blacks. (*supra* note 43, p. 951)

The movement towards equal schooling was a combination of white allies of good will and Black activists who historically led movements for equality in education on behalf of their children and communities.

Sarah C. Roberts v. The City of Boston, 59 Mass. 198–210 (5 Cush.) (1850)

By 1849 the actions taken on behalf of integrating the schools added another layer to its movement. It was in the form of a suit against Boston for damages brought about by Benjamin F. Roberts because his daughter, Sarah, had been excluded from the all-white

public schools near her residence. He tried to enroll her four times and four times she was rejected. They walked past “no less than five other primaries” on a direct route between their home and the Smith School. The City required that all Black children attend only the all Black Smith School located on Beacon Hill but Roberts refused to enroll her. Roberts, an activist, employed the “the aggressive Black Robert Morris” and the soon to be U. S. Senator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, to argue his case before Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. His argument before the court was to test the constitutionality of the school committee’s power to legalize segregated education under a Massachusetts statute that provided a recovery of damages if any child were illegally excluded from public school.

In March of 1850, Chief Justice Shaw rendered a unanimous decision of the court upholding the power of the school committee to enforce segregation in schools (Darling, 1957–1960, pp. 129-142; Horton & Moresi, 2001, pp. 14-16; Levy & Philips, 1851, pp. 512, 515; Mabee, 1968, pp. 350, 352). Forty-six years later, on May 18, 1896, *Roberts v. Boston*, 59 Mass. (5 Cush.) 198 (1850) was cited in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537, 16 S. Ct. 1138, 41 L. Ed. 256 (1896) as the United States Supreme Court sustained the constitutionality of Louisiana’s Jim Crow law. This decision codified in law and in practice the principle of separate but equal. Supported by the Constitution of the United States for fifty eight more years, Black citizens lived in a constitutionally segregated America until *Plessy* was overturned on May 17, 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). With the *Plessy* decision came a shift in the lives of Black America from a hopeful future to an indomitable determination to make America live up to its promises for all of its citizens.

During the period of 1850 to 1855 the trend for Black and white Bostonians was a move to the suburbs of Boston, including Brighton, Chelsea, and Cambridge. These were taxpayers moving from Boston to avoid paying taxes for segregated schools, whether they had children or not. The integration movement now shifted to the state legislature to prohibit school segregation. They undertook a less than successful petition drive throughout the state. They maintained pressure on the school committee through petitions, lobbied for a desegregation bill in the state legislature, had four school boycotts including “taxpayer boycotts,” and moved from Boston in protest of segregated schools. Their tax revenues went along with their move away from Boston. The desegregation campaign lasted eleven years. In 1855 the state legislature accepted desegregation across the Commonwealth and segregated education was no longer “required” in Boston (Mabee, 1968, 356-357).

Equal Educational Opportunity: A Generational Link to the 20th Century

Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.

—W. E. B. Du Bois – *The Souls of Black Folk*

Between 1830 and 1892 and the majority of Blacks “lived in the West End, beyond Joy Street and down along the northerly slope of Beacon Hill to several blocks below Cambridge Street” (Daniels, 1914 p. 143). By the early 1900s, some had moved south as teachers and others were moving out of the West End. With an influx of Blacks coming from the south and from the West Indies, the Beacon Hill Black community, whose legacy was now imprinted on the fight for equal schooling, was experiencing a shift in its residential landscape. Some were moving to the South End of Boston and others to the suburbs (Daniels, 1914; Cromwell, 1994). Although many families who

were part of the equal school struggle remained in Boston, housing in the West End was limited and deteriorating.

In 1900, the Black population at only 2% of the Boston population began to shift residentially. Some moved to the “then-fashionable South End” of Boston along Columbus Avenue as well as to the suburbs (Cromwell, 1994, p. 57). Daniels (1914) argues that the residential movement took place because of “deteriorating housing conditions” and high rents. Boston proper housing was limited because of prejudice and greed. With the influx of new Blacks and a pattern of residential movement landlords seized this opportunity to charge high rents. Johnson (2006) argues that “race and racism” were clearly “potent” in Boston. Although jobs were plentiful before and after the Great Depression, discrimination was obvious. Ads read, “Supervisor needed, white man only ... Colored Woman Wanted for Shining Shoes ... Girl Elevator Operator. Will train, neat, well-mannered white girl ...” (p. 28). In 1919, a mayoral candidate stated that he would not have a Black teacher in a public school with more than fifty white children because “the time has not yet come for it” (p. 29). Johnson added that Black leaders during the first decades of the 20th century organized against the one belief shared by those white Bostonians in positions of power. It was “a belief in the innate inferiority of Black people.”

In 1798, out of frustration with Boston as it excluded Black children from universal schooling, the Black community, coupled with a strong sense of urgency for an equal opportunity, opened a private African school and maintained it with little financial assistance from Boston. Thirty-seven years later in 1835, the School Committee did support an all-Black school, intended to house all children whose heritage was African

and who sought an education in the city. This shift to purposeful separate education for Black scholars carried an unintended consequence for the Black community. The community that had petitioned, mobilized, and led an effort to obtain these citizenship rights for their children lost local control of these schools. While racially divided schools were unequal, the community did have some influence over who taught their children when they initially petitioned for separate schools. Once the Boston School Committee successfully obtained funding for these schools, it institutionalized its dominance and control over hiring, curriculum, and funding. Given that the schools Black children attended prior to 1835 were neglected, under-resourced, and underfunded, many in the Black community worked toward a goal of equalization, and yet, “the control of separate schools had slipped entirely from their grasp” (Levesque, 1979, p. 122).

A critical issue included the indifference from the School Committee to parental influence in hiring teachers for the Smith School. The differences in the teaching staff between the all Black African schools of the early 19th century and this new edifice were disturbing. Levesque (1979) writes, “During the first twenty years of separate grammar schools in Boston, most of the teachers were black ... Beginning in 1818 ... and extending through 1848, all teachers – save the three-year term of John B. Russwurm, 1821-1824 – were white” (p. 122). When a vacancy occurred at the Black primary school the Committee consulted Black parents regarding their preference. A Black teacher was hired, remained for five years, and then the Committee hired a white teacher to replace her. Although Black parents found the Black teacher to be a valuable and competent teacher, the Committee did not agree. “Believing that good teachers were born, not made, the Committee charged that Miss Woodson ‘was not naturally qualified.’” Black parents

felt that “they alone ... were the parties interested and had a right to decide the question, and ... if the colored people preferred Miss Woodson as a teacher ... their wishes should have been law to the Committee ...” (Levesque, 1979, pp. 123–124). This was an argument for local control of the schools. The School Board’s response was clear. It was that control would be centralized and parental input would never be “decisive.” Levesque (1979) continued:

For Negroes, the time to reappraise their decade-long strategy of sharing authority with school officials was at hand. If these would not share the jurisdiction they exercised over the separate school system, then perhaps the answer was to fight to abolish that system altogether. In the early 1840s, the decision toward which a decade of Negro discontent had been leading was reached. No matter that blacks were themselves prime-movers in establishing that system in the first place; separate schools were now, to many, anathema, and the whole system should be abolished. Phase II of the story of black education in antebellum Boston was about to begin. (p. 125)

A century after the first petition in 1787 was presented to the General Court of Massachusetts the fate of Black Americans was sealed in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* for more than half a century. The 1896 decision from the United States Supreme Court institutionalized a dual society – one Black, one white, separate and unequal. It remained that way as some of the greatest legal minds, led by Charles Hamilton Houston, tested the constitutionality of *Plessy* and provided a path forward towards equality in America. Boston Blacks protested against racial injustice, organized against racialized schooling, and built the oldest African American church still standing today.

As the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled slavery unconstitutional in 1783, Black Bostonians were the first generation of Boston’s free people of color (Horton, 2005). Their educational activism, beginning in 1787 and continuing throughout the 19th century provided critical markers for Boston’s Black Education Movement. Their

actions were transformative and each was a generational link to future action by those 20th century Black Americans who lived in Boston and came to understand and appreciate the importance of a people's legacy.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Historical Research

This research study is a historical analysis of Boston school desegregation viewed through the lens of Black Bostonians who gave rise to a Black Education Movement. The central question seeks to discover the ways that the Black community demonstrated agency and activism in response to segregated education. Using oral history and case study methods, this study describes a history of race, resilience, and schooling in Boston contrasted against manuscripts that center classism, judicial activism, and political manipulation as central to the desegregation dispute.

This history is what Green (2000) identifies as movement history with narratives that “emphasize the role of historical consciousness in movement building and in the mysterious processes that create human solidarity” (p.1). Movement history opens a space for inclusive “history–telling” by the academic and the activist. The act of making and recording movement history is a collective and collaborative process, which enriches historical perspectives. It is neither an exclusively academic nor a singularly authored act. It is, at best, “Bringing the Boundaries of History Closer to People’s Lives” (p. 52).

A plausible explanation for the source of this self-help energy in movement building is embedded in the history of Black Americans as an enslaved yet emancipated class who, beginning in 18th century Boston, sought to organize to obtain the rights of American citizens. It is intended to result in a more complete historical understanding of the relationship between early school desegregation and the role of Boston’s Black community. It also will provide a deeper knowledge of the social and cultural complexities these narrators faced as Black Americans born before *Brown*. This is public

history that deconstructs narratives of white resistance and provides historical space to tell a history of a less known social justice movement in Boston.

Insider Research

Postmodern researchers suggest that insider research uncovers knowledge and nuances within a community that “may be undiscoverable” to outsiders, that conscious objectivity may fail to capture the variety of standpoints that exist in the text of the human experience, and that there are many advantages to insider researchers who have had these shared experiences with their research (Edwards, 2002; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, Muhamed, 2001; Milner, 2007; Taylor, 2011; Unluer, 2012; Yow, 1997). Wilkinson & Kitzinger (2003) challenge those who view objectivity as inviolable and who see insider research as “contaminating the production of knowledge” (p. 251). They argue that there can be rich perspectives brought about through the insider’s view, yet to be captured as knowledge and formally theorized. Only then can its value as knowledge production be assessed. My positionality in this study is as a deep and intimate insider researcher.

Deep insider research

Insider researchers are, “those who choose to study a group to which they belong,” and outsider researchers who are non-members of the group they research (Breen, 2007, as cited in Unluer, 2102, p. 1). Edwards (2002) introduces the value of deep-insider research, defined as a researcher who has been part of the organization, or in my case the community, being studied for at least five years (p. 72). He argues that the deep-insider researcher has historical knowledge about the individual subjects, the context of the research, and the organizations or communities under study. Because of the

length of time, which has been subject to “scrutiny, review, and adjustment,” that process aids in the validity of the historical knowledge. The membership role changes to researcher and with that, rapport and trust become even more valuable.

Because the deep-insider is aware of organizational history and personal relationships and much of this may be undiscoverable to outsiders, history is still unfolding and the deep-insider is very much connected to that unfolding, shared history. The advantages of this positioning are “strongly grounded hermeneutics,” embedded in the trust and rapport established during the intimate contacts and the deeper connectivity to the data sources. “Charades and cover stories” can be detected a lot easier with this historical knowledge. Understanding data through informal language is common among those who are insider-researchers. In addition, groups and community histories along with the identities of informants are clearer. Their potential contributions to research can be identified sooner as a more accurate strategic approach to the research. Deep insiders better know individuals and their histories as well as the organizations’ and community’s culture.

Intimate insider research

Taylor (2011) defines the “intimate insiders” as those with whom friendships are shared. Her argument posits that this position is a plausible and justifiable source of data gathering. She writes not to justify friends becoming informants in research but rather to clarify the role of an “intimate insider” and to posit ways of managing the relationships in the “intimate insider dynamic” (p. 5). She finds advantages in intimacy with her informants. In comparing her professional relationships with unfamiliar informants to her intimate informants she sees advantages that have opened accessibility to new types of

data. Because of the level of comfort between the researcher and the more familiar informants, the data gathered from them is “significantly greater in volume and depth.” It can provide appropriately descriptive language, as the conversations are fluid and natural. She writes,

To guide us in our research, we must equally value and rely upon our strength of character, goodwill, our gut instincts and emotional intelligence as we do our formal training ... but inevitably, we must not only think but also feel our way empathetically in the field. As an insider researcher, but particularly as an intimate insider, ‘the field’ is not only my site of work and learning, but it is my place of personal belonging, comfort, trust, friendship and love. The fragmentations of self in this instance are multiple and the ethical negotiations are complex, but as I have demonstrated here, the benefits of conducting research from an intimate insider position can be great. (p. 18 – 19)

Challenges to insider researchers

There could be challenges to the insider’s role as a result of this methodology, specifically with the collection, analysis, and reporting of data, and with ethical issues. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) acknowledge research advantages in having a greater understanding of the individual or group’s culture under study, the natural social interaction between a familiar researcher and the informants, and a pre-established intimacy, which promotes truth telling. It also positions the researcher to gather formal and informal knowledge of the politics of institutions and thereby adds to the context of the research. Insider researchers, they propose, come to the study with a priori knowledge mainly unknown to the outsider who needs time to acquire this needed information.

The disadvantages to the insider case study researcher, however, is a potential loss of objectivity that may lead to bias, incorrect assumptions, faulty decisions, or unscientific conclusions, even unconsciously acquired (DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt–Taylor, 2002; as cited in Unluer, 2012). Nonetheless, Smyth & Holian (2008) recommend that

the more a researcher overcomes his/her bias as an insider using evidence-based criteria, the more he/she is able to come up with rich themes (as cited in Unlit, 2012).

Finally, Hargreaves (1994) writes about balkanized subcultures, those groups who tend to become fragmented within an organizational structure (as cited in Taylor, 2011, p. 76). Cautionary tales for deep insider researchers include unintentionally overlooking some important data because of familiarity, choices of responses in interviewing as words now have a more impactful meaning on the respondent. Questions to examine are how the relationship changes as the roles shift and how much to disclose in writing the results of the research? Finally, for deep insider-researchers, ethics and respect for these informants must be principled, explicit, and part of a mutual agreement.

Edwards writes, "Such deep insider research, while carrying dangers, carries much promise" (p. 81). It opens a public space for marginalized groups to reveal what is true history for them.

Scope of Study

This research study focuses on Boston's Black community and its leadership in dismantling de facto segregation in the public school system. Using oral history interviews, it studies a community of activists whose expressed objective was to gain equal educational opportunity for all children in Boston regardless of race. The study is limited to Black Americans who were born before the 1954 *Brown* decision, who lived in Boston during the 60s and/or 70s, and who were activists in this educational movement. It is bound by 1960 and 1975, the advent of Black consciousness, school equalization, and community control of schools. The informants are twenty Black men and women whose oral histories provide a counter-narrative to a public history of white resistance to

Boston school desegregation. Case studies provide a collective account of the history of this Black education movement.

Research Design

As a historical study of the events associated with the history of segregated schooling in Boston, the research design combines oral history methodology, the recording of living histories, and case study methods to analyze the role of the Black community in its effort to disrupt the segregative effects of separate schools and to replace it with a model of equal educational opportunity. Oral history is used to give voice to insider knowledge. Yow (2005) identifies this “public history” research as crucial to obtaining the picture of a total society in that it provides a public space for recounting the experiences of the “nonelite who do not leave memoirs or have biographers ...” (p. 11). This research uses, as primary sources of data, interviews of insider accounts from those in Boston’s Black community who were leaders in, at minimum, two decades of activism to improve public education for Black children in Boston’s public schools. It recounts stories of race, resilience, and schooling through the voices of Black Americans. Researching first person insider accounts from a racially marginalized class provides data and perspectives less known in historical accounts of school desegregation in Boston.

Oral history.

“Oral history is the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form” (Yow, 2005). It is a research method that involves deep interviewing focusing on life history resulting in taped memoirs transcribed into a manuscript. However, the written form is not the central role in data collection and analysis. The taped memoir is equally as

important. Terkle writes, “there is one common denominator;” ... that the primary interest in this data “is in the voice, talk, flesh and blood of people,” ... that “It’s not the song. It’s the singing” (Grele, 1991, p. 55). Oral historians look beneath the words and into the meaning of these histories.

Portelli (1998) defines orality, the spoken words, as oral sources of data. When taped, the narrator’s responses become interpretive data. The videos and/or audiotapes are transcribed so that the narration can be examined in words and viewed with or separately from the transcriptions. These transcripts and tapes are reliable primary data that result from the spoken word and life memories. When archived, they provide valuable data for future historians. This methodological approach obtains qualitative data that can access relevant and authentic history, which may be unavailable using any other method. It foregrounds stakeholder voices, whose living histories redefine ways of understanding the Boston schools. This methodological approach can enrich our understanding of institutional conflicts and racial tensions in the city, through the meaning made by those who were marginalized within its schools.

Case study.

The use of the qualitative case study method in this research is to provide a view of the contextual conditions that are particular to this history. Narrators tell their stories of 20th century schooling in Boston prior to the *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974) decision. Each story is unique yet similar in different ways. The focus of interest is to understand how this history was made by ordinary people, what their life circumstances were, and how they arrived at a time in American history where they could force a city to overcome its reluctance to change and to accept its destiny. In exploring how race was prominent

in the Boston schools and identifying the sources of resilience in Black activists, case study methods provide an approach to the history of school desegregation that has been underexplored. The history of a community-based movement to disrupt segregated education, narrated, and examined through the lens of race and resilience describes historical life events that, in this study, give rise to movement activism.

Context.

This study is bound by 1960 and 1975, the period when Blacks in Boston were actively affirming their rights for equal educational opportunities. Black activism in Boston is historically rooted in movements for equality and freedom and has a long movement history. The road to equal schooling has its beginnings in 1787 and it continued through to the 20th century. Leaders in the Black community combined resources to address the disparities in the public schools. On June 21, 1974, U. S. District Court Judge W. Arthur Garrity issued the landmark decision to desegregate this 339-year-old public school system. In December 1975, he placed South Boston High School, the school that became a symbol of resistance, under federal receivership. This sealed the order and a new phase began which brought massive resistance in a northern, liberal city to the attention of the nation.

This study is situated in the areas of Roxbury, North Dorchester, and the South End of Boston, the places where 20th century Black Americans resided and where their children attended public and alternative schools. It explores segregated schooling from multiple perspectives in order to generate an in-depth understanding of segregated learning spaces and the effects it had on school children, on families, on residents of sections of a city, and on community that said, “No more.” It extended over seven years,

resulting in the study of a community who alone recounted their journey along the road to equal educational opportunity. Yow (2005) identifies this “public history” research as crucial to obtaining the picture of a total society in that it provides a public space for recounting the experiences of the “nonelite who do not leave memoirs or have biographers ...” (p. 11). Using oral history as a research methodology was critical to obtaining a more complete historical understanding of the relationship between early school desegregation and the role of the Black community. Life histories contextualized the circumstances – time, place, and impetus – that drove a community movement. It also provided greater insights into understanding long-term commitments to equity and social justice that each of these narrators had. The narrations were focused on three areas: 1) life histories 2) social action between 1965 and 1975 and 3) community history. Yow (2005) and Ritchie (2003) discuss community history as a way of viewing transformations in society more intimately and identifying how groups share a common conviction.

The data is bound by a historical period in Boston, 1960 through 1975. This was a critical period identified by a court order, a mobilized Black community, and a vociferous resistance to this reform. The Black-led social justice movement that charged against segregation in the public schools found federal support in the court order (Batson, 2001; Cronin, 2008; U.S. Commission, 1975). As such, I sought the common meanings of this shared experience and what meanings were unique to the narrator (Yow, 2005). A thematic analysis approach was used (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Emphasis was placed on the content of a text, the “what” that is spoken, in an effort to uncover common thematic patterns in the texts of these narrators that address the research questions and sub-questions.

Data Collection

Sampling.

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used for this research. I identified narrators whose activism could provide substantive data for the questions posed. In addition, narrators who were part of the study suggested others for me to interview. Others I sought out through referrals. Narrators met the following criteria:

- Black Americans who lived in Boston during the 1960s and/or the 1970s;
- Resided in Roxbury, Dorchester, or the South End between 1960 and 1975;
- Attended segregated public schools either in Boston or in the South;
- Associated with an organization or program that worked to equalize schools;
- Active in the civil rights struggle either in Boston or in the South;
- Actively involved in education movements leading to the Boston Court Order to desegregate the public schools;
- Born and lived under de facto or de juri segregation prior to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

In that I match these criteria as a deep insider researcher, I began by contacting five key activists in the Roxbury community to request an interview. All agreed. I was selecting a sample size that would ensure that the data provided by the informants would bring new insights to the study of Boston school segregation. While interviewing the first five, these informants began to refer others, all of whom I knew but often was unaware of their contributions to this history. It was at this point that snowball sampling began.

Case profiles.

Twenty-six narrators (26) were identified. Some had moved from Boston since 1970. I contacted those who lived in Massachusetts and those who lived in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. They were interviewed at their residences or at an agency or organization with which they were affiliated. All were actively engaged through community-based programs, non-profit agencies, and local, state, or federal agencies while involved in this education movement. All narrators, but one, were Black Boston resident between 1960 and 1975. There was one white art teacher who was included who met all other requirements but two – race and residence. I selected her because she worked with me at the Dickerman School in Roxbury. As a practicing artist, she maintained an archive of Boston school documents, Dickerman students' art work along with their written stories from 1968, and she was eager to share these artifacts with me. Her memories of the Dickerman provided insight in that because of her whiteness and privilege, teachers spoke to her as an insider. Her information was most valuable to this research.

Of the 26 identified, 22 were interviewed. Interview choices were made based on their compelling histories and a proper sampling of narrators that added unique and relatively unknown insider events in this Black movement and in the Boston schools. I videotaped and/or audiotaped these movement activists for approximately two hours each, which produced about 44 hours of unedited narration. The interview setting was comfortable and familiar, usually in a home or office. The interviews were established as recorded "conversations." As such, questions were posed as prompts to trigger the start of the conversation leading to selected parts of a narrated life history. The informants are

identified as narrators as each is viewed as a historian of the time period in which he/she lived. What is spoken and often felt is captured by video and/or audiotape.

For the purposes of this research study, I limited my selection to 10 and am analyzing approximately 20 hours of interviews. The additional twelve interviews will be reviewed to blend in additional accounts and provide context to the history of this movement. As themes emerge from the analysis, their voices will be included. Each of these narrators touches on a unique part of the Boston movement and each provides fullness to its history. Collectively they represent varied perspectives including community agency leadership, the alternative school movement, and political activism. All were strategic and tactical informants. There are views from inside the office of the Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, from inside South Boston High School immediately following the court order, from the perspective of Black adults riding with children on the buses, and from those representing legal and community agencies. Their perspectives come from the generation *before* the Boston school system was required by court order to desegregate. This gives readers more context than many of the past accounts of school desegregation. There is a videotaped interview with the brother of Rachel Twymon, the sole survivor of the only Black family included in *Common Ground*. Perspectives came from parents, community residents, a reporter, and from agents of the Receiver at South Boston High School.

Some memories were sharper and clearer than others. However, what is interesting is that age was not a major factor in recalling events. Some of the elders, who were in their eighties had sharper memories of this period than did the younger narrators, who were in their sixties and seventies. Note that the events recalled in this study are

supported by archival documents and manuscripts in special collections within the City of Boston's School Committee desegregation files, the Massachusetts State archives, Northeastern University's special collections archives, Washington University's film and media Henry Hampton Collection, reports from the U.S. Commissions on Civil Rights, Joseph Healy Library's holdings of Judge Arthur Garrity's papers on school desegregation, Harvard's Schlesinger Library's papers from Ruth Batson, and an extensive list of books and journals.

Table 3.1

Ten Narrated Histories

Name	Information	Role¹⁶
Barbara Burke	2 nd generation Bostonian. Born in 1942 in Akron, OH. Family moved in 1943 to Roxbury.	Roxbury resident: 1 st Black Director of Clarendon YWCA; volunteered her agency to support desegregation.
Harry Elam	1 st generation Bostonian. Born April 29, 1922 in Boston Lying-In Hospital. Parents moved from VA to Cambridge to Roxbury. Died 2012.	Roxbury resident: 1 st Black judge appointed to the Boston Municipal Court bench and the court's first black chief justice. He and his wife were active parents at the Higginson school.
Kenneth Guscott	1 st generation Bostonian. Born in Boston in 1925. Mother was from Jamaica. Emigrated to Boston.	Roxbury resident: Boston branch NAACP President leading up to the district course case.
Al Holland	1 st generation Bostonian. Born in 1945 in Boston. Parents moved from VA to Boston.	Roxbury resident: Represented the Superintendent's Office in South Boston High School
Mel King	1 st generation Bostonian. Born in 1928 in Boston. Grew up in the South End. Parents emigrated to Boston	South End resident: Community and political leader who organized for community control of schools
Bill Owens	Born in 1937 in Demopolis, AL. Moved to Roxbury at age 16.	Roxbury resident: Led parent / teacher walk-out from Gibson School. Founded Gibson Liberation School

¹⁶ These narrators have been employed and active throughout their lives and served many roles. The roles identified are the ones that are key to understanding their participation in this movement. The role descriptions focus on the period between 1960 and 1975.

Name	Information	Role¹⁶
Peter Parham	2 nd generation Bostonian. Born in 1945.	Roxbury resident: Special assistant to Marion Fahey, Superintendent of BPS during Phase I (1974-1975) of the court order
Rudy Pierce	2 nd generation Bostonian. Born in 1942.	Roxbury resident: Attended the BPS, attorney, member of the Freedom House Coalition, the hub for strategic planning in response to the court order
Melissa Tillman	3 rd generation Bostonian, Born 1940-d/2015. South End & Roxbury resident	Roxbury resident: Teacher, Sarah J. Baker, Roxbury/New School for Children, part of the alternative school movement.
Percy Wilson	Born in 1940 in Alabama. Moved to Boston in 1968 or 1969.	Director of the Roxbury Multi-Service Center, one of the key agencies and a key leader in Roxbury.

Table 3.2

Twelve Supporting Histories

Name	Comments
Doris Bunte	Roxbury activist, worked with parents and community. Public housing resident, state representative, and Director of Boston Housing Authority.
Deloris Goode	Roxbury resident, active in school desegregation
Matthew Goode	Roxbury resident, active in school desegregation
Sandra Martin	Roxbury, North Dorchester resident. Member of crisis intervention team, traveled on the bus with high school and middle school students to schools in South Boston.
Stephen Moss	Roxbury resident. Rode the Charlestown High School bus with students daily. Remained at the school as a member of the crisis intervention team
Jean McGuire	Roxbury resident, 3 rd & longest METCO Director, education activist.
A. Robert Phillips	Roxbury activist in schools and colleges, including Boston College.
Alex Rodriguez	South End activist and a leader in bilingual education.
Ruth Rosner	White art teacher at the Dickerman school in 1968. Holds artifacts that include student's art. Their art is a reflection of the school and the child's personal view of self. She shared stories about the teachers' perception of these students.
Hasan Sharif	Roxbury resident, Rachel Twymon's brother, and an informant for <i>Common Ground</i> .
Sarah Ann Shaw	Parent, community activist, former television news reporter, and life-long resident of Roxbury.
Lorraine Wheaton Johnson	Roxbury & North Dorchester resident. One of the named plaintiffs on the class action complaint issued to the U.S. District Court on

	March 15, 1972 in the case of Morgan v. Hennigan.
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To assure validity by supporting these narrators' historical memories, manuscripts and archives were used as primary sources. The following are the archives used in this research found in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Archival Documents

Information source	Detail about information source
<i>City of Boston Archives and Records Center</i> <i>School Committee Secretary</i> <i>Desegregation Files</i> 1963 - 1984; bulk: 1974 - 1976 Boston Public Schools	Files date from 1963 to 1984. They are comprised of correspondence, meeting minutes, transcripts, student assignment plans, court orders and news clippings
<i>Northeastern University Special Archives</i> <i>Collections Archives and Special Collections</i>	Archived files and recordings of oral histories of approximately 20 Black community activists who lived in Roxbury, North Dorchester, and Boston's South End.
<i>Washington University Film and Media Archive</i> <i>Henry Hampton Collection</i> http://digital.wustl.edu/e/eop/index.html	Videotaped interviews of Boston activists and politicians about their roles in Boston School desegregation.
<i>Reports from the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights</i>	Testimonies from parties about the Boston Public Schools
<i>Harvard University Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America</i> Batson, Ruth. Papers of Ruth Batson, 1919-2003 (inclusive), 1951-2003 (bulk)	Papers of Ruth Batson, the leader of school desegregation, that include photos, minutes of organizing meetings, and hand written notes of civil rights activism I also have some of Mrs. Batson's personal papers, artifacts, books, reports, research notes, and the master copy of the Northeastern University produced Black Education Movement. Her daughter gave them to me upon her death. Other artifacts and papers remain with her daughter in VA, which I have access to and used in this research.
<i>Joseph P. Healey Library</i> Garrity, W Arthur, Jr.: Papers on the	Decisions and orders of the U. S. District Court, District of MA. Papers that constitute a day-to day file documentation of Morgan

Boston Schools Desegregation Case, 1972-1997	v. Hennigan, 379 F. Supp. 410 (1974), commonly known as the Boston Schools Case
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Data Analysis

Hesse-Biber (2017) argues that the analytic procedure for data processing is an ongoing enterprise interwoven throughout the stages of data collection. “Analyzing and interpreting data are interrelated” as the researcher looks for new ideas in the data (p. 307). These processes are ongoing and intentional. In preparing to gather data using interviews, how they are collected and transcribed is crucial to analysis and interpretation. This study seeks to discover new knowledge through interviews relative to the research questions. The interviews were videotaped, audiotaped and fully transcribed so that rich meaning-making can flow from the textual and video data.

Yin (2011) describes the discipline of data analysis in phases. Compiling and sorting follows the collection of data. The data is then organized, often as a database. The next stage would be disassembling, or reducing the data into smaller fragments, which can be repeated. New labels can be assigned to these smaller fragments leading to codes that repeat throughout the data as themes can emerge. Reassembling or recombining the data to further depict the data graphically. For the purposes of historic research, the graphic representations often are timelines and maps. The next phase is to reassemble and reinterpret the data in a fresh way. Finally, the researcher considers the conclusion based on the data that has been compiled and sorted, disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted.

Coding and Thematic Analysis.

The oral history interviews represent the sources of data that will answer the research questions. All interviews have been transcribed. In addition, the video and audio components were converted to DVDs and/or MP4 files. Codes were applied to the text. Using an organizing principle that unearths salient themes, thematic analysis becomes a more efficient and an appropriate way to analyze these narratives in a methodological manner. Through the open-ended conversations, themes emerge that can be better understood through identifiable patterns of living or behavior under the control of a thematic analysis (Aronson, 1995; Attride-Stirling, 2001).

Limitations of Study

Maher and Tetreault (1993) discuss the importance of examining a researcher's positionality because "gender, race, class, and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational *positions* rather than essential qualities" (p. 118). All the subjects central to this research are Black, all are born before *Brown* into a segregated America, all are educational justice activists, and all are from working class backgrounds. I am a Black female, born before *Brown*, whose relational position to my subjects essentially carries an undeniable affinity towards and similarity to the narrators. With respect to descriptive variables, our ages differ in some cases and our points of entry into educational justice activism may have different start dates.

