“The Metropolitan Moment: Municipal Boundaries, Segregation, and Civil Rights Possibilities in the American North”

by

Michael Gray Savage

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of History
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Michael Gray Savage 2018
“The Metropolitan Moment: Municipal Boundaries, Segregation, and Civil Rights Possibilities in the American North”

Michael Gray Savage

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History
University of Toronto

2018

Abstract

Exploring battles over school desegregation in metropolitan Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia in the 1960s and 1970s, “The Metropolitan Moment” examines how black and white city dwellers at odds over integration within the city pursued – and sometimes allied over – efforts that crossed municipal lines to incorporate the suburbs in desegregation remedies. Though possessing divergent motivations, such as the white tactical aim of ensuring white majorities in all area schools by enlarging the desegregation area and the black desire for improved educational opportunities, both groups sought access to white suburban schools and at times acted together in court in an attempt to implement metropolitan desegregation. The search for such solutions opened a “metropolitan moment” across the urban North in the late 1960s and early 1970s when proposed regional remedies offered real possibilities of heading off white flight, fostering interracial coalitions, and substantively combatting segregation. Though this moment was foreclosed by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1974 decision in Milliken v. Bradley – a case prompted in part by just such a surprising urban black-white alliance in Detroit – its legacies, including suburban anti-busing movements that helped fuel the rise of the New Right and the transformation of the Democratic Party, and the larger retreat from metropolitan solutions to metropolitan dilemmas of race, schooling, services, and inequality, echo down to today. The
findings complicate several historiographies pertaining to the long civil rights movement, post-World War II urban and suburban history, the rise of the right, and representations of the “busing” controversy. Throughout, “The Metropolitan Moment” broadens the conception of the municipal reformer to include both ordinary black parents and white reactionaries.
Acknowledgments

Over the years spent writing and researching this dissertation, I have benefitted from the support and suggestions of friends and colleagues.

The idea for this project first took shape at the University of Calgary. My MA advisor, Frank Towers, deserves especial thanks for inspiring me to go to graduate school and, on more than once occasion, for convincing me of the value of academic pursuits.

At the University of Toronto the supervision of Russell Kazal has benefitted this dissertation greatly. Russ has been extremely helpful in asking the right type of questions and sharpening the dissertation’s analytical rigor. Thanks as well to the other members of my dissertation committee, Rick Halpern and Michael Wayne, for their support and suggestions throughout the process. Thanks as well to those participating in this dissertation’s defense, Matthew Farish, Sean Mills, Mary Nyquist, and Thomas Sugrue.

I am indebted to the camaraderie and suggestions of a remarkable group of friends and colleagues in Toronto and Calgary. Thank you to Yuri Beaulieu, Ryan Buchanan, Matt Bucholtz, Susie Colbourn, Justin Douglas, Alyson Fortowsky, Glenn Iceton, Kassandra Luciuk, Steve McClellan, Shannon Murray, Erica Toffoli, and Gavin Wiens.

Finally, my deepest gratitude to Lyndsay Vanderveer for her love and support.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ iv

Table of Contents .............................................................................................................. v

List of Appendices ......................................................................................................... vi

List of Abbreviations in the Notes ................................................................................ vii

Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1 Envisioning School Desegregation in Metropolitan Boston, 1963-1966 ........ 34


Chapter 4 Divergent Motivations, Similar Results: Integrationists, Segregationists, and the Development of Detroit’s Metropolitan School Desegregation Order, 1964-1972 . . 172

Chapter 5 Preserving Suburban and Sectional Distinctions: Antibusing in Detroit’s Suburbs, 1971-1974 .................................................................................................. 219

Chapter 6 In *Milliken’s* Shadow: Metropolitan School Desegregation in Boston in the Busing Era ........................................................................................................... 263

Chapter 7 In the Shadow of *Milliken* and Boston: The Death of Metropolitanism and the Futility of Intra-City Desegregation in Detroit and Philadelphia ...................... 317

Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 359

Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 376

Appendices ....................................................................................................................... 392
List of Appendices

A.1 Map of Detroit’s metropolitan remedy ordered in *Bradley v. Milliken* 392

A.2 Map of Greater Boston School Districts and METCO participation, ca. September 1986 393
List of Abbreviations in the Notes

**BVM:** *Bradley v. Milliken* Case Files, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**CAR:** Carmen A. Roberts Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**CCC:** Citywide Coordinating Council Records, Archives and Manuscripts Division, John J. Burns Library, Boston College

**CCPE:** Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia Records, Urban Archives, Temple University

**CEC:** Citywide Educational Coalition Records, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University

**DB:** Don Binkowski Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**DCCR:** Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Records, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

**DPM:** Democratic Party of Michigan Records, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**DPS:** The Detroit Public Schools Community Relations Division Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

**FC:** Fellowship Commission Records, Urban Archives, Temple University

**FH:** Freedom House, Inc. Records, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University

**FJM:** Frank J. Miranda Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University

**FL:** Floyd L. Logan Papers, Urban Archives, Temple University

**HO:** Helen Oakes Papers, Urban Archives, Temple University

**HSC:** Home and School Council Records, Urban Archives, Temple University

**JGO:** James G. O’Hara Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**JJM:** Congressman John Joseph Moakley Papers, Moakley Archive and Institute, Suffolk University

**JTK:** John T. Kelsey Files, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**LDH:** Louise Day Hicks Papers, City of Boston Archives and Records Center
**LWV-DD**: League of Women Voters of Dearborn-Dearborn Heights Records, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**LWV-P**: League of Women Voters of Philadelphia Records, The Pennsylvania Historical Society

**METCO**: Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc. Records, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University

**NAACP-D**: NAACP Detroit Branch Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

**NAACP-LOC**: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records, Library of Congress

**PMR**: Phyllis M. Ryan Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University

**RB**: Papers of Ruth Batson, Radcliffe Institute, Schlesinger Library, Harvard University

**RD**: Richardson Dilworth Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania

**SCSD**: School Committee Secretary Desegregation Files, City of Boston Archives and Records Center

**SW**: Shirley Wohlfield Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

**UL**: Urban League of Philadelphia Records, Urban Archives, Temple University

**WAG**: Garrity, W. Arthur, Jr.: Papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, Archives and Special Collections, University of Massachusetts Boston

**WPSC**: West Philadelphia Schools Committee Records., Urban Archives, Temple University
Introduction

In a Michigan courtroom in 1971, a white parents’ group that formed the previous year to oppose school integration, the Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE), made an argument that was adopted by the plaintiff National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and soon accepted by the court. Pointing to metropolitan demographics, the CCBE argued that any desegregation plan for Detroit’s schools could not be limited to the central city alone. Though it opposed desegregation, the CCBE quickly realized that Detroit’s schools would be found de jure segregated and abruptly shifted course from protesting urban integration to demanding metropolitan desegregation. This shift was simple pragmatism and did not require a genuine transformation in outlook among the group’s members. The CCBE understood that a desegregation area reaching beyond the confines of Detroit’s predominantly black public school system into the politically autonomous, virtually all-white suburbs would mean that their children would still attend majority-white schools. The NAACP supported metropolitan desegregation because it recognized the vast inequalities between urban and suburban schools and the segregated housing patterns which kept African Americans largely confined to the poor central city. Despite their wildly divergent motives, the white parents and the NAACP possessed similar understandings of the interconnectedness of city and suburb. Significantly, they understood the clear and important links between metropolitan boundaries and civil rights possibilities. These metropolitan understandings were not limited to the city of Detroit. In other cities, diverse constituencies ranging from self-interested urban segregationists to integrationist civil rights advocates similarly articulated grievances about civil rights remedies that exempted the majority-white suburbs and, in turn, pushed for metropolitan school desegregation.
“The Metropolitan Moment” considers the relationship between municipal boundaries and the struggle for racial equality in twentieth-century America. Focusing on the intersection of urban-suburban differences and civil rights struggles in metropolitan Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, it shows how suburban racial and class exclusion shaped efforts to desegregate education in central cities and suburbs alike. In tandem with civil rights challenges to segregated education, urban residence became a force capable of uniting disparate groups against inequalities, though only in the courtroom. In each city anti-integrationist urbanites, when faced with a legal challenge either created or made possible by black civil rights advocates, reversed course and trumpeted the advantages of metropolitan desegregation. These tactical metropolitanists recognized that a larger desegregation area extending into the predominantly white suburbs would mean that white children would continue attending majority-white schools and they understood that stoking suburban opposition to desegregation could defeat integrationist legislation and possibly produce a constitutional amendment banning desegregation busing. Yet despite their impure motives, tactical metropolitanists recognized correctly that intra-city desegregation alone could not succeed, and they provided remedies capable of producing lasting integration by limiting opportunities for white parents to flee the desegregation mandate by moving to the suburbs.

From the early 1960s onward, battles over school desegregation took on an increasingly metropolitan orientation, one all but destroyed by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1974 decision in *Milliken v. Bradley* that overturned Detroit’s metropolitan desegregation plan. This decade – the metropolitan moment – was one of tremendous possibility and importance, capable of reshaping metropolitan areas, addressing inequality, and seizing the productive kernel from the arguments of white working-class urbanites who lamented being forced to integrate while wealthy suburbanites and “limousine liberals” escaped responsibility. Metropolitanism, in diminishing
the possibilities for white flight and involving communities of higher socio-economic status, provided a much better chance of combatting segregation and offering superior education than did solutions limited to the central city alone.

This is not to say that educational metropolitanism was a panacea. It addressed a consequence of residential segregation – the patterns of school segregation that reflected racialized municipal boundaries – without consistently attacking such discriminatory housing patterns themselves.¹ Though capable of mitigating white flight and slowing residential resegregation within the city, it did nothing to bring black residents, as opposed to black students, to the suburbs. Moreover, as historian Ansley Erickson demonstrates, though metropolitan desegregation reduced achievement gaps and maintained integrated student bodies, it could stitch inequality anew through the discriminatory tracking of students or by disproportionately burdening black students in busing plans.² Racism undeniably motivated tactical metropolitanism. White metropolitan advocates frequently presented the black population as a problem to be dealt with, which provides further clues as to why committed segregationists could quickly change course and trumpet the advantages of metropolitan integration. Evidenced by suburbanites comfortable with integration so long as it did not apply to them and by white urbanites favoring metropolitan desegregation because it would keep their children in white majority schools, the poles of segregationist and integrationist were not always

---

¹ Only in Boston was suburban housing segregation addressed by tactical metropolitanists in a productive manner. Many antibusers supported the state’s “Anti-Snob Zoning Law,” which allowed the construction of a moderate amount of low- and middle-income housing regardless of restrictive local zoning requirements. As the law seemed to provide an opportunity for black residence in the suburbs, it conformed to the tactical metropolitanist goal of dispersing the black population throughout the metropolis. George M. Collins, “School board wants suburbs named in suit,” Boston Globe, 19 May 1972; For more on the law overall, see: Sharon Perlman Krefetz, “Low- and Moderate-Income Housing in the Suburbs: The Massachusetts ‘Anti-Snob Zoning’ Law Experience,” Policy Studies Journal 8 (1979): 288-299.

as far apart as they might seem. In their tactical advocacy of metropolitan desegregation, many whites in Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia proved capable of operating on both sides of the integrationist-segregationist divide simultaneously.

“The Metropolitan Moment” takes a comparative and connective approach to educational metropolitanism in three cities where it flourished, albeit in different ways. By comparing metropolitanist initiatives in cities where they experienced varying degrees of success, this study illuminates the dynamics of urban metropolitanist alliances and suburban anti-metropolitanist organizing. The work reveals connections between these three metropolitan regions, as activists increasingly forged ties between them and the contours of each city’s desegregation experiences had concrete effects for integration elsewhere. The Milliken decision on Detroit’s metropolitan integration plan affected the available remedies to segregation in Boston and Philadelphia. Milliken pitted potential metropolitan allies against one another in Boston, and Boston’s subsequent busing controversy – marked by outbreaks of violence, student boycotts, and the increasing segregation of city schools – induced judges to order a diminished intra-city busing plan for Detroit and a toothless remedy of voluntary integration for Philadelphia.

Boston and Detroit are included in this study because of their national importance to school desegregation politics. From Detroit emerged the nation’s most radical challenge to unequal education. In 1972 a federal judge accepted the arguments of white tactical metropolitanists and the plaintiff NAACP and ordered the implementation of a metropolitan plan of desegregation incorporating Detroit and fifty-three autonomous suburban school districts. Ultimately in the summer of 1974, the Supreme Court’s Milliken decision overruled this metropolitan remedy. Months later, Boston famously greeted court-ordered intra-city busing with violence and its busing controversy dominated national headlines and served as a reference point for desegregation battles in other cities. But a focus exclusively on that city’s massive resistance
to busing in the mid-1970s obscures the fact that Boston witnessed the longest and most widespread consideration of metropolitan solutions to segregation, a neglected aspect of the voluminous historiography of the Boston busing controversy.\textsuperscript{3} Boston’s metropolitanism occurred because of, not in spite of, the Boston School Committee’s intransigence on civil rights. The Committee’s hostility led the city’s civil rights advocates to seek alliances with liberal suburbanites, making Boston’s segregation a metropolitan concern in the process and producing integrationist legislation. In response to this metropolitan activity, the Boston School Committee developed its own tactical metropolitan strategy that primarily aimed to weaken the suburban legislative commitment to desegregation. But as the battle over school segregation continued, the strategy’s secondary aim of ensuring white majority schools for white children and equalizing what its adherents viewed as the burdens of desegregation throughout the metropolis became its animating force.

Philadelphia is covered in part because of the relative paucity of historical treatments of the city’s desegregation efforts, but above all because its distinct history of metropolitanism serves as an instructive foil to that found in Boston and Detroit. The factors that hindered urban metropolitan alliances in Philadelphia, in particular that the city’s desegregation challenge came from the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission rather than a black plaintiff, underline the crucial precondition for such alliances: a courtroom open to black civil rights litigators. This insight likewise helps to explain why metropolitanism in Boston foundered once

the *Milliken* decision pushed attempts at metropolitan remedies out of the courts, with the Massachusetts Legislature the only remaining venue.

By the time of *Milliken*, these three cities’ desegregation battles were inextricably intertwined. The *Milliken* decision affected the possible remedies in Boston, and the violence and white flight accompanying intra-city busing in Boston affected the creation of Detroit’s post-*Milliken* intra-city busing plan and the scope of desegregation in Philadelphia. The eventual interplay between these metropolises demonstrates that the politics of desegregation were simultaneously local, regional, and national.

All three cities evidenced a white opposition to intra-city desegregation that turned into advocacy of metropolitan desegregation in the face of a legal challenge. Simultaneously, mandatory metropolitan desegregation garnered a near-universal suburban opposition. While urban metropolitanists argued for a metropolitan vision that placed the city at the center of an interconnected region, suburbanites, seeking to ensure the continuation of a suburban world of lower taxes, better schools, and a largely racially homogenous population, increasingly claimed that they were not connected to the city at all. From these urban metropolitan arguments emerged a stronger suburban opposition to metropolitan undertakings – such as metropolitan planning and government – that involved the central city. When *Milliken* worked to preclude the adoption of radical metropolitan solutions it codified this suburban secessionist worldview and entrenched further the inequalities between cities and suburbs familiar to residents of America’s metropolitan areas today.

**Implications**

The 1970 census revealed the suburban ascendency in the United States, indicating that for the first time more Americans lived in politically autonomous suburbs than in central cities.
Northern suburban development had deep roots that predated the battles over school desegregation, but municipal boundaries and the patterns of exclusivity they engendered helped shape the contours of metropolitan spatial inequality. Northern suburbs began resisting annexation in the late-nineteenth century, well before the presence of a sizeable black population. At issue was the ability to provide citizens necessary services. In 1874, Brookline resisted annexation to Boston. While the central city could offer water and sewage facilities, wealthy Brookline could provide its own systems and saw no advantages in consolidating. For its part, Boston occasionally acted like Brookline, weighing the benefits of annexation. Though it continued annexing communities, Boston’s voters refused to annex adjacent Chelsea, Somerville, and Revere, all considered potential burdens on the city treasury. All remain independent today. Philadelphia reached its present size in 1854, when lawmakers in Harrisburg approved the consolidation of the city with its suburbs, over suburban opposition. Of the three cities, Detroit was last to finish its territorial expansion, attaining its present boundaries in 1926. A look at a city map reveals two suburban islands entirely surrounded by the city – Highland Park and Hamtramck. Though desiring the tax base, Detroit could not annex Highland Park, home to a major Ford factory, or Hamtramck and its large Dodge plant. Nor could it annex the wealthy Grosse Pointe communities on its eastern edge. This meant a major loss of tax revenue. Long before the metropolitan school desegregation battles of the 1960s and 1970s, the

---

4 I borrow the term “spatialized inequality” from historians Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue, who note that “in America, where you lived has determined your access to goods and services and how much they cost in the form of your taxes.” See Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).
development of municipal boundaries hinged on competitive advantages and stitched fiscal inequalities into the metropolitan landscape.\(^5\)

While cheap land, inexpensive construction methods, abundant resources, cultural preferences, and improved transportation technologies fed America’s rapid suburbanization, that process was as much governmental as natural. The governmental contribution to suburbanization helped racialize spatial inequality. During the New Deal, the federal government encouraged homeownership, creating the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933 to provide low-interest loans. These loans were rarely available to residents of racially-mixed neighborhoods. To aid lenders, HOLC created residential maps denoting a neighborhood’s housing stock and demographic composition. The best neighborhoods, colored green and blue on HOLC maps, were upper class and racially homogenous. The lowest rating was provided to neighborhoods with old housing stock or with even a small proportion of black residents. These areas were colored red. Though HOLC insured a relatively small number of loans, its neighborhood appraisal standards were adopted by the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration, which insured mortgages against default, making lending largely risk-free. With “redlined” neighborhoods ineligible for such loans, federal policies provided massive subsidies to suburbanization and helped ensure that new housing developments were overwhelmingly white.\(^6\)

Collective action by residents kept urban neighborhoods and suburbs white. In Chicago and Detroit, working-class residents forcefully resisted the incursion of African Americans into


their neighborhoods in the 1940s and 1950s, well before the white backlash of the late 1960s. African Americans who crossed invisible neighborhood boundaries or bought in all-white suburbs often became victims of violence. Homeowners also used racially restrictive covenants – contractual agreements banning the sale or rental of property to non-white individuals – to maintain neighborhood racial homogeneity. Though the Supreme Court found such covenants unconstitutional in *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948, one Detroit company, the Burton Abstract and Title Company, continued using covenants in real estate contracts as late as 1969. Many new developments, such as Levittown, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia, continued selling to whites only.

This suburban history necessitates viewing the battles over metropolitan school desegregation as part of an ongoing process of city-building. As historians Robert Self and Matthew Lassiter have noted, suburbanites did not merely flee the city. Material and ideological incentives such as commuter highways, suburban job opportunities, lower taxes, and better schools pulled white homeowners. But flee many did, whether from urban uprisings, racially transitioning urban neighborhoods, or urban school desegregation. Suburban city-building

---


ensured that fleeing whites could expect to find well-funded schools and racially homogenous communities. Once ensconced in suburbia, few evidenced a desire for metropolitan consolidation, preferring to bask in the superior services that a stronger suburban tax base could provide. In tandem with a renewed civil rights challenge in the 1960s and 1970s, suburbanites elaborated what historian Kevin Kruse has called the “politics of suburban secession,” guarding against initiatives such as regional planning or metropolitan government that could entangle their communities and their schools with a racially distinct central city. Though municipal boundary lines were not typically drawn according to race in the North, through both public and private action they came to embody racial divisions and became tools for perpetuating racialized spatial inequality.

As metropolitan integration efforts led suburbanites to emphasize their distinctiveness from the city, they also made clear the limits of suburban reform. Even in Massachusetts, the only state to vote Democratic in the 1972 presidential election, suburban enthusiasm for voluntary integration waned in the face of urban demands for mandatory metropolitan desegregation. In Michigan, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), a voluntary regional planning body whose purview did not include education, witnessed extensive suburban opposition and rejection motivated largely by fears of metropolitan desegregation. As tactical metropolitanist urbanites served as the face of metropolitan reform and proposed self-interested remedies to spatialized inequality, suburbanites increasingly erected barriers, defeating a broad range of metropolitan initiatives.

---

Suburbanites had long opposed metropolitan government and annexation and the very existence of autonomous suburbs reflected success in avoiding both. Though efforts at metropolitan governance met little success prior to the 1960s, historians have noted that the 1960s and the mid-1970s marked the period of this kind of metropolitanism’s defeat. Historians’ reasons for this defeat range widely, from black leaders not wanting to dilute newly won political power in cities experiencing white flight to academic “public choice theory” professing the superiority of decentralized government. Historian Andrew Highsmith argues that the defeat of metropolitanism as a governing and economic strategy entailed a more localized “suburban capitalism,” valuing racial segregation and metropolitan fragmentation, beating “metropolitan capitalism,” an economic ethos resting on suburban manufacturing and efficient regional government capable of reducing production costs. Writing of battles over metropolitan government in Flint, Michigan just prior to the metropolitan moment in education, Highsmith adds that some suburbanites were attracted to suburban capitalism because they feared that “annexation would somehow facilitate the integration of suburban schools and neighborhoods.”

These suburbanites were actually correct. By the time of the metropolitan moment, logical fears of mandatory integration motivated anti-metropolitanism. In the context of a finding of de jure segregation, which required remedies affecting the entire district, annexation or metropolitan government would result in school integration. Suburbanites articulated a defense of suburban sovereignty in the context of metropolitan school desegregation proposals that seemed imminent and were very nearly realized. Though black nationalists opposed metropolitan solutions because of the inherent racism of positing black students as a problem that needed to be

---

13 Highsmith, *Demolition Means Progress*, 143.
dispersed and the potential for losing political power in predominantly white districts, the far more numerous population of white suburbanites ensured metropolitanism’s legislative defeat through a politics of suburban secession strengthened in response to radical metropolitan civil rights demands. Ultimately, the *Milliken* precedent joined with suburban secessionist politics to ensure the continuation of municipal fragmentation. The fragmented political and service structure of these metropolises not only reflects the longstanding desire to preserve the financial privileges arising from suburban independence, it also represents the physical manifestation of suburban fears of metropolitan desegregation.

With debates over metropolitan school desegregation entailing a contestation over the future of American metropolitan areas, maintaining the exclusivity of many suburbs and the spatialized inequality characteristic of most Northern metropolitan areas required beating back challenges to the supremacy of municipal decentralization. A different outcome in *Milliken* would have represented a fundamental challenge of this nature. Though powerless to confront ongoing deindustrialization and the economic flight of jobs out of the city, it would have resulted in vastly different metropolitan areas, where suburban residence did not entail attendance of segregated white schools and urban residence did not have to condemn most children to an inferior education in largely impoverished schools.

Urbanites pushing for metropolitan desegregation, recognizing the increasing separation of city and suburb, functioned as reformers seeking to reaffirm the central city’s place at the top of the metropolitan hierarchy at a time when it had never been less powerful. Never mind that exclusive residences clustered on greater Philadelphia’s Main Line, in Brookline, surrounded on three sides by Boston, or the Grosse Pointes, or that suburban employment centers could conceivably surpass the old central business districts. Urbanites positioned the city as the true
center of a vast interconnected region. And when it came to integration, they argued, residents of that region should be subject to the same rules.

That these proposals for metropolitan desegregation came from a wide and unexpected segment of the population forces a reconsideration of narrow conceptions of the metropolitan reformer. Frozen in Progressive Era representations, the reformer figure calls to mind a white-collar member of the middle class who values efficiency and order and who seeks to reform the waste of parochial urban politics. In addition to businesspeople, metropolitan reformers are said to include academics and professional planners engaging in the related efforts of urban renewal and metropolitan planning.14 This representation dominates urban history. Andrew Highsmith’s study of Flint, Michigan, though incorporating diverse actors, positions General Motors in its quest for regional business efficiency as the primary fighter against metropolitan political fragmentation.15 Jon Teaford notes that metropolitan government is typically supported by metropolitan businesspeople who reside in the suburbs but whose business activities are entwined with the central city. Teaford argues that metropolitanism emerged from the efforts of “the elite, the most articulate, the most powerful, and the most learned in the city.”16 Historians speak of such urban reformers, whether urban renewal advocates or metropolitanists, as “the best and brightest,” echoing the claims of conventional reformers of the age such as the Committee for Economic Development, an organization of academics and business leaders that defined reformers as “enlightened business and civic leaders” seeking efficient and productive

15 Highsmith, Demolition Means Progress.
16 Teaford, City and Suburb, 151, 170.
government. From existing scholarship emerges an unchanging vision of the sources of reform from the Progressive Era onward, even as downtown’s decline and the continuing flight of jobs and residents to the suburbs made both metropolitanism and urban renewal more urgent.

Within both urban renewal and metropolitanist efforts, expert leadership often marginalized grassroots reform, even as opportunities for citizen participation in urban planning accelerated in the 1960s. Boston’s 1960s Washington Park urban renewal project, for example, engaged community representatives but ultimately reflected the efforts of local elite and business concerns to reduce suburban flight and economic disinvestment rather than the aims of the area’s low-income residents. Urbanist Andrew M. Busch notes that “for most of its history, urban planning has been used as a means for the powerful to reorganize space to fit their interests,” a trend that continued at the same time that planners cultivated new opportunities for community representatives to collaborate in the 1960s. Despite this democratization, both planning and its scholarship remained distinctly elite. Rather than crediting civil rights challenges, community activism, or Great Society programs requiring the maximum feasible participation of the poor for accelerating citizen engagement in planning, Busch points to the influence of French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s 1968 essay “Right to the City” on planners themselves. Though civil rights activists are increasingly entering metropolitan scholarship as alternate agents of reform, there is little hint of reactionary urbanites functioning as anything more than foils to metropolitan planning.

This is not to suggest that classical reformers did not matter to the metropolitan moment. The metropolitanists consulted with, and built on the work of, enlightened experts. Sometimes, the experts and the metropolitanists were one and the same. Philadelphia Board of Education President Richardson Dilworth was a reformer *par excellence*, linking municipal boosterism and arguments of efficiency in proposing metropolitan desegregation. So too was Ed Logue, Boston’s Redevelopment Authority administrator, who proposed a modest metropolitan plan that would send urban middle-schoolers from segregated schools to suburban ones. Civil rights groups and tactical metropolitanists in all three cities looked to academics to buttress their metropolitanism. In Philadelphia, both the Urban League and the Fellowship Commission advocated for educational parks, a campus-style collection of multiple schools designed to aid integration that first gained currency in academic circles for their desegregative potential.20 In crafting their metropolitan desegregation plan, Detroit’s CCBE reached out to local academics to produce the final product. But the CCBE’s decision to embrace metropolitanism was its own and made without consulting academics. It found academics necessary for the metropolitan idea’s presentation, not its genesis. Boston’s tactical metropolitanists, though condemning Judge W. Arthur Garrity’s reliance on academic experts in designing Boston’s Phase II busing plan, nevertheless looked to sociologist James Coleman for support of their opposition to intra-city busing alone. But when Coleman proposed allowing urban children to choose to attend suburban schools, he echoed solutions first devised by Boston’s metropolitanists without the assistance of social scientists.

Throughout the metropolitan moment, tactical metropolitanists offered the farthest-reaching solutions to segregation, precisely because they aimed to disperse as many black pupils throughout the metropolis as possible. When they reached out to academics, tactical metropolitanists typically did so in support of ideas formed out of their own self-interest, not from abstruse studies or a general belief in the theoretical efficiency of metropolitan consolidation. Like the civil rights reformers who consciously made segregation a metropolitan issue, the representatives of white, working-class neighborhoods who embraced tactical metropolitanism crafted alternative visions for the future of the metropolis and should be recognized as important voices of metropolitan reform. They should not be understood merely as defenders of the status quo.

Where historians have been comfortable looking to figures like Dilworth and Logue as metropolitan reformers, they present reactionary local politicians and neighborhood groups as impediments to change. Standing against reformers are figures like Philadelphia’s Mayor Frank Rizzo and Boston’s Louise Day Hicks, representatives of a parochial white racial backlash. But civil rights challenges provoked a reformist impulse from within reactionary white urban politics. No friend to black Philadelphians, Rizzo, given broad powers to remake the Philadelphia Board of Education by the city’s Home Rule Charter, appointed successive Board superintendents who echoed Dilworth’s metropolitan solutions. Though Hicks never embraced metropolitanism, her refusal placed her in the minority on the Boston School Committee. For a decade prior to busing, the Committee embraced metropolitan solutions, first with the aim of defeating intra-city integration but eventually in a fashion offering a potentially productive

---

remedy to segregation. And from Detroit’s profoundly reactionary CCBE, a group first organized against modest school reform, emerged the most audacious challenge to unequal education.

Few fit the reformist archetype worse than John J. Kerrigan, a Boston School Committee member who owed his political career to the white ethnic loyalty of Boston’s Irish-Catholic voters and who embraced the spoils of political patronage. Yet throughout Boston’s desegregation controversy, Kerrigan proposed tactical programs of metropolitan desegregation and agitated for reform from a more prominent position than could suburban elites, academics, or urban planners. In aiming to maintain a white middle-class population in the city, Kerrigan’s motivations conformed with those of conventional reformers like Ed Logue, whose urban renewal efforts aimed to attract white residents to the city. James Baldwin’s famous quip that “urban renewal… means Negro removal” could also apply to tactical metropolitanism.22

This history provides lessons for metropolitan reformers in the present moment. The “metropolitics” movement, of which Minnesota politician Myron Orfield and former Albuquerque mayor David Rusk are prominent leaders, seeks to unite the “unfavored three-quarters” of the metropolis – the central cities and older, declining suburbs – in order to build political coalitions to push for metropolitan reform.23 Emphasizing efficiency and racial and economic justice, metropolitics combines the urban class-based arguments made during the metropolitan moment with traditional reform arguments. Though little has been written about school politics from a metropolitan perspective, Rusk notes that larger school districts foster integration while smaller ones perpetuate segregation.24 Yet while Orfield, Rusk, and others

emphasize cooperation and self-interested alliances in the legislative realm, the metropolitan moment reveals that the most radical challenges to spatialized inequality occurred in the courtroom and did not translate successfully to electoral politics. Only in the courtroom did educational metropolitanism have a chance to get around both suburban anti-metropolitanism and white opposition to mandatory integration. White Detroiters were free to support metropolitan desegregation in court at the same time that they voted for segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace in Michigan’s 1972 Democratic Presidential Primary. While seeking a radical redistribution of metropolitan educational resources, urban white tactical metropolitanists were simultaneously part of the nation’s bipartisan rightward political shift, along with the white suburbanites who opposed their metropolitanism. While metropolitics has gained small victories in revenue-sharing, so long as minority residence remains overwhelmingly urban and the suburban population dwarfs that of the nation’s central cities, political alliances dedicated to eradicating racialized spatial inequality are unlikely to emerge. Even at the height of the desegregation controversy, metropolitanism failed to move very far beyond the courtroom.

Antibusing politics, however, went national, contributing to America’s rightward shift. Historians have crafted two dominant explanations of the role played by race in the rise of the right in American political life. The first is the suburbanization thesis, largely focused on the Sunbelt and emphasizing an ostensibly colorblind and meritocratic politics that rested on structural racism rather than individual bigotry. In contrast, the backlash thesis focuses on the Republican Party’s southern strategy and an often-coded individual racism. According to backlash explanations, George Wallace and 1964 Republican nominee Barry Goldwater served as harbingers of an explicitly racialized politics that ultimately succeeded in the Nixon and Reagan administrations.
The backlash thesis holds that the Republican Party used racial appeals to attract white ethnic voters in the Northeast and Midwest and hold the South. As historian Dan T. Carter writes, “In Barry Goldwater’s vote against the Civil Rights Bill of 1964, in Richard Nixon’s subtle manipulation of the busing issue, in Ronald Reagan’s genial demolition of affirmative action… the Wallace music played on.”

Writing of the white ethnic working-class community of Canarsie, Jonathan Rieder emphasizes the role of residential proximity to African Americans in accounting for white racism. For Canarsie’s residents, nearby African Americans meant that integration was not a distant abstraction. This proximity helps explain Canarsie’s stronger reliance on racism and its attraction to extremist right-wing politicians when confronted with integration.

Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall argue that the interrelated issues of race and taxes accounted for the rise of the right in the 1960s and 1970s. According to the Edsalls, as the civil rights movement increasingly pushed for redistributive measures and became associated with the Democratic Party, Northern ethnic whites and white Southern populists responded to a racialized strategy that emphasized the costs of redistributive programs that benefited minorities. It was in the 1960s, these historians argue, that the New Deal coalition fell apart on the minefield of race.

---

These historians’ focus on the 1960s as the transformational decade in the decline of New Deal liberalism and the rise of the right should not obscure the deep roots of the racial fissures within the Democratic Party. Though concurring with historians Carter, Rieder, and the Edsalls on the primary importance of race, historians Thomas Sugrue, Arnold Hirsch, and Becky Nicolaides note the racist opposition of Northern and Western working-class whites, firmly planted in the New Deal coalition, to housing integration in the 1940s and 1950s. This opposition limited the Democrats’ commitment to civil rights and continued to cement segregation in the metropolitan environment. White Detroit resisted wartime housing for black defense workers during World War II and founded scores of neighborhood associations – at least 192 between 1943 and 1965 – that employed openly segregationist tactics to keep neighborhoods entirely white. These neighborhood associations mattered during the metropolitan moment. It was through Detroit’s neighborhood associations that the CCBE first mobilized to recall integrationist Detroit Board of Education members from office, ultimately sparking the legal challenge that paved the way for the CCBE’s metropolitan transformation.

In contrast to backlash explanations, the suburbanization thesis argues that rapid suburbanization and the shift of economic might away from the blue-collar and heavily unionized Rust Belt accounts for the conservative ascendancy. According to Lassiter, America tracked rightward not because the United States became more Southern, but because it was

---

becoming more suburban. Throughout the nation emerged “a bipartisan ethos of private-property values, individual taxpayer rights, children’s educational privileges, family residential security, consumer freedom of choice, and middle-class racial innocence” that portrayed segregation as the result of economic competition rather than structural racism.\(^{32}\) This colorblind discourse and belief in racial innocence rested on hidden “structural mechanisms of exclusion that did not require individual racism by suburban beneficiaries in order to sustain white class privilege and maintain barriers of disadvantage facing urban minority communities.”\(^{33}\) Historian David Freund concurs, pointing to the centrality of government action in not only facilitating suburban growth but in popularizing the myth that government policies “did not contribute to new metropolitan patterns of inequality.” As policymakers claimed that the free market accounted for the massive growth of the suburbs, the suburban recipients of federal largesse agreed. Suburban exclusion, suburbanites argued, came from free market principles.\(^{34}\)

Just as no single factor can account for the rise of conservatism, the role of race in America’s rightward shift need not be simplified into a single political impulse. The arbitrary division between the suburbanization and white backlash explanations obscures how both racist and ostensibly colorblind arguments proved co-constitutive. Furthermore, the two explanations tend to look quite alike in their use of ostensibly colorblind language, suggesting that a considerable part of the divide between them rests on perceived rather than actual differences.\(^{35}\)

---


\(^{33}\) Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 4-5.


\(^{35}\) Historian Joseph Crespino argues that Strom Thurmond was both emblematic of the southern strategy and sunbelt conservatism, suggesting a need to unite the suburbanization and backlash theses. See Joseph Crespino, *Strom Thurmond’s America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2012).
Though known for uttering the line “Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation Forever!,” George Wallace lamented not using the term “states’ rights” in place of segregation to give his segregationist arguments a thin constitutional veneer. Wallace’s 1968 and 1972 national campaigns rarely engaged in explicitly racial language. In ostensibly colorblind harangues, Wallace railed against the federal courts for ordering “busing” and campaigned against “lawless street punks and demonstrators.” While suburban explanations portray the southern strategy as openly racist, backlash explanations such as Dan Carter’s emphasize the role of coded language rather than open racism. In contrast, suburban explanations require that historians take suburban colorblind rhetoric at face value, assuring readers that suburban opposition is “earnestly” colorblind. Given the inability of historians to psychoanalyze, this is unconvincing. Where historians correctly view states’ rights as a cover term for segregation, the colorblind discourse of homeowners’ rights similarly rested on a confrontation with redistributive civil rights remedies. Though unwilling to take working-class denials of racism at face value, historians have evidenced less doubt about the middle class, a segment of the population that has been more able to flee integration. The irony was that during the metropolitan moment, it was the racist urban white working class and its political representatives, not the colorblind suburban middle class, that proved most capable of envisioning solutions capable of combatting spatialized inequality. Metropolitan solutions, frequently emerging from white racism, recognized that racism not only transcended the boundaries of municipality and class, but formed the building blocks of the metropolitan environment through public and private discrimination and the preservation of suburban autonomy.

36 Carter, From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich, 1, 16.
37 The word “earnestly” appears multiple times in Freund’s “Marketing the Free Market,” for example.
Rediscovering the prominence of the metropolitan challenge shows that the suburban response to integration was not merely colorblind. Open racism and ostensibly colorblind arguments characterized the antibusing response in the three metropolitan areas examined here, and claims of colorblind opposition depended in part upon whitewashing overt racism. Racism was most obvious in working-class city neighborhoods where African Americans were proximate and where whites did not have the resources to flee an intra-city desegregation mandate. But racism was not limited to the white urban working class. It was visible in an elected suburban school official in greater Philadelphia describing integration as the spreading of cancer and in Wallace’s astonishing victory in the 1972 Michigan Democratic Primary, where he won every county in the state but one. Similarly, colorblind meritocratic appeals could be found in both working-class city neighborhoods and wealthy suburban ones.

The upheavals of the metropolitan moment helped form a bipartisan suburban ethos valuing racial and class exclusion under the guise of property rights. This suggests the need for what Lassiter has called “political history beyond the red-blue divide.” While school desegregation primarily benefited the Republican Party and wreaked havoc on the Democrats’ multi-racial constituency, it contributed to the Democrats’ rightward shift as well, with suburbanites leading the way. In Michigan, suburban Democrats repudiated the party’s commitment to busing and Macomb County Democrats released their own antibusing platform. In Massachusetts, suburban liberals helped to defeat new metropolitanist legislation that went beyond individualist and voluntary remedies, and suburbanites of both major parties grew increasingly opposed to extant programs of voluntary desegregation. With both Democrats and Republicans defending suburban class exclusion, racial privilege, and homeowners’ rights,

---

38 Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide,” 760-764.
consensus marked suburban responses to mandatory metropolitanism. Residence proved more formative than party affiliation.

In pushing suburbanites farther to the right, metropolitan initiatives revealed the inherent limitations of suburban liberalism in the context of redistributive civil rights challenges. Lily Geismer’s insightful account of Massachusetts suburban liberalism, Don’t Blame Us, argues that suburban liberals “supported racial integration so long as they did not have to use local tax dollars to pay for it, and the busing went in one direction and involved the placement of only a few minority students in each classroom.”39 According to Geismer, this shallow support withered in the face of a national recession, as suburbanites valued low taxes more than racial integration. Though suburban integrationism had long hinged on the integration being “free” in the sense that it did not affect local tax rates or threaten the material priorities of suburban liberals, revisiting the radical metropolitan proposals made by urbanites for a full decade prior to busing reveals that metropolitanism, more than taxation, oriented the suburban response to racial integration.

Increasing suburban opposition to integrationist legislation and extant voluntary desegregation efforts emerged in tandem with the threat of mandatory metropolitan integration, an outcome long predicted by tactical metropolitanists. Liberal suburbanites responded to integration in an environment where a majority of the Boston School Committee and many prominent Boston politicians urged metropolitan integration and in the context of Detroit’s radical challenge to suburban sovereignty. The increasing suburban opposition to both voluntary and mandatory integration can best be understood as a defense of suburban racial privileges against challenges capable of reshaping the political and educational structures of the metropolis.

Viewing school desegregation through a metropolitan lens likewise challenges dominant representations of desegregation busing as a local issue and broadens our understanding of the antibusing movement. The centrality of metropolitanism to Boston’s desegregation controversy is not revealed in its two most prominent historical treatments, J. Anthony Lukas’s *Common Ground* and Ronald P. Formisano’s *Boston Against Busing*. Nor does metropolitanism make an appearance in a recent *Journal of Urban History* issue devoted to “rethinking the Boston ‘busing crisis,’” which rethinks the controversy by leaving the suburbs out entirely.\(^{40}\) Formisano and Lukas at least provide hints of metropolitan activity, focusing on the anti-elite animus of many antibusers. Though wrongly excusing the racism of Charlestown High student Alice McGoff, Lukas captures McGoff’s anger that intra-city busing meant that desegregation was for whites unable to flee to the suburbs or pay private school tuition. Ultimately, Lukas argues that McGoff did not hate African Americans as much as she despised “the Yankees from the suburbs, who were just as out of touch with urban reality as she’d known they were.”\(^{41}\) Similarly, Formisano argues that allegations of racism come “easily to the lips of middle-class persons who live in the suburbs or college towns, or who if they live in urban retreats possess the resources enabling them to avoid sending their children to schools that are populated with the poor, working class, or black.”\(^{42}\)

Though Formisano and Lukas reveal antibusers’ anti-elite rhetoric, neither author grapples with the alternate metropolitan visions of desegregation articulated by urban whites, visions that emerged out of a racist desire to either defeat integration legislatively or preserve white racial majorities in desegregation plans. While focusing on antibusers’ anti-elite rhetoric,

---


\(^{41}\) Lukas, *Common Ground*, 468.