However, I share the personal and historical context that is examined throughout this research. As such, these markers do fashion the research in ways that must be made explicit, given the shared knowledge and experiences. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the narrators in this research. Each is an individual with whom I shared membership in this education movement and also within community spaces. I

acknowledge that this partiality might skew my approach to critically interpret events and/or actions without certain biases and social perspectives. Yet, there were admittedly differences in our experiences. I did not attend the Boston Public Schools as the majority had. Many were elders who were older than I during the time of the movement. Most had deep family roots and ties within Boston at the start of the 20th century when the Black community was smaller. I did not.

Albert (2005) proposes that novice researchers, whose categorical differences may render them outside the cultural norms of the research subjects, should develop “a consciousness of difference.” Although my categorical differences in most respects have insider qualities, I nonetheless attempted to understand my positionality in relationship to each of my narrators. This was intentional. I wanted to explore the experiences in their lives that were unknown to me in order to place their activism in a spoken context that they narrated.

“Positionality as a social phenomenon is both constructed and shared through communication and interpersonal interactions...” (Albert, 2005, p. 54). I considered each a “Master Teacher.” Through the use of oral history, the interviewing process was an opportunity for me to learn what I did not know about Boston’s racial past, its schools, and each of the narrators. It positioned me as an adult learner within a community of my peers and elders, as I, too, discovered many personal histories about the Black experience in Boston unknown to most.

Yow (1997) suggests a “conceptual shift” to make the researchers’ reactions to and intrusions into the lives of the narrator speakable by using a “value-free” paradigm “which requires the elimination of researcher intrusion” (p. 56). To do this, I attempted

to establish a comfortable environment where I spotlighted our conversations, not the interviewing process itself, and asked open-ended questions to support the telling of their histories and identifying their engagement with the Black education movement.

Most importantly, I held no power over the narrators in this research, which made the interviews free flowing, comfortable, and trustworthy. They benefited from informed consent, which included voluntary participation, the ability to withdraw from the research at any point, and to review summary interpretations of the interview. Of the twenty-six who were asked to be part of this research, two declined, another avoided the interview, and the third, became ill. Those who agreed were not strangers and, in most cases, were friends. I lived alongside some, worked in movements with others, and grew up in Roxbury where most in the Black community lived.

One person who declined the interview was Tallulah Morgan, a named plaintiff in the case. I made contact through a mutual friend. Our conversation was lengthy and cordial, but because of her past experiences with reporters and a stated unfamiliarity with me, she declined to participate. However, I discovered another named plaintiff in the case whom I knew and who agreed to become a narrator. I began this research concurring with Rose (as cited in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) who wrote, “There is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one’s biases. And if you do not appreciate the force of what you’re leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you’re doing” (p. 77).

A second, even more important challenge to this research is that Boston’s Black Education Movement history should be situated in the larger historical Black freedom struggle in Boston and nationally. However, even though the scope of that history provides some context to Boston’s Black Education Movement and would have verifiable

historical connections to this study, the larger movements challenged discrimination in all its forms and in all places. It was in this context that many Black residents of Boston, young and old alike, joined forces to provide voluntary manpower to many community agencies that serviced not only Boston, but were inextricably linked to the southern movement. The southern movement has its historians as its history continues to evolve, post 2000, with many 50th anniversaries, including the *Brown* decision in 2004, the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 2007, the student sit-ins and the founding of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 2010, the Freedom Rides in 2011, the March on Washington in 2013, Freedom Summer in 2014, the Selma to Montgomery marches and the Voting Rights Act in 2015.

Boston's connection to the southern movement was through many who lived in Roxbury. Ruth Batson was part of the Wednesdays in Mississippi, as a member of an interracial, interfaith team of northern women who went to Jackson, Mississippi on Wednesdays, in the summer of 1964. Bill Owens was an Alabama native and mentee of Dr. Ralph Abernathy. Reverend Michael Haynes was a friend of Dr. King's and former pastor of the church where he was the new preaching assistant in Boston in 1951. Dr. Virgil Woods was one of Dr. King's chief allies in the south and the Director of Boston's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Boston had a Northern Student Movement that was a model of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

On April 23, 2015 Boston celebrated the 50th anniversary of the March on Boston led by Dr. Martin Luther King, one month after the Selma to Montgomery march. Fifty thousand people marched from the Carter playground in Roxbury down Columbus Avenue to the Boston Common to protest segregated housing and racially imbalanced

schools. I was part of this march. But the march was not only about education, it was also about housing, jobs, and discrimination. There were many oppressive forces and institutional barriers that worked against equal access in Boston. All were countered by residents who organized to fight against these systems of oppression. This history is fertile ground for future research on Black life in Boston, post *Brown*. Its many social justice movements should be studied and recorded as part of northern freedom movement history.

Finally, although there were many more people in Boston whom I identified as very involved in school desegregation during the 60s and 70s, there were financial limitations and time constraints in performing such large-scale research on my own. It was unfortunate that I could not interview everyone who agreed or include all who did provide interviews. Location, health, memories, and the age of the narrators were also factors of concern. Six narrators critical to this history died, three before I was able to interview them and three after I interviewed them. I am saddened by the loss of these social justice champions who have contributed so much to Boston's history. I wanted to be able to meet again with the three I did interview for a follow-up interview, but sadly cannot. Yet, all the narrators included in this research did provide insightful contributions to this history and a collective vision of a movement that heretofore has been absent from important public discourse on Boston schooling, Boston's racial history, Boston's segregated schools, and Boston's Black community.

CHAPTER IV: PORTRAITS OF 20th CENTURY EQUAL EDUCATION ACTIVISTS

Introduction

This chapter focuses solely on Black voices telling their histories of life and schooling in Boston. It introduces their lives framed as portraiture advanced by Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997). It seeks “to record and interpret the perspectives and experience” of ten narrators in this study by “documenting their voices and their visions – their authority, knowledge, and wisdom” in the context of a segregated city and school system (p. xv). These narrators began their journeys during the first half of the 20th century. As such, their perspectives include living through northern and southern segregated institutions, exposing inequalities, and advancing equal opportunity in all phases of life.

This study stresses the critical nature of being born after the 1896 U. S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which declared living, working, and attending separate but equal institutions constitutional. The Brown Court reversed the decision in 1954, declaring separate but equal unconstitutional. Yet, for more than half a century *Plessy* prevailed and the remnants of *Plessy* were structured in Boston polity. The results of these decisions still left full citizenship well beyond the reach of Black Americans.

These first person histories of courageous liberation movements are examples of personal and community agency, demonstrating that equality could be realized.

Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) write, “The portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating these experiences”

(p. 3). Therefore, these narrators provide a context for understanding the fight for literacy and full citizenship. Throughout these activists' life stories, conceptual themes emerge intended to explain "the human experience." This chapter opens with an introduction to the woman who assumed the mantle of leadership for equal educational opportunity in Boston schools.

Ruth Batson, the Author of the Black Education Movement

Cassandra Batson, a native of Jamaica, was insistent that her two children advance in life with every expectation to succeed and she made it her life purpose to provide them with the necessary emotional and intellectual tools to achieve. So, when considering the remarkable evolution of Ruth Marion Batson, born a poor black child, raised in a single parent home, to become a woman of letters and an exceptional achiever, I became intrigued by the force which produced and nurtured this educator, philanthropist and champion for the people.

Notes on a Phenomenal Woman, Dorothy Batson Owusu, 2009

Ruth Marion Batson (1921-2003), the child of a mother who immigrated from Port Antonio, a Jamaican seaport, was born in Boston. She was one of the first generation of 20th century Black leaders fighting for educational equity. Known as one who spoke truth to power, Derrick Z. Jackson (2003), Boston Globe columnist, described her as a historical preservationist who fought actively to desegregate the Boston schools. He wrote about her response to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., special assistant to President Kennedy, who dismissed the cultural contributions of the 1960s at a lecture given in Boston. She countered Schlesinger in a *Letter to the Editor* by reminding readers of the many who fought and lost their lives for educational liberty, for the right to vote, and for equality. Jackson wrote that Ruth Batson was a historical advocate for "the proper reading of history" as well as a woman who made history herself.

Her dedication towards change in the Boston schools was deeply rooted in a proud history. In 1951 she was the first 20th century Black candidate to run for the Boston School Committee. She came in 16th of the 36 candidates receiving 15,154 votes. The Boston Chronicle wrote about this historic event:

She [Ruth Batson] in her first bid for public office came in sixteenth with 15,154 votes, thereby overcoming the tremendous handicap of being a novice without financial resources and the organization support possessed by most of her opponents. She is now in the vanguard of our political leaders. (Batson, p. 45)

On June 11, 1963, the Boston Branch NAACP Education Committee, which she chaired, appeared before the Boston School Committee with the goal of demanding equal educational opportunity for Black children. She spoke on behalf of the committee:

We are here because the clamor from the community is too anxious to be ignored, the dissatisfaction and complaints too genuine and deep seated to be passed over lightly, and the injustices present in our school system hurt our pride, rob us of our dignity and produce results which are injurious not only to our future, but to that of our city, our commonwealth and our nation.

They listed 14 demands that included an acknowledgement of de facto segregation, an open enrollment school policy for the city, permanent teachers in grades one to three and a reduction in class size to 25, an investigation into why there were no Black principals, the elimination of discrimination in hiring and firing teachers, and a voice in the selection of a new Superintendent of Schools. Unresponsive to the demands of the Black community, on June 12 picketing began at the Boston School Committee.

In October 1966, she, along with other Roxbury activists who were working to dismantle segregated schools, testified before the United States Commission on Civil Rights. She told the Commission that schooling in Boston was one of “official neglect.” She pointed not only to the Boston School Committee but also to the Federal Government as she testified that “it is disastrous to see the children go from one community to another

community and fail, that children go from one section of the city to another and find curriculum differences and fail,” and added that she couldn’t understand how the federal government continued to financially support “a system that breaks laws and confines and cripples children.” She further supported school integration, reasoning that equal opportunity policies in Boston were structurally designed for only those who had years of experience in areas that had been unavailable to Blacks. To provide structural access to jobs and equal education for Black children, it was necessary, she contended, for Black children to learn what and where Boston’s white children learned. She argued that a good start would be to equalize the buildings, the curriculum, and the resources, which could only happen in a city where access and opportunity were not separated by race (p. 151).

Ruth Batson continued throughout her life to argue for equality and to advance a belief throughout the city and the Commonwealth that only through equality in education would Boston’s children have a fighting chance at a principled life. She lived what she believed, on the front lines battling for civil rights. As an activist for civil rights anywhere in our constitutional democracy, she volunteered as part of “Wednesdays in Mississippi,” in Jackson. In 1964 the National Council of Negro Women, in order to provide support to the civil rights activists who were organizing Mississippi Freedom Summer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, sponsored a group of interracial, interfaith middle aged women from throughout the country to meet with their southern counterparts. With this cloak of respectability, it was imagined that these women would provide alternative images to the radicalism associated with the work of the younger activists in Mississippi. It was a unique experiment and believed to be the only civil rights program organized “for women by women” (Harwell, 2016).

From 1965 through 1966, she championed the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunities (METCO), a voluntary school desegregation program of “urban-suburban exchange.” In 1969, with a small financial present from METCO parents upon her leaving the program to begin an innovative initiative at Boston University’s School of Medicine, she established an educational foundation for Black children who were struggling to attend college. This was accomplished first through personal donations and family fundraising events and then continued with a generous donation of Channel Seven stock from her personal friend, Dr. Jerome Wiesner, President of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Between 1969 and 2003, the Batson Education Foundation granted more than \$1.2 million to African American children, adults, and community agencies in Boston and throughout the country. This included Tougaloo College, a Historically Black College, Roxbury Community College, and Boston and Nantucket’s Museum of African American History.

From 1971 through the 1980s, she was a tenured Associate Professor, at the behest of the Chairman of Boston University’s Division of Psychiatry. He recruited her because of her reputation as an activist, innovator, and champion of the community. Yet, she did not hold a formal graduate degree. He gave her a tenured position to keep her securely employed as Director of this community based program now housed in the Division of Psychiatry in the School of Medicine. His desire was to secure an institutional commitment in advance of the construction of the Solomon Carter Fuller¹⁷

¹⁷ Solomon Carter Fuller (1872-1953) was the first African American psychiatrist. received his medical degree at Boston University School of Medicine in 1897 and returned to become a faculty member. See: <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/fuller-solomon-carter-1872-1953>.

Community Health Center that she would remain in the vanguard to secure quality health and mental services for the South End and Roxbury community communities.

Her directorship in leading the Consultation and Education Program, the first funded program of the Fuller Mental Health Center, pulled a traditionally insular institution outwards toward the community that surrounded it. As Director, she led an extensive staff of psychiatrists, researchers, social workers, psychologists, and community workers into this majority Black and Brown community to become advocates for equality in mental health care. The team understood quality mental health services to include any institutional obstruction that would leave the poor and disenfranchised with inadequate social services. This included access to quality schooling, childcare, employment, and health and mental health services.

In 1987, as President of the Museum of African American History, she led the restoration and renovation of the African Meeting House, the oldest black church still standing in the United States. In 1993, she organized and convened the Black Education Movement in Boston Conference at Northeastern University to record the educational activism of the Black community and to gather oral histories from those on the front lines of activism. These are just a few of her accomplishments that enabled the Black community to advance “the cause” through the 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s.

Community activists, colleagues, columnists, and politicians acknowledged her life’s work towards justice and equality. Marvin Gilmore, president of the Community Development Corp. of Boston noted, "She always gave back to the community, quietly and effectively" as “one of the giants of the community, always giving her all.” Senator Edward M. Kennedy acknowledged, "The struggle for civil rights has lost a great pioneer

for social justice.” Former Mayor of Boston, Ray Flynn, told the Boston Globe, "She made a big difference in the lives of many people, especially the children. The term 'community activist' was made for her” (Abel & Driscoll, 2003).

Oral Histories of Activists Born Before Brown

All narrators were born during the first half of the 20th century and thus lived in a segregated America where separate but equal was constitutional. Race mattered wherever there were opportunities to advance in America. It mattered in health and welfare, public and social services, employment, housing, schooling, and all aspects of citizenship rights. As each, individually and collectively, confronted institutional racism, a crucial battleground became the public schools.

Kenneth Guscott

Born in 1925, Ken Guscott was president of the Boston branch of the NAACP from 1963 to 1968 during the initiation of the school desegregation case against the Boston School Committee. He is a second generation Bostonian, born at Boston City Hospital and lived in Roxbury for seventy-nine years. Today he lives in Milton, Massachusetts with his wife and five children. He described himself as the son of a tough Jamaican woman who, with other Boston West Indian mothers, pushed their children in carriages while marching against injustice and discrimination (Osgood, n.d.) His mother, Ruby Ann Fields, was born in Port Antonio “on the warm, lush and mountainous Jamaica” on December 5, 1900. She was raised by her grandmother and father, leaving her with memories of a time of “political uncertainty and economic hardship.” British colonization of Jamaica left poor and disenfranchised Blacks as a permanent under class without influence and power. Unless a child was part of the Jamaican upper class,

families could not afford to attend school past the government sponsored six years of education.

In 1920, she and her sister came to America, as did other immigrants, to find employment and an opportunity for educational advancement. She did not complete school past the six years in Jamaica but this proud mother of five sons “demonstrated a proficiency in English, French, Mathematics, Bookkeeping, Typing, History, Common Law, and Chemistry” and graduated with a high school diploma from Boston Central Evening High School in May 1940. She was a domestic for a Harvard professor, established social club relationships with other Jamaican families living in Boston’s Roxbury and South End areas, and married Frank Guscott, a Jamaican sailor who died when Kenneth was five (Johnson, 2006).

Nearly ten years after Kenneth’s mother, Mrs. Ruby Guscott, and her sister arrived in Boston, the Great Depression began. Ken’s early memories of Boston in the 1930s were of a white Roxbury with a few Blacks. He added that everyone he saw, both Black and white, was poor. Nonetheless, the traditions of Caribbean people were the principles of his life. These traditions were a sense of pride and a drive for education. His mother was his role model and a follower of Marcus Garvey. Garvey led a movement of “Negro” pride, educational advancement, and economic independence. In the 1930s the total Black population in Boston was 2.2%. Many lived in Roxbury and the South End and they were the children of parents who were followers of the Garvey movement. Those whose parents immigrated from the Caribbean grew up together as neighbors. Names like John Bynoe, Elma Lewis, Mel King, Ruth Batson, Rev. Mike Haynes were

well known leaders with religious, political, and community ties. The Boston Branch N.A.A.C.P. was the organizing body for generations beginning in 1912.

Because Mrs. Guscott was now raising her five sons as a widowed parent, this working mother built strong bonds within the family. She nurtured her sons' work ethic, developed in them a sense of self-reliance, and all were bound by family pride. She provided the emotional and financial support needed for her sons. She made sure they attended school and contributed financially to the struggling family as each either delivered newspapers or shined shoes. His mother told them, "*You will* get an education. *You will* be somebody. *You will* go to school clean. *You will* wear a shirt and tie."

Kenneth stated that this was a tradition of Caribbean people—the Jamaicans, the Trinidadians, the Barbadians—that their children would be respectful, studious, and educated. These themes resonated throughout Kenneth Guscott's life.

Kenneth attended the Sherwin middle school and recounted an instance in the 7th grade when he knew he wanted to become an engineer. He informed his teacher, a nice Italian woman as he describes her, who told him to go to English High School. This was the high school with the less demanding curriculum as compared with Latin, the starship of Boston's schools (Cronin, 2008). This was the school into which too many African American males were tracked. The teacher told him to attend English High "because [he] could get a job in the post office." Guscott shook his head acknowledging how incredulous this experience was as he thinks about it during the interview.

This is the point at which African American children gain insight into how teachers react to their ambitions. Attending M.I.T. was outside the paradigm of expectations that she, as a white teacher, had for him, a Black male child from Roxbury.

In spite of her misguided advice, he did attend M.I.T. but only for part of a semester and then the war began. He enlisted in the U. S. Army Air Force, stating, “Everybody was patriotic and being patriotic you wanted to do something.” Guscott was 17 years old. His oldest brother, Charles (1922–1942) died as an enlisted sailor on the S. S. Effingham, when the Germans sunk the ship. Guscott remembered his role in the war:

They sent me to Keesler Field, Mississippi. That’s where the Blacks went. They gave us – me and another fella – a train ticket to go down to Mississippi... When we got to Washington, D.C., the conductor told me I had to go up to the front car and I said, “For what?” He said you don’t understand, but that’s the way it is here. But I said, “I’m not going.” “We all had the same experience. When the man in Washington, D.C. said we had to leave to sit in the Jim Crow car, we said, ‘No.’” (Guscott, Interview, March 23, 2011)

This was his stand against power. His mother’s message of “being somebody” resonated as he resolved to contest racism, regardless of the risk. An elder Black woman on the train came to him and gently held his hand. She took him with her to the Jim Crow car. He acknowledged that she was the only person whom he would have followed into the segregated area of the train. Yet, the sense of pain, anger, and frustration could still be seen as he relived this part of his life. These experiences, in essence, were indelible images in the lives of Black Americans as they became of age during the 20th century.

When he arrived at Keesler Field, his reaction was a combination of astonishment and disappointment. The trip south was his first direct experience with systemic racism. He rode in Jim Crow cars for the first time. At Keesler Field he discovered thousands of young Black men who were patriotic and ready to go to war. However, the military was segregated. The Army only had one Black squadron at Keesler Field, Mississippi and all the rest were white. So these eager young men who volunteered to fight for their country

were relegated to the labor squadron to work for sergeants. He described this grade of officers, their sergeants, as low intellectual farmers.

After serving in New Guinea, the captain of their squadron, Captain Turner, an old Army man, felt guilty, said Ken, because he (Guscott) had enlisted in the Air Force but was assigned to a squadron in the Army. He told him, “Kid—why don’t you take the exam for West Point? I said, ‘Sure.’ Because I figured, “Go ahead, I’ll show these white people.” He scored high on the exam and was chosen to attend. On the morning he was to leave for Cornell University, the Captain called him to his office to tell him he was the only soldier to go from the 5th Air Force to Cornell. However, when the commander of the 5th Air Force discovered he was Black, Guscott was told that the commander said a Black man would not represent the 5th Air Force. His response was, “I’ll show these buggers. I will outlive them in this war and when I come back, I’ll show them” (Guscott, 2011).

His experiences were similar when he returned to Boston. He wanted to continue his studies in engineering, but the wait would be too long because of M.I.T.’s quota system. Many narrators spoke of the use of Black quotas in Boston colleges and universities. Bolner (1967) confirms this in a discussion of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination’s (MCAD) early educational activities. MCAD was established in 1950 as an independent agency that issues rules and regulations relative to discrimination. It was chiefly concerned at that time “with policing the use of quotas by private educational institutions to limit the enrollment of minority group members to certain percentages” (pp. 24-25). Instead, he attended the Merchant Marine Academy and graduated at the top of his class. Always studying, he told his white roommate:

I come from a place called Roxbury and I represented my people in Roxbury. You're a white boy and if they catch you doing something wrong they'll terminate you, but you'll be just another white boy terminated. But if I did something wrong, they'd have it all over the headlines and the paper, the New York Times said, 'See we told you—Blacks can't qualify to enter into the academy.' So, I've got the advantage over you. I've got the driving force to keep me going. (Guscott, 2011)

He returned to Roxbury in 1954, studied nuclear engineering, and worked on nuclear reactors. He joined the Boston Branch N.A.A.C.P. around 1957 and became its President. He acknowledged that he learned about the Boston schools from Ruth Batson “who was always talking at Board meetings about how bad the schools were.” At the age of 91, Guscott still functions as a General Partner of a real estate development firm in Roxbury where he supports young entrepreneurs and remains an active real estate developer. He is a leading minority business entrepreneur in the City of Boston and was the first Black director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, among his many accomplishments (Guscott, 2011). Kenneth Guscott died tragically in a home fire on March 6, 2017 at the age of 91. He was constantly working and about to close on a major real estate development in Boston.

Mel King

King, a political leader and civil rights activist, was born in Boston in 1928. He has lived in Boston's South End his entire life and remains there today. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries he was often referred to by generations of Bostonians as the mayor of the South End. For more than sixty decades he has provided political organizing strategies and tactics while advocating for policy reforms related to issues of equality in city services, employment, and public schools. His leadership around community control of schools was a primary force in what he called a “Chain of Change” (King, 1981).

With a population of only 2% in 1910, Blacks resided in the South End, Lower Roxbury, and a section of upper Roxbury known as “The Hill” (Johnson, 2006). King’s parents emigrated from Barbados to Boston’s South End in 1920. His father’s sister lived in Boston and sent for the family. He was the middle child in a family headed by his father and mother, with three sisters and five brothers. His neighborhood had 32 different racial, ethnic, cultural groups – families from Europe, the Caribbean, Cape Verde Islands, China, and the Philippines. The South End had the largest number of emigrants, including Blacks. Shower’s (2006) writes, “The reasons for the attraction to this neighborhood were clear. Up until the 1940s that section of Boston was not a Black neighborhood per se, but more of an immigrant haven” (p. 38). This was a true multi-racial, multi-ethnic living space. Mel King provides a rich description of a communal neighborhood, one where meals and holidays were in each other’s homes, a life with a broad cross section of America. This was a difficult time. There was the Depression, high unemployment, and World War II came with an exodus of young men. Nonetheless, Mel King’s memories were filled with a multi-racial, multi-ethnic neighborhood of Bostonians who worked together, played together, and it felt good to be together.

The schools reflected the population. However, there were issues of concern during those years. There were low expectations for Black students as some teachers would demean them because they lived in the South End, a predominantly white, immigrant neighborhood. However, King’s philosophy is that formal education in the public schools should not be isolated from the meaning of and experiences with education in families. Literacy in math and reading was important in his family. He, his brothers, and sisters benefited from parents who attended school in Barbados. Their

parents monitored their homework, taught them skills in reading and math, helped with the math drills, and Mel's father used the daily newspaper to help him to learn how to read. He would comment on the meaning of a word and provide context by discussing the issue he was reading. King acknowledges that he "had the benefit of the family support."

After graduating from the Boston Public Schools in 1946, he thought of attending Northeastern University, but was told he did not have the prerequisites for admission. He knew of white classmates who were offered opportunities by Northeastern to meet these prerequisites, yet he received no such offer. He thought about attending Morehouse or Lincoln University, both HBCUs, but his family could not afford this. Because he was a football player, a friend told him about a friend recruiting football players for Claflin College, in Orangeburg, South Carolina. When the college called, his older brother, who was in the Army, told his mother that Mel's "mouth was too big to go down south." She agreed and his mother and brother prevailed. He did not go "down south," at least not then. The following year the coach visited his mother and told her that he would assure his safety on campus. In 1947, Mel King entered Claflin College. However, he described the experience going "down south" as appalling. He traveled to South Carolina by train and when it reached Washington, D.C., he was told go to the Jim Crow car. He said that from that moment on he never rode a train south. He drove to school.

At Claflin, he taught in South Carolina's segregated schools. He suggests that the years he spent in this southern Black community molded his political consciousness. King felt that the media in Boston portrayed Blacks in negative ways, "clowns, buffoons, turning white on a screen." However, his experience "down south" was different. He went to a theater that was Black owned

... and that imagery was much different. And this was a very important lesson for me in terms of who controlled the image. Who controls the venue controls the image and that was an important story to tell. (M. King, Interview, February 11, 2011)

When King returned to Boston, he brought this philosophy with him as he searched for housing and work. Finding discrimination, he vowed to challenge all forms of institutional racism. Given King's experiences as an educator and activist, dismantling segregated schools would become essential. Impacted by Jim Crow schooling in South Carolina, King continued:

I think the most vicious thing that happens to children and folks is for society to not make sure that they can read. No matter whatever political perspectives persons have, sociological or otherwise, the one thing you can't take away from an individual is the exposure to ideas and things that you get from reading... I can see what it had done for me in terms of access and exposure. (King, 2011)

These accounts of legalized segregation, whether on Jim Crow railroad cars and buses or "colored only" signs, were foreign to the narrators who were born in Boston until they traveled south. Guscott said, "We knew about discrimination. We read about it in the papers, but experience it? [This was] the first time [we] ever really experienced it." They did, however, acknowledge the role of race in the Boston schools as they told stories of guidance counselors who tracked Black students into non-college courses. They also spoke of commonplace practices at colleges in Boston where students were rejected because of race, and a commonly understood quota system in Boston colleges and universities. However, they spoke most powerfully about their first experiences with racism as they described going "down south."

His educational activism began upon his return to Boston from the south with a Masters in Education and began teaching in the Boston schools. Through his connection to John O'Bryant, a well-known community leader and the first Black elected to the

Boston School Committee in 1978, Mel became active in the Boston Branch NAACP. John O'Bryant was a Boston schoolteacher who was "actively trying to get the School Department to recognize the inherent inequity in segregation" (Carden, 1989, p. 42). John headed the Scholarship Committee at the NAACP, which was the avenue used to get as many young people as possible from the Roxbury, South End, and North Dorchester communities into college. He also joined Ruth Batson, chair of the NAACP Education Committee, as they began to address the inequities in segregated schools.

William "Bill" Owens

Bill Owens was born in 1937 in Demopolis, Alabama and moved to Roxbury at the age of sixteen to live with his brothers. A number of forces molded him as a child growing up in the segregated south into the activist he became. He lived in a small town called Demopolis, Alabama until he was 15 years old and attended a segregated school system. All his teachers were Black. All his classmates were black. His father was a minister who traveled to preach and bartered his services for meat and vegetables. His mother was a schoolteacher who also sold insurance to Blacks because of how difficult it was for them to get insured. She also belonged to a group of women in church called "The Society." They would save pennies, nickels, and coins for those in need. She had a quilting circle where materials, necessities, and homes were shared. Bill reflected during the interview:

...We were probably poor but we didn't know that. We thought we had pretty much what we needed, but we wanted sometimes. Each of us, the boys that is, at an early age got a job somewhere. My father was determined that his daughters would never work at a white person's house because white men would take advantage of young girls and he was determined that wasn't going to happen to his girls. (W. Owens, Interview, February 18, 2011)

He began working, as was the tradition of the young men in his family, at the age of 10. He was a companion to the wealthiest white child in this deeply segregated town. This experience introduced him to segregation differently from other children. He sat in white sections of movie theaters, ate with whites in white-only restaurants, and took vacations with the family in southern homes where he was exposed to wealth and privilege. Understanding that there is a larger society and many more possibilities in life, his identity expanded beyond the binaries of racialized spaces. Although he lived in the Jim Crow South, he began to test racially imposed boundaries. “I knew all of these things were existing. For instance, there would be signs that would say colored only or white only and sometimes I would deliberately violate that because I was with this boy that I knew nobody was going to tamper with. So I took liberties” (Owens, 2011).

Black institutions were major forces in his life. Owens attended segregated schools and worshiped at the Eastern Star Missionary Baptist Church, a Black church whose pastor was the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Dr. Martin Luther King’s chief partner in the civil rights movement. He recalled, “Most of the teachers were excellent teachers and I believe it is still the best school for *my* education that I’ve ever gone to ... I’ve been to Boston University, Harvard University, and the University of Massachusetts Boston and I went to the Boston Business School, commonly known as Clerical ... [Black] teachers cared ...” (Owens, 2011).

Churches and Sunday schools were places in Black communities where children developed communal strength as literate and resourceful human beings. Identity was inextricably linked to these institutions. With historical connections to Sabbath schools, both in structure and purpose, southern Sunday schools became a source of resilience for

children born into segregation. These were places of socialization and instruction where children developed identity and self-esteem. Anderson (1988) writes that the “foundation of the freedmen’s educational movement was their self-reliance and deep-seated desire to control and sustain schools for themselves and their children” (pp. 12-16). In addition, Haight (1998) proposes that the Sunday schools, through spiritual socialization, can support the development of resilience in Black children. There were strong connections between home, schools and church. Black teachers, administrators, and mentors surrounded Owens in school, in his community, and where he worshipped. Expectations were high and opportunities for leadership and service were essential.

Reverend Abernathy appointed Owens, the teenager, Superintendent of Sunday School. Next to the pastor, this position is one of the most important in the church structure. These were places in Black communities where children developed strength as literate and resourceful human beings. Identity was inextricably linked to these Black institutions. Resilience in the face of a legally segregated America can be understood by communal alternative supports that cultivated the necessary intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. These alternative supports nurtured the resilience needed for those who would grow up in segregation and become Boston’s freedom fighters.

When he moved to Boston, he enrolled in Boston’s English High School. He sensed inequality and discrimination, but for him much of it was not tangible. He identified attitudes and an unwillingness of teachers and the principal to help students. He felt that his situation in school was a little different from his classmates who were native Bostonians because of his different experiences and his ability to manage his teachers’ expectations. Similarly to Kenneth Guscott, he took charge of his appearance.

He wore a tie and a shirt to school each day. He said, “I caused no problems and took school seriously.” As a result, he contends that teachers viewed him differently and would answer his questions while ignoring the “troublesome” student. He was more interested in being respected than anything else as a result of his parent’s training. He stated, “If you are going to succeed in life you have to position yourself in a position of being respected. Because without respect, you’re not going to get to wherever it is that you want to go” (Owens, 2011). The politics of respectability is part of a Black culture that is framed as a way of uplift and inclusion by managing appearances in more formal ways. How one speaks and how one looks assumes acceptance and normalcy. Historically, it was a “form of resistance to the negative stigmas and caricatures about their morality (Gross, 1997).