\(^{42}\) Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, xiv.
they ignore its productive aspects. Writing of metropolitan solutions, Formisano argues that the metropolitan “idea had not gained much of a foothold in Boston.”\(^4\) This is wrong. When compared to Detroit and Philadelphia, Boston witnessed the longest and most in-depth consideration of metropolitan solutions to desegregation. Metropolitanism was not peripheral to Boston’s protracted desegregation conflict or those in Detroit and Philadelphia; it was formative to the shape of the desegregation battles and to the grievances of ostensibly antibusing urbanites. Most antibusers, including Alice McGoff, were racist. But urban antibusers thought suburbanites were just as racist as city dwellers. As suburbanites successfully resisted being included in mandatory desegregation, they seemed to confirm the suspicions of urban whites. Not just devoted to their particular turf, antibusers’ anti-suburban grievances rested upon seeing themselves as part of an interconnected metropolitan whole.

Whether or not busing proceeded on a metropolitan basis accounted for its success or failure, making a metropolitan lens necessary when discussing school desegregation and its limits. Neglecting metropolitanism, historian Matthew Delmont places the blame for busing’s failure on the news media, arguing that it created a moral false equivalency between civil rights advocates and their opponents and uncritically accepted segregationists’ framing of the issue as “busing” rather than integration. Delmont suggests that if only the news coverage was more pro-busing, busing might have succeeded.\(^4\) Though the media matters to this story, it alone cannot explain the failure of busing in the three metropolitan areas. In Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia, school desegregation failed because preserving suburban municipal sovereignty meant that

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 229.

\(^{44}\) Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016). *Why Busing Failed* misses the metropolitan argument entirely. It paints the Boston School Committee as opposed to all forms of desegregation, including METCO. On the contrary, the Committee sought to co-opt METCO as proof of its own desegregation efforts and consistently proposed expanding the program exponentially in order to meet the requirements of the Racial Imbalance Act.
desegregation did not affect residents equally. Though diverse actors attacked the artificial boundaries separating cities and suburbs, *Milliken* ensured that desegregation would be largely confined to the nation’s central cities.\(^{45}\) But busing itself did not fail entirely. As Lassiter and Ansley Erickson demonstrate, busing possessed an “ambivalent legacy.” In metropolitan areas such as Charlotte and Nashville, where school districts coincided with county boundaries rather than city borders, busing involved a larger number of area schools and limited the possibilities for white flight. School desegregation was framed as “busing” in Boston and in Charlotte, but in Charlotte busing crossed municipal boundaries and succeeded in mitigating flight and maintaining stable levels of integration.\(^{46}\)

Though all three cities faced school desegregation orders, none achieved integration. In Detroit and Philadelphia, school desegregation proceeded with an already black-majority student body that stood in marked contrast to regional demographics and the racial composition of suburban schools. Both cities demonstrated the folly of trying to integrate using only a population that was itself segregated in the metropolitan context. In Boston, a city with a much smaller black population, intra-city desegregation busing accelerated white flight and quickly produced a majority black and impoverished school system.

In light of all three cities’ resegregated schools that are attended almost uniformly by impoverished and minority students, it is worth revisiting these metropolitan proposals. Often conceived in white racism and prone to viewing black students as a problem population that needed to be dispersed, such metropolitan plans also held possibilities for meaningful racial and

\(^{45}\) Following *Milliken*, two-way metropolitan busing proceeded only in Louisville, Kentucky, and Wilmington, Delaware, while Indianapolis, Indiana inaugurated a one-way busing program. For more on how the Wilmington case met the *Milliken* precedent, see Brett Gadsden, *Between North and South: Delaware, Desegregation, and the Myth of American Sectionalism* (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

\(^{46}\) Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 9; Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis*, 5.
socioeconomic integration. Viewing school desegregation through a metropolitan lens allows for a broadened understanding of the continuing process of city-building, the history of metropolitan reform, urban history, and civil rights. It complicates our understanding of America’s bipartisan rightward shift, demonstrating the importance of residence in shaping political activity in the judicial realm and race and the politics of homeownership in the legislative one, while revealing the persistence of white racism in both challenging and maintaining municipal fragmentation. The metropolitan moment’s defeat helps explain the extreme disparities between central cities and their suburbs and the continuing absence of efficient metropolitan solutions to a wide array of metropolitan problems.

*****

The bulk of *The Metropolitan Moment* examines the emergence of metropolitan challenges to school segregation in the Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. Chapter One focuses on Boston, tracing how a newly energized black freedom movement challenged the city’s segregated schools and made school segregation a metropolitan issue. Through a black bootstraps effort, activists mobilized a statewide constituency against segregated education and succeeded in passing integrationist legislation and inaugurating voluntary busing programs. While black Boston created a metropolitan ethos that rested on legal compulsions for Boston and incentives for voluntary suburban integration, the Boston School Committee responded to this metropolitan activity by elaborating its tactical metropolitan strategy, one that aimed primarily to weaken suburban legislative support for integration. Only secondly did its tactical metropolitanism aim to ensure that desegregation, should it proceed, would affect the metropolis equally.

Chapter Two focuses on the ascendency of the Boston School Committee’s tactical metropolitanism strategy. While resisting intra-city desegregation, the Committee sought to
coopt voluntary metropolitan desegregation programs and continued demanding mandatory metropolitan desegregation. Its persistent refusal to undertake meaningful intra-city desegregation and its clear segregationist acts ensured that schools would be desegregated by court-ordered busing, making the Committee’s proposed metropolitan remedies all the more urgent.

Together, these two chapters force a reconsideration of the Boston busing controversy. Moving beyond the opposition to any desegregation of figures such as School Committee member Louise Day Hicks, the chapters reveal that the Committee was dominated by tactical metropolitanists. Focusing exclusively on Hicks and the violence which accompanied busing misses these crucial planning years in which school segregation and its remedies were conceived of in a metropolitan fashion.

Chapter Three travels to Philadelphia, revealing three distinct constituencies for metropolitan reform that emerged in sequence prior to *Milliken*: integrationist civil rights advocates, the Philadelphia Board of Education under classical reformer Richardson Dilworth, and the Board of Education produced by the white backlash election of Frank Rizzo as mayor. Though the Philadelphia Urban League pushed for a radical rethinking of the city’s schools, metropolitan educational reform in Philadelphia was primarily a top-down process, as the city’s desegregation challenge was led by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) rather than a black plaintiff. The genteel interracial Fellowship Commission and Philadelphia Board of Education President Dilworth provided the strongest support for metropolitanism. Though the Board of Education’s conciliatory approach to black student protest contributed to Rizzo’s election, Dilworth’s metropolitan arguments remained the centerpiece of the Rizzo-era Board’s desegregation politics. Metropolitanism, whether as a means to dodge integration, valid response to the impossibility of successful intra-city desegregation, or honest desire to achieve
desegregation, characterized much of Philadelphia’s response to school desegregation, demonstrating the breadth of metropolitanist support.

Chapter Four reveals that Detroit’s most radical challenge to school segregation came not from its integrationist Board of Education or civil rights advocates, but from a reactionary anti-integrationist group that formed to oppose a small school desegregation plan. After the Board of Education produced a modest desegregation proposal, white opponents mobilized through Detroit’s longstanding neighborhood associations and created the Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE). One year later, following the NAACP’s filing of a desegregation lawsuit first known as *Bradley v. Milliken*, the CCBE reversed course and became the first party in the case to urge metropolitan desegregation, aiming to ensure that white children would still attend white majority schools. The plaintiff NAACP and defendant Detroit Board then joined the CCBE in pushing for metropolitan desegregation. In 1972, Judge Stephen J. Roth accepted their arguments and ordered the implementation of a metropolitan desegregation plan involving Detroit and fifty-three autonomous suburban school systems. Though radical in the courtroom, CCBE members’ legislative politics did not undergo a similar transformation. Outside of the courtroom, CCBE members migrated rightward along with their suburban counterparts.

Chapter Five travels to the Detroit suburbs, where suburban residents sought to reaffirm their suburban and sectional privilege in the face of Detroit’s metropolitan challenge. Arguing that Detroit’s schools were Detroit’s responsibility and that *de jure* segregation was confined to the South, suburbanites responded in ways indicative of both racial backlash and of an ostensibly colorblind discourse of rights. Consensus, more than conflict, characterized the suburban antibusing response, strengthening a bipartisan suburban secessionist politics guarding against links with Detroit.
In ruling against Detroit’s metropolitan remedy, the Supreme Court’s *Milliken v. Bradley* decision codified the suburban secessionist worldview. The final two chapters of “The Metropolitan Moment” consider the fate of metropolitanism post-*Milliken*. Chapter Six demonstrates how *Milliken*, by shunting metropolitanism to the legislature, posed an insurmountable barrier to its realization. As buses rolled in Phase I of Boston’s desegregation, the Boston School Committee continued pushing for legislative metropolitan solutions alongside its more well-known resistance to busing. In the legislative realm, Committee members and politicians forwarded workable metropolitan solutions that did not seek to evade Boston’s desegregation mandate – above all, the 1975 Daly-Sullivan Bill, which required affluent suburbs to reserve up to 10 percent of their classroom seats for Boston students. But, in a fashion long predicted by tactical metropolitanists, suburbanites defeated mandatory metropolitanism in the legislature and increasingly opposed endeavors linking their communities with Boston, including extant voluntary desegregation efforts. A newly sincere metropolitanism succumbed to the logic of tactical metropolitanism. When Boston’s Phase II busing decision confirmed that mandatory integration would be limited to Boston and maintained the disastrous pairing of poor black Roxbury and poor white South Boston, the School Committee embraced massive resistance alone, only now becoming the one-dimensional antagonists remembered by historians.

Chapter Seven returns to Detroit and Philadelphia, where majority-black school systems were legally required to desegregate within their district boundaries. Both cities were affected not only by *Milliken*, but by Boston’s massive resistance which undermined support of busing and made courts reluctant to order large-scale busing schemes. Together, *Milliken* combined with Boston’s busing controversy to dictate the limits of educational equality in Detroit and Philadelphia. In Detroit, anti-integrationist urbanites again trumpeted metropolitanism, but as an appeal to antibusing suburbanites to continue agitating for an antibusing constitutional
amendment. But suburbanites, secure in their post-*Milliken* world, evidenced little desire to aid antibusing Detroit whites or maintain connections with the city at all. Still fearing the possibility of metropolitan busing, suburbanites rejected attempts to strengthen the regional planning apparatus lest it bring their communities into a closer relationship with Detroit.

Philadelphia’s Board of Education, still arguing that intra-city desegregation could not succeed, continued demanding metropolitan solutions. When the Board of Education appealed the PHRC’s desegregation order, the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania ordered the PHRC to submit its own desegregation plan. The PHRC was unable to design a plan desegregating all of the city’s schools through intra-city measure alone. In response to this inability and aiming to avoid a busing controversy akin to Boston’s, the Commonwealth Court ruled in favor of a voluntary program of desegregation, one with provisions to reconsider the plan should it prove unsuccessful. It was unsuccessful, and the conflict between the PHRC and the Philadelphia Board of Education, already a decade old, continued for three more decades with the battle lines remaining essentially the same. As the Board’s lawyer said in 1994, in a statement that could have been made at any time since 1968, “if we don’t involve the suburban school districts, we will never be able to bring about desegregation in Philadelphia.”

The history of school desegregation in Northern metropolitan areas confirms this impossibility. Though the metropolitan moment has long ended, the inequalities that it was capable of remedying continue to persist.

*****

The battles over school desegregation in metropolitan Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia illuminate a history of metropolitan development, municipal reform, political realignment, and

---

civil rights that complicates our understanding of the antibusing movement. Far from unchanging one-dimensional opponents, urban antibusers traversed the surprisingly fluid boundary between integrationist and segregationist as it suited them. In one of the overlooked ironies of civil rights history, when faced with black demands for educational equality, the “antibusing” villains proved willing authors and supporters of radical structural solutions capable of addressing metropolitan inequality, mitigating white flight, and aligning with the efforts of integrationist civil rights advocates in court. It is a further irony that their plans involved a tremendous amount of busing.
Chapter 1
Envisioning School Desegregation in Metropolitan Boston, 1963-1966

Discussions of school integration in Boston typically bring to mind the failed intra-city busing plan that, beginning in its first phase in 1974, paired the black neighborhood of Roxbury with its poor white counterpart in South Boston. Facing extensive opposition both in Southie and other white neighborhoods, intra-city busing exacerbated white flight from Boston’s public schools, helping to create a situation where minority students outnumbered white students by 1975 in the majority white city’s public school system. In the aftermath of the busing controversy, historians and observers frequently suggested a mandated metropolitan solution to Boston’s school segregation – achieved either by consolidating metropolitan Boston’s school districts or through extensive two-way busing between the overwhelmingly white suburbs and the increasingly black city schools – would have helped both to minimize white flight and eliminate the continuing segregation of Boston’s schools within the metropolitan context. By incorporating the entire region in any plan for school desegregation, opponents of integration could not simply flee to the suburbs in order to escape the desegregation mandate. In making these claims, however, historians have either downplayed or neglected the extensive metropolitan thinking present in discussions of Boston’s school segregation since at least 1964 – a full decade prior to the beginning of busing mandated by the Morgan v. Hennigan school desegregation court case. Almost from the beginning of Boston’s desegregation controversy, integrationists and their opponents framed school segregation in the context of the metropolitan area as a whole.

Compared to Philadelphia and Detroit, Boston witnessed the longest and most widespread consideration of metropolitan solutions to school segregation. Boston’s metropolitanism occurred largely because of the intransigence of its discriminatory School
Committee, which led civil rights activists to seek out suburban allies and make desegregation a metropolitan issue. This metropolitanism is largely missing from the Boston historiography, including the two best books on the Boston busing controversy, J. Anthony Lukas’s *Common Ground* and Ronald Formisano’s *Boston Against Busing*.¹ Though *Boston Against Busing* argues that antibusing opinion spanned a far more diverse spectrum of opinions than those represented by Louise Day Hicks’s organization Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR), formed over a decade after the beginning of the desegregation controversy, when it comes to metropolitanism Formisano largely neglects his own argument.²

J. Anthony Lukas similarly focuses on Louise Day Hicks, ignoring that Hicks’s consistent opposition to all busing – including metropolitan solutions – placed her in the minority of the Boston School Committee. As does Formisano, Lukas reveals a belief in the desirability of a metropolitan solution. Though Lukas laments an apparent lack of black support for a metropolitan solution during Boston’s major desegregation court case, *Morgan v. Hennigan*, in the early 1970s, the book does not delve into the long history of metropolitan planning that well


predated the case.\(^3\) Lukas’s work also drew criticism for neglecting much of the early black struggle for better education. Ruth Batson, who led the NAACP’s initial charge against the Boston School Committee in 1963 complained that *Common Ground* “completely leaves out the struggle that was carried out for so many years by black activists in Boston.”\(^4\) Beginning an analysis of Boston’s school desegregation with the efforts of the black community accurately portrays the origins of both the push for educational equality in Boston and the emergence of metropolitan solutions to segregation.

In making school desegregation a metropolitan issue, Boston blazed a path that would be followed in Detroit and Philadelphia. In these three cities and beyond, civil rights advocates fought against segregation and grew to articulate a tentative metropolitanism that placed school segregation in its metropolitan context. Their advocacy led to clear civil rights gains, whether in the form of integrationist legislation, judicial orders, or — unique to Boston — programs of voluntary metropolitan desegregation. These gains pushed recalcitrant reactionaries to articulate their own, more wide-reaching metropolitan demands for desegregation. Reactionary metropolitan demands entailed a valid recognition of metropolitan spatial inequality but, as clearly seen in Boston, they often evidenced a desire to weaken integrationist legislation by prodding suburban opposition. More productively, tactical metropolitanism also functioned as a last resort aimed at preserving white majorities in local classrooms by including the predominantly white suburbs in remedies to segregation and could grow to be an important voice of metropolitan reform. But whether resisting integration or adopting integrationist rhetoric and


making tactical metropolitan appeals, the preservation of white majority classrooms remained the animating focus of urban white reactionaries.

The metropolitan discourse emerged because of black demands for civil rights. The Boston Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) first attacked Boston’s school segregation in 1963. When faced with an NAACP demand that the Boston School Committee acknowledge a situation of de facto segregation in its schools, the Committee rebuffed the charge and reaped political benefits. In response, Boston’s civil rights advocates looked to the suburbs for support. They found it. In 1964, a “Freedom Stayout” of Boston’s schools attracted considerable urban and suburban participation. This urban-suburban civil rights alliance produced results, leading to the state’s Racial Imbalance Act, which required the Boston School Committee to integrate its schools or else lose state funding, and the voluntary Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) program, which voluntarily bused black students from Boston to willing suburban school systems with available seats. In their activism, Boston’s black civil rights advocates and their suburban allies articulated the first of Boston’s two metropolitan streams, one resting on legal compulsions for the central city and financial incentives for voluntary suburban participation. Though some suburban civil rights advocates supported two-way busing or a metropolitan school district, this metropolitan stream ultimately avoided challenging the sovereignty of independent suburban school systems and did not seek to mandate suburban participation in a remedy. 5 Though resting on cross-system cooperation, its commitment to voluntary measures allowed for continued suburban autonomy in educational matters.

5 For a discussion of METCO’s early ambiguity on whether it aimed to become a metropolitan school district, see Chapter Two. See also: Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 81.
Boston’s openly discriminatory School Committee developed the second metropolitan stream as part of its strategy to weaken suburban support for the Racial Imbalance Act. Prominent members of the Boston School Committee argued that white flight made impossible any intra-city solution to school segregation. Viewing the metropolis as an interconnected whole, they argued that the suburbs should be required to participate in any plan to “racially balance” Boston’s schools. This tactical metropolitanism, aimed primarily at eroding suburban support of the Racial Imbalance Act, nevertheless pointed to clear inequalities between urban and suburban schools and challenged the exclusion of minorities from suburbia. At the very moment that the Committee began wrapping itself in the segregationist mantra of “neighborhood schools,” it simultaneously challenged that concept by calling for metropolitan solutions to school segregation, and by proposing a dramatic expansion of METCO because it would entail a reduction of black students in the city’s schools. Though the Committee did not yet seriously hope for mandatory metropolitan solutions, this metropolitan stream rested upon the threat of mandatory suburban participation. Though reactionary, tactical metropolitanism constituted a potentially radical solution, one targeting funding inequities between the city and its wealthier suburbs and challenging the validity of the municipal boundaries that allowed virtually all-white suburbs to plead innocent to segregation. While aiming to beat back the rising tide of integration, tactical metropolitanism nevertheless contained potential seeds of metropolitan reform.

In these early stages of the Boston school desegregation controversy, the voluntary metropolitan stream dominated discussions and it alone provided consistently productive solutions to school desegregation. In contrast, the Committee’s tactical metropolitanism transparently aimed to defeat integrationist legislation. The Committee’s simultaneous commitment to defending urban segregation while challenging metropolitan segregation
indicated a do-nothing, blame-shifting approach to educational inequality. If the suburbs wanted integration, a consistent majority of the Committee argued, let the suburbs do the integrating.

Far from being an afterthought, the metropolitan discourse was central to the Boston desegregation controversy from its beginning as activists and their opponents grappled with potential remedies capable of addressing metropolitan educational inequality. When Boston’s civil rights advocates first looked to the suburbs for support, the future of metropolitan education and of municipal autonomy became entwined in debates over Boston’s segregation.

“Freedom Stayouts” and Suburban Allies

The metropolitan framework, though it would grow to be most associated with tactical urban white opponents of desegregation, emerged from the efforts of black Bostonians. On June 11, 1963 the Boston chapter of the NAACP, declaring its goals to be “First Class Citizenship,” delivered a statement to the Boston School Committee charging the Committee with operating segregated schools. Although it accused the Committee of de facto segregation, as opposed to de jure, it quoted the Supreme Court’s rationale in the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision concerning de jure segregation to argue that the effects of each type of segregation were identical. The NAACP argued that “there can be no misinterpretation” of the Court’s language when it declared that “separation of children solely on the basis of race generates a feeling of inferiority that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” The NAACP believed that the “best possible education” could not be possible in a segregated
context, reasoning that “inadequate educational standards, unequal facilities and discriminatory practices exist wherever there is school segregation.”

Ruth Batson, who in 1951 became the first black person in the twentieth century to run for a position on the Boston School Committee, delivered the NAACP’s demands. In her 1951 campaign, Batson did not run on a civil rights platform – her main proposals included a hot lunch program, the replacement of inadequate facilities, and better conditions for teachers. Her campaign materials primarily drew on the fact that she was a mother, though her visual materials always included a picture of herself, often accompanied by her three daughters – her blackness visibly setting her apart from the Irish Catholics whose dominance of the Committee was aided by the city’s at-large elections that privileged the majority population. Though she failed to become a member of the Committee, Batson’s civil rights career quickly took off in the weeks following the election. While on the phone with a white friend from another neighborhood, Batson heard the friend mention their child’s science project, prompting Batson to wonder why her own daughter had never mentioned one. The reason was simple: the predominantly black school Batson’s daughter attended did not have a science project. After complaining to the teacher and the principal, within a few weeks Batson noticed her daughter working on a science project. Batson’s pride in this development disappeared once her daughter complained that she could not understand why she was the only student to be assigned such a project. Batson quickly went to the NAACP to report this. Although she felt that the NAACP’s response lacked

---

6 Hearing to NAACP, June 11, 1963, box: 1, folder: School Committee: Hearing to NAACP, School Committee Secretary Desegregation Files, City of Boston Archives and Records Center (hereafter: “SCSD”).
enthusiasm, that same day she received a call from the president of the Association asking her to chair its new Public School Committee.\textsuperscript{8}

Though the city’s public schools had little to brag about – fourth-grade citywide averages in reading and arithmetic scored fifteen points below national averages – the poorest conditions were typically found in black schools.\textsuperscript{9} A 1963 Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) study revealed that only one new school opened in predominantly black Roxbury in the previous thirty years and that over half of Roxbury’s school buildings were over sixty years old, well over the citywide percentage. The study also demonstrated that aside from one item, instructional budget per pupil expenditures in black majority districts lagged behind the city average. Black teachers were also barely represented among the system’s 3,000 teachers, numbering fewer than forty despite the city’s approximately 10 percent black population in 1963.\textsuperscript{10}

Though its rhetorical focus on the neighborhood school asserted that residential patterns were the cause of racial variances within the schools, the Committee also engineered segregation, creating a dual school system where identifiably black and white schools possessed different grade structures. By 1970-71, minority children constituted 71 percent of the enrollment in schools with a grade structure of K-5, 6-8, 9-12 or K-8, 9-12. In the K-6, 7-9, 10-12 stream, white students accounted for 76 percent of all pupils.\textsuperscript{11} This dual system largely prevented black children who began in a predominantly black elementary school from transferring to a predominantly white one at the junior high level.

\textsuperscript{8} Ruth Batson Civil Rights Documentation Project Interview Transcript, box: 1, folder: 1, RB.
\textsuperscript{9} Robert Levey, “The Dilemma of Boston Schools: The Declining State of Public Education in Boston and the Challenge Facing the School Administration,” box: 1, folder: 33, Phyllis M. Ryan Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University (hereafter: “PMR”).
\textsuperscript{10} CORE Press Release, Spring 1963, box: 1, folder: 33, PMR.
\textsuperscript{11} “Plaintiffs’ Partial Particularization of Claims,” Morgan v. Hennigan, box: 1, folder: Desegregation File Apr-Jun 1972, SCSD.
To remedy the segregation within the Boston system, the NAACP presented a list of demands, including those for visual classroom aids representing “people of all races,” in-service training for faculty, and the rezoning of attendance boundaries for integration. It also called for a review of the schools’ open enrollment policy, which in practice allowed white students to leave increasingly black schools. The School Committee agreed to study these requests. However, the Committee refused the most important NAACP demand, that it acknowledge the existence of *de facto* segregation in its schools. School Committee member William O’Connor explained his opposition by arguing that should the Committee admit the existence of *de facto* segregation, it “may be forced to do something about it.”

In the face of the Committee’s intransigence, Boston’s civil rights advocates banded together as the Massachusetts Freedom Movement and held a “Freedom Stayout” of Boston’s public schools on June 18. Students who boycotted Boston’s schools for the day could attend alternate freedom schools, where, according to the co-chairman of the Stayout, Canon James Breeden, students “will not be moving away from education but will be coming to be educated about the situation that they’re speaking out against.” The Stayout attracted an impressive roster of instructional participants, including Harvard professors, retired teachers, and Boston Celtics star Bill Russell. In contrast to its future efforts, the NAACP emphasized the essentially urban nature of the protest. According to Boston Branch President Thomas Atkins, the “people taking part in tomorrow’s demonstrations are Boston people,” not outsiders.

Following the Stayout, the NAACP continued to press the School Committee to acknowledge segregation. After rejecting a July 1963 petition from the NAACP to meet with it

---

12 Hearing to NAACP, 11 June 1963, SCSD.
14 Ibid; See also: Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us*, 73-76.
in order to continue discussions, the School Committee agreed to a meeting in August.\textsuperscript{15} At the August meeting, the NAACP sought to discuss \textit{de facto} segregation, which it now referred to as “racial imbalance” to soften the blow, and the methods to eliminate it. In response, the Committee refused to acknowledge racial imbalance by a vote of four to one. The meeting ended after roughly fifteen minutes. Ruth Batson concluded that the only reason the Committee agreed to meet with the NAACP “was to attempt to publicly discredit the work that the NAACP has been doing with the Boston Public Schools.”\textsuperscript{16}

The Committee did aim to publicly discredit the NAACP, and it reaped political rewards in the process. Responding to an NAACP sit-in at School Committee headquarters on September 5, Committee Chairwoman Louise Day Hicks argued that the NAACP’s leadership “tragically damaged” black education and she pledged not to “bow down to this irresponsible type of leadership exercised by the NAACP.” Hicks’s confrontation with the NAACP turned her into an immensely popular figure among white Bostonians. In the November 1963 election, held after the confrontation with the NAACP, Hicks won an astonishing 74 percent of all votes cast, finishing first among all School Committee candidates and setting a record in Boston municipal elections. Her vote total surpassed that of the re-elected mayor, John Collins, by 20,000 votes.\textsuperscript{17} The election so rewarded race-baiting that William O’Connor, elected by his colleagues as incoming Chairman, declared in his inaugural speech that “we have no inferior education in our schools… what we have been getting is an inferior type of pupil that we have been asked to cope with.”\textsuperscript{18} Meanwhile, Arthur Gartland, the only sitting Committee member to acknowledge \textit{de}

\textsuperscript{15} Press Release, Boston Branch NAACP, 24 July 1963, box: 1, folder: 33, PMR.
\textsuperscript{16} WGBH Radio Broadcast, “To Secure These Rights,” 24 February 1964, FH.
\textsuperscript{17} Lukas, \textit{Common Ground}, 129.
facto segregation and to receive the support of civil rights advocates, saw his share of the vote drop by 7 percent from the previous election. Two years later, Boston voted Gartland out of office.\textsuperscript{19}

With the elections demonstrating that the majority of white Boston voters clearly supported the School Committee, Boston’s civil rights advocates increasingly looked beyond Boston’s municipal borders for support, making school desegregation a metropolitan issue in the process. With plans for a second Freedom Stayout underway for February 1964, the Massachusetts Freedom Movement cultivated allies in Boston’s suburbs. Through its press secretary, Phyllis M. Ryan of suburban Brookline, the Freedom Movement trumpeted suburban involvement in the upcoming Stayout. The Stayout’s date of February 26, coinciding with suburban school vacations, likely aided suburban participation. Although activists portrayed the suburban school vacation period as a hindrance, it meant that suburban participants would not be required to boycott their own classes in their demonstration of solidarity. Support from the suburbs appeared broad, with twenty-three communities making definite plans for enrollment in Boston freedom schools two weeks prior to the Stayout.\textsuperscript{20} Suburban support typically emerged from suburban civil rights committees, such as the Weston Fair Housing Committee. “In order to provide Weston high school pupils with the opportunity to experience and see the problems of the segregated student,” the Weston group announced it would provide free transportation to Roxbury for suburban students interested in attending freedom schools.\textsuperscript{21} The Freedom Stayout’s Suburban Support Committee Chairman, Hubie Jones, spoke of being “overwhelmed by the support from suburbia,” though he noted this was the first evidence he had seen of suburban support.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 46.
\textsuperscript{20} Freedom Stay-Out Committee, Statement of Further Suburban Support of ‘Freedom Stayout,’ 12 February 1964, box: 3, folder: 19, PMR.
support for civil rights in Boston. Mindful of maintaining alliances going forward, the Freedom Movement granted charters to the suburban groups that participated in the Stayout. Announcing the issuing of the charters, Co-Chairman of the Freedom Movement, Noel Day, spoke of a “need for further dialogue and cooperative action for equality in the entire Commonwealth.”

On February 26, 1964, over 20,000 Boston public school students absented themselves from the Boston Public Schools, 22 percent of the total school population. More than 10,000 students attended one of the thirty-four freedom schools established for the day with 1,200 of those students coming from the suburbs. Attendance exceeded expectations, leading the Freedom Movement to quickly establish “overflow schools” to take the extra students. The total attendance marked a considerable uptick from the previous year, when only 8,260 students stayed out of the Boston Public Schools with roughly 3,000 attending freedom schools. The high participation occurred in spite of Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Owen Kiernan’s warning that anyone who encouraged a child to stay out of school could face a $50 fine and the position of Massachusetts Attorney General Edward Brooke, a black Republican, that the Freedom Stayout involved disrespecting the rule of law.

Three years later, with formalized links between black Boston and several suburban communities, Ruth Batson justified seeking support in the suburbs by noting that when whites form alliances “they go and they get the best brains and the most productive, the most motivated Negroes to form these alliances.” Lamenting class-based arguments that poor black and white Bostonians should have allied to fight against the School Committee, Batson stated, “I’m not


interested in forming any alliance with poor whites.” Batson declared her belief in a difference in the quality of character between poor whites and poor blacks, noting that in her old housing project black people maintained their homes while whites did not. But given the School Committee’s clear support throughout much of white Boston – especially in poor white areas such as Southie and Charlestown – few possible alliances with Boston’s poor whites would have presented themselves.

“Racial Imbalance” and the Birth of Tactical Metropolitanism

Suburban support for civil rights led to punitive legislation designed to racially balance Boston’s schools. Known as the Racial Imbalance Act, this legislation defined an imbalanced school as one with more than 50 percent “non-white” students and would withdraw state aid should the local authorities fail to remedy the situation. This law led otherwise segregationist urbanites to develop tactical metropolitan arguments that placed the city at the center of an interconnected metropolitan region and suggested the need for metropolitan desegregation. Boston’s tactical metropolitanists designed their arguments to erode suburban legislative support for the Racial Imbalance Act, but their proposals nevertheless contained productive seeds of metropolitan reform. In Boston, foreshadowing subsequent desegregation battles in Detroit, Philadelphia, and beyond, calls for radical metropolitan reform emerged from reactionary white urban politics.

The Freedom Stayout prodded state action. In March 1965, the State Board of Education and Commissioner Kiernan organized an advisory committee to undertake an independent study of “racial imbalance” throughout Massachusetts. The Kiernan Commission, as it came to be known, was charged with determining whether racial imbalance existed, if such imbalance

26 Ruth Batson Civil Rights Documentation Project Interview Transcript, box: 1, folder: 1, RB.
harmed pupil education, and, if found harmful, how to eliminate it. According to its final report, the membership of the Kiernan Commission “was comprised of experienced leaders in the fields of religion, government, business, industry, labor and the several professions. It is doubtful if a more distinguished membership could be found anywhere in America.” Perturbing the Boston School Committee, the heavily suburban Commission included no representatives from the educational staff of the Boston Public Schools and included an NAACP attorney.

Determining the existence of racial imbalance proved as simple as consulting the March 1964 school censuses. Declaring any school with more than 50 percent “non-white” pupils racially imbalanced, the Commission found fifty-five imbalanced schools in Massachusetts, forty-five of which were in Boston. Eight schools in Springfield, and one each in Medford and Cambridge rounded out the total. Overall, the findings demonstrated that the majority of Massachusetts’s black students attended predominantly black schools, while the majority of white students attended schools that were either entirely white or had fewer than five non-white children enrolled. In Boston itself, minority students accounted for only 23 percent of the total school enrollment. But over 50 percent of these minority students – 10,400 in total – were found in just twenty-five elementary schools and three junior high schools with non-white enrollments of over 81 percent. Echoing the findings of CORE and the NAACP, the Commission noted that the schools which enrolled majority black populations were typically the oldest. Previous Boston school superintendents had recommended that twenty-one of these schools be closed due to age and poor condition.

28 William T. O’Connor, Specific Comments on State Report of Racial Imbalance, box: 1, folder: 40, PMR.
29 Massachusetts State Board of Education, “Because it is Right – EDUCATIONALLY,” METCO.
Quoting the integrationist rationale of the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Commission stated that segregation could affect minority students’ “hearts and minds in a way likely never to be undone.” Racial imbalance, according to the Commission, told such children they were different and inferior. The Commission argued the harm extended to white children as well, as they would grow up in an imbalanced situation without the opportunity to meet African Americans on an individual level and be more prone to stereotyped thinking. Though the Supreme Court’s decision concerned *de jure* segregation and the Commission, refusing to assign blame, claimed to find only *de facto* segregation, the report echoed the NAACP’s claims when it noted that a “child cannot comprehend the subtle difference between illegal segregation in the South and racial imbalance in the North.”30 Whether *de jure* or *de facto*, the Commission argued, racial imbalance was harmful and needed to be eliminated.

Though defenses of “neighborhood schools” upheld the segregated status quo, they also entailed a realization that integrationist policy attacked the validity of neighborhood schools for the city but not the suburbs. The Kiernan Report unmistakably targeted the concept of neighborhood schools, but only in communities with a minority population high enough to produce imbalanced schools. The Report declared false the idea that neighborhood boundaries were sacrosanct, noting that frequent boundary changes occurred any time school boards redrew district lines due to overcrowding. Illustrative of its challenge to the concept of neighborhood schools, the Commission included a recommendation that the state establish educational parks, a cluster of multiple schools covering the same grade-span at one location designed to attract

30 Ibid.
students from beyond the immediate neighborhood – at the elementary level.\textsuperscript{31} Ending neighborhood schools and achieving racial balance required busing.

The body of the report refused to abandon the concept of the neighborhood school entirely, simply stating a preference for what it called “\textit{the broader neighborhood school}.” However, one of the Report’s six appendices, an article by sociologist and intergroup education advocate Jean D. Grambs, argued that “there appears little rationale for the neighborhood school.” Claiming that local schools interfered with the education of highly mobile families, Grambs argued asserted that “if local schools… are to be established as reasonable, then it must be made clear how and why this idea is \textit{educationally} useful.” Grambs found no such justification.\textsuperscript{32}

The publication of the Kiernan Report fed the emergence of Boston’s second metropolitan stream, one in which white Boston representatives sought to demonstrate suburban hypocrisy on civil rights by explicitly placing the Boston Public Schools in the metropolitan context. While the Kiernan Report challenged the validity of neighborhood boundaries, white Boston officials increasingly challenged the borders separating city from suburb. By doing so, they began a reactionary process ultimately capable of producing radical metropolitan solutions.

Boston Superintendent William Ohrenberger argued that the “problem of integrating people rests on the total community,” and claimed that the necessity for an open enrollment policy in Boston schools would be ended “once we adopt a policy of ‘Open Housing’ in every community in this state.” Declaring racially imbalanced schools the result of racially segregated

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. For a larger discussion of educational parks, see Chapter Three. While some sources, such as Philadelphia’s Fellowship Commission, proposed educational parks in order to attract students across municipal lines, the Kiernan Commission only proposed them to cross the boundaries of neighborhood. Unlike Philadelphia, proposals for educational parks did not figure prominently in Boston’s desegregation battles.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. (italics in original).
housing, Ohrenberger blasted the suburbs “which deny housing to Negroes by means of devious tactics every bit as repugnant as the voter registration techniques utilized by some unscrupulous communities of the South.” To support this argument, Ohrenberger quoted George Berkley, Chairman of the Boston Finance Commission, who argued that though “Boston has racial problems… suburban communities, through their snob zoning and their refusal to put up public housing, are the chief practitioners of segregation in the metropolitan area.”

Attacking suburban segregation did not require a commitment to civil rights on the part of urbanites. Ohrenberger undercut the impact of his arguments against metropolitan segregation by refusing to admit that segregation was educationally harmful and by denying Boston’s culpability. Ohrenberger also cautioned against embarking “upon plans which may be socially desirable but educationally harmful,” a clear indication that he opposed school integration.

Overall, Ohrenberger’s challenge to the overwhelmingly white suburbs, though containing merit, entailed a blame-shifting approach to Boston’s racial imbalance. Ohrenberger’s tactics served as a prototype for subsequent Committee responses to integrationist challenges.

Committee member Thomas Eisenstadt echoed Ohrenberger’s argument that the state needed to attack racial imbalance “with even greater vigor at its other sources, namely, at the levels of employment and housing.” But Eisenstadt focused his response on proclaiming his opposition to busing, calling it “disruptive, inexpedient and impractical.” Though he agreed with the Report’s recommendations to close outdated schools, liberalize its open enrollment policy, and construct new schools close to the boundaries between white and black neighborhoods, Eisenstadt made sure to declare his opposition to the activities of Boston’s civil rights advocates.

---


34 Ibid.
the very people who brought these issues to the table. Eisenstadt declared that “the marching, the picketing, and the sit-ins at our Headquarters… tend only to fan the flames of passion, charge the atmosphere, and retard any chance for real progress.”

Louise Day Hicks drew attention to the suburban origins of many of the Report’s authors in order to emphasize the importance of local control for Boston’s School Committee. Portraying the Report as an attack on Boston’s sovereignty, Hicks characterized the Report’s authors as hypocrites who sent their own children to all-white private schools. According to Hicks, the members of the Kiernan Commission constituted “a small band of racial agitators, non-native to Boston, and a few college radicals” engineering “a conspiracy to tell the people of Boston how to run their schools, their city, and their lives.” She noted that if the authors’ preference for racial balance “has any validity at all, then it should follow that the education provided by the private schools of Boston is inferior.”

Committeeman William O’Connor responded to the Report with racist claims of black incapacity, asserting “after forty years in education, twenty-five of which were in the Negro area, that moving them around is not going to make them learn any better.” O’Connor claimed that the Kiernan Report would be detrimental psychologically for white students. He predicted that “in an effort to do something for them [black students], we are going to injure a very large percent of our population.”

Aside from Arthur Gartland’s support and Eisenstadt’s qualified endorsement of portions of the Kiernan Report, the Boston School Committee provided vociferous opposition to the Kiernan Commission’s findings. This opposition came quickly. As the NAACP pointed

---

35 Statement of Thomas S. Eisenstadt Re: The Report of the Advisory Committee on Racial Imbalance and Education, box: 34, folder: 1185, FH.
37 William T. O’Connor, Specific Comments on State Report of Racial Imbalance, PMR.
out, within twenty-four hours of the Report’s publication three members of the School Committee had already condemned it.\textsuperscript{38}

Outside of Boston’s municipal borders, the Kiernan Report received a much more favorable reception. The Report called for the state to pass legislation that would force school committees to eliminate racial imbalance and would give the state’s Board of Education discretionary power to withhold existing state aid in the absence of “reasonable progress toward elimination of racial imbalance.”\textsuperscript{39} Less than three months later, on August 18, 1965, Governor John Volpe signed such a proposal, the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act, into law.

The Racial Imbalance Act adopted the Kiernan Commission’s definition of a racially imbalanced school as one with over 50 percent non-white enrollment, in effect mandating that black schoolchildren in Massachusetts be a perpetual minority. As recommended by the Commission, the Act required that school boards remedy racial imbalance or lose state educational aid. The Act affected strikingly few districts, as only Boston, Springfield, Cambridge, and Medford possessed imbalanced schools. With forty-five imbalanced schools out of the statewide total of fifty-five, the Racial Imbalance Act affected Boston far more than any other municipality.

Most suburban legislators could vote for the Act knowing that it would not affect their predominantly white communities. Urban economist Frank Levy articulates clear parallels between the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. With its effects primarily confined to the South, the Voting Rights Act passed with a legislative majority of Northern and Western representatives who were relatively secure that their constituents would

\textsuperscript{38} Letter “Dear Friend,” Boston Branch NAACP, 20 April 1965, box: 3, folder: 18, PMR.
\textsuperscript{39} Massachusetts State Board of Education, “Because it is Right – EDUCATIONALLY,” METCO.
remain largely unaffected. In much the same way, most Massachusetts representatives could vote for the Racial Imbalance Act knowing that their communities did not have a sizeable enough black population to conceivably run afoul of the law. The number of state representatives representing areas unaffected by the Racial Imbalance Act dwarfed the number of those whose constituents would be subject to it. In the legislative battle to weaken the Act, cities containing at least one imbalanced school accounted for a high-water mark of fifty-one votes (including yeas and nays), while districts without imbalanced schools mustered as many as 171 votes.\(^{40}\)

The Racial Imbalance Act passed with a further carrot for suburban representatives. The Act included an antibusing plank that preserved suburban autonomy by prohibiting mandatory inter-district busing. The Act stated that “no school committee or regional school district shall be required as part of its plan to transport any pupil to any school outside its jurisdiction or to any school outside the school district established for his neighborhood, if the parent or guardian of such pupil files written objection thereto with such school committee.”\(^{41}\) Although this still required parents to take the initiative to file written objection to busing plans, it provided assurances that children would not be bused out of their home district. The Act reaffirmed suburban sovereignty at the very time that it indicated Boston’s schools were a statewide concern.

The School Committee’s campaign against the Racial Imbalance Act echoed its objections to the Kiernan Report, with members making racist arguments of black incapacity, criticizing the suburban origins of the act, and suggesting that the suburbs should be required to

---

\(^{40}\) Levy, *Northern Schools and Civil Rights*, 4, 13, 20, 54. Recalling a long history of suburban interventionism in Boston politics, Levy also argues that the Act served as a newer “Boston Bill,” referring to laws passed by the State Legislature during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries designed to reassert Yankee control over the increasingly Irish-Catholic city.