He learned this from his parents and Dr. Abernathy and used this as a model for action through his many roles as a parent organizer, community activist, and elected state representative. He was the first Black elected to the state senate in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He is a former business owner. He was a parent leader of the Gibson Liberation School, one of the first grass roots parent groups to “sit-in” a school to protest substandard education. The Gibson parents, students, and a few teachers followed him out of the doors of the substandard public school to what came to be known as the Gibson Liberation School. They were one of the first grass roots parent groups to “sit-in” a school to protest substandard education and then to establish alternative education (Owens, 2011).

Percy Wilson

Percy Wilson also was born in Alabama in 1940, three years after Bill. He attended elementary, high school, and college in Alabama. Although Bill and Percy's lives were separated by spacial boundaries, they shared some common experiences as young Black men raised in the segregated south. Percy was born in a small farming town with the nearest city about 28 miles away. He attended segregated schools and excelled enough to enter college at 17. He described the challenges living in the Jim Crow South as difficult but manageable because of family. He was one of 9 children raised by a very strong mother who, along with his grandfather, instilled in him an ability to plan ahead. He recounts his early years as cautious, yet filled with great memories. He said:

For me it was the issue of always knowing your boundaries so there were things you didn't bother to challenge under the Jim Crow rule. Fortunately, I grew up in pretty secure family situation although my father passed when I was 9 years old. The most I have of him was good memories. But my grandfather was a fairly successful businessman and farmer. So we always knew ourselves on the farm. We had about 500 acres of land, so we had a lot of room to roam and to do our thing, so to speak in growing up...from chasing horses around the farm, to wrecking tractors and doing all kind of things. A lot of kids didn't have that lucky break but we had that. (P. Wilson, Interview, May 8, 2012)

There were shared themes between these two narrators from Alabama. Church was what Percy characterized as their "solid rock." It was the family's place of worship as well as a "social outlet." The Black church was the political and spiritual landmark organized to address faith, develop values, and support both the family and its community. The other commonality was their view of southern, segregated education. The segregated high school that Percy attended was about 36 miles away from home. The white high school was four blocks away. The bus carrying the Black children drove through 50 percent of the county. Yet, he and other Black students could have walked to schools if separate had not been constitutional. Percy arose every morning at 5am to

prepare to catch the bus to take him to the Black high school by 9. However, as he reflected on those early years some fifty years later, his insights gave rise to some of the benefits:

... going to a segregated school, it's not the worst in the world but its not the best thing either because you're denied certain things. I'll be honest with you and tell you that I never been inside a white school in Alabama, so I don't know what they had. People tell me they had a lot of stuff—better books, better libraries... They certainly had better athletic activities, equipment, and facilities than we had. But one of the things I found by going to segregated schools was that teachers were clearly committed to our education and they were dedicated to our education. (Wilson, 2012)

Both Bill and Percy affirm the saving grace of the all-Black teaching force in the south, beyond the “segregation” issue. It speaks to a special quality needed in teachers. Their affirmation of Black teachers aligns with W. E. B. Du Bois’ position that

The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between pupils, and between teacher and pupil, on the basis of perfect social equality, as will increase this sympathy and knowledge; facilities for education in equipment and housing, and the promotion of such extracurricular activities as will tend to induct the child into life. (Du Bois, 1935, p. 328)

Percy’s grandfather and mother were role models during his early years. His mother taught him to stay focused and plan ahead. Growing up in the segregated south was palatable, but only for a limited time. His mother told all her children, “Well, this was only short term, so don’t worry about it. You will be able to leave here and go someplace else or get your education. You’ll be able to beat the odds and beat the system.” Percy said that that stays with him even now. His grandfather had more influence on him than he realized as he grew to adulthood. There were many examples

but the more important one was that “even in the toughest times he was able to rise above all of the oppression, and become successful.”

As a child, Percy always thought about leaving Alabama because of segregation and a lack of opportunity. After he graduated from Alabama’s Stillman College, a Historically Black College, he left home and developed during his working years an extraordinary resume that included government, social services, banking, and degrees from Harvard and Boston University.

Percy was recruited to come to Boston to direct the Roxbury Multi-Service Center, a social service agency held in high regard by community leaders, the city of Boston, and those to whom services were provided. He found himself situated as a member of a community coalition, once the Judge issued the order to desegregate the Boston schools. That coalition of community agencies was the network of support that was to keep Black children from Roxbury, North Dorchester, and the South End safe during desegregation. Percy is one of the narrators with a personal history relating to the Black community’s support of its children under the banner of the Freedom House Coalition. As the Director of the Roxbury Multi-Service Center, his agency was key in addressing safety for the children attending South Boston High School (Wilson, 2012).

The Road to Justice

Professor Derrick Bell’s position was that there exists “a version of American history that differs from the usual version one finds in the history book,” that historicizing racial realities in Black American life often does not converge with the interests of white America, and that “racism is here to stay” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, pp. 85, 99, 115, 123). Although born in two distinctly different regions of the country,

racism impacted the lives of these narrators with these same powerful tones from birth that continued throughout their lives. Both Guscott and King had similar experiences with racism moving between the north and the south. They each experienced Jim Crow for the first time in public accommodations on the southern route to the U.S. Army Air Force and to college. They were confronted by northern discrimination in Boston. Owens and Wilson, on the other hand, were born in the segregated south and attended segregated schools. These four narrators' initial experiences with racism in the south and the north began differently, but the resulting effects contextualized segregated education for each as a societal injustice and emboldened their resolve to confront its inequality.

King's route to justice began in the South End of Boston where he returned after college and lives today. He became a political force in Boston as he worked within the Black community to organize for community control. Guscott remembers returning from the war to register at M.I.T. only to be stalled by a quota system. The waiting list was so long that he took an alternative route to complete his education. He entered the U. S. Merchant Marine Academy and graduated in 1954 as the only "Negro cadet-midshipman ... [o]ne of 97 graduates"¹⁸ He became the president of the Boston Branch of the NAACP in 1963. King's route to justice began in the South End of Boston where he returned after college and lives today. He became a political force in Boston as he worked within the Black community to organize for control of the schools. He continued his activism as a political activist, an author, and an adjunct professor at M.I.T. He was the director of the Urban League of Greater Boston, ran three times for a seat on the Boston School

¹⁸ From: C. Gerald Fraser, "U.S. Merchant Marine Grad Wins Honors," *Amsterdam News*, 1954.

Committee, developed a citywide political organization, and ran successfully for State Representative in the Massachusetts Legislature (Hayden, 1991).

Owens moved from Demopolis, Alabama to Roxbury at the age of 14, attended the Boston Public Schools, and became a business entrepreneur. His educational activism began when he led a group of parents to confront school officials through direct action. Owens became a political force in the Black community. He was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1972 and to the Senate in 1974, at the start of school desegregation. Percy found himself the newest community leader in town. Unfamiliar with the city but clearly experienced politically and armed with the lessons of the past, he simply felt as if he were being told, “You’re in the water. You swim. You learn to swim or if you can’t swim, you drown.” Percy became one of the Black community’s Olympians as the Multi-Service Center’s new Director became one of the staunchest leaders in the charge toward equal schooling.

King and Guscott came of age in Roxbury and the South End during the Depression and were nurtured by family and community. Owens and Wilson came of age in the segregated south with similar supports. Family and community sustained these men and this resonates powerfully in their work. By the 1960s and the 1970s, their lives intersected with a growing number of leaders and foot soldiers from the Black community, as they moved against racialized schools. Eliminating racism wherever found was clearly a marker in each person’s life and was shared by the narrators who follow.

Harry Justin Elam

Harry Justin Elam was born on April 29, 1922 and died at the age of 90 on August 16, 2012, twenty-one days following our interview. With a thirty-seven year career in

law, he was the first Black judge appointed to the Boston Municipal Court in 1971, was the unanimous choice to serve as the Boston Municipal Court's first Black chief justice in 1978, and was appointed associate justice of the Superior Court in 1983. He proudly attributed his start to a vocal group of community women who, unknown to him, urged Massachusetts Governor Sargent to appoint him to the Municipal Court. Their support arose from his political voice and outspoken advocacy for residents of his underserved community. Among those who paid tribute to him was Roderick L. Ireland who, in 2010, became the first Black chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. He spoke admiringly of Judge Elam:

Every time I spoke with him, I thanked him for opening doors for the rest of us ... He was what I would call an icon. He exemplified every aspect and quality you would expect in a leader, and I'm not just speaking from the perspective of an African-American.

Wayne A. Budd, senior counsel at Goodwin Procter and a former US attorney, also said:

For those lawyers of color such as myself who were coming along, he was a role model ... He had been in private practice and was successful. We could say, 'Hey, Harry Elam did this, and he's there to support us, so we can do it.'

His respect for the law was recognized, but his work to maximize "the possibility of rehabilitation, particularly for youthful offenders" was one of his most important contributions.¹⁹

The maternity hospital for everyone in the Boston area at the time Harry Elam was born was Lying-In Hospital. This hospital was established in 1832 as one of America's first maternity hospitals. Although he lived "across the river" in Cambridge on

¹⁹ Bryan Marquard, Globe Staff (2012): <http://archive.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/2012/08/22/harry-elam-pioneering-black-jurist-massachusetts/PuJnuhvi9Teouy0IHFSIAK/story.html>.

Western Avenue at the corner of Howard Street, identified as “The Coast” in the early 1920s, his birth certificate confirms that he was “born in Boston.” His parents were married in 1920 and he was the second of five children. He had a brother, Charles, born in 1921, Harry in 1922, a brother, Clarence, and a sister, Annette, all while living in Cambridge. His sister, Harriett, was born twenty years after him during a later time when the family moved to Roxbury in 1932.

He began his interview acknowledging that he wasn’t feeling well and was battling a serious illness. He told me he almost called to reschedule but thought against it because he wanted me to complete this project. His demeanor was statesman-like as he sat tall and proud at his desk, never appearing to indicate that he was at all unwell as we talked. His mind was sharp. Judge Elam was the product of a proud history. Although he came from humble beginnings, his birthright was that of an “Elam.” To the question of his earliest memories, he responded, “... you’re asking me some questions that relate to a memoir that I’ve been writing for the past 4 or 5 years. And it takes me back to my first recollection of being an Elam.” His first memory at the age of “four or five” was in the family home on Western Avenue in Cambridge as he is “looking up at the casket of my grandmother who I didn’t get to know but got to learn about ...” The casket was in the parlor of the family home, as was the tradition of many at that time, where family and friends attended the wake. He remembered “looking up at the casket at this rather regal looking woman, my grandmother,” his maternal grandmother.

His mother was born in Aiken, South Carolina and her family moved from the south during the Great Migration, “probably in the early 1900s.” His maternal grandfather was very active in circulating material against discrimination in the south and

Judge Elam described him as “kind of a wanted man,” driven out of Aiken. He had seven children and brought his family to a Cambridge. He remembered his grandfather, even though Harry was young. His grandfather “was sort of an entrepreneur.” He leased a couple of limousines and drove for wealthy families in Brookline with help from one or two of his sons. He established his own business along with a couple of garages where the limousines were kept, but “when he died, the business died.” His grandfather died within a year of his grandmother.

Because his grandmother had diabetes, became blind, and had a leg amputated, Judge Elam’s mother had to leave school in the 8th grade to take care of the family. There were seven children in the family, two girls and five boys. His aunt, however, attended the prestigious Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Palmer Memorial Institute, now one of North Carolina’s historic sites, which, as the museum states, “transformed the lives of more than 2,000 African American students.” His mother became the mother of the family. She cooked, cleaned, took care of the household, and, as Judge Elam states, “never complained.” His aunt, however, worked for the first branch of the Urban League in greater Boston. In the absence of the Director she would run the office, help people and families, and became the person to whom the family would turn for answers.

His father was born in Chase City, Virginia, one of five siblings. At sixteen, Harry’s father joined his two older brothers in Pittsburgh to work in the steel mills. A year or two after his father went to Pittsburgh, World War I began and he enlisted in the Army. He was assigned to an artillery outfit, served overseas in France and once discharged, he came to the Cambridge area and met Harry’s mother on a blind date. Harry’s paternal grandfather was a farmer and a widower who married a second time. His

grandfather was a self-taught auto repairman and opened his own business on the corner of Memorial Drive and Western Avenue. He purchased mortgaged equipment to operate his business. Just as he started, “along came the crash of 1929.” All Harry’s father was able to salvage was a 1926 Hudson automobile, a memory Judge Elam keeps with him today.

The crash changed his life. It was 1929 and by the age of seven his family had lived fairly well, he recalled. However, now they moved several times because of his family’s inability “to keep up with the rent.” And so, in 1932 the large house in Cambridge, where they once lived comfortably, was replaced by a third-floor apartment in a three-decker house on Elbert Street, a dead end off Humboldt Avenue in Roxbury, with one bedroom for his parents, one for his sister, and a third for his two brothers and him. Still, he humorously stated, they were the only family on the street with a 1926 Hudson.

The family attended church every Sunday in Cambridge and continued to “cross the river” until they met neighborhood families who attended St. Mark Congregational Church in Roxbury. This church is one of the historically Black Churches in Boston. It opened in 1895 “with over 600 Afro-American people,” who voted to name their new church the William Lloyd Garrison Memorial Congregational Church. In three months the name was changed to Saint Mark Congregational. The Church moved to different sites in the early 20th century, but by 1926 with a membership of about 75, it settled on Townsend Street in Roxbury. With the Rev. Samuel Leroy Laviscount, the well-respected, Roxbury minister as its first pastor in 1928, church members made important contributions:

It contributed largely to the development of the Roxbury community in the 1930s and as the black population in Roxbury rose, St. Mark's set up community centers for children and adults. In 1934, St. Mark sponsored the first black Cub Pack of the Boy Scouts of America. Social programs caused membership to skyrocket and by 1959 membership stood at around 400.²⁰

The family joined St. Mark's in 1934 because he and his brothers met the neighborhood boys and discovered that the Church had a Boy Scout Troop. The Boy Scouts were "a big thing in those days," recalls Judge Elam.

The Depression set in, he said, so everyone that he knew lived on rations and free milk. The neighborhood was predominantly Jewish when the Elam family moved in 1932. Even on that dead-end Elbert Street, Black families were in the minority for quite a long time. The early exodus of the Jewish community did not begin until the early 1950s (Levine & Harmon, 1992, pp. 44–65) and the schools reflected that demography. He attended the Henry Lee Higginson School starting in the fifth grade with classes, as he described it, that were half-Jewish and half-Black. Most of the Jewish students, he recalled, attended two schools nearby that were predominantly Jewish. The Higginson and Boardman schools were the two schools where most of the Black children in that area of Roxbury attended. Harry attended the Higginson for one year and was recommended by his teachers to Boys Latin School starting in the seventh grade. Unsure what the prestigious Latin School held, he went to his mother and relayed the message from the teachers. She "looked into it and submitted an application."

He noticed that there "was a very distinct difference" related to the skin color of those to whom teachers provided support and attention. The "lighter-skinned" Blacks

²⁰ See: Angelica Coleman,
http://roxbury.wikia.com/wiki/Saint_Mark's_Congregational_Church.

were favored. Of the 2000 students, he remembered about twenty-four Black students throughout his schooling at Boston Latin. He reported that there was never much attention paid to many of the Black students at Latin during the time that he was there. They had no one from whom to seek advice and the guidance counselor took very little interest in the Black students. The guidance counselor would barely acknowledge his presence even though Harry had attended Latin for six years. Harry said that the counselor would just ignore him.

He thought he would not be able to go to college because his parents had no money and he needed advice and direction from someone. What saved him was a cousin who was teaching at Virginia State College, a Historically Black College. After talking to his mother, she urged him to come and live with her in Virginia. She would help him find a job and get him into college. He graduated from Boston Latin in 1940 and moved to Virginia to live with his cousin.

This move not only changed his life, it brought forth an enormous amount of pride as he discovered his history. What he remembered learning about Boston's Black history was the story of Crispus Attucks. His white teacher at Boston Latin said, "Crispus Attucks was a drunken sailor who got in the way of a bullet." Harry was the only Black in his class and felt immensely embarrassed as the students and teachers laughed. When he graduated from Latin, he said that his self-esteem was so low because he knew nothing about his history. Whatever he learned, he said, came from his family. He had never had a Black teacher until Virginia State College and this is where he developed a sense of pride. His professors had advanced degrees, but couldn't teach at the white schools from

which they received their degrees. His history teacher also was an activist who worked on voting rights.

He attended Virginia State for two years and then joined the service during World War II. However, those two years at Virginia State College were the most impactful. His self-esteem became stronger as he learned the proud history of his people. He returned to Boston, met the “love of his life,” Barbara, married, and raised his family. With arms wide enough to envelop an entire population whose resources were scarce, together Harry and Barbara Elam became a political force and school activists in the burgeoning Black community of Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Melissa Tillman

Melissa Tillman, born in 1940, experienced these historic events first hand, as she was part of a generation of activists who started school in the mid-1940s and helped to expand the educational justice movement during the late 1960s and into the 70s. She and her family represented three generations of Blacks in Boston. She attended the Boston Public Schools, continued on to Boston Teachers College where she received a Bachelor of Science, and then to Harvard for a graduate degree. She returned to the Boston schools for three years as a teacher and was then asked to become part of an innovative educational experiment as one of the four founding faculty at the New School for Children. This experimental school was part of Boston’s alternative school movement. Melissa, the educator, the advocate for better schools, and the former public school student attended many community meetings where desegregation planning and alternative schooling were discussed. As a third generation Bostonian, she vividly remembered a multi-ethnic community, notably in the South End.

We grew up with Italians and Armenians and because we spent a lot of time in the South End at my grandmothers' ... there was much more multiracial, multiethnic in the South End... And they came from everywhere ... so you had a real mixture of kids... The South End really was, in the early day, a very integrated community and everybody got along. There wasn't any undercurrent or undertone. You were in and out of one another's houses. You shared dinners. In the summertime you did things together. (M. Tillman, Interview, March 31, 2011)

In 1950, whites were 758,700 or 95% of the population in Boston as compared with Blacks who were 40,057 or 5% of the population. By 1970 the percentage of Blacks in the city tripled to 16% while its white population fell by 125,000 between 1950 and 1960, and continued to drop (Golden, 1982). Melissa entered kindergarten at the age of five in her Roxbury neighborhood school. She continued in the Boston schools through high school, attended Boston Teachers College, and returned to the school system as a Boston teacher. When she started elementary school in 1945, she remembered that there were five or six Black children in her class. All her teachers were white. However, she became disillusioned with the public schools that she once described as a place where "everybody was in the business of getting an education" and that "school was something that you looked forward to." She never saw a Black teacher until she returned as a teacher herself in 1962.

Boston State Teachers College, where she received her teaching credentials as an educator, was the exclusive recruitment source for the Boston school system. This college was well known to all prospective Boston teachers. Founded in 1852, Girls High School was its forerunner. Boston Normal School, next in line, separated from Girls High School in 1872 and was renamed the Teachers College of the City of Boston in 1924 and then became the State Teachers College at Boston in 1952. By 1960 it was known as Boston State College, a premier institution preparing primarily white female teachers from which

Boston teachers were recruited. By 1960, two-thirds of Boston's teaching force were composed of women of whom 99% were white, while one-fourth of the public school students were Black (Schrag, 1967, p. 75).

Inspired by her first grade teacher Melissa Tillman knew she wanted to teach.

After college, she began teaching first grade at the Sarah J. Baker School. She said:

... within four years it went from I'd say one-fourth, one-fifth minority families to three-fourth of minority families in just those four years ... a lot of the middle class kids, when I came back after the first summer, had gone ... the families had moved. And a lot of the white kids had moved out. And minorities, Black kids, particularly families, were moving in. By the end of that four-year stint, ... my class was, and I taught first grade, was maybe three quarters black. Just in that four-year span. (Tillman, 2011)

She was disheartened upon returning to the public schools, the same school system she attended, by the overcrowded classes, the old buildings, but more surprisingly, she was teaching from the same geography books she had actually used when she was a fourth grader. Just shy of tenure, which she would have received had she entered her fourth year of teaching, she left to teach at The New School for Children located in Roxbury, where she still lived. The New School for Children was part of Boston's alternative school movement. She was excited to teach at The New School and described her experience as "*really* teaching." The New School was a work in progress that combined dedicated educators, enthusiastic parents, and a supportive neighborhood. They developed a new curriculum based on a shared belief that the children who attended were capable of so much more than what they learned in the Boston schools. As the plans developed, Melissa described the experience as "energy, churning and bubbling."

The major difference between the public schools and the New School, she contended, was that parents were a central part of building the school, "which meant that

you had parents there all the time day and night...anytime they wanted.” They would “sit in on classes and make comments” after class. She proudly stated that, “if you were to teach there and if you were concerned with the level of parental involvement, then it wouldn’t be a fit.” The founders wanted parents to be part of building this teaching and learning space they called school. One of the cornerstones’ of Boston’s Alternative School Movement was parent involvement. Boston Public Schools screened parents out. The New School opened wide its doors to make room for all parents. This school represented a true cross section of the community and it flourished because of parental engagement and community control. The children came from diverse economic, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Melissa was part of a social experiment that had its roots deeply entrenched in economic and educational justice. Melissa Tillman died in 2015.

Barbara Burke

Barbara Burke, born in 1942 in Akron, Ohio, was a Boston activist who, during the years leading up to school desegregation, worked with youth in the Boston area as the director of educational counseling at Model Cities.²¹ She was the first Black director of the Boston YWCA and later held a number of senior positions in state and local government, including the director of the City of Boston’s youth department, Associate Commissioner of Employment & Training at the Massachusetts Department of Welfare, and later became the Commissioner of Social Services in Washington, D.C.

²¹ Signed into law on November 3, 1966, Model Cities was a federal program under the Johnson Administration to provide selected neighborhoods with “comprehensive assistance” in a range of areas, from education to housing. See: Klemek, C. (2007), *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*, Model Cities.

Her mother was from Atlanta and her father was from Ohio. They moved to Boston, where her father found employment, when she was four months old. As World War II began to escalate, her father volunteered for the Navy and subsequently died during his service in 1944. When asked about discrimination, Barbara remembered hearing that following her father's attendance at Central State College, a HBCU, he still could not find professional employment. A second memory she still carries with her is the story told by her mother and grandmother of her birth and delivery by a midwife. Her mother noticed a foot abnormality. Her feet were turned inward. Segregated hospitals and discriminatory health care services denied her family and other Black families treatment. She recounted that her mother told her the following:

They ran tests and then this young white doctor came to the house one night and said if you ever wanted your child to walk, you need to take her to Boston Children's Hospital. Your daughter has clubbed feet and they won't treat her here. She took me to the hospital in Boston. (B. Burke, Interview, February 26, 2011).

Barbara's maternal grandmother was her rock. When her father was killed in the war, her maternal grandmother, still living in Atlanta, came immediately to Boston to help her widowed daughter raise Barbara. She describes her grandmother as a radical, with one eye, a story Barbara eagerly awaited throughout her life to hear. Her grandmother eventually told her the story of the loss of her eye.

She told me that she used to work for white folks and she was in the kitchen and she didn't move fast enough. The woman was difficult; she picked up a poker in the fireplace or something and just hit my grandmother in the eye, and she lost it. (Burke, 2011)

At this point in the interview, Barbara pauses and states that her grandmother was a "radical, for good cause." She was a woman who lost her husband while she was pregnant because he was determined to vote and was killed as a result. Her grandfather,

whom she never knew, was named Frank. Barbara's grandmother named her daughter Mary F. Morris and it wasn't until she was older that she knew that the "F" stood for "Frank." On election day in 2008, Barbara went to the grave of her grandmother and spoke these words to her, "Nanny I am going to vote for a black man for president. I don't know if he is going to win, but we got a good shot at this." She continued to say that she was just so overcome with emotions "because I was leaning down on her headstone thinking she would never have imagined that in all of her lifetime."

Barbara's account of her early school years starting in 1948 differed from what she anticipated for her daughter, who would enter public school in 1971. Both Burke and Tillman attribute the change to a migration of Blacks into the neighborhoods and an exodus of whites to the suburbs. The narrators who attended school in the twenties and thirties had similar descriptions of a changing city, which corresponded to different generational experiences in schools. They spoke of communities and schools where, even though African Americans were in the minority, there were many white families with whom they socialized and many white children with whom they attended school. This, in turn, promoted long term interracial friendships and constructed in the minds of some that Boston was a liberal city. Yet, the schools were becoming more segregated during the 60s and the 70s, and the communities where Black, Jewish, Irish, and other immigrant groups once co-existed were changing rapidly. Barbara Burke compared the schools she attended during childhood to the schools her daughter would attend in the 1970s:

I can remember the frustration when it came time for my daughter to go to school. And I'm saying to myself what happened to these schools in twenty something years when I went through the Boston Public Schools and got a decent education and twenty something odd years later, you don't want to send your child there. ... I think the neighborhoods changed in the sense that the South End and Roxbury

were not always black. They weren't always one-race neighborhoods. They were very diverse neighborhoods. (Burke, 2011)

These memories of racial population shifts mentioned by Barbara, shared by Melissa Tillman, and confirmed by Harry Elam were reflections of a change, beginning in the 1950s through the 1960s, in the racial composition Roxbury. There was a structural shift from a mixed race community to a predominantly Black community. For Melissa and Barbara this shift was a subconscious event. They were in high school, had friends, and socialized as most students did at that age. Their memories were a reflection of their lives, not historical and political events surrounding them. However, the “decent education” of which Barbara Burke spoke is challenged as Harry Elam speaks about his experiences of being ignored by his guidance counselor, or Kenneth Guscott’s example of being tracked towards “working in the post office,” or Mel King’s inability to enter Northeastern because some of the courses in which he was enrolled were not part of the college track. Instead of college counseling, encouragement, and support, these Boston School graduates had to find alternative routes to college. One can only imagine how many Black children had missed opportunities, as life chances were limited because of colorism and racism in the Boston Public Schools.

The subtle demographic population shift over two decades of Barbara and Melissa’s childhood went almost unnoticed as they attended school until each became adults and joined the education movement. Their reflections provided insight into the differences in memory and feelings when communities are naturally evolving. As young people, they paid little attention to events in their lives that were structurally determined by political forces. Everyone did not share the “decent education,” yet many left the school system and were incentivized to continue their education, in spite of their personal

experiences. The school system was too often, for many Black Boston school children, an unequal educational opportunity. It was not the Boston school system itself that they acknowledged as meaningful, but rather they spoke of a teacher or a coach or a mentor – an individual – who helped them through a challenging system – during the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s, as the white population began to exit to other parts of the city and to the suburbs.

Barbara Burke began kindergarten in Boston in 1947 and graduated from high school in 1960. She remembered, as she looked through some photos, that most of the children in her first or second grade pictures at the Asa Gray elementary school were Black. The classes were small, under twenty children in most cases. It included some white students, a Hispanic family, and a Native American. She has pleasant memories of the schools she attended from kindergarten through high school. During elementary school she had her first Black teacher, although the majority of teachers were white. Everyone walked to a neighborhood school. She describes a childhood with a school experience adjusted by the changing demographics in Boston. In 1950 the white population was 95%. Throughout the next two decades, Black residents would triple in size while the white population would drop. When asked why the schools of the 70s no longer had the positive learning environment she experienced, she responded:

School buildings looked terrible. I can remember my younger brothers and sisters and the schools that they went to. I don't know if it was politicians. Well, it's always money if you don't put in resources. I think as the neighborhoods changed, the resources followed the white folks, you know. It's like public housing. As the working people moved out, the resources declined. And if you don't give daily upkeep services, things deteriorate. And that's exactly what happened. (Burke, 2011)

Her conclusion was shared by most in this study. Those who attended the Boston schools and observed the changes in the schools – over crowding, aging structures, fewer

resources, and demographic shifts in schools – agreed that where whites moved, the financial support for schools followed and the resources for the Black schools diminished.

Barbara's activism in Boston began around 1966 or 1967 working for Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)–Neighborhood Youth Corps. She began as a counselor working with youth who dropped out of school in the eighth or ninth grades. She was amazed by the dropout rate of students in Boston. They were as young as thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen. The Neighborhood Youth Corps, part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 during Johnson's War on Poverty, provided a work-training program coupled with part-time employment opportunities to impoverished elementary and secondary school students "so that their education may be resumed or continued" (Tucker, 1965, p. 1442). To many in Roxbury, it was an alternative to the unsuccessful schooling they were receiving. From there, she was recruited by John O'Bryant who hired her for an educational talent search program at Northeastern, funded by the U.S. Office of Education. The program worked with "borderline students" in an effort to help those children go to college. John O'Bryant had a long history in the Black community as an educational activist on behalf of students in the Boston Schools. He knew they were treated as second-class students because he was a Boston School Counselor and the first Black elected to the Boston School Committee during the turbulent times following school desegregation. John established for Barbara and another worker "a little office on Blue Hill Avenue and our job was to work with kids, high school kids and getting them into college ... Kids that would not normally go to college" (Burke, 2010).

From there, Barbara Burke's advocacy on behalf of families and children continued to flourish throughout a number of leadership positions. During the late 60's, early 70's," she established a Talent Search program at Boston's Model Cities. Model Cities was a neighborhood revitalization program, supported by federal funding, where they placed "over eight or nine hundred kids a year into college ... Most with full financial aid." The most significant place of employment, for this study, was her recruitment by the Board of the Clarendon Street YWCA to become its first Black Director. It was here that her leadership within an established organization intersected with the immediate needs of the Black community. That organization, the Clarendon Y, had limited access to Black children in a pre-Brown Boston but now essentially supporting the Court Order to desegregate the Boston Public Schools. The Clarendon St. Y was to become the safe place for Black high school students going to and returning from the all-white segregated Charlestown High School. Following her directorship at the Y, she served as an Associate Commissioner of Employment and Training in the Dukakis Administration and then became Commissioner of Social Services for Washington, D. C.

Rudy Pierce

Rudolph F. Pierce, born in 1942, was a second generation Bostonian and a Roxbury resident. He attended the Boston schools from elementary through high school and then joined the Army. The early years of life began with a trajectory of challenges met with hope from his mother early in life and then from men in his community who wanted better for him and other Black students as he grew to adulthood. Because of these influences, he developed a passion for hard work and service. As a child, he did not like schools nor was he a successful student. In spite of an unpleasant start in school, Rudy's

life circumstances led to a man who graduated from Harvard Law School in 1970, served as a Magistrate in the United States District Court, became a Justice of the Superior Court, and was the first African American president of the Boston Bar Association. This was accomplished in spite of some significant challenges he faced within the public schools, which included encounters with racism. His history epitomizes the type of resilience that is necessary to counteract the many pernicious effects of institutional racism.

Rudy attended Boston schools from elementary through high school, describing one of the schools that a student destroyed by fire, the Sherwin, as “probably the best thing that ever happened to the place.” This school taught children from Lower Roxbury in grades four through eight. To him it was a disastrous space where no one was safe and few, if any, could learn. Students attended this school under the most unimaginable circumstances. This included a falling ceiling, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate resources. Some teachers, he felt, wanted to instruct while others cared little about teaching or the students. Until he reached high school there were no more than two white children in either of the two schools he attended. Feeder schools for Lower Roxbury were majority Black and would be included in the 1964 Massachusetts State Board of Education advisory committee’s report that confirmed the existence of segregated, racially imbalanced schools in Black residential areas.