\(^{41}\) United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, Opinion, *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 21 June 1974, box: 2, folder: 1, Louise Day Hicks Papers, City of Boston Archives and Records Center (hereafter: “LDH”).
participate in any remedies. O’Connor repeated his charge that no one considered the point of view of Boston’s white community and continued to denigrate black intellectual capability. He claimed African American students came to the first grade already “handicapped” by not receiving any previous education and spoke of the travails of mixing black children “with an IQ of 70-80 and less with white children with an IQ of 110-130.”^42 Associate Superintendent William G. Tobin raised the specter of busing, declaring it “impossible to balance schools without busing.”^43 Meanwhile, Hicks continued bashing suburban exemption from the Act, declaring herself “tired of nonresidents telling the people of Boston what they should do.”

Running for mayor in 1967 and nearly winning, Hicks’s campaign slogan “Boston for Bostonians” promised a sovereign, independent Boston.^44

Metropolitan civil rights activity resulted in Boston’s first expression of tactical metropolitanism. The Boston School Committee’s Joseph Lee pioneered the strategy of calling for metropolitan desegregation with the aim of weakening suburban legislative support for civil rights. In early February 1964, taking note of the suburban support of Boston’s upcoming Freedom Stayout, Lee proposed an exchange of students between Boston’s predominantly black Roxbury neighborhood and suburbia. Rationalizing his proposal, Lee asserted that considering “the boycott has enlisted the aid of suburban schools… perhaps those school officials would be interested in the exchange as a means of improving race relations.”^45

Lee’s solutions merely mocked the law and aimed to erode its suburban support, as his satirically titled “A Plan to End the Monopoly of Un-light-colored Pupils in Many Boston

^42 Hearing on Governor’s Bill Against Racial Imbalance – Opposition, 2nd Speaker: William O’Connor, Boston School Committee Member, 28 June 1965, box: 1, folder: 28, PMR.
^43 Ibid.
^44 Buell and Brisbin, School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods, 70, 80.
Schools” made clear. Released following the adoption of the Racial Imbalance Act, the plan’s first suggestion was to “notify at least 11,958 Chinese and Negro Pupils not to come back to Boston schools this autumn.” Pointing to forty-five schools where the total African American and Chinese population of 15,482 pupils outnumbered the total of 3,524 white students, Lee asserted that the simplest way of achieving compliance with the law was to ensure no more than 3,524 minority students attended these schools. Noting that the Lewis Annex educated precisely zero white pupils, Lee reasoned that the presence of a single black student would make the school racially imbalanced and suggested it be closed. Lee gave no consideration to busing white students to the school. Aware that his balance plan would leave several schools with fewer than fourteen pupils in each grade, Lee then advocated closing all schools with insufficient enrollments, bringing the total number of minority pupils he actually proposed removing from Boston’s schools to 12,570. Lee proposed sending these 12,750 pupils, a majority of Boston’s black public school students, to suburban schools. Boston would retain only the 8,547 non-white pupils who attended balanced schools. Throughout the 1960s, Lee continued advocating for his metropolitan solution, with the numbers of students involved the only thing changing. By 1969, Lee proposed sending 14,000 black students to the suburbs.

Lee’s tactical proposal nevertheless pointed to clear patterns of metropolitan segregation. The suburbs, home to three times Boston’s population, averaged less than 1 percent black students in their public school populations, which Lee called “racial imbalance, if ever there was.” Commenting in the margins of a copy of Lee’s plan, a CORE representative concurred,

---

47 Ibid.
48 Letter, Joseph Lee to Leon Trilling, 27 January 1969, box: 8, folder: 42, METCO.
writing “agreed, but not by the definition of imbalance in this law.” Simultaneously motivated to undermine the law and by a racist desire to remove black students from Boston schools, tactical metropolitan proposals such as Lee’s laid bare the demographic differences between Boston and its suburbs, pointing to a regional racial divide as stark as that between individual Boston neighborhoods.

Lee’s tactical proposal paralleled a desegregation plan offered by Boston Redevelopment Authority administrator Ed Logue. Quickly following the publication of the Kiernan Report, Logue argued that “any enduring, effective solution” to racial imbalance “must go beyond the corporate limits of the City of Boston.” Logue proposed that middle school children in grades five through eight who attended imbalanced schools be bused to suburban schools for those four years. Following middle school, these students would return to the Boston schools because Logue believed it possible to desegregate local high schools. Logue’s plan would affect 4,000 pupils from thirty imbalanced schools in Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End. Pupils would not be dispersed evenly throughout the suburbs. Logue’s plan excluded communities with overcrowded schools and those with a significant black population, and required that no suburb receive a number of students exceeding 10 percent of its middle school enrollment.

As the face of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Logue and similar figures are looked to by historians as the main agents of metropolitan reform. Few would think to look to a

---

49 Lee, “A Plan to End the Monopoly,” FJM.
51 Indicative of the tendency to discount reactionary whites as agents of metropolitan reform, historian Christopher Klemek considers individuals like Logue and former Philadelphia Mayor and Board of Education President Richardson Dilworth as urban reformers. Their antagonists are people like Louise Day Hicks and Dilworth’s mayoral successor Frank Rizzo. Metropolitan school desegregation battles call this divide into question. While Hicks remained an antagonist, she was consistently in the minority of the Boston School Committee when it came to metropolitanism and, as will be seen, Rizzo’s school board echoed Dilworth’s calls for metropolitan integration. See Christopher Klemek, The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Urbanism from New York to Berlin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 131.
reactionary white politician such as Lee as an important voice, yet both men produced comparable solutions, despite the fact that Lee aimed to undercut the law. In contrast, Logue predicated his massive redevelopment proposals with the Boston Redevelopment Authority on attracting suburbanites back to the city, and he viewed a predominantly white school system as an important magnet for well-to-do white families. Boosterism, rather than a moral commitment to integration, spurred Logue’s effort. But despite differing motivations, the assumptions undergirding urban renewal and tactical metropolitanism rested on a presentation of African Americans as a problem population and privileged white majorities. As did Lee, Logue equated African American students with poorer educational standards, and his plan disproportionately burdened black pupils by making them the prime workers of integration. Logue “entirely and unequivocally” opposed so-called “reverse busing” – the busing of white students to primarily black schools – because “the idea that we should promoted equality and balance by worsening the education of the white children seems to me not responsible.”

Both Logue and Lee shared a fear of intra-city desegregation spurring white flight and turning Boston into a black city. In order to justify his opposition to the suggestion that the Boston School Committee build schools in white sections of the city and transport black students to them, Lee argued that intra-city busing would only result in the rapid arrival of the day when Boston’s school system would be majority black. To emphasize this point, Lee pointed to the school systems of Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Cleveland, all of which possessed majority black public school populations, to show that whites were largely unwilling to attend predominantly black schools. Logue, while introducing his metropolitan solution to the

---

53 Lee, “A Plan to End the Monopoly,” FJM.
Massachusetts Association of Women Lawyers, predicted that the total percentage of minority pupils in Boston’s public schools would approach 50 percent within a few years and argued that this would jeopardize “Boston’s massive effort to create a city of stable and attractive neighborhoods which can compete with the suburbs.”

These plans received a frosty reception from the city’s civil rights advocates. CORE lamented that “many people at present interpret a ‘metropolitan’ solution as freedom to bus Negro children up to twenty miles or the like while refusing to ask a white child to enter a bus or walk a slightly different or longer route to get to school.” CORE added that it did not believe busing was “dangerous to children or their education, but we believe discriminatory planning, as illustrated above, is.” Logue coined the word “scatteration” to describe his plan’s dispersal of African American middle schoolers throughout metropolitan Boston. The word did not inspire confidence in Ruth Batson. Though Batson firmly believed in urban-suburban cooperation in solving racial imbalance, she made it clear that this did not include Logue’s scatteration plan. “I hate the term he uses,” said Batson, adding that she did not see “a sincere attempt on his part to talk to the educational problems.” As Batson knew, Logue’s plan never mentioned any educational content. With no measures for additional instruction in black history, compensatory programs, or the use of racially diverse texts, the plan simply involved the mathematical distribution of pupils throughout the metropolitan area. Such a formulation rested upon the presentation of black children as burdens without drawing attention to the benefits of integration.

Commissioner Kiernan opposed Logue’s plan, calling it “not a practical solution for the immediate future.” In responding, Kiernan defended municipal autonomy, asserting that “local

54 Logue, “A Proposal for Achieving Racial Balance,” PMR.
55 CORE, Testimony before Joint Committee on Education in Opposition to House Bills 188, 728, 1364, 1783, 2162, and 2363, box: 1, folder: 2, FJM.
communities have a responsibility only to educate children in their own communities.”

Years later, Joseph Lee suggested that Kiernan opposed metropolitan solutions because to do otherwise “might land a Negro pupil betwixt the wind and his nobility in Milton,” the Boston suburb in which Kiernan resided.

The overall suburban response to Logue’s proposal proved negative, though some suburban school officials acknowledged that they could play a role in Boston’s desegregation. Concord Superintendent Robert S. Ireland called Logue’s proposal “a possibility” and added that Concord’s “policy is to accept non-residents when there is room.” His counterpart in Lynn, Superintendent Lawrence McGinn, however, claimed there existed a “general agreement that busing within a city doesn’t work, so I question how inter-city busing would work.” Chairman of the Beverly School Committee, Peter F. Fortunato, stated his flat opposition to busing, believing “that a family should have their children attend schools in their area.” Within Boston, Louise Day Hicks railed against Logue’s proposal, noting that she would “vigorously oppose” any legislation that led to busing. Hicks declared that issues faced by black students would not “be solved through osmosis by sitting next to the white child” and pledged that “not one of our children is going to the suburbs.”

Throughout her tenure on the Boston School Committee, Hicks’s anti-metropolitanism placed her in the Committee’s minority. As the Boston representative most opposed to desegregation, whether intra-city or metropolitan, Hicks worked to reaffirm both city and suburban sovereignty. The authors of the Racial Imbalance Act, in contrast, reaffirmed suburban

---

57 Letter, Lee to Trilling, 27 January 1969, METCO.
sovereignty at the very moment they enshrined Boston’s segregation as a metropolitan and statewide issue that necessitated intervention.

**Voluntary Busing and the Crossing of Neighborhood and Municipal Boundaries**

While Bostonians debated the merits of Lee and Logue’s proposals, a number of black children were voluntarily aiding Boston’s compliance with the Racial Imbalance Act. Boston’s voluntary efforts began by crossing neighborhood boundaries, but soon grew to cross municipal borders. As with the Freedom Stayout, Boston’s black parents led the desegregation efforts and then established alliances with liberal suburbanites. Together, they fashioned voluntary remedies to school segregation. Voluntary metropolitanism made concrete contributions to remedying Boston’s segregation, most notably through the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) busing program, which, beginning in 1966, bused black students from Boston to participating suburban communities with available school seats. In contrast to programs of intra-city desegregation, METCO earned the Boston School Committee’s support because it implied the existence of segregation in Boston’s liberal suburbs and, in line with Joseph Lee’s plan, reduced the number of black students in the Boston schools.

Actual desegregation began with parent initiative. In July 1964, a group of parents whose children were to be transferred from the Garrison School to the Boardman School in the Washington Park redevelopment area objected to the move. The parents argued the amount of construction in the area constituted a “serious safety hazard” and a distracting learning environment. With 12,000 vacancies elsewhere in the system, the parents asked that their children be transferred to other schools.60 The Boston School Committee denied their request.

---

While trying to get a court injunction preventing the reassignment of their children, the Boardman Parents organized and funded their own private busing program that sent roughly sixty children daily to the largely white Peter Faneuil School in the Back Bay.\textsuperscript{61} The Boardman Parents served as the precursor for a much larger black bootstraps effort begun in September 1965.

In the summer of 1965, the Boston School Committee prohibited the use of school funds to bus black children from overcrowded schools to schools with available seats. As a result, double-session school days posed the only feasible solution to school overcrowding, despite the system’s many vacant seats.\textsuperscript{62} Roxbury parents worried about the impact of double session school days and many parents would not be able to afford the increased childcare costs a shorter school day would bring. Furthermore, double sessions suggested a decline in educational quality. Already, the Boston school day was shorter than most, and double sessions promised a further reduction in instructional time.\textsuperscript{63} On August 19, 250 black parents met in Roxbury to discuss their options. Their next meeting, held two days before school started, attracted 500 people.\textsuperscript{64}

Bandng together as the North Dorchester-Roxbury Parent Association, the parents weighed their options. They discussed creating a human chain around a school, writing petitions, picketing, and conducting sit-ins in classrooms and at School Committee headquarters. Not wanting to inconvenience school children, the parents instead chose a bold plan that took advantage of the Committee’s open enrollment policy. As did the Boardman Parents, this group

\textsuperscript{61} Levy, \textit{Northern Schools and Civil Rights}, 132-33.
\textsuperscript{64} Levy, \textit{Northern Schools and Civil Rights}, 133-34.
decided to privately raise funds to operate their own busing program to move children from overcrowded situations to schools with vacant seats. In an astonishingly short time, Operation Exodus was born.65

A meeting on September 8 ended after midnight with 250 children registered to bus. Only then did the search for transportation begin. According to Exodus Chair Ellen Jackson, the parents “called all through the night until 4:00 a.m., and would up having seven buses donated by civil rights groups and private organizations. By 8:00 in the morning, the buses and children were assembled, just in time for the first day of school.66 Though overcrowding, not integration, motivated Exodus’ founding, its participants left all-black or nearly-all black schools for predominantly white or all-white schools within Boston. Estimates of the number of students involved in the first year vary. An Exodus press release claimed it transported 500 children in its first year67; Jackson, speaking to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, put the number at 47568; the Boston Globe noted 266 children directly bused by Exodus in December 1965 but found at least an additional 100 students transferring on their own initiative.69 Whatever the number, Exodus constituted the largest of Boston’s efforts to comply with the Racial Imbalance Act in the 1965-66 school year. By moving children out of their immediate neighborhoods, this program, founded and centered in a specific neighborhood and clearly indicative of an ethos of community control, nevertheless challenged the concept of the neighborhood school. That it did so, and involved intra-city busing, earned it the contempt of the Boston School Committee. If

65 Teele, Evaluating School Busing, 10.
66 Ibid., 11.
68 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearing Held in Boston, October 4-5, 1966, 128.
busing was to remain within Boston, the Committee opposed it as an attack on the neighborhood school concept. Only metropolitan busing could earn the Committee’s approval.

The Boston School Committee’s opposition to Exodus was immediate. On the opening day of school, Louise Day Hicks unexpectedly arrived at Exodus’s Roxbury headquarters with a police escort. Hicks warned Exodus that its students would not be accepted in their chosen schools if they did not have an official yellow transfer card. Hicks claimed she arrived only to ensure proper procedure was being followed, while Exodus saw Hicks’s presence as simple provocation and grandstanding. One parent told Hicks “we know why you’re here, so the press will follow you around.” 70 This visit was the first time Exodus heard of the transfer card.

Evidently, not all receiving schools required the card. Some schools seated children without the cards, while others held firm and did not admit the students. Overall, the students encountered a hostile reception at their intended schools. Jackson told the United States Commission on Civil Rights of children being physically segregated within classrooms, and of other schools keeping the children isolated in auditoriums and hallways for the entire day. At other schools, Jackson recounted that “some of the school doors were actually barred and locked so our children could not get in.” 71 Prior to the students’ arrival, some school administrators had vacant desks unbolted from the floor and removed from classrooms. 72

The Committee’s hostile response to Exodus also included occasional cooption. Ordered by the state to comply with the Racial Imbalance Law and facing the possibility of the loss of essential state aid should it fail to do so, the School Committee used Exodus as proof of its commitment to eradicating racial imbalance. Neglecting to mention its hostility to the program,

70 Buell and Brisbin, School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods, 84.
72 United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, Opinion, Morgan v. Hennigan, 21 June 1974, LDH.
the Committee noted in its legally required 1966-1967 Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools that “if any one program can be considered a testimonial to the effectiveness of Boston’s Open Enrollment Policy, it is that program known as Operation Exodus.” Then in its second year of operation, Exodus had grown to involve more than 800 students. The Committee congratulated itself on this growth, stating that Exodus’s “smooth and effective operation is due in no small measure to the weekly count of vacant seats in the Boston Public Schools.”

This contained a kernel of truth, but missed the much larger story. Exodus certainly required knowledge of vacant seats, but it did not initially receive this information from the School Committee. According to Jackson, though the School Committee was “a little more helpful” in the program’s second year, Exodus first received the list of vacant seats “through some friends who literally stole the list for us.” Despite the Committee’s use of Exodus to defend its own record on racially balancing schools, it never officially approved the program or contributed a cent to its operation.

Exodus gathered and spent approximately $150,000 in its first year, all without any governmental funding. Exodus raised money by canvassing within the black community, first reaching out to local businessmen and shopkeepers, then holding dances, plays, and concerts in order to raise funds. Further support came from white proponents of civil rights in Boston and its suburbs, who formed a group called Friends of Exodus and made contributions. Though white support existed, black people contributed the vast majority of funds. According to Jackson, three-fourths of the money came from Roxbury. Exodus never intended to be reliant on private

74 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearing Held in Boston, October 4-5, 1966, 128.
75 Teele, Evaluating School Busing, 14.
76 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearing Held in Boston, October 4-5, 1966, 135.
funding for the long term. Initially, the parents believed that the School Committee would respond to their initiative by taking over the busing operation and its expenses. These hopes were unfounded.

Not only did the Committee refuse to provide Exodus with funds, by refusing to approve the program altogether the Committee precluded additional funding opportunities for Exodus. Exodus attempted to secure $262,105 of federal funding available under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. However, the Federal Government awarded Title III grants only to programs submitted with the approval of school districts. Though the Committee used Exodus as proof of its own commitment to racially balancing schools, it never gave Exodus this simple approval. Exactus continued searching far and wide for funding opportunities. It appeared to find one in December 1966, when Harvard University proposed to use U.S. Office of Education funds to both aid and study the effects of busing on Exodus’s students. Weeks later, Commissioner of Education Harold Howe dashed Exodus’s hopes when he told Harvard that it would not receive the $156,000 it planned to give to Exodus to cover operating costs. The $156,000 would have paid for most of Exodus’s costs for a full school year while increasing the number of students bused to 1,000. Howe had better news for the academic portion of Harvard’s study, indicating a willingness to provide funds to the wealthy private university but not the private busing program.

Throughout its history, Exodus flirted with insolvency. In its fourth year and having received no financial contributions from any level of government, Exodus announced that it would have to discontinue its busing program. By the time Exodus ended its busing operations,

78 “U.S. Studies Exodus Aid,” Boston Traveler, 7 December 1966.
its enrollment had begun to decline. In the 1968-69 school year, Exodus bused 500 students – a considerable reduction from its second and third year totals. Several reasons account for this, including the establishment of private schools within the black community. Other students were likely siphoned off by the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO), a voluntary metropolitan busing program that avoided placing students in Boston’s inadequate schools altogether. Indicative of an increasing metropolitan commitment to addressing segregation in Boston, METCO bused urban students to suburban schools that willingly provided spaces.

METCO emerged from the urban-suburban civil rights alliance. The idea for METCO originated in September 1964, when the Brookline Civil Rights Committee asked the Brookline School Committee to accept black schoolchildren from Boston. In response, a citizen-staff committee from Brookline’s schools met with Ruth Batson, then Chair of the Massachusetts Committee Against Discrimination, and Paul Parks, Education Officer of the NAACP. At this stage, the enrollment of Boston children in Brookline’s schools did not proceed, though Brookline did inaugurate a tutorial program for urban students. Following the publication of the Kiernan Report and the adoption of the Racial Imbalance Act, the Massachusetts Federation for Fair Housing and Equal Rights (MFFHER), an umbrella group of suburban civil rights committees, announced a meeting for November 1965 to explore educational cooperation between Boston and suburban schools. At the meeting, Massachusetts Deputy Commissioner of Education Dr. Thomas J. Curtin and Dr. Leon Trilling of the Brookline School Committee called on suburban communities to come together in a plan to enroll inner-city children in their

---

81 On METCO’s origins, see also: Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us*, 79-83.
schools. On December 3, on behalf of MFFHER, State Senate Majority Leader Kevin Harrington filed a bill enabling schoolchildren to attend public schools in communities in which the children did not reside. Shortly after, an exploratory meeting in Brookline attracted sixty-five school representatives. By January 1966, Newton School Superintendent Dr. Charles E. Brown agreed to draft a proposal seeking Title III funding on behalf of METCO.

Trilling sought to address educational inequalities in the metropolitan area. He expressed “concern over the problem of the core city with its shrinking tax base and its increasing problems which make it increasingly difficult to furnish the children in the city the kind of education they need.” But METCO was not intended only to benefit Boston’s black students – white suburban students would similarly benefit. Trilling’s second motivation in founding METCO “was a concern over the fact that the youngsters in the suburban towns surrounding Boston were somewhat made narrow by the fact that they were or they are all white, segregated in a sense.”