Yet, it was his mother’s words that reverberated through the difficult times. About education she would say, “If you are not prepared to work, you will be a bum,” along with “If you don’t get an education, you are doomed to be a bum.” He described her as “fiercely independent.” Rudy lamented, “I have this vision of my mother sitting at the

kitchen table trying to figure out how to pay the bills with tears in her eyes.” Her sister was a diabetic so his mother ungrudgingly became his aunt’s caretaker. She would model personal responsibility with acts of love and advocacy. For example, his mother would bring her sister to the hospital and if the elevator didn’t work, she would have Rudy carry his aunt up six flights of stairs. Additionally, instead of providing deeply personal information about her sister’s need for welfare assistance, to which she was entitled, his mother refused to answer the personal questions the state required.²² Instead she walked out of the welfare office. He noted that many people in his community were poor and needed government assistance. However, his mother’s lesson to him was that “welfare was death. It ruined your ability to work.” His wonderfully strong mother lived to be ninety-seven years old and was the major influence on the man he would become.

He attended Boston Technical High School, an exam school. He said it was a culture shock, coming from the Sherwin, a predominantly all-Black school with “one or two white kids in the entire class” to Boston Technical with about “about twenty-two Black kids total.” He was the only Black student in his entire class. In some ways he felt he wasn’t ready for this type of culture shift. He fought a white student because he called Rudy a “brownie,” even though he wasn’t sure what that meant. He had a cruel teacher

²² In the 1950s and early 1960s, welfare reform was limited to various states' attempts to impose residency requirements on welfare applicants and remove illegitimate children from the welfare rolls. Many states also passed so-called "man in the house" rules, which cut off benefits when a man lived in the home. By the late 1960s, such laws had been struck down on the ground that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment requires the government to treat all persons in similar situations equally. See: Welfare - A Brief History Of Welfare Reform - Assistance, Programs, Act, and Recipients – From: <http://law.jrank.org/pages/11266/Welfare-BRIEF-HISTORY-WELFARE-REFORM.html#ixzz4RW8ml600>

who used the short stories that he wrote as an example to the class of how “not to write.” “High school was difficult,” he said. “I wasn’t really up for studying. I was halfway in the street and halfway in school.” Rudy left Boston Technical High School in February of his senior year with enough credits to graduate and then he joined the army. His claim was that the military transformed him, as he learned self-discipline and matured into manhood.

He left the Army in February of 1963 and returned to Boston. He made contact with Reverend Mike Haynes to seek advice. In Roxbury and the South End communities, there was a network of Black men who mentored Black youth in what was known as settlement houses. Rudy remembered that the two preeminent “social workers” who worked closely with young men were Mel King in the South End and Reverend Michael “Mike” Haynes in Roxbury. He met Mike when he “was about eight or nine years old” at the Shaw House. For most of his youth Mike Haynes was an advisor and a mentor. When he returned from the Army, it was natural that he would seek advice from him about his future.

Reverend Haynes introduced Rudy to someone whose connection to Hampton Institute, a HBCU in Virginia, at one point yielded nearly 100 students from Boston, primarily Roxbury residents. Rudy went to Hampton in September 1963, mentally prepared, he said. Yet, in all his years in the Boston Public Schools, he had never read a book from cover to cover and, as a result, he needed a remedial English course. The interesting memory about the first book he read can be understood through these words:

I remember like it was yesterday. I was in the Army, I had gotten out of basic training and went to radar school in St. Peters, California, and when I got there guys were circulating a book ... That was the very first book I ever read from cover to cover. (R. Pierce, Interview, May 9, 2012).

1963 through 1967 were active years for southern college students in the civil rights movement. They led sit-ins, were part of mass arrests, organized local residents, and held student demonstrations across the south. In 1964 the Virginia Students Civil Rights Committee was organized. Rudy remembers it as “an incredibly difficult time.” He was voted student body president. They also had a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) chapter. He brought Kwame Ture, also known as “Stokely Carmichael,” to Hampton. The SNCC organizer accompanying Stokely, George Best, was run off the road and killed four days later. These were trying times for Rudy, as it was for all the students in the struggle for equal rights,

In the summer of 1966, Rudy attended a summer program that Harvard instituted for Black students. As a result of this experience, coupled with his degree from Hampton, he applied to Boston College, Case Western Reserve, and Harvard for law school. He recalled that he applied to Harvard, “really as a lark. I didn’t think there was a chance that I would get into Harvard. I hadn’t been great at standardized testing.” However, he was accepted to all of the colleges to which he applied but chose Harvard Law School because:

There were so many things going on in the street and lawyers were playing a big part in that. I never went to law school to go into a law firm, as I did. I went to law school because it seemed the perfect thing to do to continue the struggle in the street. A lot of Black kids went to law school and we all had this romantic idea that we were all going to prepare ourselves to do the stuff that was going on in the street. (Pierce, 2011)

His legal training coupled with his experience as a Boston school graduate provided critical insights for the Freedom House Coalition, the Black community’s hub for strategic planning during desegregation, of which he was a member. During the

1970s, Rudy worked in a private law firm. He also represented the Boston Branch NAACP during the desegregation years.

Albert “Al” Holland

Al Holland was born in 1945 in Boston. His father, once a prizefighter, was born in Canada, and raised in New York. He enlisted in the Army during World War II and was stationed in Virginia. His mother, who was born in New York, married his father while in the service. After the war, they moved to Boston because Al’s mother had family in Boston. He lived in the housing projects on Camden Avenue and then on Canton Street in the South End. He recalled that living “in the South End during the fifties were great times.” He described the South End as mainly people of color, homeowners, and at family entertainment.

Everybody looked out for one another, knew each other. Everybody spoke ... There wasn’t a lot of nightclubs, nor was there many hotels. So, many of homes down there were rooming houses. A lot of my family worked for the railroad. They would come from the railroad and stay over. Spent a lot of my weekends riding around with my uncles on the railroad from Boston to New York. Sometimes it was Boston to Washington. Those were fun times (A. Holland, Interview, July 27, 2012).

His memories of his early years were good ones. He attended the Nathan Hale and Dudley elementary schools and then Timilty Junior High. He had Irish, Italian, white, Hispanic, and Black classmates, all of whom “got along well,” he recounted. He felt that attending the Boston Schools was a positive experience. What was of interest, however, was his statement that the “one thing that I did notice was that they didn’t have any teachers that looked like me.” His description of his teachers were mixed. Some, he said, were concerned about education and others focused less on learning and more on behavior.

As a teenager, Al became involved with the Norfolk House. The Norfolk House was converted in 1914 to a settlement house in the tradition of agencies with a comprehensive approach to strengthening neighborhoods, families, and individuals and addressing community problems (Koerin, 2003). This is where Jeep Jones and Reverend Michael Haynes influenced his life and the lives of many other Black students attending the segregated Boston schools. Both men, along with Mel King, were part of the Black network of Roxbury residents with education and social service resources to mentor children from the community. These men opened up avenues for the next generation to attend college where they could envision a world where Black Americans made personal and professional strides in life.

He attended Jamaica Plain High School (JP), an “integrated school,” in 1961. He felt welcomed and enjoyed this part of his life as he “made a lot of good friendships.” The students who attended JP were predominantly white and middle class. The student body lived in Roxbury and Jamaica Plain. His feeder school was Timilty Junior High, which went to the ninth grade. JP at that time was an agricultural school with grades nine through twelve, the ninth grade, as he described it “as mostly the farming program and since none of wanted to be farmers we went to the academic program” Al completed ninth grade at the Timilty and entered JP’s college prep program. He also joined the school’s basketball team, which is where he remembers being part of one of his first protests. He had a great basketball coach who died after his first year in high school. A number of his teammates from Roxbury knew Fred Gombs, an assistant basketball coach at Latin School. However, there were no head Black coaches in the City of Boston. Every head coach was white. Al, along with the others from the basketball team, organized,

lobbied, and protested at the Boston School Committee for the first Black head coach to be hired and placed at JP high. Al recalls:

We had a petition. We gave them our petition. We walked around the school committee headquarters. We had our signs. We wanted Fred Gombs. We wanted Mr. Gombs to be our coach. We didn't necessarily realize that we were setting a precedent but Mr. Gombs became the first Black head coach in basketball and football in the City of Boston ... We were determined ... The basketball team was mostly Black and we were determined (Holland, 2012).

They received their strength and determination as high school students from the social and political changes taking place in the South. It was the early sixties and those fighting for rights were their role models. Their consciousness expanded as they watched what happened in the South with the student boycotts, sit-ins, marches, and demonstrations, realizing that they had the power to force a difference in their schools. They were conscious of race and wanted to combat racism.

Al said that the team wanted someone of color from their neighborhood whom they respected because they didn't have a lot of Black teachers. The guidance counselor rarely met with them and when he did, he discouraged them from going to college. They had teachers from whom they learned nothing. Al recalled a "study" as an example. It was a class to which many of the Black students were assigned. They sat in a room and could chat with each other as long as they were not loud while the teacher was "busy" doing something other than teaching. He does remember Ms. Dempsey whom he didn't like because she was hard on her students. Once he began college, his analysis of Ms. Dempsey changed. He reflected, "Thank goodness for Ms. Dempsey. She forced me and made me learn." With Reverend Michael Haynes' guidance, he attended college and got his first job in 1969 with the Department of Youth Services as a juvenile parole officer.

Following Judge Garrity's order to desegregate the Boston Public Schools in 1974 and recommended by Peter Parham, Special Assistant to the Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, Marion Fahey hired Al Holland in 1975. One of his responsibilities was to represent the Superintendent's Office at South Boston High School. Both Al and Peter had as one of their responsibilities to monitor the schools during desegregation. During Peter Parham's interview, he praised Al's work. As he worked with teachers, parents, and students during the first years of the Court Order, Peter provided him the ultimate compliment an educator can receive. He said, "Over the thirty years that Al stayed in the schools, he made more of a contribution and impacted more lives. Few others have done what Al Holland has done in that school system" (Parham, 2012).

Peter Parham

Peter Parham, a third generation Bostonian, was born in 1945. During Phase I of court ordered school desegregation, 1974 through 1975, he was recruited to become Special Assistant to Marion Fahey, Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. His memories are of a Roxbury where he lived, made life-long friends, and a place he still loves today. He described his childhood in this way:

I loved growing up in Roxbury. At certain ages you're sort of oblivious to the fact that you're middle class or poor. It was the contact and associations that you had with people ... Places like the Norfolk House and Twelfth Baptist Church. They opened up and exposed me to different people and a sense that you could achieve. At the same time that I wasn't comfortable at a place like the Latin School in terms of it not being welcoming—that afternoon you could go to the Norfolk House and you could be made to feel that you are a part of something because it is a community organization where they had clubs for the kids. With "Jeep"

(Jones)²³ and Mike (Haynes) teaching you—whether it was through basketball or the other social clubs they had for us—to accept people and see the worth in the values that other people bring. They may not have the same knowledge base as you, but they may have knowledge in another area. So those foundations of coming up in Roxbury at that time have really stayed with me. (P. Parham, Interview, May 9, 2012)

Peter attended the Boston schools—the David A. Ellis, the Higginson, and Latin School.

His mother was from Boston and his dad was from West Medford, Massachusetts. His grandparents lived nearby in Roxbury. His was a close-knit family with roots deeply imbedded in the Roxbury community. His father was a captain in the Army during World War II who was wounded in Italy. As a disabled veteran, he retired and worked for the Post Office. Peter remembers that his father worked no matter the weather condition, even during a blizzard in Boston “as he was coming up Warren Street,” an image he will always remember. His father impressed on him the value of work and that work was an important responsibility.

His mother attended Boston schools and after graduation worked as a secretary. At one time she was secretary for the Governor. She also worked for the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) when Ed Logue was its Director. Logue was best known for overseeing major public works projects in Boston including Faneuil Hall-Quincy Market and Government Center in Boston. However, his tenure brought a major controversy for parts of the city. This was the period of urban renewal, which typically displaced urban dwellers. In Boston, it would have a major impact in the South End and

²³ Clarence “Jeep” Jones (1933) is a community activist who lived in Roxbury. He was the first African-American Deputy Mayor of the city of Boston under Mayor Kevin White. In addition, he had a 32-year career at the Boston Redevelopment Authority, serving as the Chairman of the board for 24 years. From: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarence_%22Jeep%22_Jones.

Roxbury. However, a number of grass-roots neighborhood movements successfully thwarted the plans to remove many of the homes in the South End. Mel King was part of the coalition (O'Connor, 1993).

Peter spoke proudly about his family. Not only did his mother work, but she also took special pride in ensuring that her children were always ready for school and made sure that they attended daily. His home was a gathering place for his friends as well as for others. Peter stated that there were always more people in his house than it could hold but his family always found room. He has a large extended family. His father had four brothers and three sisters. One of the brothers had ten children. His mother had three brothers and one of her brothers had ten children. Peter said that he couldn't go anywhere in Boston "without running into family." However, as with Rudy and Al, the Norfolk House was an important place in his life because, "Mike Haynes and Jeep Jones were there and really impacting not only my life but the life of other youngsters" (Parham, 2012).

Peter's early memories of school were good ones. He describes elementary school as an integrated experience with "a few white kids ... kids from Puerto Rico and ... primarily Blacks." However, when he attended Latin, he became a minority and began to recognize that the respect and friendly environment that existed in elementary school no longer existed. He felt that there were so few Blacks in Latin because of a tracking system. Tracking generally meant that students were assigned college prep, general, or vocational education curricular paths early in their schooling. In Boston, many Black children, particularly males, were not in the college prep track, which would exclude them from attending Latin. Parents could influence which route to higher education their

child would take if they understood “tracking.” Peter’s parents did, as they were vigilant about their children’s educational opportunities. Latin was an exam school and so they kept watch on homework and class attendance so that he could qualify for Latin.

Peter was in the minority for the first time in the Boston Schools. He felt uncomfortable. He passed the entrance exam and was accepted into the predominantly white Latin School. This is where he first began to get a sense of institutional racism. He spoke of a college recruiting system established between the colleges and Latin for seniors. A time would be set for seniors to be sent to the office for an interview with college admissions officers from Boston College, Harvard, and Northeastern University, as examples. Colleges competed for Boston Latin School’s graduates because of its reputation as an exam school. Peter recalled that he was in a graduating class of two hundred seniors and he was never once called for an interview. He said that if he did not have the support of Mike Haynes or Jeep Jones from the Roxbury settlement houses, he most likely would not have been able to attend college. These men established tours for juniors and seniors to visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), a tradition that remains in the Boston community today. Peter took the tour and chose Delaware State University. He acknowledged how critical their support and intervention was for him and others from Roxbury as a means to attend college. Latin did nothing to help him, he felt, but these men and others, identified as the Roxbury Interagency Council, were the principal avenues to higher educational opportunities for Roxbury high school students.

This is the point at which his path towards an impressive career began. He graduated in 1968 from Delaware State as a history major the spring that Dr. King was

assassinated. Northeastern University offered him a full scholarship to graduate school and so in July he returned home to Boston to start Northeastern in the fall. Transitioning from an HBCU to this northern predominantly white institution was not easy. He decided to work at the Boys Club in Roxbury. While at the Boys Club, he was recruited to attend Harvard where he received his M.Ed. When Marion Fahey became school Superintendent in 1975, she was looking for an ombudsman from the Roxbury community to work as her assistant during Phase I of the Court Order. Some Board members of the Roxbury Boys Club recommended Peter. There was only one Black administrator in the Boston Public School system and Marion Fahey wanted Peter, a Roxbury resident, to join her at a Special Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools. This was at the start of the Federal Court Order to desegregate the Boston Public Schools.

His role was multi-faceted, as it expanded to personnel issues, such as increasing the number of Black teachers, to establishing meetings between the Superintendent's office, parents, and community representatives. Coupled with these duties, Peter also needed to work with the schools identified in the court order. On a daily basis he would "run from South Boston High to Charlestown High to East Boston High" with all of its constant conflicts. He told the Superintendent that he needed another person and hired Al Holland, a well-respected Roxbury resident and community worker.

In January 1977, Senator Ted Kennedy had a position available on his staff with a particular focus on the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In January of 1977, Peter left the Superintendent's Office and became Senator Kennedy's Special Assistant in Washington, D.C. Because of his first-hand knowledge of the impact of teacher training and parental involvement, he was able to work with the Senator and

members of the Congressional Black Caucus to prepare legislation that impacted the schools then and today. As Kennedy's special assistant, Peter opened many doors that previously had been closed to advance Blacks to professional positions during the four years he worked with Senator Kennedy. His legislative accomplishments through Senator Kennedy's office, and with the Congressional Black Caucus, were some of the critical health issues affecting Blacks and the elderly, such as sickle cell anemia and elderly legislation. He helped to fully fund Meals on Wheels.

His pathway through segregated schooling to an education and experiences far beyond the expectation of many of his teachers can only be attributed to the support received from those within his family and through community networks.

Voices of Resilience

Chapter IV represents ten of the many voices that bear the history of northern and southern segregation. They challenged Boston's systemic discrimination in school, employment, and housing policies. These narratives lay the foundation for understanding the lives of Blacks who were born in Boston or moved to Boston prior to the implementation of the Federal Court decision to desegregate the Boston Public Schools. The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the actors by shaping and framing the context (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, pp. 41 – 59). At this point, themes emerge connecting each to the other and to the Black education movement in Boston.

The themes of race and resilience will be examined in Chapter V. It introduces the reader to a timeline of movement events by foregrounding activists who resisted the inherent perils of segregation and racism. Black Education Movement themes emerge from the collective lived accounts of these narrators. Ken Guscott and Harry Elam both

spoke about their hardships during the Depression, describing poverty as normality for all within their communities. They describe poverty, not as a state of being, but as something to overcome. Each gathered strength from a mother, a father, a grandparent, a community mentor, or combinations of these support systems. Their resilience was demonstrated in their ability to achieve “something,” to “be somebody,” to constantly push through life’s circumstances, and to move forward.

Mel King joins this “movement” from a political perspective that seems to take form when he attended a HBCU in the segregated South. He expands his ability to combat racism as he embraces the concept of “community” engagement as a source of resilience. Percy Wilson and Bill Owens moved from the segregated South to this northern city, about which they held no illusions. They acknowledged that Boston was not an escape from southern racism and segregation, but rather a new frontier.

Barbara Burke and Melissa Tillman, the two women in the study, understood Boston from a different perspective. Both came from middle class, working families and experienced schooling as a sound experience. They were from a second wave of Black Bostonians born in the 1940s who attended Boston schools. Melissa became a Boston schoolteacher and then a founding member of the New School for Children, an alternative school movement developing in Boston. Barbara, on the other hand, worked for community agencies as an activist in expanding leadership roles. She viewed the schools in the 70s both as this activist combined with being a parent. After both attended Boston schools and became active in the movement, they agreed that their memories of school were so antithetical to what existed by the 70s. They believed that the schools had developed into places that were slaughtering the next generation of children. To them the

reasons for these changes were confusing, as they reflected on their past experiences in school. Yet, they were certain that the children who lived in Black neighborhoods were being denied quality schooling.

Their values and energy as activists can be traced to their families. Melissa revered her parents and Barbara idolized her grandmother. Many of the same experiences with race and sources of resilience reside in the narratives of Peter Parham, Al Holland, and Rudy Pierce. Their commonalities, which led them to activism, came from place and family. They speak of home in Boston and Alabama as the places where their values were formed, where they lived with family, and made long-lasting friendships throughout their communities in the north and south. These narratives elucidate the context, which brought about the cadre of men and women who would spend their lives fighting for equality and full citizenship.

CHAPTER V: RESILIENCE IN ACTION

While washing dishes, I received a phone call from a friend shouting the news of the Supreme Court decision. Not wanting to rely on my friend's account, I rush out to purchase a paper whose headlines confirmed my friend's joyous news. I sat down to savor this historic victory, and said to myself, "Everything is going to be fine now. Our kids will get a decent education (May 17, 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education*)

– Ruth M. Batson,
The Black Education Movement in Boston, 2001, pp. 46-47)

Introduction: Voices of the Black Education Movement

Ruth Batson's hopeful response to the *Brown* decision was twenty years too soon. Although *Brown* applied to all school systems that intentionally segregated, whether by law or by practice, Boston schools remained in violation of the Equal Protection Clause through 1974 (*Morgan v. Hennigan*). Boston's Black community had been organizing to achieve educational opportunity for Black children throughout the first half of the 20th century. Community based programs, mentoring and counseling services, modeling and structuring personal, political, and social support networks were the means by which this small community organized for equal access to educational opportunities. This was a resilient community, which faced head-on Boston's racial boundaries that were becoming more impenetrable in the midst of a population growth.

This Chapter provides accounts of individual and community agency addressing unequal educational opportunity and foregrounds the role of community activism in Boston and its schools. It identifies personal and community resilience that countered the pernicious effects of structural racism. It narrates these accounts using the voices and experiences of those who struggled for equality. For twenty years following *Brown*, they were part of movement activism intended to disrupt an unconstitutionally segregated

school system. This movement resulted in the June 21, 1974 Federal District Court Order to desegregated the Boston schools.

Most importantly, these accounts will be narrated by some who were active in this movement and experienced, first-hand, the intent of segregated education. For them, segregated education was the means by which second-class citizenship endured. It was not the only cause for resistance and outrage. Rather, what was most important was the unequal and unlawful distribution of resources that advantaged majority white schools over majority Black schools in the city. This was the reason for disrupting segregated schools. Many confirmed that their primary participation in school desegregation was not that Black and white children would learn together in the same classrooms. Rather, it was to secure their rights as American citizens to an equitable distribution of financial and educational resources those majority white schools received.

This chapter provides a timeline of movement activities interwoven with personal accounts from the ten narrators.

Historical Background

Unnoticed by many in Boston was the leadership position of the Boston Branch NAACP in the move toward equal schools. As the first Branch of the NAACP in 1911, Boston held a unique position in the history of the organization. Its leadership in educational advancement for youth was notable. Mrs. Florence Lesueur, the first woman President of a local NAACP Branch (1949-1950), established an Education Committee for the Boston Branch during her tenure. This committee would be the forerunner to the Public School Committee, established in 1953, which would maintain that leadership in contesting racially imbalanced schools into the second half of the 20th century. The early

Education Committee's focus was to support potential college students through fundraising and educational counseling (Batson, 2001, p. 42). By 1960, the Public School Subcommittee was eliminated and Mrs. Ruth Batson became chair of the Education Committee. She and Paul Parks were the principal leaders in the struggle for equal educational opportunity. Ken Guscott confirms this in his interview:

I learned about the Boston schools from Ruth Batson. She was on the Board of Directors [of the NAACP] and she was chairwoman of the Education Committee—she and Paul Parks. She said, “These schools are bad.” She talked about the Hyde School and the Everett School.” I said, “What’s bad about it?” She would say, the way they mistreat Blacks and the way they don’t give them the same resources that the white schools had. Paul Parks did a study... and the study showed that the amount of money that was spent on the white schools out in Hyde Park, where the politicians lived at, was twice the amount that was spent on the Black kids and South Boston. South Boston got less than they spent on the Black kids. Paul went to Louise Day Hicks and said, “Look at this. Instead of fighting this, you should be fighting with us.” That impressed me. That’s where I say, find out how the system works and make it work for you. (Guscott, 2011)

As did many Black men returning from the war, Ken sought his place in the fight for freedom as a member of the NAACP. Gill (n.d.) writes “over the course of the war years, dues paying membership in the NAACP more than doubled” (p. 17). Ken became membership chair in 1957 and then President in 1963. He worked for Bethlehem Steel in Quincy and was the only Black engineer. As was his nature, he was curious about the hiring rate of Black employees and discovered that the company very rarely hired Blacks. He described what concerned him:

There was a Black guy that had gone to M.I.T. and I had heard about him and thought he was working as an engineer but instead he was working in the trash shop, as a trash man ... I said, “How come he’s not working as an engineer? He graduated from M.I.T. and I started looking and seeing that the Blacks were just in certain departments. (Guscott, 2011)

Kenneth said he was working on a new project at Bethlehem Steel that was associated with the new field of nuclear energy. However, seeing opportunities abound

for white engineers in this field and knowing that there were restrictions against hiring Black employees along with quotas that limited the number of opportunities for employment, he decided to join the organization known for challenging discrimination. He knew many of his friends were active in the Boston Branch NAACP and this is where he thought his contributions would move the race forward. His philosophy was, “You got to use your brains, not just your muscle ... You got to see how the system worked.” That’s what he tried to instill in others at the NAACP. He continued, “Rather than just making noise, you got to see how the system works and then make it work for us” (Guscott, 2011).

Other civic organizations were essential to the school movement in the 1970s. Notably was the organization named The Freedom House. In the late 1940s, waves of black southerners moved to Roxbury, the heart of the Black community, in search of new opportunities (Lewis, 1988). The Freedom House was founded in Roxbury in 1945 by Otto and Muriel Snowden as a neighborhood civic center for interracial understanding between the African American and Jewish community. Its mission was to “to conserve and improve the Upper Roxbury neighborhood.”²⁴ It is important in this study because the Freedom House became the center for information and agency coordination during the start of the 1974–1975 school year following the Court Order to desegregate the schools. Agency coordination meetings and community information services were under the umbrella of the Freedom House Coalition.

1950s: A Time of Growth.

²⁴ See: The Freedom House, A Legacy Preserved at http://www.lib.neu.edu/archives/freedom_house/team.htm

The 1950s were a time of growth both in a population and in discrimination (Gill, n.d.). From 1920 to 1950 the city's total population exploded from just 74,060 to 801,444. This was a growth of more than 930%. The Black population expanded from 16,350 to 40,057, increasing from 2.2% in 1920 to 5% of the total population by 1950.²⁵ Black and concerned white citizens formed alliances to ward off inequality and division in the city. On November 30, 1950, the Parents Federation of Greater Boston, an interracial group of parents, staged a protest against "Mayor John B. Hynes' opposition to building a new school in the South End" (Batson, p. 44). The choice of where the school was to be constructed was the Mayor's and the School Committee. Their choice was in the white "growing area" of Hyde Park or a residentially similar area. The South End community was interracial with a prevalence of Blacks. A new school was needed there. Ruth Batson's response to the mayor was forceful and pointed:

The South End is not a ghost town. There are real people living in the South End whose children are entitled to as many privileges as any other children living in the city. It is no accident that the most financially distressed region, the South End with its predominately Negro population should also possess the worse features of public education. The economic and social discrimination of the Negro people in the South End is reflected in the neglect of educational standards for its children. There is no more democratic way of beginning a sound building construction program than by eliminating the regional differences in the building standards and making the most sub-standard region, the South End, the starting point of a new school building program. (Batson, 2001, p. 44)

Ruth Batson and the Parents Federation.

In 1949, Ruth Batson joined an interracial coalition of parents whose children attended the Boston schools.. The membership consisted of a small group of white women throughout the city, with Ruth Batson and her neighbor as the only Blacks. The

²⁵ See Boston's Black Population between 1638 and 1970, pp. 60-62 in this document.

coalition functioned as an invested but unacknowledged watchdog of the public schools. She discovered through these meetings, a 1944 document title *The Strayer Report*. This report was commissioned by the City of Boston's Finance Commission to survey the administration of the Boston Public Schools—its expenditures associated with buildings, salaries, and instruction. From that point on, Ruth said that the Strayer Report became her bible. Through it she discovered the disparities within and between schools in the city. The older structures had no lunchrooms, libraries, or gymnasiums. Notably, the oldest and most unsafe school buildings were in the Black community (Batson, 2001, p. 3-4; Strayer, 1944).

On September 25, 1950 with the backing of the Parents Federation, Ruth Batson became the first Black candidate for the Boston School Committee in the 20th century. Her campaign platform highlighted five points – the replacement of inadequate school buildings; hot lunch program for elementary grades; better working conditions for teachers including cost of living increases, relief time, and removal of marriage prevention barriers that targeted women teachers only (Batson, p. 45). This was a historic event in the community because, for the first time in this century, a Black candidate placed in the top half of a city-wide School Committee election.

Developing Black Political Capital.

More Black candidates ran unsuccessfully for the Boston School Committee during the 60s and 70s, including Mel King in 1961, 1963, and 1965 supported by the Citizens for Boston Public Education (CBPE) because of his work around the schools and his organizing in the South End. The Citizens for Boston Public Schools (CBPS), founded in 1960, worked “for the improvement of the Boston Public Schools” and

included an aim to encourage participation in electoral politics by running for school committee. Their slate included a favored incumbent, School Committee Member Arthur Gartland, two other white allies, and Mel King. (Batson, 2001; King, Interview, 2010). The first Black to be elected in a Boston's city-wide election was John O'Bryant²⁶ in 1977, twenty-seven years following the first Black 20th century candidate.

Mel King, however, was very much aware of the critical "relationship between the Black community and the power structure in Boston" (King, 1981, p. xv). He both studied and theorized how it operated. His life's work has been to penetrate the walls of power in city hall and political institutions that construct institutional barriers to fair housing, equal schools, and suitable employment. His purpose was to demolish those barriers, which denied Black and Brown residents equal opportunities and advancement.

His leadership abilities to organize for equity started at the age of 14 or 15. He described a time in the early 1940s where in order to shine shoes and sell newspapers you had to have a license. If caught, the offender would go before what he described as "this little tribunal" composed of licensed newspaper and shoeshine people. So, he ran for one of the spots and with help from so many in his neighborhood in the South End and his high school friends throughout the city, he won the seat for two or three years. The students came together, agreed he should run, and got signatures for the ballot. He identified this as his first Rainbow Coalition. He got "a buck and a half each session"

²⁶ John O'Bryant was a Roxbury resident. He worked in the Boston Public schools until 1969, when he quit his job as a high school guidance counselor, frustrated by what he called the "downgrading of the quality of educational services in Boston" (New York Times, July 5, 1992). He was known in Roxbury as an advocate for school children and was co-chair of the NAACP's Scholarship Committee.

and felt good that he was earning this income. He also made important decisions at this young age that would have an economic impact on others. He said:

People would come there with their stories of why or why not they were out there shining shoes or selling newspapers at an hour they shouldn't have been or without their license, etc. And so we got to make decisions about what kind of penalty, if you will, they would have to pay. So I did a city-wide election and I won. (King, 2011)

This was to be his first, but far from his last attempt at electoral politics. He would become and remain a political actor in Boston throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. In addition to his three runs as a candidate for the traditionally all white School Committee, in 1973, he was elected as a State Representative and served in the Massachusetts Legislature until 1982. In 1983, he ran for mayor in a close race. For the first time in the history of Boston a Black person with a "Rainbow Coalition," defined by Mel as "tenants, the elderly, women, gays, lesbians, Latinos, Asians, the disabled and youth groups" (Clendinen, 1983), placed a very close second in a field of three.

In 1953, after continuing her meetings with the Parents Federation while her three daughters were enrolled in the public schools, Ruth Batson understood unequal schooling at a more personal level. She discovered at the Parents' Federation meetings that her oldest daughter received fewer home assignments and they were less rigorous than children who attended schools in majority white sections of the city. She naturally went to the NAACP to see what they were doing about the public schools. She discovered that the focus of the NAACP's Education Committee was on fundraising for scholarships and recruiting talented students from the community to pursue advanced education. She

returned home but soon afterwards received a call from Lionel Lindsey,²⁷ a Roxbury resident, an activist from the community, and the President of the Boston Branch. He asked if she would she chair a newly established sub-committee of the NAACP's Education Committee. This sub-committee's task would be to focus primarily on the Boston Public Schools. She agreed and recruited activists from Roxbury and the South End to join the Committee (*Personal Communication, 1971-1978*). Thus began her thirty-year journey, beginning in 1950, on behalf of the Black community in a long struggle to equalize the schools.