Trilling recognized the connection between Boston’s schools and the schools of its suburbs. With the vast majority of metropolitan Boston’s black students found in predominantly black schools within a small section of Boston and the suburbs enrolling few black students, segregation affected the composition of the region’s schools, not just the city’s. Bordered on three sides by Boston and much closer to black Roxbury than were many areas of Boston, Brookline could not claim to be disconnected from the central city.

Ruth Batson viewed METCO as a continuation of black Boston’s alliance of necessity with white suburbanites. Batson recollected the founding of METCO by placing it in the context of the unsuccessful 1965 re-election campaign of School Committee member Arthur Gartland.

---

83 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearing Held in Boston, October 4-5, 1966, 142.
and the simultaneous failed attempt to elect a black representative, Mel King, to the Boston School Committee. Asked by representatives of the Brookline School Committee to attend a meeting proposing METCO, Batson proved receptive.⁸⁴

In September 1966, one year after Operation Exodus began challenging Boston’s system of segregated neighborhood school boundaries, METCO’s buses first traversed the political borders separating Boston from its suburbs. In the 1966-67 school year, 220 Boston students traveled daily to seven suburbs – Arlington, Braintree, Brookline, Lexington, Lincoln, Newton, and Wellesley. In the following year, nine additional suburbs joined the program and METCO expanded from 220 students to 425.⁸⁵ Unlike Operation Exodus, METCO did not require a bootstraps effort from participating communities to fund itself. Aided by the bureaucratic expertise of its suburban school committee founders and the approval of the Boston School Committee because it sent black students out of the city, METCO received Title III funding from the U.S. Office of Education. It secured additional funding from the Carnegie Corporation and from the state of Massachusetts, which provided direct payments to participating communities, incentivizing suburban participation.⁸⁶ With METCO’s fully-funded students taking up seats in suburban schools that would have gone otherwise unoccupied, METCO provided its suburban communities a financial incentive while not requiring that suburban students change their educational routine in any way. Focused on daily busing, METCO did not raise the possibility of increased black residence in suburban communities. The Boston schoolchildren who rose early to catch buses to unfamiliar communities made the real sacrifices of the program. CORE’s criticism of metropolitan plans that called for busing black “children up to twenty miles or the

---

⁸⁴ Ruth Batson Civil Rights Documentation Project Interview Transcript, box 1, folder 1, RB.  
⁸⁵ “METCO: Suburban Education for Urban Children (Revised October 1967),” box: 8, folder: 11, METCO.  
⁸⁶ Ibid.
like while refusing to ask a white child to enter a bus or walk a slightly different or longer route to get to school,” could be applied to METCO as well.  

It is tempting to view the differences between Operation Exodus and METCO as indicative of the gulf between the goals of black power advocates and integrationists. There exists considerable evidence for such an interpretation. Although Exodus, by busing children away from their neighborhoods, entailed a challenge to the neighborhood school concept, its founder, Ellen Jackson, continually trumpeted what she termed the “community-oriented school.” This school, a product of self-determination, would ideally involve the entire black community in the educational process. Jackson complained that civil rights advocates focused much more attention on sending African Americans to the suburbs and noted that “very little energy” had been spent on “the improvement of the black community so that black people can remain in that community.” Indicative of her commitment to black culture and community, Jackson urged people to “question any definition of integration that deals exclusively with student enrollment but does not call for more black principals, more black teachers and upgrading of black professionals in the school system.” For Jackson, true integration meant full black participation in the centers of power, not the dispersion of token numbers of black children in previously all-white communities.

Jackson opposed the intellectual underpinnings of integration. Declaring that Operation Exodus worked on behalf of “parents who want quality education in the black community,” Jackson professed the organization’s opposition to the prevailing wisdom articulated by academics such as Daniel Moynihan, Thomas Pettigrew, and James Coleman, which asserted

87 CORE, Testimony before Joint Committee on Education in Opposition to House Bills 188, 728, 1364, 1783, 2162, and 2363, box: 1, folder: 2, FJM.

that “black children must attend classes with white children in order to learn how to function in this society.” She saved her strongest denunciation for Logue’s scatteration plan. Asserting that Logue’s plan revealed a lack of respect for black traditions and culture, Jackson called it tantamount to “genocide.”

Logue’s plan bore striking similarities to the eventual METCO program. Both required sending black children from the city into the suburbs while not requiring that suburban children enter the city schools. METCO’s voluntary nature and its lower numbers reveal it to be something of a palatable updating of Logue’s proposal. METCO also entailed enough similarities to Joseph Lee’s proposal that Lee claimed that he deserved credit for its creation, much to Ruth Batson’s chagrin.

Though the two programs appear to be philosophically divergent, black parents enrolled their children in both Exodus and METCO because they offered demonstrable educational advantages. One mother of a child enrolled in METCO declared that “just going to school with whites isn’t important at all to me.” This mother’s goal of getting her daughter into a good college motivated her participation in the program. Another METCO parent asserted that “my child sitting next to a white child isn’t going to guarantee him an education, but it comes close to guaranteeing that he will be taught.” Noting “that more attention to education is paid in predominantly white schools,” this parent vowed to support METCO “until this attitude changes.”

Ruth Batson, whose civil rights career now included serving as METCO’s Executive Director, acknowledged integration rarely motivated parents to register their children. Education was the goal for most black parents. According to Batson, “the interesting thing about black

89 Ibid.
90 Ruth Batson Civil Rights Documentation Project Interview Transcript, box: 1, folder: 1, RB. Geismer acknowledges the parallels between METCO and Logue’s proposal, but misses Lee’s tactical metropolitanism. Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 80-81.
power advocates is that while they will say a program like this is no good, they have their kids in it.”92 Batson probably referred to Jackson. Of Jackson’s four children, three enrolled in Exodus while one participated in METCO and attended a suburban school.93

Though integration on its own did not motivate all participating parents, it provided the impetus for the METCO’s founding. Participant suburbs continually trumpeted METCO’s integrative potential and integration motivated the suburban families that volunteered to be a METCO child’s “host family,” serving as a home away from home that allowed increased socialization, occasional after school visits, and a local contact should an emergency arise.

Though many black parents viewed Exodus and METCO similarly, the Boston School Committee did not. While refusing to endorse Exodus, which challenged segregation only within the city, the Committee quickly endorsed METCO over the objections of Hicks and O’Connor. The Committee’s endorsement occurred not because of any newfound commitment to integration, but because METCO implied the existence of suburban segregation and would result in fewer black students within Boston’s schools. METCO had the additional attraction of asking suburbanites, whose representatives voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Racial Imbalance Act, to demonstrate their commitment to integrated education. Though historian Matthew Delmont paints the Boston School Committee as opposed to all forms of desegregation, including METCO, the historical record reveals the Committee’s unbroken tactical embrace of METCO.94

The School Committee’s 1966-1967 Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance, required by the Racial Imbalance Act, trumpeted METCO. In this document, the School Committee declared its “enthusiastic support” for METCO’s request for additional state funds to

---

92 Ruth Batson Civil Rights Documentation Project Interview Transcript, box: 1, folder: 1, RB.
93 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Hearing Held in Boston, October 4-5, 1966, 128.
94 Delmont, Why Busing Failed. 90.
expand operations. The Committee also proposed a reduction in the per pupil allowance METCO provided to suburban schools from $1,000 to $600, because it would allow a two-thirds increase in the number of participating students. Finally, the Plan called for the State to “exercise leadership in the development of a metropolitanistic approach to eliminating racial imbalance in public schools.” Quoting the Kiernan Report, the Committee reminded the state that “racial imbalance is the responsibility of all citizens in the Commonwealth.” Indicative of the Committee’s desire for METCO’s expansion, it sent a letter to sixty-two suburban school committees that urged suburban participation in METCO and detailed the pertinent state legislation that provided financial assistance to participating communities.\(^{95}\) Though a metropolitan solution to racial imbalance was not the only portion of the Committee’s submitted plan, it was the only part to which it gave its actual support.\(^{96}\) At this point, the Committee’s metropolitanism entailed shifting the work of desegregating to black students and suburban communities, in an obvious attempt to avoid intra-city solutions for complying with the Racial Imbalance Act.

**Conclusion**

A decade prior to the arrival of desegregation busing in Boston, individuals on all sides of the civil rights spectrum placed school segregation in its metropolitan context. From an alliance between black civil rights activists and liberal suburbanites emerged Boston’s first metropolitan stream, one that focused on voluntary cooperation and financial incentives for suburbs while mandating Boston’s desegregation. In response, the Boston School Committee engineered the

\(^{95}\) Boston School Committee, “1966-1967 Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools,” SCSD.

\(^{96}\) Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “Review of Boston School Committee Revised Plan on Racial Imbalance,” 26 June 1966, box: 37, folder: 1218, FH.
second metropolitan stream, one that claimed school desegregation within Boston was an impossibility and aimed to offload students it viewed as a burden to wealthier suburban communities. By trumpeting metropolitan desegregation, the Committee intended to damage suburban legislative support for the Racial Imbalance Act. But no matter which side of the segregation-integration divide one was on, engaging with school segregation in Boston meant grappling with metropolitan solutions and issues of municipal autonomy.

In the earliest phase of Boston’s school desegregation controversy, the voluntary metropolitan stream offered the only productive assistance in remedying Boston’s desegregation, producing both the Racial Imbalance Act and METCO. The Committee’s tactical metropolitanism, though containing meritorious arguments concerning suburban racial and socioeconomic exclusion, was nakedly based on shifting the blame for Boston’s school segregation and perpetuating the Committee’s intransigence on civil rights within Boston’s borders. Though the majority of the School Committee embraced tactical metropolitanism, it had yet to gain a significant number of adherents outside of the Committee. But as the desegregation battles continued, the Committee’s tactical metropolitanism would soon make clear both the limits of suburban liberalism and the tenuous nature of the urban-suburban civil rights alliance. As the desegregation crisis deepened, it would ironically be the segregationist School Committee that articulated the most radical and only possible means of providing lasting desegregation for Boston’s schools in light of the massive white opposition and flight that it bore much responsibility for exacerbating. Increasingly, both of tactical metropolitanism’s aims – either eroding the suburban commitment to civil rights or ensuring the maintenance of white majorities in the face of mandatory desegregation – seemed realizable.
Chapter 2
Before Busing: Tactical Metropolitanism in Boston, 1966-1974

Whereas Boston’s early desegregation battles reflected the work of black Bostonians and their liberal suburban allies, as the desegregation controversy progressed the Boston School Committee’s tactical metropolitanism grew most influential. By the early 1970s, tactical metropolitanism dominated school politics. In their protracted effort to both avoid and defeat the full implementation of the Racial Imbalance Act, prominent members of the Boston School Committee such as John Kerrigan continued arguing that an intra-city solution to school segregation was impossible, demanding either suburban involvement or no desegregation at all. Rather than leading to metropolitan collaboration, the Committee’s metropolitanism damaged extant desegregation efforts. Antibusing suburbanites, fearing mandatory metropolitan desegregation, launched anti-metropolitan challenges to the voluntary METCO busing program.

While these early challenges emerged from the political fringe, including members of the ultra-right John Birch Society whose founder, Robert Welch, lived in the Boston suburbs, by the early 1970s such anti-metropolitanism entered the mainstream as suburbanites and their Democratic and Republican political representatives joined with Boston to demand the repeal of the Racial Imbalance Act. By the 1970s, metropolitan Boston’s politics bore the imprint of the School Committee’s tactical metropolitan arguments.

The Committee’s transparent tactics helped delegitimize integration in the eyes of a majority of Boston’s suburbanites, pushing Massachusetts’ reputedly liberal constituency rightward and harming existing voluntary desegregation efforts and the urban-suburban civil rights alliance more broadly. By calling for mandatory metropolitan desegregation, the Committee helped turn many suburbanites into busing opponents. Fears of mandatory integration
and a corresponding loss of suburban autonomy contributed to an aggrieved suburban mentality and a heightened desire to escape city affairs. In the face of tactical metropolitanism, only liberal Republican Governor Francis Sargent’s veto kept the Racial Imbalance Act alive. But by 1974, Sargent’s support fell to the Boston School Committee’s tactics as well and he pledged to replace the Act with a law that would not mandate integration. With Sargent’s proposal, the Committee’s strategy of raising the specter of metropolitanism in order to arouse suburban opposition reached its crescendo.

While historian Lily Geismer focuses on the inherent limitations of an individualist-based Massachusetts liberalism made increasingly evident by the 1973 national recession to explain the transformation of the region’s Democratic politics, the fissures of the desegregation controversy reveal that more than the inadequacies of a liberalism averse to structural solutions and higher taxes pushed suburban Democrats rightward. Geismer presents METCO as broadly accepted among Massachusetts suburbanites in the beginning because it did not propose two-way busing or the creation of a metropolitan school district. Though Geismer notes that “metropolitanization” became “another key word in residents’ growing lexicon of busing terminology” by the early 1970s, Geismer positions the suburban backlash to METCO as coming during the 1974-75 school year, spurred by news coverage in the fall of 1974 over efforts to expand METCO and the filing of mandatory metropolitan desegregation legislation in January 1975, alongside the state’s economic pressures arising in the recession’s wake.¹ Geismer importantly places Boston’s busing controversy in its metropolitan context, but her focus on the effects of the recession fails to acknowledge that Boston’s longstanding tactical metropolitanism

weakened the suburban commitment to civil rights well before the 1973 recession. In December 1971, METCO, linked by some of its supporters and many of its opponents to a metropolitan school district or two-way busing, worried about a decline in suburban support that threatened the program’s viability. Months later, in March 1972, an anti-METCO candidate won election to suburban Milton’s School Committee by playing on fears of two-way busing. By the spring of 1973, the Boston School Committee’s tactical metropolitanism succeeded in turning a majority of Massachusetts’ legislators against the Racial Imbalance Act, the signal achievement of the urban-suburban civil rights alliance.

By rediscovering the visibility of Boston’s tactical metropolitan challenges, we can see that urbanites increasingly called into question the autonomous suburban world of good services, low taxes, and racial homogeneity. In response to the redistributive civil rights measures being proposed by a most unexpected source, the Boston School Committee, suburbanites articulated a reactionary defense of their communities’ autonomy and revealed an increasing opposition to civil rights initiatives, such as busing, which could link them to the central city. Well before the depths of the recession, suburbanites could look to the School Committee’s tactical metropolitanism and metropolitan desegregation cases in Richmond, Virginia and Detroit, Michigan and see that mandatory metropolitan desegregation was a real possibility. Though suburban liberals long preferred limited individualist remedies such as METCO to larger structural issues such as racial inequality, tactical metropolitanism weakened even the voluntary urban-suburban civil rights alliance and led a plurality of suburbanites to retreat from the goals of the Racial Imbalance Act.

Metropolitan Boston’s politics unmistakably bore the School Committee’s stamp. But the successes of the Committee’s tactical metropolitanism did not guarantee that mandatory busing would not arrive. The Committee’s self-interested calls for metropolitan desegregation occurred
at the very time that federal courts elsewhere were considering mandatory metropolitan solutions and as the Committee was confronting a significant legal challenge to its segregated system. As would other defendant school boards across the nation, including those in Detroit and Philadelphia, the Boston School Committee advocated a mandatory metropolitan solution and asked the court to declare suburban systems its co-defendants. In Boston, the School Committee used the exact arguments to justify metropolitanism that it made to arouse suburban opposition to integration. As similar challenges came before courts elsewhere, the Committee’s strategy carried with it the very real possibility that the courts could order a metropolitan solution involving massive busing. Faced with a legal challenge, the Committee’s tactical metropolitanism, already metropolitan Boston’s dominant strand of metropolitan thinking by the early 1970s, metamorphosed from a technique of merely avoiding desegregation into a potential remedy, one capable of desegregating not only the city’s schools but those of the region as a whole. Ironically, the “antibusing” Boston School Committee proposed achieving desegregation by a massive metropolitan program of busing.

While capable of remedying segregation, tactical metropolitanism built off of white racism with the goal of ensuring the maintenance of white majority schools. Though the Committee’s metropolitanism contained a productive kernel, one capable of desegregating schools, its anti-suburban tactics meant that if significant metropolitan desegregation was to be achieved, it would have to be through the courts. By arousing suburban opposition and prompting a bipartisan defense of suburban educational autonomy, tactical metropolitanism ensured that if left to the state legislature and suburban voters, desegregation would not arrive in Boston or its suburbs. On the other hand, tactical metropolitanism potentially invited a feasible metropolitan solution – and the possibility of a metropolitanist convergence between integrationist civil rights advocates and their urban white adversaries – in the courtroom. Though
the prospect was uncertain in Boston on the eve of its busing crisis, courts in Michigan and across the nation appeared open to metropolitan solutions.

In these years before busing, the grievances of white urbanites and the fears of suburbanites came into the open, prefiguring and articulating the metropolitan fissures of the subsequent busing crisis. This era of potential solutions to — and the simultaneous exacerbation of — segregated education gave clear hints of the type of white urban response to come should Boston be ordered to integrate while the suburbs were not. Both the regional battle lines in Boston’s busing controversy and reputedly liberal Massachusetts’ bipartisan rightward shift were in place well before buses first rolled to desegregate city schools in 1974.

**METCO as Metropolitanism: Cracks in Suburban Support**

With the Boston School Committee calling for mandatory metropolitan desegregation and declaring its enthusiastic support for METCO, even voluntary desegregation seemed to increasing numbers of suburbanites like a harbinger of mandatory metropolitanism. In tandem with Boston’s tactical metropolitanism, METCO began experiencing challenges to its existence in liberal suburbs. Though the program continued to grow in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the increasing suburban opposition revealed exploitable fissures in metropolitan Boston’s urban-suburban civil rights alliance. Functioning at the very limits of suburban racial liberalism, METCO owed its success due to its voluntary nature and to not subverting suburban political autonomy. As early challenges to METCO demonstrated, suburbanites would mobilize to oppose mandatory metropolitan desegregation and preserve their communities’ autonomy.

Throughout the protracted desegregation controversy, the Boston School Committee continually reminded Massachusetts citizens that METCO had the potential to provide a metropolitan solution to what state law called “racial imbalance.” In making these claims, the
Committee was aided by METCO’s early ambiguity over whether it wished to be a forerunner of a fully metropolitanized school district. METCO’s initial proposal for the community of Lincoln considered “the establishment of a centrally administered metropolitan system.” However, the report suggested that a metropolitan district might not “be accepted by a sufficient number of Boston’s suburbs without a prior demonstration in the Boston area that a suburban busing program is workable.” The proposal presented METCO as this demonstration project.²

Elsewhere, METCO’s advocates pulled back from portraying the program as a precursor to a metropolitan school district. METCO’s co-founder Leon Trilling, writing a speech for an audience at Boston College in March 1966, eliminated a section which stated that it was “premature to expect a Greater Boston Metropolitan School District… It appears more realistic to develop special project after special project and to build mutual confidence and experience for broader voluntary joint educational ventures.” Though Trilling crossed out this portion, his speech retained a statement that rooted part of the problem of segregated education “in a fragmented metropolitan political structure,” suggesting a receptivity to a form of metropolitan educational governance.³ METCO’s Statement of Policy similarly excised a statement about metropolitan school districts. Noting METCO’s belief that Boston must comply with the Racial Imbalance Law, the deleted remarks argued that should the State Legislature change the “whole system” of metropolitan governance “the METCO Board of Directors will consider the role it can and should play to meet our goals of equal educational opportunity for the children of the Commonwealth.” The policy statement retained a phrase that stated that METCO did not anticipate being “the primary mechanism through which a system-wide integration will be

³ Leon Trilling, For Meeting at Boston College, 10 March 1966, box 2, folder: 34, METCO.
accomplished,” before predicting “that in the long run, the greater Boston area will move toward some kind of metropolitanization.”

In her account of METCO’s creation, historian Lily Geismer, specifically pointing to Trilling’s crossed-out remarks in the Boston College speech, extrapolates that “proponents never mentioned any possibility that METCO could potentially serve as a model for a two-way program.” Certainly, Trilling avoided making explicit suggestions that METCO could lead to a metropolitan school district or involve the busing of white suburban children. In 1966, Trilling responded to a question from a U.S. Commissioner on Civil Rights about potentially supporting a metropolitan district by stating that “as an organization, METCO cannot take a position on this.” But other METCO proponents did not feel similarly constrained and championed metropolitanism. Though noting this was his personal opinion, Newton School Superintendent and author of METCO’s successful Title III funding proposal, Dr. Charles E. Brown, told the Commission that “as long as we have these rather hard and fast boundaries between an urban area and the greater area surrounding it, it is going to be rather difficult to solve particularly the problems of providing equal educational opportunities for all.” Calling for officials “to think in larger geographical terms,” Brown added that “there would be real benefits in this from an educational point of view – a metropolitan school district.”