On April 24, 1956 Ruth Batson was elected to the Democratic State Committee. Again, she was the first Black to be elected. Her campaign slogan was, "If minority people are seeking a stronger voice in the Democratic Way of Life, we must become practical and active" (Batson, 2001, p. 57). However, racism reared its ugly head:

The Democratic State Committee elects one man and one woman from each senatorial district. Wards 12, 14, and 18 have been represented for years by residents of Ward 18, Hyde Park. A recount is demanded and the election of Ruth Batson is validated. Rep. Michael Paul Feeney from Ward 18 states, 'This is the last time that a Negro will represent Ward 18.' (Batson, 2001, p. 57-58)

In 1957, once again Ruth Batson was the first woman to be elected President of the New England Regional Conference NAACP. These accomplishments, including her first political run for the school committee, sealed her position as a national leader from Boston whose mission was to institute a fair and equal educational system for Black students in the city's schools. She was willing to make this her life's work. With the 1954 decision in tow and the 1955 decision providing directions to the states, this community

²⁷ Lionel Lindsay (1904-1991) born in Kingston, Jamaica, moved to Boston in 1923, was the President of the Boston chapter of the NAACP from 1951 to 1954. *Boston Globe*, Mar 08, 1991.

was strident in its efforts to use the law for change in the schools and to enforce its intent for better educational opportunities for all students in the schools (Batson, pp. 59–60).

A year later, the staff at the United South End Settlement (USES) surveyed the South End community. That survey revealed that 85% of the community's children who were part of gangs, both Black and white, were dropouts from the Boston schools. They never graduated from high schools and about 50% had not even completed the 8th grade. Without a high school diploma their options were very limited, as were their choices in the future. USES began to offer tutoring and educational enrichment programs that would encourage students to continue on to college. King (1981) writes:

We developed a motivation fund which managed at first to get two or three, then six, then fourteen, then forty to fifty kids going beyond high school. This emulation theory we had been operating on was clearly at work here. Once kids began to see their friends or older brothers and sisters going on successfully, they decided they could do it, too. (p. 17)

On August 21, 1959 the Boston Branch NAACP convened a meeting “to explore the question of school segregation and educational standards for Negro children in the New England area.”²⁸ They proposed that they join efforts with two other NAACP Branches in the region and together survey the conditions within the schools. It was determined that It was determined that the final goal of this program should be twofold:

1. To attempt to achieve integration in the public school systems.
2. To equalize educational content in those schools attended predominantly by minority groups.²⁹

At the end of the first half of twentieth century, a new dawn arose.

²⁸ Notes from NAACP Meeting, Reproduced from the Collections of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress 26596 AUG31'59

²⁹ Ibid

Organizationally there was a need for more than individual groups working separately to address the needs of a community seeking equal opportunities in education and citizenship. More targeted movements toward parity and justice were emerging. This would involve a concerted effort under the leadership of one or more organizations with resources beyond a single locality.

1960s: Community Activism Advances

By the early 1960s, the Black Education Movement was under the umbrella of the Boston Branch NAACP with Melnea Cass as President, Ruth Batson and Paul Parks as co-chairs of the Education Committee, and Richard “Dick” Banks, chief counsel of the Boston NAACP Branch. Ken Guscott was Chairman of the Membership Committee and memberships grew at a rapid pace. He was President of the Boston Branch from 1963 to 1968 while Thomas Atkins was Executive Director from 1963 to 1965. Tom Atkins then became Branch President from 1976 to 1978. The Education Committee and the legal team continued their efforts as the case for school desegregation moved toward litigation. The Black Education Movement was underway.

Throughout the 1960s, more community-based organizations, groups, and services focused their resources on the movement for educational equity. As executive leadership naturally changed within the NAACP, the constant was the leadership of the Education Committee and the legal arm of the Boston Branch. The organizations that were actively seeking parity in the schools during the decade of the 60s are described by Tom Atkins in this way:

Well, the NAACP wasn't the only organization ... involved ... the NAACP was initially one of several organizations that were heavily involved in ... addressing the problems of education ... back in 1963 when I first got involved, the NAACP had an education committee that was just really getting off the ground. It had

begun trying to gather information. It had started talking with parents. It had begun talking with people in the school establishment but it was certainly not ... a well-oiled machine ... there were ... program efforts under way at the Urban League ... the Minister Alliance ... had held meetings and had tried to bring parents together and bring other folks in the community together ... the Northern Student Movement ... was a very important voice in addressing northern problems of school segregation ... the South End settlement ... had begun to address issues of race and education. So what happened was all of these various people and/or groups that had been working each in their own little corner came together in June of 1963 as part of a coalition to go to the school committee and ask for what we thought was a very simple thing ... We just want them to say yes, there is segregation in the schools and we wanted them to acknowledge that the problem exists and to commit themselves to do something about it. That meeting came to be known as the NAACP's ... meeting. It was not. The NAACP was one of many. (Interview, Tom Atkins, conducted by Blackside, Inc. November 10, 1988)

Nonetheless, the NAACP's leadership role was dominant in school desegregation and for very clear reasons. It was the largest organization focusing directly on citizenship rights for Blacks, locally and nationally. Resources were available from the national office, other parts of the region, and when necessary throughout country. The NAACP had the most experienced litigators for northern school desegregation. They were as experienced in the north as the Legal Defense Fund and the Justice Department were in the South. Atkins believed that the Boston Branch "sort of backed into" the leadership role in Boston with the support of the other groups' involvement. Education has always been at the top of the NAACP's agenda even though its history also included litigation and public action in housing and employment discrimination. Atkins continued:

No other institution, no other public institution in which there were major problems had centralized control and simultaneously affected so many people as the public school system. So if you tackle the public school system, at least there was somebody to talk to. You want to deal with housing, who do you talk to? The real estate board? The brokers? The individual home owners? A person wants to sell or wants to buy, where do you go? In education there's a focal point by the nature of the beast...and that's what led back in the year--in the late '40s and early '50s to an increasing focus on education. Those race factors. (Interview, Tom Atkins, November 10, 1988)

In 1960, the Black population in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was 2.2% or 111,842 of the total Commonwealth population of 5,148,578 residents. Over two-thirds lived in the Boston Metropolitan Area, with more than half, 56.5%, concentrated in the City of Boston. From 1950 to 1960 there was an approximate 58% increase from 40,057 to 63,165 in the City of Boston while the city's white population decreased by 17%. The white exodus from the city and the Black influx to the city almost doubled the Black percentage of residents from 5% in 1959 to 9% in 1960.³⁰ The City of Boston was now on its way to becoming the home of the majority of Blacks and minority newcomers entering Massachusetts.

However, the control of the city's powerful infrastructures, including the Mayor's office, the State Legislature, the School Committee, and the Superintendent of Schools, remained under the jurisdiction of the city's white power structure (Blodgett, 1984). At the start of the 20th century, there were nineteen mayors. All were white males. All but three were Democrats and twelve were of Irish Catholic descent. During the decade of the 1960s there were two mayors, John Collins (1960–1968) for two term and Kevin White (1968-1984) for four terms, both of whom were white and of Irish Catholic descent. Without representation in the halls of power it became difficult to gain the attention of the Mayor and the School Committee without movement activism.

³⁰ Source: Discrimination in Housing in the Boston Metropolitan Area, Report of the Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, December, 1963, Documents Collection, University of Maryland, Law Library, Baltimore. p.2-3. Retrieved from <https://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12h812.pdf>

NAACP Leads an Attack Against Unequal Schooling.

In 1960, with Mrs. Melnea Cass (1896-1978) as the second woman elected President of the Boston Branch (1960-1962), the Branch became more visible. Mrs. Cass was greatly revered in the community as an icon and a staunch defender of civil rights. Politicians knew her well as did Mayor Collins and Mayor White. She was an activist, deeply involved in voter registration. She helped found the Boston local of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Those in the Roxbury, North Dorchester, and the South End community lovingly called her the First Lady of Roxbury.³¹ During her tenure as President and Kenneth Guscott as membership chair, membership levels in the Boston Branch increased to nearly 5000, demonstrating a high interest level in the Boston Branch (Hayden, 1962). It also was the time that the work of the Public School Subcommittee was increasing.

Batson (2001) writes that parent complaints became more vocal and persistent. Their children's schools were devastating places in which to learn. Parents reported disrespect of Black children, unqualified and uncaring teachers, second-hand books that were being thrown out by majority white schools in parts of the city, and overcrowding. But even more unnerving was the physical aspect of the schools. The Sherwin School in Roxbury attended by both Kenneth Guscott and Rudy Pierce, albeit separated by nearly 18 years, gave forth a stench throughout the school so strong that the mothers who took their children to the playground across from the school could smell it. Rudy's account was equally devastating given this school was to be a place of learning. Parents were also

³¹ Melnea A. Cass papers, 1954-1979, located in the Northeastern University Libraries, Archives and Special Collections Department, Boston, MA

furious that the back of Kruger Beer ads was being used in the classrooms. The NAACP Board of Directors then voted to remove the designation of “subcommittee” to the public school subcommittee, naming it the NAACP Education Committee, and elevating its work to a higher priority in the organization (Batson, 2001, 63).

In 1961 the NAACP Committee on Education met with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and the minutes of the meeting revealed the cunningness of the Boston School Committee and the lack of immediacy and commitment to an equalization of the schools. Representing the NAACP were Mrs. Cass, President of the NAACP, Mrs. Batson, the Chair of the Education Committee, and Mrs. Rheable Edwards, Chairwoman of the Housing Committee. Their counterparts were the Chairwoman, the Executive Secretary, and the Field Representative of the MCAD. Their concerns were the clustering of Black students in the few majority Black schools in the area and that school officials were consistent in their stance that they kept no records on a “student’s race color or creed.” However, Mrs. Cass reported an I.Q. test, #432, administered in the Boston schools that recorded the race or color of the students (Batson, 2011, p. 77). In addition, it was generally known that only “colored” teachers taught in “colored” schools and white teachers in white schools. The NAACP also requested that the Commission address an imbalance on pupil transfers between schools, specifically whether Black students had more restrictions with respect to transferring between schools than whites.

As the decade moved forward and the responses from institutions responsible for monitoring charges of discrimination were unsatisfactory, community agencies were advancing a more militant and political approach to any form of discrimination. The

NAACP and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) filed a formal complaint in 1962 with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) charging that the Boston Housing Authority was still maintaining segregated housing projects. In 1963, the Boston Housing Authority (BRA) pledged to discontinue discriminatory tenant assignments and promote integration in housing projects throughout the city. However, the dismantling of discrimination in Boston public housing in an affirmative way did not arrive until the 1980s. CORE also conducted door-to-door code inspections from the South End to Mattapan, in response to a lack of housing code enforcement by the city. This led to the creation of the Housing Inspection Department (Hayden, 1962). The Boston Action Group (BAG) boycotted Wonder Bread Company until they hired Blacks.

Throughout the 60s, there were sit-ins, protests, boycotts, and demonstrations against discrimination in housing, employment, and the schools led by a number of national and local groups. They demonstrated a universal and constitutional truth, that separate is never equal, assuming limited resources distributed unequally within large political systems that favor one race over the other. This was Boston, Massachusetts post *Brown*. As a result of the NAACP's meeting with the MCAD, the Assistant Attorney General "advises as a matter of law" that the superintendent can take a head count and advised that he should, as policy, "take a color census." This was in response to the MCAD's response to the NAACP that "School segregation in and of itself, although morally wrong, was not illegal (Batson, 2011, p. 78).

Racially Segregating Schools is Morally Wrong and Illegal.

Ken Guscott identified Tom Atkins and some of the younger newcomers to Boston as impatient. Their responses to how Boston's political power was wielded in

favor of others in the City, but not for its Black residents, was to find organizations that were active and radical. Schools were under resourced in majority Black sections of the city. Jobs were scarce and those available preferred to hire whites making it quite difficult to obtain employment if you were Black. Unbridled redlining was growing at a rapid pace by the 1960s. The leaders for racial imbalance and school desegregation were radicals but to some, like Tom Atkins, not radical enough.

Tom Atkins (1939-2008) was a Roxbury resident, a husband, and a father. He became the Executive Director of the NAACP in 1963. He also served as Associate trial counsel for the plaintiffs in *Morgan v. Hennigan* and was a decisive actor in the movement to equalize the Boston schools. Ken Guscott's first contact with Tom Atkins was as a student at Harvard graduate school while Guscott was NAACP President (1963-1968). He said, "Tom wrote me a letter one day ... and in the letter he said, 'These Black leaders around here don't know what they're doing. But I'd like to talk to you because you seem like you know what you're doing.'" Ken invited him to a meeting at the NAACP office in Roxbury. He responded to Tom's contentiousness in this way, "Let me tell you this—people have all different viewpoints based on their background and what you should do is you should become involved. Are you involved?" Tom said, "No" and Ken extended an invitation for him to join the activists who were organized within the NAACP Boston Branch. His response was quite positive, so Ken added incentives.

Tom, Ken said, was at Harvard studying Middle East languages. He was so bright and political, he felt that Tom was a potential recruit for the C.I.A. Knowing that he was married, Ken asked, "What's it cost you to live?" Tom responded, "I don't know. I have to go and ask my wife." The couple was living in a basement apartment while he attended

Harvard. The next day Tom returned and told Ken, “Seventy-one dollars a day is what it costs us to live.” Ken said, “I’m going to give you seventy-five dollars a week and then you’re going to work as Executive Director of the NAACP, so you can learn a little bit about what’s going on in the community.” Tom agreed and Ken said, “It was one of the best decisions I ever made—first class guy.”

Richard “Dick” Banks, chief counsel to the Boston NAACP Branch, was managing the case. The Boston Branch, in 1963, had begun to as it was originally being formulated by the Boston Branch NAACP, in 1963. Two other attorneys assisted him. One was a “young Jewish guy,” recalled Ken and the other was David Nelson, a Roxbury resident and a respected member of the Roxbury community and well known throughout the Commonwealth. He had an illustrious career in law, culminating in a Presidential appointment by Jimmy Carter. He was seated on March 23, 1979 as the first Black federal judge on the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

Cronin (2008) writes about a meeting during the summer of 1963 between these Attorneys from the NAACP and representatives from the American Jewish Congress discussing litigation strategies. David Nelson and Richard “Dick” Banks, both in private practice and members of the Boston Branch, attended the meeting on behalf of the NAACP. Their correspondence to Ruth Batson of the Education Committee and the NAACP Board was a seven page, single typed letter with five basic strategies. One included a recommendation to avoid the Federal Court and petition the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to appoint a master. Tom Atkins, some years later, would voice his opposition to an approach that would avoid litigating the case in federal court. His view was that if a lawsuit were to be filed, these litigants would have only two choices –

the State Court or the Federal Court. What counts, he believed, were the precedents, and the most important precedents had all been made in the federal court, starting with the 1954 *Brown* decision. It was his view, along with lawyers who would file the case in 1972, that a state court was not suited to handle a case of this magnitude. He said:

A single federal judge, sitting in a federal district court is the most powerful man in American political system. Keep in mind it was one federal judge. No, no bigger than Arthur Garrity. No more power than Judge Garrity had, who pulled Nixon off his throne. We figured that probably could straighten out the Boston School Committee. (Interview, Tom Atkins, conducted by Blackside, Inc. November 10, 1988)

Throughout the first half of the 60s, there were community meetings at the Freedom House regarding civil rights, school desegregation, and voting for community candidates and allies. The School Committee election was a high priority because a seat on the committee represented most of the political power and control of the schools. There were flyers and posters at this meeting and one poster identified three reasons why community members must vote. It read 1) Boston Schools' reading scores are below the national level; 2) Only 25% of Boston high school graduates go to college; and 3) The vocational classes in the business schools are training students for outdated jobs. It also added this question in large, all capitalized letters. "Will your children be prepared for the computer age" (Freedom House archives,

In 1961, these words held a special meaning for Black Americans. Literacy was the road to a better job, a step towards the middle class. This was a forward thinking community of poor, working, and professional class families, many holding on to the belief that education was the way out of poverty and that if their children could. This also was a period when activism was embraced not only by those born during the first half of the 20th century but by those coming of age during the 60s. Boston was a city that

attracted a number of Black college students from other states. When many arrived they joined the Boston chapter of the Northern Student Movement, the New Urban League, the Congress of Racial Equality, the NAACP and, of course, many were part of the movement attacking segregated schools (Batson, 2001, King, 1981, King & Jennings, 1986).

Turnout was always in large numbers when people assembled at the Freedom House for a political event. Some of the best political organizers lived in the Roxbury, North Dorchester, and the South End communities of Boston. They mentored others on organizational strategies to get out the vote. Yet, the odds were very slim that a Black person could win, during the early 60s, in a city-wide election at 9% of the city's population, yet not impossible. There were candidates who were willing to try with support from the community along with friendly allies from within and without the City of Boston.

Harry Elam and Ed Brooke³²

When Harry Elam returned from the war, he met his future bride who was a freshman at Simmons College. Her name was Barbara. He decided to complete his undergraduate degree before marriage and "wanted to try Harvard." After all, he had spent two years at Latin. For the white student, Latin was a feeder to colleges like Harvard. During the interview with the Harvard representative, he got the cue that Harvard had reached its quota of Black students. He was asked, "Do you know Royal

³² Edward Brooke was the first Black elected Attorney General of Massachusetts and of any state. His tenure as AG was from January 3, 1963 through January 3, 1967. He successfully was elected as the first Black Senator since Reconstruction from January 3, 1967 through January 3, 1979.

Bolling? We just admitted a Black fellow from Roxbury with that name.” This was a signal well known to Black men and women who sought higher education within the Commonwealth. There were a certain number of Blacks who were admitted annually to colleges and universities. When the quota was reached, the door was closed for that period (Bolner & Shanley, 1967). Harry didn’t know Royal at that time, but would soon come to know him. He applied to Boston University where they accepted his two years at Virginia State. Once completing his undergraduate degree, he “fell into law.”

He said he didn’t know what he was going to do with his education. He didn’t know any lawyers. However, he had some friends from Virginia State College who were in classes ahead of him that came to Boston University for Law School. There were five of them who lived together. He said, “If these guys can go to Law School, so can I.” Ed Brooke was in Law School at the same, even though he was older than Harry by a couple of years. His younger brother, Clarence, was in the service with Ed Brooke. Clarence encouraged Ed Brooke to stay in Boston because he thought he would do well politically, once he completed his law degree.

He and Barbara were married in his senior year of Law School. She worked as a librarian at the Boston Public Library and at this point, Harry couldn’t find employment as a lawyer. She was the principal breadwinner because his career was just starting. “It was not an easy road,” he said. Harry had a problem getting a job, even with the Legal Aid Society. Even they did not hire Blacks. So his brother encouraged him to contact Ed Brooke. Ed invited him to join him, but he couldn’t pay him. He offered him an office in a three-room suite on Humboldt Avenue in Roxbury and a desk that he would share with Al Brothers, a real estate broker. Al, Harry said, was out of the office selling real estate

most of the time. Ed told him that he could accompany him to go to court and watch the lawyers try their cases. He said, “Whatever you bring in will be yours.” Harry said that these arrangements worked out. Additionally, he gained insight into the politics of Massachusetts:

But the thing that helped, I think for both of us, was the political. Ed ran for office in 1950 and 1952, and the area, as I say, was predominantly Jewish and was turning but there weren’t enough votes, Black votes, to elect. And you had to get some help from the Jewish community. Ward 12 had two Jewish Representatives and we thought we could encourage them to vote for Ed Brooke, and give one of your votes to Ed Brooke. But, it didn’t happen.

This was the start of not only a lasting friendship but also of his entry into Boston politics with Ed Brooke and Al Brothers. In 1956 they ran as a team, Harry Elam and Al Brothers, for state representative. Then again in 1959 they entered the race for City Council. It was during this time that he crossed paths with many of the future power brokers of Boston – the McCormicks, the Kennedys, Ed McLaughlin, Kevin White, and Chris Ianella, to name a few. He eventually became one himself, yet kept the reputation of mentor/teacher to younger lawyers throughout his life.

Chapter 636: The Racial Imbalance Law of 1965.

In 1963, Royal Bolling, Sr., whose family has provided two generations of public service to the City of Boston and the Roxbury community, attempted to get support for a bill in the State Legislature that would withhold funds from schools that are racially imbalanced. Representative Bolling’s origination of the bill is known as foundational to the eventual legislative accomplishment. This is a part of the Massachusetts Racial

Imbalance Law's origination of which few know little. Batson (2001) and the Center for Law and Education (1972)³³ chronicle this history in their papers.

On April 26, 1965 the State Board of Education appointed an ad hoc Advisory Committee on Education and Racial Imbalance. That committee's purpose was to "maintain checks on communities to determine how they are acting to correct racial imbalance" and to make "suggestions on legislation aimed at that purpose" (Batson, 2001, Addendum 202a). The Center for Law and Education (1972) describes the passing of this bill as "a case-study in coalition politics:"

At the outset both Democrats and Republicans produced bills of their own, which were similar in word and content. Soon thereafter, party leaders – particularly Republican Lt. Governor Elliot Richardson and Democratic House Speaker Francis F. X. Davoren – agreed to unite forces in order to push a single strong bill through the two chambers. Civil rights leaders from organizations such as the NAACP, and officials from the State Department of Education aided them in finding support for a strong bill. As anticipated, Boston legislators – mostly Democrats – offered stubborn and organized resistance to the bill.

After they failed to send the bill back to committees, the Boston representatives tried at every opportunity to weaken it through anti-bus amendments. In these bids to amend the bill into impotence, the Boston delegation had the advice and support of the Boston School officials who appeared frequently on the floor to lobby against the bill ... *The bill survived due to a concerted effort by pro-integration lobbyists and party leaders who, in the end, convinced a majority of the legislators that the bill was a political and educational necessity, and one which will have little direct impact on constituencies outside of a few cities* (emphasis added). (p. 39)

Tom Atkins provided key insights into the politics of this bill and the reaction from some in the Black community. He felt that even though it was enacted into law and applied to

³³ See: A Study of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act, February, 1972, Center for Law and Education, Harvard University. Ruth Batson's daughter gave this 657-page report to me in a 3-ring binder after her death in 2001, along with many of other books. They were part of the personal library of Ruth M. Batson, which was filled with the history of Boston's Black community.

all public schools throughout the Commonwealth, those legislators who supported it were free from its impact in the all-white suburbs. The law only applied to school systems whose student population was more than 50% Black. Nonetheless, it was anticipated by many in the civil right community that the Racial Imbalance Bill would have serious consequences throughout the Commonwealth if a school system purposely segregated Black and white students.

On April 26, 1965, Reverend Vernon Carter, who was a native of New Bedford and a Lutheran minister with a long history of civil right activism, staged a planned vigil, alone, beginning at midnight April 26, 1965. He wrote, "I will not leave until the Boston School Committee takes action on Racial Imbalance in Boston schools." At 9 am the next morning, he wrote that he was walking alone in front of 15 Beacon Street, the headquarters of the School Committee, when, to his amazement civil rights activists, the news media, churches, and synagogues joined him. He lived there, in front of the School Committee building on Beacon Street, for "114 days and five hours, walking 21 hours a day and sleeping 3 hours a day (4 am to 7 am)." He succumbed on the 54th day and was taken to the hospital. Once released, he returned to his "Freedom Vigil" because, he wrote, "It Is Right." Eventually, thousands joined him at times from across the country, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Dr. King's organization (Batson, 2001, pp. 203-204).

The Racial Imbalance Act was enacted into law and did move the issue of segregated schooling forward, albeit not throughout the Commonwealth. It did have an impact on children who attended segregated schooling in Boston through its implementation. Passed through the legislator in 1965, it remains a legislative fiat in the

21st century, providing funding for public education options beyond urban school districts. It established within the state oversight. Data could be collected data to inform the public about the racial composition of students throughout the Commonwealth and their school locations. Some funding was available for transportation and allocation to the receiving school systems.

Statement on the Education of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools.

On May 22, 1963, Paul Parks, co-chair of the NAACP Education Committee releases a poignant Statement on the Education of Negro Children in the Boston Public Schools.³⁴ This is a study he undertook as part of his role in the NAACP's Education Committee. In it he provided an overall view of the condition of the schools that Black children attend. He stated that there were:

13 schools in Boston that have a predominantly Negro pupil enrollment. The youngest of these building was built in 1937, the next in 1922. All the rest are over 50 years old, going back even to 1870 and 1868. The Sargent Survey of May 1962 recommended that at least four of these schools be abandoned for health and safety reasons, and eight renovated in order to meet present educational requirements.

These aging school building include all the schools that have been discussed or mentioned in this study. All may not have been identified by name but have been part of the scope of this study. For example, he speaks of the Sherwin School that Ken Guscott attended as a child. Some thirteen years later it was the school attended by Rudy Pierce that most likely destroyed so many children. It would have included Rudy in the devastation had he not had the supports he described and the military to lean on. He

³⁴ Reproduced from the Collections of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress 26596 AUG31'59

identified the Garrison school where the Boardman parents placed their children on a bus to move them away from construction surrounding the school that would be a hazard for children to walk near in order to get to school. He mentioned the Higginson and its overcrowded conditions as well as the Garrison, both of which are described by Harry Elam and Peter Parham, attending a generation apart from each other, describing the start and continuation of segregated education. Paul continued:

The Sherwin School, 93 years old, presents an extreme of dilapidation. It has an all wood interior and open wood stairways. Its walls are cracked beyond normal repair, the floors are badly worn and cracked, the roof leaks, water runs down the walls, and faulty plumbing fixtures and inadequate ventilation are evident. The basement toilets are unsanitary and malodorous. Window sashes are loose in their frames. The school presently houses some 317 students. It is one example of the kind of structures that Negro children are presently attending, which is repeated many times.

According to the Boston School Department's structural engineer, there are 8 district schools with basement classrooms that are unfit for pupil use. Of these 8, 7 are predominantly Negro. Out of the 13 schools previously mentioned 4 are junior high schools, but at that level many parents send their children out of the area to other schools in the city. Of the 9 elementary schools, 6 are overcrowded. For example, the Garrison School has a capacity of 690 pupils, but presently has an enrollment of 1,043; the Ellis has a capacity of 640 with a present enrollment of 823; the Higginson has a 300 pupil capacity, now housing 407; and the Howe School with a 500 pupil capacity is now housing 634.

We now have a clearer picture of how these students, who are crammed into classrooms, must have felt about themselves and their ability to learn, given the physical condition of these schools. But, what about the expenditures as compared to other schools outside the Black community? Are expenditures on repairs and supplies weighted fairly toward the greater need, as existed in overcrowded classrooms in older school structures? Paul continued:

The average cost per pupil spent in elementary schools by the City of Boston is \$275.47. The following is the cost per pupil spent in our predominantly

Negro schools:

Dearborn District (Dearborn, Davis, Palmer Schools) \$257.78

Garrison District (Garrison and Williams Schools) 22R.98

Higginson District (Ellis, Higginson Boardman) 228.98

Howe District (Howe, Baker, Lewis, B.S.B.A. Annex) 238.05

In the Sherwin School district, which includes the Sherwin, Gray and Allen Schools, the expenditure amounts to \$294.45 per pupil, but only one of its schools is predominantly Negro; the Gray and Allen are predominantly white.

This discrepancy is more deplorable when one considers that the need for an intensified and special educational program is greater in our lower economic and congested areas.

He continued this very sad but accurate account of what awaited Black children in the city who would attend the Boston Public Schools, showing that Boston's median test scores ranked below the national median. An even more discouraging statistic was that the results showed that except for the Garrison district, all the districts in predominantly Negro schools were below the city average. The power of the evidence and the knowledge those generations heretofore and into the future would remain as second-class citizens without access to an equal educational opportunity. His closing words would predict the future of generations to come:

We can no longer afford to wait. The time is now. We must have a school administration that we can talk to and that will understand the conditions and be willing to do something about it.

Unless we are successful in obtaining the education our children need, the "New Boston" that we hear so much about today will be a hollow name. Our next generation will stand on the outside and gaze upon a promised land of opportunity but not be equipped to enter.

This was the reason for intense activism. This was the driving force in the Black Education Movement.

Parent Activists and Community Organizations Protest Boston Schools

Parents rose to challenge poor schooling in the form of organic, vocal, and organized protests against substandard schools. The number of parents increased during the 1960s because of their children. They actively engaged schools through the force of sheer determination and organizing power. This activism took form in different ways. Many organized as parent groups to address the unequal education children received in their schools or district. Those who directly confronted the failures of the neighborhood schools identified themselves by the names of the segregated schools to which their children were assigned. The Higginson parents organized in 1960; the Boardman parents organized in 1964; and the Gibson parents organized in 1968. These three are used to symbolize the work of the many parent groups in Boston's Black community who confronted the substandard, racialized education their children were receiving.

On November 15, 1965 Leon Trilling, President of the Brookline School Committee, an affluent town bordering six of Boston's communities, convened an ad hoc group of suburban school officials and Black leaders to develop a voluntary urban to suburban school transfer program of Black students from Boston to suburban schools. Work continued from 1965 through 1966 while the program formalized its name and legislation was passed enabling Boston school children to attend schools in cities and towns outside of their city of residence. On September 6, 1966, 220 African American children in grades K-12 traveled by bus to classrooms in 7 suburban school districts (Batson & Hayden, 1987). The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program, initially funded with a grant from the Carnegie Foundation and the US Department of Education, still operates today.

Some parent and community groups took a different road to remove their children from schools. In 1966, the alternative school movement's doors opened for better educational opportunities. These were private, not-for-profit, tuition-free schools started, for the most part, by parents and educators who lived in the Roxbury, North Dorchester and South End communities of Boston.

The New School for Children, Highland Park Free School, Roxbury Community School, St. Marks School, and other community schools, focused on quality education. Many adopted an Afrocentric focus to counteract the dehumanizing effects of racism that children internalize in segregated schools.³⁵

This section centers narrators in this study who were associated with parent and community organizing. The ones highlighted are the Higginson parents (1963), Operation Exodus (1965), the Boardman parents (1965), and the Gibson Liberation School parents (1968). These parent groups are presented to symbolize the work of the many parent groups in Boston's Black community who confronted substandard, racialized education. The Higginson, Boardman, and Gibson accounts foreground the voices of activists who were part of protests and active in community politics.

February 13, 1963: Higginson School District Parents Protest.

"Our children are not inferior, but they have been receiving an inferior education."

Barbara Elam
(Batson, 2001) 122, 84, 84a-c 85, 85b,

³⁵ The psychological damage that segregation caused Black children is discussed in the work of Dr. Kenneth Clark. See the Clark Interview, Blackside, Inc. on November 4, 1985, for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*. Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection. Teaching children about Black history, culture, and traditions is a means to promote psychological health and a strong identity. See Carter G. Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc. 1990);

Barbara and Harry Elam married and settled in a house in Roxbury to raise their family. Barbara was a mother and a librarian by profession. Harry was a father and a lawyer. Both were respected and admired in Boston. Their children attended a local school in the Henry Lee Higginson School District, which included the David A. Ellis in Roxbury, a kindergarten through third grade school. Barbara was a school activist and one of the leaders of the parents' movement.

During the 1962-1963 school year a group of Black mothers whose children attended school in the Higginson School District knocked on the Elam's door in Roxbury to meet with Barbara. It was an unexpected visit. She shared their concerns about the problems in the district and discussed the common issues. Barbara Elam became one of the founding parents of the Higginson Parents Group. Her daughter and son attended Boston schools. Her daughter started school in the Higginson district and moved to another Boston school. Her son was in the first grade when the Higginson parents organized.³⁶

The parents began their protest with a petition to the principal of the district stating, in part, "Our children are not inferior, but they have been receiving, in many instances, an inferior education." They presented a report to the superintendent that listed, among the many problems, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate supplies for the school children, and little communication between teachers and parents.

Harry recalled:

³⁶ Interview with Barbara Clark Elam by Polly Welts Kaufman [hereafter cited as Elam Interview], Higginson Parents Collection [hereafter cited as Higginson Collection], Special Collections of University of Massachusetts Boston [hereafter cited as UMB], October 11, 1988, Dorchester, MA.

The Lee School. . . I'm trying to think of the school on Homestead Street that was part of the Higginson district. They all were having the same problem with our kids. We just knew our kids weren't getting the kind of education that we got. We went to some of these same schools. And here, our kids are not able to get the same kind of thing that we got. – a decent education and we knew that in school the teachers were predominately white, and so we formed a Higginson Parents Group and wanted to meet with the School Committee to find out why we aren't getting or able to get Black teachers in the schools even though they were predominately Black, but the teachers were predominately white. It was very upsetting and we knew that even though some of them might have had an interest in our kids. So many of them didn't. It was a job to them. So that was a big thing. (Harry Elam Interview. 2012)

As a result of the meetings, the Higginson parents began an organization to improve their children's education. Harry noted that some Black parents who lived in the district chose to move from Roxbury to the suburbs, such as Brookline and Newton. There are examples of some families' continued ties to Roxbury as political and community leaders in their towns. He and Barbara chose to stay.

On April 5, 1963, the Higginson parents sent a detailed letter to Mayor John Collins listing specific inequities and demanding equal educational opportunities. They stated that their children did not have a dynamic, dedicated teaching faculty, or adequate supplies, or a reasonable distribution of students per class as the class size was 45. There were few permanent teachers. Most were temporary teachers in Roxbury districts and reading books were at a premium. They ended their letter with:

As Negro parents we alone, did not make Roxbury's schools problems and we alone cannot solve them. We do believe that the school can influence the child and this influence can be carried into the home when necessary. We further believe that there are positive forces in Roxbury working to bring about a new Roxbury and that the school authorities, the School Committee, the teachers, and the parents have to believe that EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ROXBURY'S NEGRO CHILDREN IS THEIR UNDENIABLE RIGHT in order to achieve this goal. (Batson, p. 85b)

October 19 (week of) 1965: The Boardman Parents Hire a Bus.

King (1981) placed the Boardman parents in his chronology with this title to acknowledge they were the first group of parents to use a bus to transport children to better schools. The W. L. P. Boardman, also a part of the Higginson district, was the school to which children from the William Lloyd Garrison, an overcrowded Black school, would be transferred in September of 1964. Two hundred Garrison parents were notified at the end of the 1963-1964 school year that their children would be reassigned to the nearby Boardman School to relieve overcrowding. At this time the Urban Renewal Program was active in Boston and the Boardman School was on a schedule to be razed during the school year. This meant that the children from the Garrison School would have to cross a major intersection and walk around and near construction to get to the Boardman (Batson, 2001, pp. Addendum 162-162a).

Harry Elam worked as the NAACP's Legal Counsel to represent these parents. When his family "crossed the bridge" from Cambridge to Boston, his school district was the Henry Lee Higginson. Even then, when Blacks were in the minority, he recalled that there were ethnic and racial divisions. Most of the Jewish students went to the Garrison School and another school on Homestead Street that was predominantly Jewish. Black children only attended the Higginson and the Boardman Schools on Munroe Street. When the Garrison parents were told in 1965 they could no longer send their children to the neighborhood school because the school was overcrowded, the NAACP Legal Counsel filed an injunction to stop the transfer of these students to the Boardman. Dick Banks, who was the NAACP's Legal Counsel before Harry Elam, worked with him on this case. It was around the time that Dr. King was coming to Boston to lead a march to the Boston Commons against segregated schools. Harry said:

So we asked the leaders of that group if they could bring Martin Luther King to take a look at the area so he had some idea of what was going on. We had talked to him and he perhaps could allude to this situation at his speech on the Common. So they did, they agreed to do that. Dick and I met with him to show him exactly what was happening here. Our kids are coming here to school in an area where they are doing a lot of construction work and the school itself is going to be taken down at some point and so he got the full picture, and he did talk about it. The Cradle of Liberty... This is what was happening in the Cradle of Liberty. (Harry Elam, Interview, 2012)

The case was tried and the Judge found for the School Department. This was not an arbitrary and capricious decision. The school argued that there were no problems, that the children could go to and from school without the fear of harm. The NAACP argued to the contrary, that this was potentially unsafe because of the construction over time. Harry said that they “were so downhearted when that happened” and thought there was nothing much more that could be done in court about the situation. Nonetheless, the parents remained steadfast. They asked, “There must have been other schools in the city where you can send these students. Why to the Boardman School?” So the parents decided that they were either going to move but they weren’t going to send their children into harm’s way.

They did find an alternative and hired a bus, the destination of which would determine educational opportunities for their children. Using private funding sources, the Boardman parents and a special committee of the NAACP sought money to rent a bus that would transport their children to the majority white Peter Faneuil School in the Back Bay. The Boardman parents pioneered the use of buses in Boston as a means of transportation to better educational opportunities in the city (Batson, 2001, p. 228a; Batson & Hayden, 1987, p. vii; King, 1981, pp. 41-42).

September 9, 1965: Operation Exodus.

During the 1964 school year, three elementary schools in the Roxbury–North Dorchester neighborhoods had a combined enrollment of 2000 children. These overcrowded schools were located in the Black community. In the summer of 1965, the Boston School Committee passed a proposal banning the use of school funds to bus Black children. Between 300 and 400 adults formed the Roxbury-North Dorchester Committee for Better Schools.³⁷ That evening, Operation Exodus was formed and Ellen Jackson³⁸ was elected president. This group, as was the tradition of so many grassroots groups, strategized ways to expose the Boston public schools' segregated education system. On September 8, 1965, Operation Exodus, a parent-led community organization, rented buses and transported students to empty seats in predominantly white seats in the City of Boston.

Mel King understood the work of the NAACP Education Committee as he was one of the original members along with Ruth and Paul Parks soon joined by Tom Atkins and Ken Guscott. The first approach was to go to the School Department to raise the question about segregation. They responded that no such thing existed. When the Education Committee was then able to research the records of the School Committee meetings, they confirmed votes clearly intended to keep Black children separate from where there were majority white residential districts and, in turn, majority white schools.

³⁷ Ian Forman, *To Enroll Pupils Through City: Parents Plan Boycott Of Crowded Schools*. Boston Globe (1960-1982); Sep 9, 1965; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Boston Globe (1872-1982) pg. 1.

³⁸ Tom Long, Globe Staff. "Ellen S. Jackson, 70; Pioneer of Boston School Desegregation." *Boston Globe*, Nov 23, 2005. Ellen Jackson was born and raised in Roxbury. She was a mother and the director of Operation Exodus from 1965 until the program ended in 1969. She was the director of the Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education during desegregation. Among her many honors, a day care center on Mission Hill is named in her honor, as is a fellowship at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

They made no effort, even under their open enrollment policy to affirmatively accommodate requests to transfer to schools where there was low enrollment in majority white districts.

Operation Exodus, covertly used the open enrollment policy by seeking from allies in the Boston schools the location of schools that had seats available. However, in some schools when the Exodus buses arrived, the doors were locked. In other schools, children were separated by race. Some administrators unbolted and removed desks from the classrooms so that there were no empty seats.³⁹ This resistance further solidified the racial divide in Boston. It made it difficult, said Mel,

for folks of color to go to certain schools, even schools close to them because they [the school officials] redrew school lines and they started sending the folks of color to one school where there were more folks of color ... trying to keep the schools more white. (Mel King, Interview, 2011)

Mel's opinion was that the reason the public discussed busing instead of the policy of segregation is because "busing" is all they know. Instead of interrogating the reasons why city-wide transportation was part of the order, it became easier to target the means the Court used rather than the fact that "the judge found that they [the School Committee and its Superintendent] were guilty of doing what they were doing in the south...consciously...denying the rights of the children and the families to schools." Mel stated, "all you had to do was look at their records." However, his final thoughts were much more piercing as he interrogated the intersection of race and class. He said:

Well there are two issues here and I think it's important that people be clear. The willful, purposeful, evil of segregating youth based on race, class, color, gender, etc., is wrong ... The second aspect of it is that in the schools there is an attitude that is pervasive around low expectations. And that is a big problem in Boston

³⁹ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *School Desegregation in Boston*. A staff report prepared for the hearing in Boston, Massachusetts, June 1975, p. 56.

today and in many of the schools around the country and it impacts mostly youths of color but also youths who are of lower economic means.

That the decisions around the schools and the way the children are treated, in my belief, is on the basis of what they think about their parents and about the roles their parents played in this world and in this society. So, where the perception is that the parents aren't somebody and work, that's how the children get treated like they're not going to be able to be something. It's the biggest issue, I believe, around the schools—the whole business of high expectations ... And so, we need to understand clearly that in a city where two-thirds of the people don't have children in the schools, if they don't see all those children as deserving, then their votes will reflect they don't give a damn. (Mel King, Interview, 2011)

September 26, 1966, the New School for Children Opens Its Doors.

When the interviews started, Mel King asked if Mellissa Tillman had been contacted to discuss the New School for Children, one of the many alternative institutions that developed in response to poor schooling and the cry for community control of the schools. This was important because this innovation came from the families in the South End who had been monitoring the schools there. They were an innovative and educated group who sought new ideas and ways of providing children who were receiving an education in a system whose standards were lower than the national average a better chance in life. With an all in, hands on approach, residents, friends, educators came together to plan this alternative school.

Melissa was identified as a talented, smart, and committed teacher who was a product of the schools that she no longer loved. She was an innovator who sought out new ways of engaging the young mind. She brought Head Start to Boston after she worked at the New School for Children. She was being recruited by a parent group in the South End who wanted to educate their children differently with some control over where they would be taught, by whom they would be taught, and what the curriculum would teach them. She was excited about that. The Executive Director of the Parent Group was

Jim Reed, a long time Roxbury resident. The school was organized by a local parent group who had begun planning a year before opening. They now had funds and a building and were ready to hire their teaching team. It was a community school located in the heart of Roxbury, on Dudley Street.

As a former teacher in the Boston schools, she was thinking that first graders were not coming to school as prepared as they should be. So she found her niche in kindergarten because children are just capable of much more if you can teach them without breaking that spirit to learn. She was an experienced educator trained at Tufts and then worked on a federal project where they studied racial awareness and cultural diversity. This was all bubbling in her at the same time as she thought of the school. She said she had no idea how interesting the school would be.

Melissa's reputation was one of excellence, as she was known in the community as an innovative and committed teacher. I got a little bit hooked. It just seemed very exciting to me.

Jim Reed, whom she did not know, came to Chicago and recruited her, hiring her at the start of the summer. She said:

“Okay, I’ll do it. I figured what the hell, I’ll take a flyer. I don’t have kids. I don’t have any obligations and responsibility for anyone but me. So I figured, yeah okay....I had no idea how interesting it was going to be. I call it “singing for our supper. We’d go out on the weekends to Dover and Wellesley and talk about the alternative schools and do a little dog and pony show and they would us write checks and that would become our pay. So, we were working seven days a week. And then the meetings. (Mellissa Tillman, Interview, 2011)

The school went to the fourth grade. There were four teachers and a “Head Mistress.” Parents were in and out of the classrooms all day. There was a lot of unpredictability. The teaching staff and the Head Mistress, Bea Miller, a well-known

educator from Chicago, enjoyed the atmosphere. Class size was kept to 20 students or less that first year. She was teaching her kindergartners to read and they were reading at a second and third grade levels because they were capable of it. However, she said, if the truth be told:

we had kind of the cream of the crop. I mean in terms of mindset. I mean we had middle-class kids and we felt the demise of New School had to do with it at some point middle-class people are not going to support middle-class kids with their checks. They'd like to think that they're doing something for the under-class. I'm not going to give money for your kids. You can educate your own kids. (Mellissa Tillman, Interview, 2011)

The New School remained open for maybe about four years, she recalled. But another school spun off from this one that may have lasted as long as ten years and remained in Roxbury. This was a time of educational innovation throughout the country at the grass roots level. The newer school derived a lot of benefit from having been part of New School, said Melissa, because they knew what mistakes to avoid. The building that they purchased looked like a school facility. The New School was in disrepair and was in a brownstone that seemed to be someone's home. She felt it didn't physically look or feel like a school and "when you walk into a place that looks like a school, physically your mindset is very different (Tillman, 2011).

Some of the successes were that parents had a sense of self-confidence knowing that they could make it happen. It also reinforced the teachers' beliefs that they could teach, even if it took more time. We could see that parents appreciated what we were doing. There was a kind of sense of collectivity around defining education and its importance. We knew there were children in these rooms that were being bounced from public schools because the teachers were lazy – they did not want to invest the time it took to *really* teach – to individualize the curriculum. This type of teaching took time. (Tillman, Interview, 2011)

September 4, 1968: Concerned Parents Occupy the Gibson School

The Black community was growing more impatient and the call for community control was growing louder. The concept of Black Power and the new Black consciousness movement inspired many in the city. By 1968, Black people comprised 60% of the Roxbury community, yet owned less than 10% of its businesses; they occupied 30% of the city's public housing, yet were 4% of public housing employees; they comprised 25% of the public school population, yet 2% of the teachers.⁴⁰ With few Black teachers and principals, the schools rendered African American children almost invisible and generally unprotected. In reaction to these changes and the documented treatment of Black children in Boston, community control of schools became a rallying cry. Alternative schools began to sprout up across the neighborhoods, many conceived and executed by Roxbury, North Dorchester, and South End residents.

During that school year, the Gibson School parents staged a sit-in to liberate one of the most dilapidated school buildings in the city of Boston. They protested the lack of relevant curriculum in the schools and the closed-door policies of the superintendent and school committee. They demanded a Black principal and, angered by the entrenchment of a system that ignored their power, sat in the principal's office to take control of the school. Failing to make any changes, the parents established an alternative school, designated the Gibson Liberation School. Bill Owens led this group and remembers:

We went to the office and told the principal that she could no longer operate that school. That we were, as parents, going to take over this school. We went to the teachers and told them they could stay if they chose to do so, but if they did not wish to stay with the new administration, they could also leave. (W. Owens, Interview , February 18, 2011)

⁴⁰ "Roxbury's Cry: 'Action, Now!'" *Boston Globe* (1960-1982), Mar 19, 1968.

He explained that the Gibson parents had been meeting with the principal attempting to negotiate changes in curriculum and teacher assignments. They felt compelled to move in another direction. He continued:

So in taking over the school, we set up the Gibson Liberation School. And when we went to the door, the police were there the next morning and they said you cannot come in the school. So, as the Acting Chairperson, I called the parents right there because most of the parents were bringing their children to school. And I said if we cannot go into the schools, we will not allow our children to go in. And I said I hope all the parents agreed and they did. (Owens, Interview, 2011)

The Gibson Liberation School found a home that day as parents, children, and some of the teachers walked with Owens from the Gibson to the Robert Gould Shaw House, a local settlement house and community center, where the school operated for the next three months. Undeterred by police power and school entrenchment, many parents exercised community control by removing their children from the public schools and establishing alternative institutions.

Parent and community activism shone a bright light on the dichotomized approach to education promoted by the Boston school committee. Black children attended schools in overcrowded classrooms housed in dilapidated school buildings in contrast to schools with empty seats in white sections of the city. What separated these children was the city's structural and very visible barrier of racism. Blacks occupied a small section of the city so it was simpler to maintain these divisions by keeping children in separate spaces. In response, active parent and community engagement through organizing and protest became a powerful response to the entrenched system of segregation. Segregated schools robbed generations of Black children of life chances. Metco, Operation Exodus, and the Higginson, Boardman, and Gibson parents were examples of Black Boston's historical wave to push back against those who would

deprive children of basic citizenship rights. All their efforts were squarely focused on one purpose. It was to provide an equal educational opportunity to Black children in the City of Boston.

What Did the Judge Say?

March 1972: The Complaint.⁴¹

In March of 1972 Attorneys for Tallulah Morgan and her children representing Black parents and children in the Boston Public Schools filed a complaint with the U.S. District Court alleging that “alleged that her children as well as all black children enrolled in the Boston public schools, has been denied equal protection of the laws by the Boston School Committee, which, she claimed, intentionally brought about and maintained racial segregation in the Boston public schools.” The Boston School Committee had done this, according to the complaint, by the adoption and maintenance of discriminatory pupil assignment procedures, the manipulation of attendance areas and district lines for various schools in the system, the establishment of grade structures and feeder patterns which had discriminatory intent and effect, the manipulation of construction policies and school capacity plans, and unreasonably failing to take steps which were reasonably designed to eliminate segregation found within the school system.

The School Committee’s response was that that result came from residential segregation over which the School Committee had no control. They contended that segregation was due to a “neighborhood schools” policy, which the Committee stated was permitted under the Equal Protection Clause. They followed with the claim that the Committee had attempted to eliminate racial segregation and could do nothing more than

⁴¹ See: Boston Bar Association, Desegregation: The Boston Orders and Their Origin

it had done. However, Black parents and their children were seeking, not money, but an order requiring the defendants to take authentic steps designed to eliminate segregation in Boston public schools.

The trial lasted for approximately 15 days with exhibits, testimonies, and a visit with the Judge to some of the schools identified in the complaints. On June 21, 1974 Federal District Court Judge, W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. filed a lengthy opinion with the Clerk of the Court that stated that “the School Committee had brought about and maintained racial segregation in the Boston public schools.” He presented the following facts indicating that the Boston public schools were “characterized by heavy concentrations of black students in some schools and heavy concentrations of white pupils in other schools. The evidence showed that Black children accounted for 32% of all children attending the BPS, more than ½ attended schools that were more than 70% black. White children accounted for approximately 61% of all the children attending the BPS, but 84% of them attended schools that were more than 80% white.

In light of these facts, Garrity’s opinion stated that “at least 80% of Boston’s schools are segregated in the sense that their racial compositions are sharply out of line with the racial composition of the Boston public school system as a whole ... Racial segregation permeates schools in all areas of the city, all grade levels and all types of schools.”

The question that had to be answered by the District Court Judge was how did the schools become racially desegregated? The evidence that was considered for him to come to a conclusion were these six areas: new construction and the use of existing school buildings, the creation and maintenance of various school districts in the city, the complex system of feeder patterns when assigning students to city high schools, the

School Committee's open enrollment policy and controlled transfers between schools, faculty and staff assignments, and the Examination and vocational schools and Programs.

The evidence presented confirmed that some school buildings were badly overcrowded while others had significant excess available space. Overcrowded schools were predominantly white while the underutilized schools were predominantly black and that transferring some of the students in those schools to underutilized schools, which were predominantly black, could have cured the overcrowding in the predominantly white schools but the school committee failed to do so because they believed that such transfers would cause 'problems' with white parents. In some instances, portable classrooms were used to relieve overcrowding, but in large part had been used only in predominantly white schools. The use of these classrooms had been used to help perpetuate the racial concentration in overcrowded white schools as well as racial composition in undercrowded black schools to which the overflow white students could have been sent.

Instead of building new schools in areas where there would have been "neighborhood schools" for both black and white children, the School Committee placed schools in predominantly white and predominantly black areas of the city and had done little to attract white students to schools in the black areas. With respect to feeder patterns, the intended and actual consequences were that children from predominantly black elementary and junior high schools were channeled into predominantly black high schools and likewise for white students even though their schools were overcrowded. In practice the "open enrollment" policy became an aid to segregation because it was used primarily by white students to transfer from schools, which were predominantly black to

those, which were predominantly white. Finally, regarding faculty and staff assignments teachers as well as students were segregated by race. These statistics also tell a story:

- 40% of all the schools in Boston never in their history had a Black teacher.
- 17% (about) had only one Black teacher in any year since 1967–1968 school year
- 74% of the Black teachers were teaching in predominantly Black schools in the 1972–1973 school year
- 1972 -1973 school year there were 5 black principals and all were assigned to Black schools
- 14 Black assistant principals and assistant headmasters and all were assigned to predominantly Black schools.
- In predominantly black schools there was a higher percentage of provisional teachers than in predominantly white schools.
- 1972-1973 school year there were 4243 permanent teachers in the entire system, of whom only 231 or 5.4% were black
- 1970–1971 school year there were 509 senior administrator positions in the system, of whom only 18 or 3.5% were black

Federal District Court Judge Garrity found sufficient evidence to conclude that the School Committee of the City of Boston intentionally and purposely had maintained a segregated school system in Boston for a number of years. Accordingly, it was necessary to devise a remedy for the School Committee's illegal action.

June 21, 1974: The Remedy.⁴²

Because of the very short time between June 21 and the start of school in September of 1974, the remedy ordered by the court was in phases. “The School Committee was ordered to comply with the Racial Imbalance Law, not to begin any new construction or expansion until a final plan had been devised, not to grant transfers of

⁴² From: Adkins, McHugh, & Seay, 1975. See: City of Boston Archives and Records Management Division Guide to the Law Department records Morgan v. Hennigan and related cases files from:
https://www.cityofboston.gov/images_documents/Guide%20to%20the%20Law%20Department%20records%20Morgan%20v.%20Hennigan%20and%20related%20cases%20fil_tcm3-50853.pdf

teachers from white to majority white schools or Black teachers from majority white schools, and not to grant transfers of students under existing exceptions to the so-called “controlled transfer policy.” Phase I for the fall of 1974 called for redistricting and busing. Phase II started in the fall of 1975 calling for the creation of a citywide magnet district open to all students, college/university pairings to help improve the quality of education, closed schools, and required the busing of 24,000 students. Phase III in 1977 ordered the creation of a permanent Department of Implementation to carry out desegregation and a long-range plan for the construction and repairs of facilities. In orders the creation of a permanent Department of Implementation to carry out desegregation and a long-range plan for the construction and repairs of facilities.

In December of 1982, Judge Garrity turned over monitoring of desegregation to the Board of Education and issued his final orders in 1985. In 1994, the United States Federal District Court issued its final judgment in *Morgan v. Hennigan* permanently barring the School Committee from practicing racial discrimination in the Boston Public Schools.

September, 1974: The First Constitutional School Day

The Freedom House Coalition.

The Freedom House was an institution in the Roxbury community. Not only was it the place for political gathering but, for many, it was also an exclusive social club. Muriel and Otto Snowden were the founders. Muriel was raised in Glen Ridge, New Jersey and attended Radcliffe College. Otto was a graduate of Dorchester High School, attended Howard University, directed St. Mark Social Center in Roxbury, Massachusetts both before and after serving in World War II. They married and moved to Boston. Some

narrators had good memories of the Freedom House during the desegregation era but when they reflected on their childhood, some felt its social exclusivity.

Black Bostonians, confined to certain parts of the city because of discrimination, also were divided within this separation. Barbara Burke identifies the divisions by zip codes and designates two separate places where families lived. One was called “in town” before urban renewal. It was then that the former identification of living spaces shifted from “in town” to Lower Roxbury. The other place was known as “the hill,” a designation of families who either had three generations residing in Boston, or were part of the professional class, many of whom owned their homes. These divisions, however, unlike the black-white binaries of the city at large, were penetrable. Children played together and families attended certain churches and events that were accessible to those on the hill and those living in town.

The middle class lived on the hill and in certain sections of Roxbury. The working class generally lived in town. They worked on the railroad and for the post office. The professional class were physicians, judges, politicians, and teachers who lived on the hill. Class, generational family trees, types of jobs made groups distinguishable from one another. Melissa Tillman’s family had been part of Boston for at least three generations as compared to the influx of families who had migrated from the south. Hasan Sharif’s family, the brother of Rachel Twymon, featured in Anthony Lukas’ *Common Ground*, is an example of a family whose ancestors were new to Boston. Yet, by 1970, all were involved in some aspect of educational activism and all Black residents in this study knew each other.

These divisions were not territorial or nor did they define friendships or coalitions as the mid-1960s began to take shape and focus on the schools. By this time there were movements across the city. At that start of school desegregation, those memories of social exclusion generally were placed aside and often resolved. All involved shared the belief that the Freedom House was the natural place to develop the community coalition. Rudy Pierce said, “We coalesced because of the NAACP ... My memory is that the case was about schools” and that “Boston was two cities.” The safety of its children was at stake.

The Freedom House’s new nomenclature during the days leading up to the start of school was now *The Freedom House Coalition*. Membership included representatives of agencies associated with the Roxbury, North Dorchester, and South End communities. As desegregation began, leadership and manpower were needed.

Three of those in this study who were part of the Coalition were Rudy Pierce, part of the NAACP’s legal team, representing the Coalition, Percy Wilson, the Director of the Roxbury Multi-Service Center, one of the most effective service agencies at that time, and Barbara Burke, Director of the Clarendon Street YWCA who was assigned to back-up Charlestown High School’s community intervention team. Others included the Founders of the Freedom House, Muriel and Otto Snowden, and Ellen Jackson, the Director of Freedom House’s Institute on Schools and Education who was also the co-founder of Operation Exodus. Additional partners within this inner circle were Ruth Batson, Pat Jones from Lena Park, and Toye Brown from the New Urban League. Other

agency directors came when they could. Key to these meetings were Ron Edmonds⁴³ and Kenneth “Ken” Haskins.⁴⁴ Both were educational researchers and practitioners.

Rudy stated that Ron Edmonds played a critical role in the Coalition’s understanding of schooling. He repeated constantly, “The fact that you bus kids around doesn’t mean that their education is going to get any better. You’ve got to do better than that.” The Coalition focused a lot on hiring more Black teachers. Ron reminded the group, “There is no basis to believe that when you change the color of the teacher, it is going to improve the quality of instruction.” He proposed the academic pairings that Garrity ultimately imposed in the plan.

Rudy had the unique perspective of being part of the case as a member of the NAACP legal team, representing the coalition, and also representing the students who were being arrested in and outside of the schools in parts of the city associated with Phase I. He said:

There were so many unbelievable things happening outside the courtroom that I remember—not in any particular order. Percy and I went to go see a Black girl, she went to South Boston High School and she lived off Dudley Street, and she was somewhat of a leader and she was catching hell in the school. Someone had arranged it so that she could transfer if she wanted to transfer. So Percy and I went up to see her one night at her house and we drove up there. We drove into this alley off Dudley Street and we knocked on the door. What you thought the house was going to be like on the outside was not what it was like on the inside. It

⁴³ Ronald “Ron” Edmonds (1935 – 1983) was an African-American educator, author, and pioneer of effective schools research.

⁴⁴ Kenneth “Ken” Haskins (1923-1994), a Harvard lecturer and researcher, was “an early advocate of the movement that culminated in decentralization, and in 1967 he became principal of the Morgan Community School in Washington, one of the nation’s first community-controlled schools in modern education.” He also became President of Roxbury Community College. See: <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/20/obituaries/kenneth-haskins-educator-71-urged-decentralization.html>

was this extraordinary place. Her mother was this big heavyset woman. It was very emotional. This kid was getting a very rough time and we said to her, “Look we can arrange for you to be transferred. She and her mother said, “We don’t quit here. We’re not quitters.” Her mother was very clear that she didn’t quit. That she would stay in the school and we agreed that we would do what we could for her safety and all that. It was a very emotional experience. (Rudy Pierce, Interview, 2012)

Rudy shared what he felt were the benefits during these troubling days:

It wasn’t as if busing kids into South Boston we thought they were going to be bused into a better educational system. We thought they might put more resources on them but we thought more had to be done than that. You’d ask yourself, “If the whole system sucked, which it did, why would you want to be there? But even as bad it was there was still a disproportionate amount of resources going to that community rather than the Black community. But overall we knew that most of those schools had to be improved as well. (Rudy Pierce, Interview, 2012)

Percy Wilson was a newcomer to Boston and had become a close friend of Rudy’s. They met through David Nelson who was Rudy’s mentor. David convinced Rudy to head up the Roxbury Multi-Service Center’s legal staff. They were trying to bring about class action suits in housing and employment discrimination. Percy became a member of the Freedom House Coalition because he believed involving his agency in anything impacting the community. He attended a community meeting when the Roxbury Multi-Service Center was assigned South Boston High School. Their responsibility was to provide support to the students who were going “south” to South Boston High School. Percy said that he didn’t think it was going to be as tough as it was but was surprised when he and his staff soon learned the difficulties ahead of them:

We got our staff all organized. We got phones in our cars. That’s when phones were just coming out in automobiles and we did caravans. We never went into South Boston alone. We sort of relied on the police to provide us with safe passage ... If we got there at the right time, when the buses were going up, we could go up. But if we tried to break with that schedule and tried to go up there on our own then they weren’t providing us with much safe passage. They weren’t driving us up there. In most cases we didn’t go up there until it was bus time ... Pat Jones at Lena Park was given Hyde Park. They were “softies” so they were

given Hyde Park. Please...give me a break! ... Barbara [Burke was given]...Charlestown.

Percy remembers one day:

Columbia Point was a staging area for South Boston. All the students going to South Boston, the buses would come into Columbia Point. Students would all get on one bus and go in under police escort up to South Boston ... There were two things that happened that stand out in my mind. One was a fight between a Black kid and a white kid at South Boston High School. We thought the place was going to blow. The white kid walked up to the Black kid and called him a “nigger.” The Black kid didn’t give it a thought and he knocked him out. He just decked the kid. (Percy Wilson, Interview, 2012).

And another day:

The three of us decided that we were going to ride the bus up the hill to get the kids. Just as the bus turned to go up that hill to South Boston High, missiles started to fly! I don’t know that there were any windows left on that bus that were not cracked one way or the other by the time we got up to the top of that hill. The only hero that day, on that bus, was the bus driver. He did not stop. He rolled up that hill.

Percy was also a monitor at South Boston High. He witnessed disruption, fights, and the arrests of Roxbury high school students. He said, “Oh my god this is not going to work out.” Whenever the police arrived after an altercation, the white students were threatening that the Black students would not make it safely home once the buses pulled away from the high school. During one incident, the police decided that they would escort the buses to Columbia Point, the staging area, while Percy and the other monitors assigned to South Boston were used decoys to follow buses and distract the mob as the police found an alternative route for the students to leave safely. They left through the back of the building and the police escorted them along another route. This rings of the decoy and escape route used to avoid a mob lynching of the nine students when Little Rock High School was desegregated in 1957, seventeen years earlier.

The Coalition had daily meetings at the Freedom House, usually chaired by Otto Snowden with Muriel Snowden and Ellen Jackson in supportive roles. Others attended when they could. Each day was reviewed and assignments were distributed to the agencies that were standing members of the coalition. Ken Haskins and Ron Edmonds served as educational resources with expertise in research, innovation, and practiced leadership in their fields.

There were regularly scheduled parent meetings at The Freedom House, also. Information about the Court Order, student and parental rights, and resources were constantly distributed and available. Freedom House became an information center for parents and community residents. Percy said, “Parents were emotionally engaged and rightfully so.” The question was whether they were going to send their children back to school or not? As part of the Coalition meetings, there had been meetings with the mayor and his team and the mayor had assured the Coalition that the children would be safe.

Percy recalled:

He said, “Don’t worry about it. I’m on this. I got it. I’ve got my police and I’ve got a direct line to the white house. Gerald Ford has told me that if I need something I will get it. If I need Federal Troops I will get them” (Wilson Interview, 2011).

At this point, said Percy, the Freedom House parents were not listening to the Coalition. So Percy stood up and said, “Sure we can get federal troops. The mayor has told us that when we are ready for federal troops to just tell him, and he will call them in.”