News organizations trumpeted METCO’s metropolitan potential, ensuring that many Boston-area residents associated the program with more than the modest busing of urban

---

4 METCO, “Statement of Policy,” box 2, folder: 38, METCO.
5 Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 84. On METCO more broadly, see ibid., 78-95, 206-225. Geismer herself, however, notes that internal discussions during the founding of METCO hinted at the aspirations of some organizers for a possible metropolitan educational system for Boston. Ibid., 81-82.
7 Ibid., 182, 186.
schoolchildren. In an internal report to the Carnegie Corporation, METCO included many of these news reports. One from the Boston Herald stated that “putting Greater Boston’s school systems on a metropolitan basis could mean advantages for the suburban communities.” Other items included a WBZ editorial that called METCO “a step in the right direction for the entire metropolitan area” and a Worcester Telegram article which stated METCO furthered “the cause of sensible regionalism.”

Meanwhile, other prominent supporters of METCO urged the adoption of a regional school district. In February 1966, the Boston Finance Commission (BFC), a city agency charged with reporting on Boston’s finances, called METCO “commendable, but hardly the complete answer.” The BFC preferred the creation of a metropolitan school district because it offered “the possibility of correcting both the racial imbalance and the fiscal imbalance which now plague Boston and hamper its educational efforts.” “A metropolitan district,” it declared, “would allow the suburban communities to play their part in the resolution of a metropolitan problem.”

Debating METCO entailed discussing the future of metropolitan educational governance. At a Wellesley meeting concerning METCO, journalist Peter Schrag recounted hearing a “METCO defender” urging the community’s support of the METCO program. This unnamed proponent echoed Trilling’s crossed-out remarks for the Boston College speech, asserting that “it’s still premature to expect the formation of a greater Boston school district, but at least we can do this much.”

---

11 Schrag, Village School Downtown, 138.
It was in Wellesley in 1966 that METCO received its first substantial challenge, with suburban fears over METCO’s metropolitan implications taking center stage. Responding to the decision of its School Committee to welcome thirty black Boston students to its schools, a group of Wellesley citizens launched Operation Challenge METCO. An advertisement by the group urged residents to “consider the long-range implications of busing,” which it said included “diluting control of our schools by regional school committees” and “lowering the high quality of Wellesley schools.” The group invited Boston School Committee member and metropolitan opponent William O’Connor to speak to its supporters. Appearing before 150 people at a Wellesley school, O’Connor asserted that METCO marked the beginning of a regional school system that would eliminate local control of schools.

The Wellesley opposition reflected a fear of metropolitan government and a racist belief that the presence of black children in schools lowered educational quality. Believing that “busing Negroes here is too big a thing sociologically to be left up to the committee,” Operation Challenge METCO founder Gilbert Stubbs announced the group’s intentions to hold a referendum on Wellesley’s participation in METCO. Wellesley’s referendum consisted of two questions. The first asked whether voters favored “busing non-resident students from other communities to Wellesley” while the second asked whether voters wanted a public referendum before busing would begin. Held on a Saturday, the results of the secret balloting revealed that more than four out of every five voters opposed Wellesley’s participation in METCO. However, the poll attracted very few participants, with only 10 percent of eligible voters taking part. Both METCO’s opponents and supporters declared victory, pointing to the lopsided results and the

low voter turnout respectively.\textsuperscript{16} Regardless of the results, the Wellesley School Committee had earlier pledged to support METCO and let it be known that its support would not waver. The week of the election, Wellesley School Committee chairman Richard Gardner told the \textit{Boston Globe} that “the Committee does not feel that all vital issues should be put to a vote” and flatly stated that “right now Wellesley is a segregated town.”\textsuperscript{17} After the poll, the Committee voted unanimously to participate in METCO.

Outside of Wellesley, suburbanites launched similar challenges against METCO in 1966, though none with as much force. In Braintree, a small group of citizens opposed participating in METCO until a survey of residents could be conducted. With one member abstaining, the Braintree School Committee overrode the group’s objections and voted four to two to participate in METCO.\textsuperscript{18} In Brookline, Trilling, a member of the Brookline School Committee, faced a challenge from a candidate who campaigned against METCO. Trilling successfully retained his position, which METCO presented as “one more indication of METCO’s acceptance and support by the citizens of the participating communities.”\textsuperscript{19} In contrast to METCO’s rosy presentation of suburban support, the \textit{Boston Globe} reported that in some suburban communities “reaction has been so hostile that one might suppose METCO had proposed burning down suburban school houses rather than putting a few more children in them at no expense to local taxpayers.”\textsuperscript{20}

Because Boston’s tactical metropolitanism did not yet dominate school politics, this early METCO opposition remained on the outskirts of suburban opinion. Operation Challenge METCO possessed close links to the far-right and militantly anti-communist John Birch Society.

\textsuperscript{16} “METCO: Suburban Education for Urban Children: Carnegie Corp. Internal Report,” METCO.
\textsuperscript{19} “METCO: Suburban Education for Urban Children: Carnegie Corp. Internal Report,” METCO.
\textsuperscript{20} “To Bus or Not to Bus…,” \textit{Boston Globe}, 15 April 1966.
Some members of Operation Challenge METCO admitted to being Birchers and Operation Challenge METCO and the John Birch Society used the same PO Box for incoming correspondence. More tactical metropolitanism from Boston was required for this suburban opposition to go mainstream.

Though METCO’s early opponents were mainly political extremists, this does not mean that the program possessed extensive grassroots support in many of its communities. The willingness of suburban school committees to avoid referendums on participating in METCO contributed to METCO’s operation. Braintree School Committee member Robert Smart reasoned that “if we took a vote now on the busing of Negro students, the community might say no,” and declared participating in METCO a prerogative of the School Committee. Much of the Boston suburbs’ integrationist reputation came precisely because METCO was not put to the voters. If left to the voters directly, METCO might never have arrived in many suburbs.

While suburbanites proved comfortable with mandating integration for Boston through the state’s Racial Imbalance Act, they revealed significantly less enthusiasm for integration, even of the voluntary kind, in their own communities. While most suburbanites did not actively oppose METCO, they could not be counted on to actively support it either. To the Boston School Committee, these early METCO battles suggested that suburbanites would mobilize in opposition to losing suburban autonomy in a mandatory program of metropolitan desegregation. By making tactical metropolitan appeals, the Committee believed it could defeat desegregation in the legislative realm. While aiming to prevent integration, the Committee’s metropolitan

---

21 Ibid.
23 Geismer similarly observes that “support for METCO outside a small circle of activists was always relatively shallow and conditional on it being free” as far as suburban taxpayers were concerned. Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 213.
appeals nevertheless held the seeds of potential remedies in line with plans before courts in other cities.

**Tactical Metropolitanism as School Policy**

By 1971, tactical metropolitanism dominated Boston school politics. With Louise Day Hicks elected to Congress and William O’Connor having retired, the Committee’s two main opponents of metropolitanism could not temper its tactical appeals. The Committee continued grappling with mandated desegregation through its twin strategy of massive resistance to intra-city desegregation and support for metropolitan integration. While predicated on weakening suburban legislative support for integration, its evidence of white flight and worsening segregation suggested a valid need to enlarge any potential desegregation area. With each passing year, the Committee’s calls for metropolitan solutions to racial imbalance continued gaining strength. While calling for metropolitan desegregation, however, the Committee took no meaningful efforts to combat segregation within its own purview, exacerbating segregation and ensuring that civil rights advocates would neither look to it for regional solutions nor consider it a legitimate voice for civil rights.

Under pressure from the State Board of Education to produce a workable plan to racially balance its schools in line with the Racial Imbalance Act, the Committee released its Fourth Stage Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in 1971. Issued shortly after the 1970 U.S. Census revealed that a plurality of Americans now resided in the suburbs, the Fourth Stage Plan rested largely on demographic arguments draped in disingenuous civil rights language. Though born of impure motives, its statistical figures revealed a picture of worsening regional segregation that indicated a need for metropolitan remedies. Between 1960 and 1970, Boston witnessed a pronounced drop in its number of white residents. Over the decade, Boston lost 17
percent of its white population, falling from 628,704 in 1960 to 524,709. Over the same period, Boston’s minority population increased by 66 percent, rising from 68,493 to 116,362. Taking stock of an overall urban population loss of over 56,000 and noting a suburban population of over two million and rising of which only 1 percent was “non-white,” the Committee argued that population trends “seem to indicate that compliance with the Racial Imbalance Law will become an impossible task for the City of Boston in the not-too-distant future without seeking metropolitan involvement.” Pointing to the American pattern of increasingly minority central cities ringed by predominantly white suburbs, the Committee argued that white flight from Boston would intensify should integration be limited to Boston itself. Furthermore, the Committee argued that a metropolitan solution would be firmly in the spirit of the Racial Imbalance Act: “If it is socially and educationally desirable to have integrated schools in Boston – and we believe it is – it is equally desirable to have integrated schools in every community of the state.” The Committee argued that by enrolling few minority students, “the school systems outside of Boston are segregated school systems” caused by the “great reluctance [of] most of these suburbs to approve low income housing which would provide both whites and non-whites of limited means an entry into their communities and a chance to partake of their educational offerings in a meaningful integrated way.”

In his official response to the Boston School Committee, State Commissioner of Education Neil Sullivan agreed with much of the Fourth Stage Plan. Sullivan concurred with the Committee’s assertion that it was time to act in the spirit of the Racial Imbalance Act, that racial isolation must be understood in a metropolitan context, and that large-scale pupil transportation

---

24 Boston School Committee, “Fourth Stage Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools,” box: 1, file: Deseg File 1/2 1971, School Committee Secretary Desegregation Files, City of Boston Archives and Records Center (hereafter: “SCSD”).
was an acceptable way to combat racial imbalance. The Committee’s Plan proposed a two-way metropolitan busing exchange of 3,899 suburban white students with an equal number of black Boston students. Of this proposal, Sullivan noted “how markedly it contrasts in boldness of conception with the timid measures undertaken by the Boston School Committee within its own sphere of responsibility.”

Sullivan did not agree with the fourth premise of the Fourth Stage Plan – that racial balance could not be achieved within the boundaries of Boston alone. Sullivan pointed to the demographic information provided by the School Committee in his opposition. The Committee offered statistics comparing the minority population of Boston with twenty-seven other American cities. Of those twenty-seven cities, Boston had the lowest proportion of minority residents. Though the Fourth Stage Plan demonstrated the rapid increase in minority students and the effects of substantial white flight even prior to a mandatory desegregation plan, detailing the shift from a student population that was 23 percent minority in the 1964-65 school year to a 32.5 percent minority one in 1970-71, there was no denying that Boston’s schools were majority white. Noting that two out of three public school children were white, Sullivan asserted that the Committee did “not need to maintain thirty schools which are more than 90 percent white or fourteen which are 100 percent white.” From a mathematical perspective ignoring potential white flight, there appeared to exist little reason why the Boston schools could not comply with the Racial Imbalance Act. Demographically, Boston was not comparable to a Detroit or a Philadelphia, cities whose majority-black public schools suggested the inadequacy of intra-city

26 Ibid.
27 Boston School Committee, “Fourth Stage Plan Toward the Elimination of Racial Imbalance in the Public Schools,” SCSD.
segregation. Sullivan’s response, underlining that this was the Committee’s fourth plan to reduce racial imbalance yet imbalance remained, eviscerated the Committee’s commitment to integration: “It is sometimes suggested, by supporters of the Boston School Committee, that integration has been tried in Boston, and has not worked. This is untrue. It has not been tried. The short-term measures proposed in this, as in previous stages of Boston’s Plan, are by and large measures initiated and supported primarily from outside the Boston school system.”

Sullivan was entirely correct. While the Boston School Committee continually championed the value of metropolitan integration, it simultaneously avoided integrating its own schools while wrapping itself in the mantra of neighborhood schools and further entrenching segregation.

While trumpeting metropolitan desegregation, the School Committee segregated a new school designed to open on an integrated basis. Proposed as part of the Committee’s first racial imbalance plan, the Lee School, named after former School Committee member and progenitor of tactical metropolitanism Joseph Lee, opened in September 1971. The school received 65 percent of its construction cost from the state because it would provide integrated education. In June 1971, the Committee elected to include within Lee’s district 350 white pupils from two nearby schools, Fitfield and O’Hearn. However, the Committee gave the parents of these children the option of electing to remain in their predominantly white schools. Most chose to remain. By July 12, the parents of only thirty-seven Fitfield pupils indicated their intent to send their children to the Lee School. Not a single O’Hearn pupil appeared poised to make the switch. Without the 350 white students, the Lee School would open imbalanced and the state threatened

28 “Statement of Commissioner Neil V. Sullivan to the Board of Education, June 22, 1971, on Racial Imbalance in Boston,” SCSD.

29 For more on the Lee School controversy, see: Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 49-52.
to withhold funds to the Boston schools. Initially, the Committee backed down and, by a three to two vote, repealed its decision that allowed the white parents to choose their children’s schools.

On opening day, many white parents refused to abide by the Committee’s decision and sent their children to O’Hearn or Fitfield instead of Lee. Compounding the confusion, approximately 200 black students from the Franklin Field housing project gave false addresses and occupied seats at Lee. With most of Boston’s black students housed in the oldest schools in the system, a new school in their neighborhood proved understandably tempting to many. Faced with over 400 angry parents at the O’Hearn auditorium at a meeting on September 21, School Committeeman John Craven, in the midst of a campaign for City Council, rescinded his earlier vote, allowing the children to remain at O’Hearn and Fitfield. Craven, initially received at the meeting with a round of jeers, received cheers upon departing. Craven claimed that his first vote was based on “false information” concerning busing. Craven stated he believed initially that busing was not needed, but now claimed that “the truth is that it is impossible to racially balance the new Lee school without forced busing.” Craven’s rationale is doubtful. Though shuttle buses were provided from the two schools to Lee, most did not use them. The schools were close enough together that no transportation was required – the shuttle buses were a luxury. In the fallout of the Lee controversy, the Committee sought to justify its decision to allow Lee to open imbalanced by pointing to the black pupils who were adamant about staying. However, there is no evidence that the Committee responded to black concerns in rescinding its decision to integrate the school. Craven reversed his vote because of white opposition, not black opposition.

---


31 Ibid.

Nor is there evidence that the Committee took educational considerations into play. Both Fitfield and O’Hearn were overcrowded; transferring students to Lee would have alleviated this overcrowding.  

As the State Board’s challenges to Boston’s school segregation grew more forceful, so too did the Boston School Committee’s simultaneous commitment to segregated local neighborhood schools and tactical metropolitanism. Though seemingly contradictory, calls for metropolitan desegregation and the defense of the urban neighborhood school were both part of an effort to repeal the state’s Racial Imbalance Act. By raising the specter of metropolitan desegregation, the Committee sought not only to demonstrate the hypocrisy of suburban liberals who supported the Imbalance Law yet would not send their children to integrated schools, but also to enlist suburban help in overturning the legislation itself. A commitment to metropolitan desegregation possessed another attractive quality for Boston’s segregationists. If adopted, metropolitan remedies promised a reduction in the number of black students in Boston’s schools. No Committee member embarked upon both aims of this tactical metropolitan strategy with more vigor or influence than John Kerrigan.

A vociferous opponent of plans to racially balance the Lee School in the fall of 1971, in March 1972 Kerrigan proposed busing black Boston students to suburban Dover, home to liberal Republican Governor Francis Sargent. Kerrigan’s resolution referred to Sargent as a resident of “the lily-white town of Dover” who has “stated publicly he is opposed to a repeal of the Racial Imbalance Law.” Kerrigan aimed “to test the governor to see if he is a real liberal.” The

33 United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, Opinion, Morgan v. Hennigan, 21 June 1974, LDH.
Committee rejected Kerrigan’s resolution three to two, with Chairman James Hennigan arguing that support of the proposal “could be construed that we’re in favor of forced busing.”

Occasionally capable of providing sensible proposals for metropolitan cooperation, in September 1972 Kerrigan proposed initiating voluntary cooperative programs for city and suburban students, pointing to two programs at Boston high schools that could attract suburban students. By October, Kerrigan proposed linking flexible campus programs in Boston with similar suburban school programs, because “flexible campus is an appropriate beginning for a broader metropolitan movement.” The School Committee passed Kerrigan’s motion calling for a meeting of all area superintendents and more than two dozen area superintendents agreed to meet to plan the sharing of school resources. But these modest efforts were out of the norm. Overall, an antipathy to the suburbs rather than thoughtful solutions characterized Kerrigan’s tenure.

On becoming School Committee Chairman for the second time in January 1974, Kerrigan proposed an exponential increase to the METCO program. Though METCO had grown to bus 1,900 children to twenty-nine suburban communities, Kerrigan argued that this represented mere tokenism, the educational equivalent of businesses placing “a black receptionist and a few black secretaries in the front office” but making no deeper changes. Kerrigan argued “a few hundred more students in METCO won’t solve the problem of racial imbalance in the city or the racial isolation in the suburbs” but “adding a multiple of ten might do it.” Kerrigan proposed busing 19,000 of Boston’s black students – more than half of the black enrollment in Boston – to the suburbs, in a plan redolent of Joseph Lee’s response to suburban civil rights advocacy nearly a decade previous.

---

Kerrigan justified his proposal by demonstrating the inequity of the Racial Imbalance Act, pointing out the law considered an all-white suburban school racially balanced while it labeled a hypothetical city school with a 51 percent minority student body racially imbalanced. Kerrigan lamented that “the lily-white suburbs which surround Boston and draw their life’s blood from the core city are untouched by this strange law” that allowed suburbanites to “have a wonderful liberal attitude – for Boston – not for themselves.” Kerrigan claimed the law’s effects were decidedly un-liberal, calling the Racial Imbalance Act “a well-intentioned but poorly conceived law which results in maintaining the apartheid it sought in principle to end.”

Though Kerrigan’s use of the word “apartheid” to describe metropolitan segregation seems indicative of a commitment to civil rights, Kerrigan possessed an antipathy for African Americans. Kerrigan famously claimed black ABC television correspondent Lem Tucker was “one generation from swinging in the trees.” While he made this remark, Kerrigan physically imitated a monkey. Kerrigan’s proposal to bus black students out of Boston revealed his conception of African American students as a burden to be dispersed in order to reduce white flight and preserve white school majorities. Kerrigan’s metropolitan plan would result in an average of 224 black students in each of eighty-five Boston suburbs. At the individual school level, Kerrigan noted “this would still be only forty-five black students per school, hardly enough to overburden a school or precipitate white flight in the suburbs.”

Aiming to convince suburban representatives to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act, Kerrigan blasted a televised news editorial which warned that repealing the Act was tantamount

37 Ibid.
40 Kerrigan, “The Boston School Committee Looks to the Future,” SCSD.
to *de jure* segregation and could result in a mandatory metropolitan busing program. Kerrigan said the report carried “a covert warning to suburban legislators to ‘keep forced busing in Boston to save the suburbs.’” In a televised response, Kerrigan told viewers “only a constitutional amendment against forced busing can prevent such a happening,” and predicted that should a federal court order suburban desegregation a “groundswell of public opinion… will come thundering out from suburbia against forced busing.”

Meanwhile, Kerrigan cultivated that groundswell, serving as co-petitioner on four tactical metropolitanist bills before the State Legislature. Kerrigan’s measures proposed to make available a list of all classroom vacancies in Massachusetts to minority students looking to voluntarily transfer, to withhold state school assistance payments from any community which did not allow the construction of low- or moderate-income housing, to expand the METCO program tenfold, and to establish a voluntary busing program throughout the Boston region that held the white to non-white population ratio of the metropolitan area as the desirable ratio for every area school. Though containing integrationist merit, all of the proposals aimed primarily to prod suburban opposition to integration.

**Tactical Metropolitanism Becomes Mainstream**

Historians frequently cast John Kerrigan aside as little more than a bigot and avoid devoting considerable attention to his metropolitan proposals. Neglecting his metropolitanism is a

---

41 WNAC-TV Editorial, John Kerrigan, “Racial Imbalance,” 4-10 May 1974, box: 38, folder: 1300, FH.


43 Lukas and Formisano, in particular, focus almost exclusively on Kerrigan’s bigotry. Readers of *Common Ground* are informed of Kerrigan’s racist vitriol and his exploitation of political patronage, but never hear of his metropolitan proposals. Kerrigan appears in a scant five pages of *Common Ground*, the text of which runs over 650 pages. Lukas, *Common Ground*, 123, 137-38, 455, 504. In *Boston Against Busing*, Kerrigan is presented as an obscene indication of the increasing ugliness of the busing controversy. Only in the context of antibusers’ anti-elite resentments does Formisano mention that Kerrigan “relished taunting the suburbs with proposals to expand METCO enormously or to open suburbia to low-income housing and specifically nonwhites.” Formisano, *Boston Against*
mistake. First elected in 1967, Kerrigan topped the School Committee elections by 1969. His Chairmanship of the Committee in 1969 and 1974 – the same year buses began to integrate Boston’s schools – reveal him to be a major player in Boston’s school politics. Kerrigan’s metropolitan proposals and his thundering against the Racial Imbalance Act increasingly characterized Boston school politics in the early-to-mid 1970s. Though most made an effort to avoid his overt bigotry, Boston politicians increasingly mirrored Kerrigan’s efforts. Well before the arrival of busing, tactical metropolitanism dominated Boston’s school desegregation political discourse.