People got in the cars and headed down to City Hall to meet with Mayor White. The Mayor says, “This is a terrible thing, those crazies in South Boston! What am I going to do with them?” Percy said, “A parent said we want you to call in federal troops under a judge’s order.” The Mayor said, “You don’t understand. People in Washington are not

even talking to me. I have no access to the White House to have any troops come in.” Percy stood up and said, “Mayor I’m sorry. That’s not what you told us three nights ago.” The Mayor said to Percy, “You’re speaking out of line. You’re being a hot head.” Percy reported that that the Mayor did not call in the Federal troops and the group headed back to the Freedom House. However, this time, they go to the Snowden’s home where the “real strategizing” takes place. He states that this is when the debate about receivership starts. Ruth Batson eventually writes a letter to Judge Garrity requesting that South Boston High School is placed in receivership.

Barbara Burke remembers the many meetings held at the Freedom House because, she says, “for us, in the black community—there was a hell of a lot at stake!

We were afraid of what would happen. We had medical teams because we had to think about... the kids and the possibility of what would happen to those kids. The possibility of the reaction of parents. You hit my child and yeah, I’m going to go crazy. We had to think about the possibility of that. The possibility of the reaction of police. We had known about how the police treated us and our children. There were the legal ramifications.

We were prepared for desegregation because of these continuing meetings. The Police Department was involved. Earl Bolt and Herbie Craigwell, two Black police officers who were on the force since Barbara was young, attended some. They were some of the first Black police officers in Boston. Clarence “Jeep” Jones, now Deputy Mayor to Kevin White was available to the Coalition. He, too, grew up in Roxbury. The elected official who attended was Royal Bolling, Sr., a long-time Roxbury resident and legislator.

There were students available to record incidents of vandalism and harm to person or property. There were Black reporters, Louis Overbea from the Christian Science Monitor and Dexter Eure from the Boston Globe who understood the consequences of this ruling as they had been reporting from the perspectives of the Roxbury community.

Paul Parks, said Barbara, was of the favorites of Louise Day-Hicks. As Kenny Guscott said at a meeting once, “We would send Paul and say, ‘You better go talk to your girlfriend, Louise, because you’re the only one she’ll talk to.’”

Barbara summarizes the coalescing of the Freedom House agencies and activists when she says, “It was understanding what people were good at, pulling on their strengths and utilizing them.” We had doctors there; we had psychiatrists there. Doctors volunteered from hospitals around us. People volunteered from neighborhood youth centers, health centers. In those meetings everybody was pulling together because of our concern for the safety of kids.” (Interview, Barbara Burke, 2011).

Inside the School System.

Marion Fahey, Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools during Phase I of desegregation, was highly respected by both Peter Parham, her newly appointed Deputy, and Al Holland, who would follow Peter upon his departure to work with Senator Ted Kennedy. Both thought she was underestimated. Peter described her as a “woman with a heart.” He felt she was sincere about bring change to the Boston schools and supported him taking the initiative towards improvement, too. They had a big task ahead of them, given the Court Order.

She was tough, too, said Peter, given that she was often in conflict with the School Committee who continued to resist the Order. He would tell her about a group of parents and students from the projects near the Trade School who had concerns about their children being bused. He said to her, “Those parents need to see *you*.” She went to the projects and sat with those parents for four or five hours and listened to them. She

gave them commitments that their children would be safe and made provisions to make those schools safe.

He tried to educate her about the perspectives of life within the Black community.

He recalls a day they passed the Charles River:

One day, she and I were heading from some part of town to another part of town and we were going by the Charles River and people were out there rowing and she was saying, "Look how beautiful it is." I said, "Yeah, that's beautiful, if you're white." Because you don't see Black people rowing on the river. It was a beautiful scene, but... You could help her to understand the difference for people who didn't have in that city versus what other people might not even have given a thought about. (Interview, Peter Parham, 2012).

Peter respected that she listened to community representatives, such as Otto and Muriel Snowden and Ellen Jackson from the Freedom House. He said she listened to parents and their children. She would come to meetings at the Freedom House to hear their concerns. A task force was organized through this coalition to aid Peter in identifying and recruiting teachers, and Black administrators from across the country. This network supported the work of the Superintendent's office because of Peter's insistence that she understand the concerns that these communities had with the Boston schools.

All that needed to be accomplished through the court and in the Superintendent's office had to be organized. Peter was overextended as he traveled daily from South Boston High to Charlestown High to East Boston High, all filled with daily conflicts. He couldn't accomplish everything alone. Upon Peter's recommendation, the Superintendent hired Al Holland, another youth worker, as a consultant. Al thought it was just going to be a couple of days a week working with the school department and it turned into full-

time employment. He and Peter spent their time going to schools to work with teachers, students, and parents during the days of desegregation.

The entire city was focused on Black children coming into white neighborhoods like Charlestown, East Boston, and South Boston. Because you could anticipate organized resistance from the white communities, both within the schools and on the streets, safety was the critical concern. Peter was appointed by Judge Garrity to be the person on the scene representing the Court in South Boston. He went to South Boston at six in the morning and saw them pouring water on the streets so that by the time seven-thirty came the water would be frozen and then the buses couldn't get up the hill. Then, white resisters would be between the homes on the route throwing rocks and bricks at the buses to disable them. Going to those schools on a daily basis and trying to give comfort and encouragement to students and administrators was truly challenging, said Peter. School administrators were turning their backs and looking away from the challenges that were ahead. Peter acknowledged that there were some white parents who were ashamed of what happened, so once he established credibility and trust with those allies, they tried to be helpful. In many instances a concerned white resident or student would call him saying, "Mr. Parham, tomorrow at Hyde Park High School they are planning to do x, y, and z."

Once the school day was over, Peter would meet with Ellen Jackson from the Freedom House Coalition to give her accurate accounts of the day. The Freedom House served as an information center and a clearinghouse for all communication during the days of desegregation. This was important because what the media emphasized may not have been completely correct. Parents needed unreported and accurate insider accounts of

their children at desegregated schools. These were sixteen-hour days for everyone, Peter reported.

Al worked with Peter daily, but by 1975, during Phase II of desegregation, Peter was in Washington, DC. Al now represented the Superintendent's Office and, when assigned, the Court. He described his first experience at South Boston High School:

Unbelievable scene... I had never seen anything... it was like a police state outside the building. The news cameras... You couldn't ride your car up there. You would have to get on the caravan where what they call a staging area at Bayside where they boarded the buses, where all the students boarded. The teachers boarded a blue bus and it was part of the caravan and motorcycle escorts down Day Boulevard and up the hill up to G Street. The crowds outside the South Boston High School greeting the students with all kinds of racial epithets. People hurling stuff. (Al Holland, Interview, 2012).

Busing, he said, was almost only one way. The students from the Black community were bused to white communities but hardly any white students were bused to Black communities. Some reasons were that white parents were determined to keep their children at home. By Phase II, some had transferred their children to Catholic schools. To relieve overcrowding in the white high schools, schools were redistricted and many lines had been drawn by the impacted white communities to avoid busing to Black neighborhoods. White seniors at South Boston High had the option to remain. All other white students attending were reassignments from other parts of the city. If you chose not to take an assignment in a Black neighborhood and could find an alternative school in a majority white community, then busing appeared to be one way. It was not designed as such but rather a unintended consequence of the Court Order.

Al stated he was nervous when he arrived at South Boston High.

Anxiety was going through my body and my mind. I tried to stay and look calm. The whole process was something unreal. I had to park my car at Bayside. I had to board a bus with the Black teachers and everybody was nervous and anxious.

Windows had bars across the windows and they said you had to be careful because people would throw stuff and the window would shatter.

By now there was a handful of Black teachers and we all had to get on the caravan with the same buses that took the Black kids up to South Boston High School with motorcycle escorts, it was something that was unreal. He asked himself:

This is how you go to school? I never went to school this way. I've always went to school, I took the bus, I walked up the hill to Jamaica Plain High School. We walked from Green Street Station. The only time we had any problems was in the afternoon when we had to walk by the bar on Green Street and occasionally they would come out and chase us. But this experience was... I'd never experienced anything like this. When you got up to the hill, all the buses had to line up and wait to be unloaded. Meanwhile there was a crowd. The crowd surrounded the bottom of the school. Thousands of people, and all kinds of insults, all kinds of, "We don't want you." "Go back to Africa." "Get out of here." Frightening. The teachers were the first ones released off the buses and we'd go up the stairs and there were metal detectors. The kids were released off the bus, one bus at a time. The kids would run up the stairs because they were scared. You never knew when the crowd was gonna charge and fight. (Al Holland, Interview, 2012)

Al had did not have training to prepared him for what he was to face at South Boston High School. He didn't know what to expect. He said that people just told him, "You're good with kids." That was all the prerequisites they thought he needed, being good with kids. The bus ride alone, he felt was very emotional and draining. To go through a crowd of students and parents and hearing all kinds of racial slurs and hatred spun at you was traumatic. He thought, "I don't think anybody in the country would believe that this is how you should start school." They walked through metal detectors. Their bags were searched for weapons. Al said, "This is how their school day started." Once the buses cleared, however, he noticed that this is when the white students entered the building.

He learned a lot about the hidden curriculum in the school. Wren (1999) encourages teachers and administrators to pay close attention to school culture. Schools

have symbolic aspects of acceptable practices that go unnoticed and remain unspoken. It is identified as the hidden curriculum. It is “almost imperceptible yet [a] powerful influence of institutional culture/climate” (Wren, 1999, p. 593). These are the symbols that are cultural practices and in the case of South Boston High, took on the name “sneaker day.” Tuesdays were sneaker days. If the white students came to school with normal shoes, it might be a good day. But on Tuesday, sneaker day, Al could predict that fighting would escalate and that the Black students would be vulnerable. He explained it this way:

... when I first got to South Boston High School over the intercom there’s a meeting of the biracial student committee. And I asked the question, “Who’s on the biracial student committee?” They said, “We bring all the students together and we meet and talk about what’s happening in the school and I said, “Who attends that?” They said, “We have advisors.”

Al attended one of the meetings and discovered that those attending were only students of color. There were no white students in these meetings. About 15 white teachers and administrators attended. He said, “Where are the white kids? They told him that they refused to meet. Next he heard over the loudspeaker an announcement of a meeting of the White Caucus Committee—when the white students would meet. Al asked, “Who are the advisors for them?” He was told that they don’t want any Advisors. These white high school students were left alone to plot and strategize about how the day would go for Black students. Right after they met, predictably the fights broke out.

At one point a student says to him, “Mr. Holland...we get sucker punched and then we get suckered punched again.” The student told him that when the white students they get sucker punched. The police would instinctively grab the Black student as he retaliated. While being held, the Black student gets punched again by the white student.

So, Al changed that dynamic. When he saw a fight, he would grab the white student to avoid the second sucker punch to the Black student. He knew that the Black student would be the one held by the police. The Boston Police eventually were removed and the state police replaced them, but the State Troopers would still instinctively grab the Black student during an altercation. Once Judge Garrity placed South Boston High School in receivership, all that changed. U.S. Marshalls were put in charge of everyone's safety without any attachment to either community. They reported directly to the federal court.

These were very difficult times for Roxbury children and families. The stories abound throughout the high schools. However, the Court Order was the only way that those who were receiving substandard education would have a chance at equal resources in the City of Boston's public schools. Tom Atkins tells this story that seems to encapsulate all that was wrong and how parents and the community felt about the schools. He coined the phrase that the schools were "killing our children" (Interview, Tom Atkins, conducted by Blackside, Inc. November 10, 1988). He asked the high school students to answer some questions about their experiences in the schools. Later that evening, he reported that he almost forgot about reading what they wrote. He said:

... I was reaching for something in my briefcase and I found ... this group of questionnaires that the kids had filled out that day at South Boston when they were at U Mass. So, I took them out and I started, just sort of reading through them, and it was, I was shocked. It was a ... powerful, powerful experience ... as I read through these questionnaires it became clear to me that these kids couldn't read and they couldn't write and they certainly couldn't spell. They couldn't make a simple, declaratory sentence no longer than one page, one sheet. They couldn't spell the names of the streets on which they lived. They couldn't spell the word Black. They couldn't spell White ... or Boston or Roxbury where they lived. They couldn't spell high as in South Boston High School. As I ... sat there I just started to cry. It was ... impossible to explain the feeling of pain, on the one hand but on the other hand, I knew we were right. We had to get those kids out of those schools and this proved it. (Interview, Tom Atkins, conducted by Blackside, Inc. November 10, 1988)

The Boston Public School System, because of the harm that the city schools had caused to Black children in its intentionality did act immorally and illegally by providing a second class, separate education. The Federal Court had no other choice but to rectify what it found to be a violation of the 14th Amendment and to then issue a remedy that would move the school system from a segregated system to a desegregated system.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings for this study were presented in Chapters IV and V. The following sections are presented in Chapter VI: the summary of the study, a discussion of the major findings, and the conclusions and implications of the study.

Summary of the Study

This research study is a historical analysis of Boston school desegregation viewed through the lens of Black Bostonians who gave rise to a Black education movement. Its purpose was to place Boston's school desegregation history in a markedly different context than many of the narratives that evolved since *Morgan v. Hennigan* (1974). First, it provided a historical connection between the 18th and 19th century long road to equal schooling and the 20th century equal educational opportunity movement, both led by Black activists who lived in Boston. Second, it gave a public space to those 20th century activists to tell their history of this significant education movement. These were community leaders and foot soldiers who were part of the movement to dismantle a segregated public school system.

Too often works that center on Boston and its racial and ethnic divides foreground white resistance and its opposition to forced busing as the dominant narrative. By deconstructing this narrative and using first person accounts from activists, this research study foregrounds Black voices and deemphasized white narratives – those stories of white resistance, forced busing, and class warfare. African Americans who were born into a segregated society provided first person accounts of agency and activism. Those who were most seriously affected by segregated education provided details on the challenges that Black children faced in the Boston public schools.

Importance of the Study

Many of the manuscripts associated with Boston school desegregation approached this history with narrower time periods, limited perspectives, and fewer voices. This study widened the scope of history and “history telling” by starting in 1787 with a Black equal education movement and connecting Black activism in education to the 20th century equal educational opportunity movement. It centered the “telling” of equal opportunity history to those who were “making” equal opportunity history. The study acknowledges the leaders and the many foot soldiers in Roxbury, North Dorchester, and the South End who were working daily for equal access to the educational resources that the Boston School Department controlled.

Research Questions

This historical research was guided by three questions: In what ways did the Black community demonstrate agency and activism in response to segregated education, how did race appear in the public schools, and what sustained the people in the movement to continue this quest for equality.

The central question of agency and activism was answered in Chapters IV and V through the stories of their lives and their organizing to confront segregated education. The questions regarding race as a dominant force in schools is also confirmed in Chapter IV as they recount their experiences in segregated schools. It is expressed in their accounts of the Jim Crow South, of school policies in Boston, and through personal encounters with racism in individuals and within organizations. Chapter V addresses structural racism as it discusses an organized movement purposed to penetrate structural barriers that denied equal education to children in the Black community.

Discussion of Major Findings

There are five major findings in this study with each emerging from the narrators' personal experiences with schools, through their activism, and grounded in theory. These findings include what activists sought to achieve from desegregation, how their narratives identified the elements of inequality, and the ways in which the "busing" narrative dominated the discourse and shielded a public discussion on institutional racism. Critical race theory (CRT) is used to analyze the intersection of race, property, and schools. It is also used in a discussion of interest convergence in the enactment of a state law to end racial imbalance. The final finding addresses resilience as social-historical account of personal and communal agency.

The major finding were:

- 1) That activists shared the view that transporting students from majority Black schools to majority white schools was not preferred. Nonetheless, many understood that more resources went to the white schools so Black students should follow the money. The goal, however, was to have these students get a "decent education" and a "better chance in life." The way to achieve this was to disrupt and then to build alternative paths.
- 2) The narrative "busing in Boston" aided in the normalization of racism. Busing and anti-busing overshadowed discussions of the prominence of race in the public schools. "Busing" provided an alternative and acceptable desegregation narrative.
- 3) The intersection of race, property, and schooling informed communities of ownership and privilege. Although schools appeared to be public, they were perceived by majority white communities to be owned by them with all the privileges of ownership. Until public schools are equalized and available without regard to the artificial

differences that divide us, white ownership and privilege will define who will have a better education.

4) Movement towards desegregating schools happened when Black activists could build coalitions with suburban whites politically. That intersection of interests is seldom equal and the greater benefits remained with the white majority.

5) Resilience is collective and communal in nature. Serving the community, working on behalf of others is what made each of these narrators strong.

The following sections explore each of the major findings.

Defining a “Decent Education:” The Unresolved Debate

The question of whether a desegregated school leads to a quality education is a policy discussion that remains today. Yet, within these narratives are repeated descriptions of educational expectations. Narrators used two phrases across their interviews. They wanted “a decent education” and “a better chance in life” as a product of schooling. It appears to be the principle that united those in the movement. Some said they received a “decent” education, yet wondered why the next generation did not. Its meaning is central to understanding why a movement was necessary. There were differences in achieving this goal, yet the descriptions of “a decent education” and “a better chance in life” became a mobilizing force.

Some argued that when they attended the Boston schools, they did receive what seemed to be a “decent” education. This meant literacy – the ability to read and write, and to communicate meaning and knowledge. Others were concerned that their schools and teachers were not equip to provide them with a “decent” education. They wanted schools

with high standards and experienced teachers. When they discussed the next generation of children, they spoke of schools with low expectations and crumbling infrastructures.

The parent movements defined more specifically what the deficiencies were. They identified overcrowded classes, an uninspired and underprepared teaching force, older books and supplies as compared to majority white schools, substandard buildings, and teachers that tracked children in majority Black schools to trade schools, rather than guiding them towards higher education. These were institutional acts that denied a targeted race of children equal educational resources and opportunities. Others narrators identified specific actions that negatively impacted their self-esteem and identity as African Americans.

Majority Black schools received less attention from the school department. This led to alternative educative systems of support. As school services decreased, reliance on family and community support systems increased, as some abandoned their expectation of receiving equal treatment in the public schools. What they identified, instead, was a particular coach or an interesting class or a supportive teacher who attended to him/her in an individual school. Yet, it was the collective external networks that accounted for their ability to have “a better chance in life.” They identified their families, extended families, ministers, agencies, organizations, and a community network of supporters. As for those who served in a war or overseas, they discussed their time in the service of their country as an “educational experience.” These alternative systems were essential to the direction the activists took in life.

Mel King advocated for quality public schools but when he experienced intractability, he led a movement for community control of the schools. Bill Owens, who

grew up in the Jim Crow south, wholeheartedly believes to this day that a more equal distribution of resources controlled by the Black community instead of racial integration would have brought about significant changes in the education of Black children. Percy Wilson, who was raised in Jim Crow Alabama, as was Bill Owens, acknowledged the belief that many of his peers held, but he would challenge the idea that a segregated education would work in favor of the Black community. A decent education becomes meaningful and, perhaps, personally definable, when you are denied one.

Problematizing the definition of a quality education is consistent with the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois, the pragmatist, who argued that segregating children into separate schools would “virtually guarantee their separation through life” (quoted by Franklin, 1976, in Provenzo, 2002, p.14-15). However, he also wrote that “the proper education” for Black children must be where there is social equality, necessary for a child’s induction into life. He wrote,

I am no fool; and I know that race prejudice in the United States today is such that most Negroes cannot receive proper education in white institutions. If the public schools ... were thrown open to all races tomorrow, the education that colored children would get in them would be worse than pitiable ... And in the same way, there are many public school systems in the North where Negroes are admitted and tolerated, but they are not educated; they are crucified. (Du Bois, 1935, pp. 328-329).

Bell (1995) also argued that “creating a discrimination free environment” has been ineffective and in some cases destructive. He argued that a preferred method would be to create or preserve model Black schools (p.26). These apparent contradictions between philosophies of schooling can account for the range of programs in Boston’s Black community that arose during the 1960s.

There is a consistent theme in these narratives identifying a “decent education” leading to a “better chance in life.” A decent education meant that equality, access, and opportunity without regard to race was the goal. Desegregated education was the strategic means to achieve this goal and it was necessary.

The Issue is Us, Not the Bus: Critical Race Theory and Counter-narratives

A tenet of critical race theory is the use of counter-narratives as an analytic framework to counter deficit and racialized interpretations regarding the experiences of people of color by majority scholars (Solorzano & Yosso, 2009). Racism is commonplace in many of society’s institutions. It is present in employment, housing, banking, and in the delivery of social services. It follows that schooling would not be an exception.

A CRT analysis of “busing” examines how this term has come to symbolize the normalization of racism in the school desegregation era. In truth, busing describes the 1974-1975 and 1975-1976 school years where students were transported from majority white and Black schools to newly redistricted and schools to enact the Federal Court’s desegregation order. Majority white communities resisting the Federal Court Order transformed the term from its place as a Federal Court remedy to a rallying cry of resistance. Reports on “busing” in Boston are immediately followed by descriptions of “crises,” “conflicts” and, in the case of Judge Garrity’s obituary, the cause of “infamy” in the city (Goldberg, 1999).

These counter-narratives tell stories of racism in schools. By subordinating Black children and causing them harm majority Black schools became places of desolation. Some first graders had their mouths taped because of talking too much. Corporal punishment was used excessively against Black students. Derogatory names were used.

Black history, when mentioned, was distorted. Harry Elam remembers being told by his teacher at Latin School that Crispus Attucks was a drunken sailor who got in the way of a bullet. Rudy Pierce remembers a ceiling falling in the school he attended and the rape of a teacher. When children experience the harm that segregated schooling causes, it devalues them and negates their self-worth. These narrators experienced racism, but as they matured, it elicited powerful responses ranging from anger to committing to fight for justice.

How does one word “busing” inflame so many who are in majority white receiving communities? Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) argue that racism has been normalized in society. As such, transporting of students of one race to schools attended by the majority race are disruptions to that norm. It identifies the intentionality of separating children by their race. The Boston public schools existed as racially separated places of learning for two centuries. When the Federal Court ordered that schools must be desegregated quickly, it elicited hostility that was so endemic to Boston’s way of living, it confirmed that two school systems divided by race was Boston’s normal. Then white resistance reared its ugly head.

Much of the reporting about the era of school desegregation in the Boston schools and its court order are stories about “busing.” Busing has become a code word synonymous with acts of racism, demonstrations of resistance, and the exposure of the problematic inequality in schools. Too often the unexamined construct of “busing” rather than the rightful constructs of racism, segregation, and desegregation dominates the tale of two school systems. Descriptions of schools that for more than half of the twentieth century caused irreparable harm to children separated by race are critical to

understanding why desegregation was necessary. Transporting children to achieve a more racially balanced school system was to be an equalizer. The Black community sought equal access, equal opportunities, and equal schooling.

Critical Race Theory and The Property Known As Schooling

Ladson-Billings & Tate (2006) argue that “society is based on property rights rather than human rights” and that the intersection of race and property “is a central construct in understanding a critical race theoretical approach to education.” Referring to Harris’ (1995) construction of “whiteness as property,” Ladson-Billings & Tate also argue that the “property functions of whiteness” are foundational to “understanding a critical race theoretical approach” in education (p. 22).

Harris (1995) argues, “the origins of property rights in the United States are rooted in racial domination” (p. 277). History authenticates this in the seizure of land from Native Americans along with the economic subordination of the enslaved who were clearly identified as property. This aggression rendered non-whites without rights of ownership. Using the law as a means to solidify racial status and power, whiteness as property took hold in this new country. Harris (1995) further argues that:

... more pernicious and long-lasting than the victimization of people of color is the construction of whiteness as the ultimate property: Possession—the act necessary to lay the basis for rights in property—was defined to include only the cultural practices of Whites...Slavery as a system of property facilitated the merger of white identity and property...contingent on and conflated with racial identity, it became crucial to be white, to be identified as white, to have the property of being white. (p. 279)

Harris explores the “property functions of whiteness,” that include (a) *Rights of disposition*, (b) *Right to use and enjoyment*, (c) *Reputation as property*, and (d) *The absolute right to exclude* (pp. 282-283). These rights are important as one examines

property rights in relation to the public schools, its curriculum and instruction, the building and grounds, and the community that surrounds it.

During the 1974 through 1976 school years, there was turmoil in the majority white high schools. The school that received the most public attention was South Boston High, a predominantly Irish neighborhood of poor and working class families. Violence and discord were viscerally covered in news stories and in subsequent manuscripts describing the years of “busing.” On the opening day of school, hundreds of white adults and children hurled rocks at the buses that brought Black children from their sections of the city to “Southie.” This was territory seldom crossed during the 1960s because white residents who were hostile to Blacks occupied South Boston. It was also “mob-infested” with the Winter Hill gang, a treacherous group, led by the notorious Whitey Bulger. One of his men, Kevin Weeks, worked at South Boston High School. Now, the Federal Court ordered that Black students would have a legal right of passage into the neighborhood and the high school. Territories and boundaries were penetrated and neighborhood schools were redefined by revising zip codes. The public viewed the hurled rocks and bricks. They read about the stabbing of Michael Faith, a South Boston resident by a student from Roxbury. The public heard little about the dynamics inside the schools. Peter Parham, Al Holland, Rudy Pierce, and Percy Wilson were inside the schools and saw first hand how Black students were treated.

Al Holland described a precarious system of desegregation at South Boston High. The principal established interracial school-wide meetings that were attended only by the predominantly white school faculty and administration and the Black students. The white student body boycotted the meetings. These boycotts were publicly supported by the

administration, as a voice on the intercom told the student body where to assemble for the white boycott. During these boycotts, the white students planned attacks on the Black students. One example was called “sneaker day.” When South Boston High students wore sneakers, it was a day of organized aggression. Black students approached “Mr. Holland” for help. They told him that white students would throw “sucker punches” and as the Black students retaliated, the police grabbed the Black students. This gave the white students a second opportunity to throw another “sucker punch.” Anticipating “sneaker days,” Al walked the corridors so that he could grab the white student, before he threw the second punch.

Rudy and Percy attended to the students throughout the city who were arrested after an altercation. Often the police arrested the Black student as he retaliated against an aggressive act from the white student. In one instance, Rudy and Al went to a female student’s home to offer legal representation after she was arrested during an altercation. Rudy suggested that he could initiate a transfer from the school. The student and her mother were emphatic that she would return to the same school. They would not give up, they told him. At this point, they exercised their rights to share in the ownership of the public schools – to be on the property, to sit in the classrooms, to read from the same books, to be taught using the same curriculum, and to have teachers value them as they valued the white students. It was because of students and parents like them that white landholders of schools would no longer have the exclusive right of *use and enjoyment* nor *the right to exclude*.

On October 16, 1975, Ruth Batson wrote a letter to Judge W. Arthur Garrity of the U. S. District Court, strongly urging him to place South Boston High School in

receivership. Her words made clear the intersection of property, race, and schooling. She identified the source of the volatile resistance to communities crossing established racial boundaries in Boston. She wrote, in part:

One of the most serious violations which more than complicates the problem is the mistaken belief, which strongly motivates many of the residents of South Boston that South Boston High School belongs to them and them alone. If we do not remove some of this feeling of ownership and personal property rights, then we will not be able to stop the continued aggressive behavior against our Black children. (Batson, 2001, Addendum 415a).

Identifying that the residents of South Boston believed that they owned the schools and the property surrounding it and could exclude Black Bostonians, because of their white privilege, is consistent with Harris (1995) whose argument is that the construction of whiteness is the ultimate property.

From December 9, 1975 through August 30, 1978, U.S. District Court stripped the Boston School Committee of much of its control over school desegregation and placed South Boston High School in receivership under the administration of a court officer who would report directly to the Federal Judge. This established the principle that public schools are available to all children in the City of Boston, regardless of race and place.

When Interests Converge

Bell (1995) theorized that in order to advance racial justice, what minority groups seek to achieve must converge with the interests of the majority. Critical race theory exposes this “socially constructed and constantly reinforced power” of majority interests. This convergence of strategic initiatives rests with majority interests not with minority rights (see Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, pp. 58–60).

Before the enactment of 1974 Federal Court order in Boston, activists used every means at their disposal to confront segregated education. A victory was claimed in 1965 with the adoption of the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act. This Act was to be the Commonwealth's "commitment to equality of opportunity." The first advocate to advance this act was Royal Bolling, Sr., a Roxbury resident and an elected member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Ruth Batson (2001) writes that it was because of Representative Bolling's persistence, session after session, the racial imbalance bill came to the attention of the Massachusetts Legislature (p. 83-84). He submitted a one sentence legislative bill in November of 1964 that read:

-- no such school aid shall be paid to any town in the public schools of which there exists the condition of racial imbalance, unless educationally feasible plans have been made and steps have been taken to reduce or eliminate such imbalance. (Center, 1972, p. 41)

The Center for Law and Education's 1972's Study of the Racial Imbalance Act attributes a combination of the NAACP's demonstrations against and before the Boston School Committee, two school boycotts, a Springfield, MA federal judge's order to file a plan ending racial concentration in six elementary and two junior high schools, the publication of a major educational report condemning racial imbalance, and the support of two Governors and the State Department of Education to bringing the question of racial imbalance before the Massachusetts State legislature (p. 37). Once there, the challenge was to agree on language and to obtain the support of the majority to pass legislation ending racial imbalance in the public schools. The Center of Law and Education called it a study of coalition politics. Those activists who Kenneth Guscott identified as "impatient," because the NAACP wasn't moving fast enough called it disappointing.

The bill passed the two chambers because “pro-integration lobbyists persuaded a majority of the legislators that it would have little direct impact on constituencies outside the city” (Center, 1972, p.39). It gave the state the power to withhold funds from racially imbalanced public schools and became law at noon, August 13, 1965. It read, in part:

The term racial imbalance refers to a ratio between non-white and other students in public schools which is sharply out of balance with the racial composition of the society in which non-white children study, serve and work. For the purpose of this section, racial imbalance shall be deemed to exist when the per-cent of non-white students in any public school is in excess of fifty-percent of the total number of students in such school. Center, 1972, p.60)

Coalition politics was a collaborative process where members of the legislature worked through a variety of approaches to arrive at a common goal of enacting this legislation. In this instance, it was certain that the Boston had an imbalance of white students distributed in certain schools and Black students in others. The goal was to use legislation to rectify this imbalance. The definition of a racially imbalanced school, which was agreed to through coalition politics was a public school system where 51% of the school population was non-white students. This meant that in predominantly white suburban towns or cities in the Commonwealth, a student body of 50% to 100% white students would not be considered racially imbalanced nor come under the jurisdiction of this law. The definition of an imbalanced school was written to attract the votes of suburban legislators who represented majority white areas, as the Boston legislators were lobbying to maintain the status quo. Therefore, the bill was written to converge with the interests of the suburbs. Their legislators represented majority white constituents whose children attended predominantly white suburban public schools.

Those who supported the legislation in the Black community saw a symbolic enforcement value to the legislation by withholding state funds from racially imbalanced

school systems. Their intention was to force the Boston school committee to equalize majority Black schools. The importance of this legislation was that it went further than the Fourteenth Amendment as it required affirmative acts by cities and towns “to eliminate racial imbalance in public school systems whatever its cause, i.e., independently of a finding of *de jure* segregation.”

Bell (1995), however, cautioned that these civil rights gains within Black communities “should be interpreted with measured enthusiasm.” He argued that they were “superficial opportunities” and “basic tenets of U.S. democracy,” to which all are entitled. However, these opportunities come only to Black school populations when majority and minority interests merge. The Racial Imbalance Act was important legislation for the entire Commonwealth but merging with white legislators interests only served to expose the contradiction in a democratic society and soften the law’s potential effect.

It had no impact on predominately white suburban schools and did not disrupt segregated schools in the City of Boston. The Boston School Committee litigated the legislation for years in court. Thomas Atkins gave voice to those in the Black community who were unenthusiastic about the legislation. His interview confirmed Bell’s cautionary argument as he said:

...eventually the bill passed in a form that came to be known as the state's Racial Imbalance Law...by the time the bill came out of the committee, we knew that it was worthless to us...What we got was a bill that identified schools that were more than fifty percent Black as illegal. Well, what about schools that were a hundred percent White? To us those were segregated too...The bill...gave very limited powers to the state to correct the problem...They had to go to court to get relief for the kids...Boston was stronger than the state. It was more determined to resist than the state was to enforce...By 1972, the efforts at the state level were so clearly thwarted that the feeling was if relief is going to come it will come only at the federal level. (Interview, Tom Atkins, conducted by Blackside, Inc. November

10, 1988)

Walk in Our Shoes: The Places of Resilience on the Road to Equality in Schools

Tummala-Narra (2007) notes “prevailing views of resilience are generally shaped by middle class and Western values of individual autonomy and achievement that may not resonate across cultures” (p. 19). Resilience in this study is a social-historical account of personal and community agency. It is less of individual responses to adversity.

However, as these individual histories evolved through their stories of schooling, periods of distress and trauma were evident. Some schools were places learning while others were scenes of chaos. The NAACP reported a stench in a Roxbury school that was so strong that families in the street could smell it. Yet, children were to attend classes and learn in spite of the stench. Tom Atkins spoke of reading what Black students attending South Boston High School wrote during desegregation and then crying because of every student’s inability to construct simple sentences and spell. Ken Guscott remembered wanting to be an engineer but being told that the post office was to be his future. He was an elementary school child.

For schools and teachers to foster traumatic feelings of fear and sadness in children is unimaginable. To treat them with presumptuous dismissiveness is harmful. The majority of these narrators spent twelve years of their lives in Boston schools. The young mind is so influenced by the one adult who formally “teaches” him about the world around him that the relationship between the child and his teacher is central to how he comes to view the world. That part of childhood should be filled with dreams of a future not with fatalistic imaginings.

These narrators experienced adversity in the form of racism, limited resources, and bad schools. What helped them move through these times has to do with what each called upon for support. Family members and extended family enable them to aim high and push through adversity. Barbara Burke's grandmother was her rock and when she needed her support, she came immediately from Georgia to Boston. She told Barbara stories of her adversity in life but it always ended with a story of how she was the conqueror. She also bragged to her friends about how she, her grandmother, had the smartest grandchild. Barbara believed in herself. She said that whenever she doubted herself, she called upon her grandmother.

Rudy's mother and Kenneth's mother were role models. Both were raising sons alone and worked hard to keep them safe and proud. Both wanted something better for their sons. They encouraged them to take education seriously. Ken remembers his mother's words resonating today, "*You will* get an education. *You will* be somebody. *You will* go to school clean. *You will* wear a shirt and tie." Rudy's mother kept him safely off the street and modeled family values as he watched her take care of her disabled sister and remembers carrying his aunt up flights of stairs for his mother.

There were supportive people within the community on whom these young men and women depended. Names like Mel King, Jeep Jones, and Reverend Mike Haynes were examples to whom they could turn in times of crisis or need. There were the Settlement Houses and places of worship that provided comfort, values, and community. Tummala-Narra (2007) discusses group movements and social change as a form of collective resilience. Bloom (1998) argues, "an individual's identification with the group is a core component of one's sense of personal identity" (as cited in Tummala-Narra, p.

47). These theories of resilience as social contracts may provide a fuller and more complete view of resilience in the form of movement activism.

Conclusions and Implications

This study made salient the voices and narratives of Black activists, who were eclipsed by the master narratives of white resistance, forced busing, victimization of whites, an overreaching judge, liberal “outsiders,” and white flight. The implication is that researchers and writers who tell stories about movements of change must recognize which narrative is centered in history and who narrates the stories. It is critical for insider researchers to seek out the histories of those who have active roles in movements of change, and to promote their stories as authentic and necessary. Boston Black activists played a central role in the fight for education equity and their voices should be prominent in Boston school desegregation histories.

Although Boston activists confronted struggles and challenges, they were capable of staying the course and making progress in their lives and in the life of their community. A second conclusion is that family, community networks, and public service were their sources of their resilience. Thus, an implication is that activists today must not only rely on themselves to stay the course or to sustain a movement but they must build resilience through community networks of people and institutions that serve the public good. Networks of families and communities assumed values and traditions that were passed on generationally. These networks provided sustenance during many difficult times, whether it was being confronted by racism or gathering strength to continue in movement activism. Returning to one’s community and aiding in its development and

growth through public service provided a perspective that promoted solidarity in movement building.

A final conclusion that emerges from this study is the significance of race. Race was often overshadowed by the unexamined construct of “busing.” In many reports regarding Boston school desegregation, “busing” and white victimization by an overreaching judge were prominent stories. There was a general failure to interrogate white racism as a destructive force. There was a complete failure of public leadership in confronting racism in the public schools. These acts implied a tacit acceptance by white leadership of the permanence of racism in the Boston schools. The continuing significance of race remains problematic. Thomas & Hughes (1986) conclude, “that the significance of race as a determinant of psychological well-being and quality of life continues in spite of recent changes in the social and legal status of black Americans” (p.830). Social movements that address equalization and access for all are needed now more than ever with their energy and focus on the destruction of racism.

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APPENDIX

Informed Consent

Boston College has a rigorous process designed to protect the rights of human subjects. The following letter was sent to all narrators in advance of the interview. It was also reviewed at the start of the interview and any changes requested were agreed upon as follows:

Oral History Project - Informed Consent

Title of Study:

The Black Education Movement in Boston and the People Who Led It:
Boston School Desegregation

Researcher: Lyda S. Peters

I am writing a doctoral dissertation and my research centers on examining the history of the Black education movement in Boston. This is a public history research project. The purpose of this research is to learn about the lives of Blacks who were involved in Boston's school desegregation. Life history interviews are an essential part of this research. You were asked to be in this study because 1) you are a person who was born before the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision into a constitutionally segregated society and/or 2) you were involved in working to improve schooling for Black children in Boston during the 1960's and/or 1970's. This study is collecting the oral histories of Black Bostonians who will narrate this movement from one's own perspective with the intent of discovering beliefs, motivation, experiences, and events that shaped your involvement.

Interview information

If you participate in this project:

- You will be one of approximately 20 persons interviewed who will be identified as narrators.
- It is anticipated that your interview will last approximately two hours.
- Because of your extensive life history and experience, the time allotted for the interview may go beyond two hours. Another interview may be scheduled, with your permission, at a mutually convenient time.
- You may be contacted by phone for a follow up interview to clarify information.
- The interview is usually held at your home or in your office.
- You will be asked questions about your life history, which includes your parents, your neighborhood, the early years of your life, your education, your career, your experiences with segregation, and your life in Boston.
- You will be asked questions about your opinions on the following issues related to Boston: schools, desegregation, race and class, and Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground*

- Your interview will be videotaped and audiotaped. You may choose to be audiotaped rather than videotaped. You will be given the opportunity to review the video or the audio and will be given a copy for you to keep.
- A transcript may be made from the video or audio. You will be given the opportunity to review this transcript prior to its further use.
- You will be given the opportunity to review the summary interpretations of the interview that may be written.
- You will be asked to be photographed. You may choose not to be photographed.
- You may be asked to show artifacts from your life. Artifacts can include photos, personal papers, books, art, and autographs, as examples. You may choose not to share any artifacts.

Costs:

- You will not be compensated for your participation in this research project.
- There are no costs to you to participate in this study. If you incur any incidental expenses such as parking or postage related to this interview, the researcher will reimburse you.

Your risks:

If you participate in this project:

- Your words and images may become public and you may become recognizable to people with whom you are unfamiliar.
- You may find that people disagree with some of your opinions or your interpretations of historical events and that this disagreement could be strong. This could include family members or members of the general public.
- In reviewing one's life history and the results of decades of work to improve public education, sadness or depression might occur. For help dealing with sadness or depression, a list of agencies and institutions in the Commonwealth that offer culturally and linguistically appropriate services will be made available to you.

Your benefits:

- You may gain satisfaction in knowing that you are helping historians, communities, school systems, and the general public understand the history of Black leadership in dismantling a system of racial segregation in the Boston Public Schools.
- You may also gain some public recognition for your participation in this effort.

Your rights:

- Your participation in this project is voluntary.
- You may stop your participation at any time during the interview.
- You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Conditions of withdrawal:

- You are free to withdraw from this project at any time for whatever reason you choose.

- The researcher may withdraw the narrator from this project, if it is in the narrator's best interest, if there are unanticipated side effects that may be harmful to the narrator, or if the narrator can no longer comply with the project requirements.

Confidentiality:

Oral history research is public history. As such, you were not selected randomly but because of your unique relationship to this research topic. The purpose of this project is to collect your life history, memories, and personal commentaries related to the Black Education Movement in Boston. The recordings of these interviews will be transcribed, summarized, or indexed and, with your permission, placed in a library or archived to be used for future research. Until you give your permission to release the materials collected in this research, the following outlines the measures that will be taken to maintain your privacy and confidentiality:

- If you do not want to be identified by name, you will be assigned a number and you will not be asked specific questions about the identification of your parents or relatives.
- Your contact information, such as your address and telephone, will not be disclosed to the public.
- The records of this study will be kept private.
- In any publication or presentation the researcher might author, if you choose to use a pseudonym, there will be no information in that publication that can identify you.
- Research records will be kept in a personal computer that only this researcher can access. All electronic information, including digital video and audio recording will be secured.
- The researcher's doctoral advisors may review these research records.
- A typist may transcribe the video and/or audio tape.
- Once this research has been concluded, all digital files will be archived for future research with your permission. Your consent is needed in order for these records to be archived. This may include being contacted by an institution's archivist. Otherwise these files will be destroyed.

Use of materials

- You will be asked to agree to have a copy of the final transcript and the original video or audio tapes archived and stored in a special collections at an institution, yet to be determined. Upon the selection of a place where the oral histories will be archived, the researcher will contact you to inform you of the selection and the arrangements made. You will then be contacted by a representative of the archives to obtain the rights to your interview. If you agree, your interview will then become available for use by researchers, teachers, students, or other members of the public.
- You will be asked for your consent to let Lyda Peters, the researcher, use your words in written and oral form for the purpose of publication.

Contacts and Questions:

- The researcher conducting this study is Lyda S. Peters. For questions or information about this information concerning this research, you may contact me at 781-267-2103 or email me at lyda.peters@bc.edu.

Narrator Agreements:

- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to let Lyda Peters, this researcher, use my words in written and oral form for the purpose of publication.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to be contacted for a follow-up interview by phone, if necessary.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to be contacted for a follow-up interview in person, if necessary.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to the use of my name.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to be photographed.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to be video taped.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to be audio taped.
- Yes_____ No_____ I would like to review the video or audio tapes prior to its use.
- Yes_____ No_____ I would like to review the summary interpretations of the interview that may be written.
- Yes_____ No_____ I would like to review the transcript of the interview that may be written.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to be contacted about archiving these files.
- Yes_____ No_____ I consent to show artifacts from my life.

I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and I understand it. I have been encouraged to ask questions and I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study and I have indicated above my choices for participation or not in certain activities of this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this consent form.

Name: (Please print)			
Telephone:			
Address:			
Signature:		Date:	

Oral History Questions

In addition to the informed consent document, a list of questions was prepared, not all of which would be asked. Open-ended questions, which can be answered at length by the interviewee, can result in rich historical information. According to the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley, the oral history interview is a combination of a conversation and a directed monologue. The interviewer should be unobtrusive, attentive, and guide the narrator to tell the fullness of his/her history.

Life History: (30 to 40 minutes)

You, your parents/family:

- What is your full name?
- What is the full name of your Siblings? Parents?
 - **Probe:**
 - Do these names have any special meaning?
 - Are there stories about the history or origins of your names?
 - Has it undergone any changes?
 - Are there any stories about those changes?
 - Are there any naming traditions in your family? What are they and what is the source of the tradition?
- What are your early memories (images) you have about your mother? Your father?
 - **Probe:**
 - What hairstyles did they wear? What kind of clothes did they typically wear?
 - What sounds and smells do you think of when you reminisce about your parents?
 - How do you describe them to others?
 - How did they describe their lives?
 - What stories did they tell you about them?
 - How did they make a living?
 - Did your family stay in one place or move around?
 - How did they come to live where you live now?
 - What are your best memories of either or both?
 - Are there any troubling memories that you can share?
- What do you know about your grandparents or great-grandparents?
 - **Probe:**
 - Describe your grandparents.
 - Do you remember hearing your grandparents describe their lives?
 - What did they say?
 - Do you remember your great-grandparents?
 - What do you know about their lives?
 - What stories have come down to you about your parents and grandparents? More distant ancestors?
 - Were there stories of enslavement, emancipation, or sharecropping passed down in your family?
 - Are there stories that bring pride when you hear them? Why?

- Are there stories that bring out sadness? Why?
- Were there any particular leaders that your parents or grandparents admired? What would they say?
- Who is the oldest person you can remember in your family or as part of an extended family member or neighbor from when you were a child?
 - **Probe:**
 - What do you remember about that person?
 - How old is the eldest relative in your family?
 - What accounts for the length or shortness of the lives of elders in your family?
 - Are there any stories of racial segregation or discrimination that have been passed down to you?
 - How much schooling did elders (parents, grandparents, and older people) have? How did they get schooled?
 - What values were passed on generationally?
 - Does your family have any special sayings or expressions? What are they? How did they come about?
 - Was there a saying your mother, father, or grandparents often repeated to you and what meaning did it have? Why do you think you remember this in particular?
 - Where did you hear about, see, or feel pride or resilience in your heritage? Who gave you this? What stories or experiences accompanied this?
- What do you remember your father, mother, or grandparents telling you about religion?
 - **Probe:**
 - What was your religion growing up?
 - What church, if any, did you attend?
 - What meaning does religion have for you? What has it done for/to you?
- Of all that you learned from your parents and older members of your family what do you feel was the most valuable and has sustained you throughout your life?
- What memories do you have of you and your siblings as children?
 - **Probe:**
 - Where were you in the birth order?
 - Are there any stories that would give us an image of your relationship(s) to each other?
 - What are your best memories?
 - Are there any troubling memories?

The early years of your life:

- Where and when were you born?
- Where did you live when you were born?
- Talk about when you first came to the United States.
 - **Probe:**
 - How old were you when you first came to the U.S.?
 - From what country did you originate from? What do you remember about that country?
 - What memories or stories do you have about the trip to the United States?

- If you were too young, what have others told you about your arrival in the U. S.?
- Do you know any stories about how your family first came to the U. S. or to Boston?
- Where did you first live and why?
- Where were you raised as a child?
- What are some of your childhood memories?
- Who were your childhood heroes? Why? What made them your heroes?
- How would you describe your life as a child?
- Where did your family live in the 1920s or 1930s?
 - **Probe:**
 - What memories do you have about poverty either yours or others?
 - What did your family do, if anything, for extra income?

Your neighborhood / community:

- Where did you grow up? City? State?
- Where you grew up what was it like? How has it changed over the years? What brought about these changes? What did people do for a living? What do they do now?
- Where have you lived as an adult? List the places and years that you lived there.
- Where you are living today and why and how did you arrive at this address? Where do you live now – your present residence and how long have you lived there?
- What can you recall about your family home and neighborhood?
- What community or family traditions are celebrated today?
- What are they like? How long have they been going on? How have they changed?
- Who is involved?
- Why are they important to the family or community?
- What memories and images did you have of your community? How do you identify “community?”
- What places stand out most in your mind and why? What are/were your neighbors like? What kinds of local gatherings and events are there? What stories and memories come to mind?
- What involvement did you have in the community?

Your education:

- Where did you live when you started school?
- What were your first memories about going to school?
- What was school like for you as a child? What were your best and worst subjects? Where did you attend grade school? High school? College? Who were your friends?
- What did your school look like outside? Inside?
- Where and when (dates) did you attend school? Elementary? High School? When did you graduate from high school?
- What book or news article influenced you most? In what ways?
- Did you attend college? When? Where? Why and how did you choose college?
- Were any of these schools racially segregated? What schools, when (dates), and where (city and state)? What were your experiences in racially segregated or racially balanced schools.

- Did you every experience being one of a few Blacks in a classroom?
- What experiences can you remember about knowing you were Black and in the majority or in the minority? How did it feel?

Your adult life:

- Have you been married?
- What is the full name of your spouse?
- When and how did you meet your spouse?
- What jobs have you held?
- Do you remember someone saying something to you that had a big impact on how you lived your life?
- Who said it, and what did that person say?
- Is there a person that really changed the course of your life by something that he or she did? How did it happen?
- Is there a person that really changed the course of your life by something that he or she did? How did that happen?
- What person had the most positive influence on your life? What did he or she do to influence you?
- What world events had the most impact on you while you were growing up? Did any of them personally affect your family?
- Did anyone in your family work in the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.), the Works Project Administration (W.P.A.) or any of the New Deal Programs? How was it different for Blacks?
- Did you or someone in your family serve in World War II?
 - **Probe:**
 - If so, where did s/he/you go?
 - Can s/he/you describe some of his or her experiences?
 - How long was s/he/you overseas?
 - Was s/he/ or were you wounded?
 - What was his/her/your job?
 - What was his/her/your experience as a Black soldier?
 - Did this experience have any special meaning to him/her or your return to a segregated United States?
 - What was it like for those in your family who stayed in the U.S.?
 - Do they remember any hardships?
- How have historical events affected your family and community? For example, what were some of your experiences during World War II, the Civil Rights Movement?
- Were you a member of any civil rights organization? How were you involved in the organization?

Your children:

- Do you have children?
- What are the names of your children?
- What are their ages and when and where were they born?
- Tell us about your children:
 - **Probe:**

- What are you most proud of?
- Where did they attend elementary and high school (city, state)?
- Did they attend public or private school?
- Urban or suburban school?
- Why and when?
- Describe the racial composition of these schools
- What were their experiences in these schools?
- What was your involvement in their education – both home and school?
- Were there any incidents during their schooling that you considered to be racial and, if so, tell describe an incident and your response to it?
- Did they attend college? Where?
- How did they describe their college life?
- What are they doing in now?

Your life in Boston:

- When and how did you come to live in Boston?
 - **Probe:**
 - Where did you live in Boston?
 - Why did you live in Boston?
 - With whom did you live?
 - How did you decide where to live?
 - Where was your residence located in Boston
 - How long did you stay there (dates)?
 - How would you describe where you lived?
- What are your early memories about (images of) Boston?
- Talk about the day you first came to Boston.
- What memories and images do you have of the 1960s?
- What were you doing for work?
- Is there a person that really changed the course of your life by something that he or she did? Tell us about that.
- Were you told, were you involved, or did you know about civil rights activities in the 1950s? Do you have any stories associated with this?
- What did you know about the NAACP or other civil rights groups? From whom? Do you have any stories associated with this?
- Do you have any memory of first learning about the Brown v. Board of Education decision? What meaning did this have? What difference did it make in your life?
- What do you remember about first seeing or getting a television? Did you see any civil rights activities on television or hear it on the radio? What are your memories?
- What memories and images do you have of the 1960s?

– Break –
(Change videotape and audiotape)

Opinions on the following issues related to Boston: (30 to 40 minutes)

Your experiences with discrimination or segregation:

- What do you, s/he remember hearing about the segregated south? Do you have any stories or memories associated with this?
- Do you have any memories, images, or stories of segregation in the North?
- Was it ever difficult for you or your family members to find employment or housing? Tell us about this.
- Were there other areas of discrimination that affected you or your family?
- I want to explore the goals for desegregating the schools in Boston in the 1960s and 1970s. What did you want to see happen in the schools remembering what they were like then?
 - **Probe:**
 - What experiences have you had with either?
 - When referring to racism in the schools, what were the differences, if any, between the ideas of desegregating, integrating, or racially balancing the schools?
 - What examples or stories can you tell about these experiences?
 - Which did you work for as an activist in the Black education movement?
- What do you know about and what do you remember about Jim Crow?
 - **Probe:**
 - Did you ever experience Jim Crow? Transportation? Schooling?
 - Talk about that experience.
 - How did it make you feel?
 - Under what circumstance? Who was involved?
- Were you told, were you involved, or did you know about civil rights activities in the 1950s and 1960s? Do you have any stories associated with this?
- How were you involved in Boston's civil rights movement? What is a memory that comes to mind?

Race and class:

- When asked your race how do you identify yourself?
- Do you have any family stories that stand out about race and racism?
- What are your first memories of discrimination? Can you provide a specific instance or story? Your reaction? Others around you? Have you experienced discrimination? When and under what circumstances?
- What were your first memories about segregation?
- In what ways, if any, has your race placed you at an advantage or disadvantage?
- In what ways, if any, has class placed you at a disadvantage?
- Who discussed segregation with you and how was it explained?
- What role has class played in your life?
 - **Probe:**
 - If asked to identify yourself in relation to class, how would you respond?
 - What is the relationship of race to class in your life?
 - What impact do these two have on one another? Are race and class inextricably intertwined, or is it possible to tease them apart? Does race trump class or does class trump race?

Involvement in the Black education movement

- What value do you place on education?

- What did you know or understand about segregation and segregated schooling as a student in elementary or high school? As you got older?
- Describe the Boston Public Schools of the 1960s and the 1970s as you remember them.
 - **Probe:**
 - What images do you remember?
 - What stories can you tell?
 - Some Blacks remember their high schools as having White and Black students attending schools together. What is your memory?
 - What was the quality of the schooling that children received?
 - Was there a difference between the education of Black children and white children? How do you know?
 - What schools did your children attend?
 - What improvements were you working for in the schools?
- What was your involvement in the Black education movement (1960s and 1970s but not limited to these decades)?
 - **Probe:**
 - When and how did you become involved?
 - What images do you have of that time?
 - Can you remember the time when you first became active? Tell us the story about an important memory.
 - Did you join or belong to an organization or more than one organization? Which one(s)?
 - Tell us about your involvement.
 - Who else were members of that organization with whom you worked?
 - What are your memories of working with them? Names?
 - Are there any stories that come to mind when you think about any one of them?
 - What are some of the most memorable activities and accomplishments?
 - Who were people that you knew who were critical to this movement and share some memories or stories about them?
 - What are your proudest moments in this movement?
 - What is a single disappointment you have regarding this movement?
- Here are a sample of events and groups that are part of the Black education movement. Choose one or two from this list. What are your two choices and what was there significance to you? What memories or stories do you have about them?
 - Operation Exodus
 - Concerned Parents of the Gibson School
 - Boardman School Parents Association
 - METCO
 - Racial Imbalance Bill
 - New School for Children
 - Stay out for Freedom Day
 - Freedom House
 - Freedom Schools
 - Community Schools

- Civil Rights organizations located along a strip Blue Hill Avenue in the 60s and 70s
- March on Boston (April, 1965)
- Carson Beach wade-in (August 10, 1975)
- Boston School Committee sit-in (September 5 and 6, 1963)
- NAACP Float at the South Boston St Patrick Day Parade (March 18, 1964)
- Tallulah Morgan, et. al.
- Stay out for freedom school boycott (June 19, 1963 and Feb 26, 1964)
- Freedom House Coordinating Council
- Black Student Federation (Jan. 22, 1971 – 200 Black Students Occupy English HS auditorium and Feb 4, 1971 – 600 Black Students Hold Solidarity Rally)
- Here is a list of people who have died and who were part of this movement. Choose one or two. How would you characterize your relationship to each? What meaning did he/she have for you? What memories do you have about either or both?
 - Ruth Batson
 - Ellen Jackson
 - Elma Lewis
 - Amanda Houston
 - Paul Parks
 - Royal Bolling, Sr.
 - Tom Atkins
 - John O'Bryant
 - Herbert Tucker
 - Teye Brown
 - Bryant Rollins
 - Judith Rollins
 - Muriel Snowden
 - Otto Snowden
 - Florence Shelton
 - Joseph Warren
 - David Nelson
 - Patrick Jones
 - Elizabeth "Betty" Johnson
 - Josephine Holley
 - Noel Day
 - Rev James Breeden
 - Mildred Griffen
 - Rollins Griffen
 - Lionel O. Lindsay
 - Richard Banks
- What were your expectations of this movement?
 - **Probe:**
 - The terms integration, desegregation, and racial balance was often used interchangeably. Was the goal to desegregate the schools?
 - Was the goal to integrate the schools?
 - Was it to racially balance the schools?

- Are these goals one in the same or what are the differences?
- What was the expectation if this was achieved?
- What changes came about in the schools as a result of your efforts?
 - **Probe:**
 - What did happen in the Boston public schools as a result?
 - What were the reasons?
 - What are you most proud of?
 - Are there any regrets?
 - Did you ever doubt that you and others had made the correct decision to support bussing which was the means the judge sought to desegregate the schools?
 - If you could relive the time that led up to your work, would you do anything different?
 - How are the Boston public schools different now from when you were first involved in this movement?

Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground*:

- Have you read or discussed *Common Ground* with anyone? If yes, what is your reaction to the book?
- How did he characterize Judge Garrity and what did you think of this characterization?
 - **Probe:**
 - How do you feel about the book?
 - Why do you think that Lukas wrote this book?
 - Did he make contact with you in the course of researching and writing this book? What was the nature of the contact?
 - How do you feel about Lukas?
 - How would you characterize Lukas?
 - How would you review *Common Ground*?
- These questions relate to reviews about *Common Ground* and your reaction to them.
 - Typical reviews state that as a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the book "...brings us as close as we are likely to get to the average person's experiences of urban racial tensions." (Publisher's Weekly Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.)
 - **Probe:**
 - What do you think about the statement "[Common Ground]...brings us as close as we are likely to get to the average person's experiences of urban racial tensions"?
 - Does *Common Ground* reflect an accurate picture of the "average" Black person's experience of "urban racial tensions?" How? Why or why not?
 - Ruth Batson said, "John Anthony Lukas stole our movement!" (Black education movement in Boston, 2001). The book completely leaves out the struggle that was carried out for so many years by black activists in Boston.
 - **Probe:**
 - What do you think she meant by that?
 - What is your reaction to her assertion?
 - In what way did you know Ruth?

- What was her contribution to this movement?
- What memories do you have of Ruth?
- How would you describe her?
- Tom Atkins wrote in the *Journal of Social Policy*, Winter, 1986 in response to *Common Ground*, “The real story about desegregation in Boston is ... the determination of Boston’s Black community not to acquiesce in the face of public policies and practices that it now spelled doom for Black children.”
 - **Probe:**
 - What did Tom mean when he wrote this?
 - What were those public policies and practices that spelled doom for Black children?
 - Why do you think it was necessary for him to write this?
 - What is your reaction to this?
 - In what way did you know Tom Atkins?
 - How was he involved in the movement?
 - What do you know about Tom and how would you describe him?
- Much has been written about the role of Judge Arthur Garrity and his order and plans to desegregate the Boston Public Schools. He has been vilified by some as having destroyed the City. What do you think about him and the order to desegregated the schools.

Questions for Hassan:

Hassan (Arnold Walker) is Rachael Twymons' brother.

Lukas was asked (referring to you and your sister as well as the other two families) as reported in *New York Magazine* Sep 30, 1985, p. 68-69:

Was it difficult to gain their confidence?

That wasn't a tremendous feat. We all enjoy talking about ourselves to a sympathetic listener. I also struck an unusual agreement with the families. To get them to open up to me the way I hoped they would, I realized I couldn't ask them to live in total suspense about what I would do with their lives. So I let each family read the nine chapters about themselves, correct any matter of verifiable fact, and argue with me about matters of interpretation, so long as they understood that final interpretation was my responsibility. This agreement, by the way, did not apply to public figures -- the mayor, the judge, etc. -- in *Common Ground*. They were people who had plenty of experience in dealing with the press, as the three families did not. This arrangement permitted us to catch about 70 small errors -- a misspelling here, a wrong date there. None of the families ever charged me with betraying them. Indeed, I think all three of them were reasonably satisfied with the portrait I drew of them.

http://www.nationalbook.org/authorsguide_jalukas.html

What is your reaction to his characterization of the interview with you and your family?

Tell me what you remember about the interviews.

How many? How often?

Did you read all 9 chapters?

Did your sister?
 What reaction did you get once the book came out?
 What were your memories of the interviews?
 Did they take place in your home?
 What questions can you remembering him asking?
 What type of relationship did you have with him?
 Did you trust him?
 What was your purpose/role in participating in the writing of this book?
 Do you know how you and your sister were selected?
 Did you see the book as an honest account of Roxbury?
 Was it an accurate portrayal of you and your family?
 Would you interview with him again?
 Have you had others interview you about this book? Describe those experiences?
 Is your sister available for an interview?

- Among other things, Lukas alludes to “Boston’s Black elite on the hill.”
 - **Probe:**
 - What’s your response to this characterization of the Black elite?
 - Are there comparisons to be made between Black elitism and White elitism in Boston?
 - Lukas defines the problems that happened in Boston related to class. What do you think motivated the anti-bussing response to Garrity’s order?
 - Many who read this book concluded that the resistance to desegregation and bussing was less about race and more about class warfare. What is your opinion of this characterization of bussing in Boston?
 - How was race and racism prominent in Boston and how was it reflected in the schools and the resistance to desegregation.
- Lukas’s book has been reviewed as characterizing Judge Garrity as a suburbanite who divided the city by his order symbolizing class and not race as the great divide. What is your reaction to this characterization?
 - **Probe:**
 - What is your opinion of Judge Garrity?
 - How do you feel about him and the order?
 - What do you think about bussing?
 - What is your memory about the resistance to this order?
 - How did it impact you?
 - What images, memories, and stories do you have about bussing?
 - Why was there such a resistance to bussing?
 - In what part of the city was their resistance?
 - In what parts of the city was their compliance?
 - What is your memory of the public officials to the Judge’s order?
 - Do you think the order was the right one? Why?
 - What do you think about the people in South Boston and Charlestown where the resistance was most prominent?

Final Questions:

- How is the world different now from when you were a child?
- Have you published or are you planning on publishing books or articles about these topics? Why is that important to you? Were you ever mentioned in a newspaper or publication? Why were you identified and what did the story tell us about you?
- Are there any other questions I should be asking to get to the depth of your understanding about schooling, racism, people, and the Black education movement?
- Is there anything that you would like to add to this interview about you, your family, your civil rights activities in or out of Boston?
- You have lived a long and full life and have contributed much to this community and beyond. Which of your awards, acknowledgements, activities, accomplishments are most proud of?
- What is something you most want people to remember about you?
- What family heirlooms or civil rights keepsakes and mementos do you possess? Why are they valuable to you? What is their history? How were they handed down? Are there any memories or stories connected with them?
- Do you have any photo albums, scrapbooks, home movies? Who made them? When? Can you describe/explain their contents? Who is pictured? What activities and events are documented?
- Are there artifacts that you would be willing to show us? Can we photograph them?
- Can we have a copy of your resume or something in writing that describes your contributions, activities, and acknowledgements over your many years of contributions to the Black community and society at large?
- May we take some pictures of you?