In August 1971, State Representative Paul Murphy of Boston, the House Democratic Whip, filed a bill requiring that suburban communities not only accept black students from Boston’s racially imbalanced schools, but send white students to Boston. Murphy proposed that two-thirds of all children transported under a balancing plan attend suburban schools. However, like the Racial Imbalance Act, the Murphy Bill would not mandate busing for any pupil whose parents objected in writing. State Commissioner of Education Neil Sullivan endorsed Murphy’s proposal, but suggested amendments. Sullivan proposed that the only compulsion on school districts be a requirement that school districts reserve a number of seats for non-white children equal to the non-white population percentage of the metropolitan area as a whole: 5.6 percent. Suburbs would need to reserve this percentage of seats or else face the loss of state funds. Murphy agreed to Sullivan’s amendment. Under the Bill, the state would pay for the busing costs, the suburban schools’ tuition costs, and salaries for any extra teachers needed, similar

\[Busing, 178.\] Geismer briefly notes Kerrigan’s frequent calls for “a tenfold expansion of METCO,” but neglects engaging with his proposals. Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 204.


\[46\] Ibid.
incentives that were required for suburban school committees to participate in METCO. The first concrete legislative proposal for a two-way busing program – one taken seriously by the Massachusetts Department of Education – the Murphy Bill remains unmentioned in all major works about busing in Boston, indicative of the extent to which historians have overlooked white Boston’s metropolitanism.

Unlike the voluntary METCO or the urban-focused Racial Imbalance Act, the Murphy Bill went down to a resounding defeat in 1971. The Bill lost in the State Legislature by a vote of 156 to 60. Residence, more than party affiliation, determined the results. Nearly all of the state’s Republicans united in opposition, while the Democratic vote revealed a clear regional divide. Majority Leader Thomas McGee, a Democrat from suburban Lynn, opposed the bill as did a majority of suburban representatives. Although some Boston Democrats opposed any measure that involved busing, the Murphy Bill attracted considerable Boston support. Suburban critics charged that Boston’s Democrats were simply trying to export their balancing problem to the suburbs, articulating a bipartisan defense of suburban autonomy that implied that structural racism was only an urban phenomenon.

Boston City Councillor Lawrence DiCara’s March 1973 testimony before the state’s Committee on Education is illustrative of how urban calls to defend neighborhood schools and to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act frequently led to support for metropolitan approaches to desegregation, even though metropolitan solutions by their very nature meant a weakening of the neighborhood school concept. DiCara argued that the Racial Imbalance Act was “unworkable and counterproductive” due to its prohibition against busing outside the district against a parent’s

48 Lukas, Formisano, Delmont, and Geismer, for example, all neglect to mention the Murphy Bill. I have only found references to the Murphy Bill in newspapers and archival material.
49 Ibid.
will. This prohibition, lamented DiCara, meant that racial balancing “will be at the expense of neighborhood identity.” DiCara remained silent on the identical implications for neighborhood identity of inter-district busing. DiCara called into question the academic rationale behind the Racial Imbalance Act, pointing out that recent research indicated that socioeconomic integration had a sizeable effect on student test scores whereas racial integration alone did not.

Socioeconomic integration seemed to require the integration of Boston with its wealthier neighbors. Though he conceded that “metropolitan plans have been defeated” in the past, DiCara declared that he “supported the proposals before as I do now,” and urged others to do the same. These metropolitan proposals too have been forgotten. In writing his 2013 memoir, DiCara did not remember these proposals when he noted that “apart from the METCO program… no regional solution was ever proposed.”

Boston Mayor Kevin White made metropolitan calls, but his sincere commitment to metropolitanism came packaged with outright criticism of the School Committee. In April 1972, White lamented the “financial crisis brought on by the Boston School Committee’s failure to comply” with the law. White spoke while the state was withholding $28 million in aid following the Committee’s refusal to balance the Lee School. A continued conflict threatened a further loss of $24 million by the end of the year. White previously lobbied the legislature to remove the financial penalties from the Act, but was unsuccessful. Now he drew attention to the financial inequalities between Boston and its suburbs. Wealthy Brookline spent $1,471 for every

---

50 Testimony of Councillor Lawrence DiCara before the Committee on Education, 1 March 1973, box: 22, Folder: 38, METCO.
school child in 1971, while Boston spent only $935. Though Brookline spent more on its schools per capita, it had a lower tax rate than Boston. Brookline’s equalized valuation per school child was $55,556; Boston’s was $15,290. These stark financial discrepancies suggested to White that “there will not be equal opportunity until Boston’s children have an opportunity to mix educationally with Brookline’s.” As did DiCara, White pointed to social science research to buttress his claims, drawing on sociologist James Coleman’s work to argue that “there is no evidence of any educational benefit to be derived from mixing low-income black children with low-income whites.” However, White argued, the proven value in socioeconomic integration meant that “the Roxbury or South Boston child should have the same access to a Brookline school as a Brookline child has.” White articulated a desire for a form of metropolitan government, calling for “a regional approach to collecting and distributing the tax dollars supporting education, free movement of students across the artificial boundaries which separate the city from its suburbs,” and increased parental involvement in schools as the solution to metropolitan inequality. White maintained that “there can be no solution for Boston’s problems that does not involve the suburbs.”

One year later, on April 10, 1973, White released a position paper outlining his proposals for addressing Boston’s racial imbalance. White’s solution lay in full funding for the METCO program in order to send the 1,000 students on its waitlist to suburban schools. He also pledged his support to House Bill 1876 to equalize metropolitan school funding, which would add $4.5 million to the school budget. His forceful critique of the School Committee remained. White blasted it for “doing everything in its power to find a scapegoat for its present problems” and he

---

53 Statement by Mayor Kevin H. White on Racial Imbalance, 14 August 1972, box: 1, folder: Deseg File, July-Aug 1972, SCSD.
asserted that “Committee members must bear the responsibility for the mess they have created.”

“With each passing year,” White argued, the Committee “made the possibility of peaceful
desegregation more difficult and have increased the likelihood that a Federal court will impose a
desegregation order on Boston” far beyond anything required under the Racial Imbalance Law.54

Responding to White’s criticism of the Racial Imbalance Law as “seriously flawed,” the
METCO Board responded that “one is reminded of George Bernard Shaw’s reference to
Christianity – that it was probably a good idea but it had never been tried.” METCO accused
White of being “curiously quiet during the past several years regarding the School Committee’s
flagrant violation of the law.” Yet METCO did not oppose White’s message entirely, stating that
“there is no denying that cities generally need help and suburbs need to provide it” and
supporting White’s call for further funding to METCO. But METCO stopped short of promoting
metropolitanism and it doubted the likelihood of a metropolitan solution, stating that to “pin
one’s hopes on some metropolitan plan likely to be achieved in some distant millennium is in our
judgment an abdication of leadership.”55

METCO’s reticence on metropolitanism contrasted sharply with Kevin White’s and Paul
Murphy’s concrete endorsement of metropolitan solutions, demonstrating that tactical
metropolitanism superseded the voluntary metropolitanism of the urban-suburban civil rights
alliance and now functioned as the metropolitanist vanguard. As METCO retreated from its
earliest metropolitan hopes, tactical metropolitanism grew to yield potentially productive
solutions to inequality alongside its primary aim of defeating integration. Whether aiming to
defeat the Racial Imbalance Act or to ensure that desegregation would be achieved equitably,

54 Muriel L. Cohen, “White offers school reforms linking suburbs to integration,” Boston Evening Globe, 10 April
55 Letter, METCO Board to Mayor Kevin White, 24 April 1973, box: 22, folder: 37, METCO.
urban whites with little connection to the aims of integrationist civil rights advocates increasingly placed segregation in its metropolitan context and forwarded remedies.

While White’s calling the Imbalance Act “seriously flawed” ran afoul of METCO, it sufficiently pleased a number of antibusers who called off plans to demonstrate outside of White’s Beacon Hill home. The protesters vowed to continue the other portion of their demonstration, scheduled for Governor Sargent’s hometown of Dover. The Dover demonstration reflected the increasing tactical metropolitan orientation of ordinary, antibusing metropolitan Boston parents. Where the Freedom Stayout enlisted suburban support nine years previous, so too did antibusers now.

**Pyrrhic Victory: Dismantling the Racial Imbalance Act**

As Boston’s antibusers stepped up their attempts to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act, suburbanites increasingly joined their efforts. As in the early challenges to METCO from the right-wing fringe, a desire to prevent potential mandatory metropolitan desegregation motivated these suburbanites. No longer emblematic of extremist politics, such efforts were now indicative of how widespread the metropolitan rhetoric had become and how seriously suburbanites took the possibility of metropolitan desegregation. Far from an afterthought, the metropolitanist discourse was formative for the region’s politics, ushering many suburbanites and the state’s Democratic Party rightward.

This suburban backlash to METCO manifested itself in the early 1970s. Historian Lily Geismer suggests that the backlash erupted during Phase I of Boston’s desegregation in the 1974-75 school year, in response to attempts to expand METCO and to the 1975 Daly-Sullivan

---

Bill, which attempted to mandate suburban participation in Boston’s ongoing desegregation.\textsuperscript{57} This backlash continued when state financial pressures arising from the 1973 recession threatened to make suburban towns pay for a portion of the METCO program. However, the earlier timing of the backlash discovered here suggests that Geismer overlooked the formative role played by the Boston School Committee’s tactical metropolitanism in stoking the rightward shift of the state’s Democratic Party and many suburbanites. Even before the 1973 recession, a majority of suburban legislators had lined up against the state’s Racial Imbalance Act and METCO revealed doubts about its continued existence.\textsuperscript{58}

Legislative attempts to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act, accompanied by mass demonstrations, became an annual rite of spring in the early 1970s. One such demonstration, on March 21, 1973, entailed 1,000 white Boston parents entering the State House to demand the Act’s repeal and assert their opposition to busing. Inside, the parents witnessed Kerrigan being thrown out of a Joint Education Committee hearing. Though Kerrigan declared his intention to question representatives on how they voted on a bill that would have included the suburbs in plans to integrate Boston’s schools, he was not interested in hearing responses. As Representative Edward McCollgan attempted to respond, Kerrigan interrupted him, asking “where are you from? You’re from Northampton aren’t you?” After the Committee successfully ejected Kerrigan, it required ten minutes to restore order, as the assembled crowd chanted “we want Kerrigan.” The Committee then considered nineteen separate bills. Eleven of the bills were designed either to repeal or weaken the Racial Imbalance Act. Other bills included a reintroduction of Paul Murphy’s proposal to involve the suburbs in balancing Boston schools and

\textsuperscript{57} The Daly-Sullivan Bill is discussed in depth in Chapter Six.
\textsuperscript{58} Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 199-225. See especially pages 206-208.
one that would provide state construction aid to suburbs to build extra facilities for urban children. Only one Boston representative testified against repealing the Racial Imbalance Act – black representative Royal Bolling of Roxbury. The crowd jeered as Bolling correctly stated that the law “would not be on the books today” if the School Committee had not ignored black parents’ calls for school improvements. The crowd applauded when a South End woman criticized black violence in schools and black welfare recipients.59

Though Kerrigan railed against suburban legislators and suburbanites themselves, suburbanites became increasingly visible in Boston’s antibusing efforts, a situation the School Committee helped to engineer. Two weeks after Kerrigan refused to let McColgan respond, on April 4 thousands of parents and children – estimates ranged from 4,000 to 10,000 – demonstrated outside the State House and Boston City Hall. The demonstration’s organizers, the Boston Home and School Association, arranged to bus concerned suburban parents into the city. Chartered yellow school buses brought antibusers from Burlington, Westwood, Dedham, Norwood, Springfield, Scituate, Waltham, Arlington, Canton, Revere, West Dennis, Yarmouth, and Milton.60 Taking stock of the suburban activity, one Westwood woman asserted that “a real grassroots movement is underway to prevent forced busing.”61 Although the Act specifically outlawed busing against a parents’ wishes, antibusing parents recognized that busing would be the only way for Boston to achieve full compliance with the law and suburban parents feared the possibility of mandated suburban involvement. To fight this, many antibusing suburbanites joined arms with Boston antibusers – the very people whose representatives stoked suburban fears about metropolitanism by proposing mandatory metropolitan busing in the first place.

In ways beyond simple suburban participation in Boston’s anti-integration demonstrations, the Boston School Committee’s tactics of stoking suburban fears by proposing metropolitan solutions appeared to be working. A noticeable decline in suburban support for integration, whether accomplished through voluntary or mandatory means, accompanied Boston’s tactical metropolitanism. In December 1971, an internal METCO memo stated that it was “increasingly evident that in a great number of METCO communities, sustained support and interest in the METCO concept… is not as strong as it should be.” The memo spoke of the “lack of commitment on the part of suburban people in general” and reported that supportive suburban school superintendents “are concerned about the attitude of the public in their respective communities.” In light of the current climate, the memo questioned whether “METCO can take its continued existence for granted.”

METCO’s fears were not unfounded. Voters in Milton’s School Committee elections responded favorably to one candidate’s attacks on METCO. In March 1972, they elected twenty-one-year-old James Mullen. Mullen, a 1969 graduate of Milton High School and a former class president, credited his success entirely to his stance on busing. Though Milton participated in METCO, receiving just twelve Boston students in the 1971-72 school year, Mullen campaigned against the program, presenting it as a precursor to a two-way busing program that would bus Milton students into Boston. Though he noted Milton’s pro-busing reputation, Mullen asserted that “in the privacy of the voting booth, citizens went on record as opposed to busing by electing me.” Mullen claimed to be motivated not by race but by a desire to defend local control. He stated that he “would oppose the busing from outside of town even if the students came from

---

Randolph or Canton,” two wealthy white suburban communities. Following Mullen’s successful campaign, supporters of segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace attempted to recruit Mullen to Wallace’s 1972 presidential campaign. Noncommittal, Mullen nevertheless noted that he and Wallace completely agreed on the busing issue. Like Wallace, Mullen also revealed an aversion to Massachusetts liberalism. Though technically related to the Kennedy family – Mullen’s great grandfather was John F. “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, John F. Kennedy’s grandfather – Mullen made no mention of this during the campaign, surely a first in Massachusetts politics.64

The increasing opposition of the Massachusetts House of Representatives to the Racial Imbalance Act provided the strongest indicator of declining support for integration in the early 1970s.65 With each passing year, as tactical metropolitanism grew in strength, so too did the Act’s suburban opposition. In September 1971, the House gave its initial approval to a bill that would suspend the Massachusetts Department of Education’s ability to withhold funds to school systems failing to comply with the Act. This would have allowed the Boston School Committee to rescind its order to desegregate the Lee School without a loss of state funding.66 Ultimately unsuccessful, a similar bill nevertheless made it through both House and Senate in July 1972 that would have released $54 million in withheld state aid to the Boston schools. This time, only Governor Sargent’s veto allowed for the punitive aspects of the Racial Imbalance Act to remain.67 In May 1972, the House voted against the outright repeal of the Act. However, before a racially polarized gallery, filled primarily with black women supportive of the Act and with the

65 On the declining support for the Racial Imbalance Act, see also: Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 60-65; Lukas, Common Ground, 219-221.
remaining space occupied by white women wearing red “stop busing” badges and accompanied by John Kerrigan, the House voted 137 to 82 to modify the definition of “racially imbalanced” to a school with 60 percent or more minority schoolchildren, rather than 50 percent.\textsuperscript{68}

As opposition continued to mount, by April 1973 House Speaker David Bartley, a Democrat from Western Massachusetts, announced that he supported legislation that would change the definition of an imbalanced school to one with more than 70 percent black students. This change would balance 20 of Boston’s 65 imbalanced schools without any effort from the Boston School Committee. With John Kerrigan and others raising the specter of mandatory metropolitan busing, Bartley also stated that he would support an “acceptable” antibusing bill and legislation that would require that any redrawing of school districts be approved in local referendums.\textsuperscript{69} Given suburban fears of mandatory metropolitan desegregation, requiring voters to approve the redrawing of school districts would preclude the formation of a metropolitan school district. In the face of tactical metropolitanism, suburbanites, through their representatives, increasingly chose suburban autonomy over black civil rights.

Bartley’s support of antibusing legislation rested on the retention of the weakened Racial Imbalance Act. But in advocating the law’s retention, Bartley was out of step with the majority of his colleagues. Days after Bartley’s announcement, the House voted to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act entirely by a vote of 133 to 96. It also approved, without debate, a package of amendments to the law, including the proposal to change the permissible minority enrollment level to 70 percent.\textsuperscript{70} One week later, the House overwhelmingly approved a bill intended to prevent the forced busing of public school students 174 to 66. Ruth Batson, a leader of the

earliest NAACP challenge to school segregation in Boston, viewed this vote as nothing less than “a vote in favor of Boston’s re-creating and continuing a racially segregated school system.” Batson lamented the House supporting “the racist white masses of Boston.”

The Act’s opponents still had a way to go however, as the Senate voted in early May to keep the law and Governor Sargent was on the record pledging to use his gubernatorial veto against its repeal.

Although he publicly mused about changing the definition of an imbalanced school to one with over 70 percent minority pupils as early as March 1972, Sargent’s support of the Racial Imbalance Act and his willingness to veto legislation provided the most serious obstacle for its opponents. Following an antibusing demonstration organized by Bostonians but taking place in his hometown of Dover in April 1973, Sargent met with antibusing parents and told them that he opposed “junking” the Act but favored amendments to “make the law workable.” Sargent again vetoed a bill in June 1973 that would have outlawed the busing of students without the consent of their parents. However, Sargent clearly felt the pressure. His veto occurred only after asking for an advisory opinion from the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on the measure’s constitutionality, suggesting a new openness to repealing the law. Sargent used his veto only after the Court informed him that the bill would be unconstitutional.

By the spring of 1974, a plurality of white people in Boston and its suburbs favored repealing the Racial Imbalance Act. A Boston Globe poll conducted in April 1974 found that 58 percent of white Bostonians supported repeal while 32 percent favored retention. White suburbanites favored repeal by a narrower margin of 46 percent to 39 percent. Only a majority of

---

73 United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, Opinion, Morgan v. Hennigan, 21 June 1974, LDH.
black Bostonians continued to support the Act, with 53 percent favoring retention and 28 percent opposed.\(^74\)

The long-brewing conflict between the Massachusetts Board of Education and the Boston School Committee put Sargent on the spot in the spring of 1974. This battle resulted in an order from the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court that required extensive busing for racial balance. Court rulings on January 16, March 22, and April 17, 1974 ordered the implementation of the state Board’s plan to racially balance schools in line with the Racial Imbalance Act. The plan, authored by Charles Glenn of the Massachusetts Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity, rested on the pairing of black and white schools. The plan’s central component paired black Roxbury and white South Boston in a busing exchange.\(^75\) The state Legislature responded to the order by voting to repeal the Act, forcing Sargent to consider using his veto once again.

On May 10, 1974, Sargent delivered a televised address outlining his response. Sargent began his address by extolling the virtues of the Racial Imbalance Act and the legislature itself, which the Governor called “one of the most progressive legislatures in America.” Sargent then mused on the nature of the opposition, asking if the resistance mirrored that found in the South. “If the answer is yes,” Sargent told viewers, “my course is clear… we will go forward, because it is right.” Conceding that some of the opposition had racism at its core, Sargent nevertheless stated that “those who resist have not made it their life’s work blocking the education of other children. Rather, they seek to better their own.” Sargent then announced his intentions to support repeal of the Act should an alternative law be adopted. Sargent’s proposed alternative guaranteed every child a choice of an integrated education without mandating integration. If a child’s

---


\(^{75}\) Ibid.
neighborhood school was imbalanced, that child would have the option of attending a school outside of his or her neighborhood. The suburbs would participate in Boston’s desegregation, but only through METCO, which Sargent proposed to give an additional $6 million to allow it to double its operations.\(^7^6\)

Sargent justified his response by pointing to the inadequacies of the state busing plan. The state plan affected Boston’s neighborhoods unequally, leaving untouched the white areas of West Roxbury and East Boston. Sargent realized that intra-city busing “put the total burden for change on black and white working people in the inner city and no burden on the richer, mainly white suburbs.”\(^7^7\) But despite this objection, Sargent’s proposal included no compulsions for the “richer, mainly white suburbs.” If successful, Sargent envisioned integration in Boston proceeding only voluntarily, a significant departure from the intent of the Racial Imbalance Act. In July 1974, the state modified the Act in line with Sargent’s recommendations, maintaining integration as law but removing the Act’s compulsory elements.\(^7^8\)

Massachusetts’s black political representatives saw Sargent’s backtracking as a capitulation to white racism. Speaking on behalf of the Massachusetts Black Caucus in May 1974, Representative Doris Bunte blasted Sargent for setting the state “on a destructive, deceptive, irresponsible and cowardly course” and noted the failures of voluntary busing programs and magnet schools in producing integration nationally. The Black Caucus recognized

---

\(^7^7\) Ibid.
Sargent’s proposal as a triumph of the Boston School Committee. Bunte’s statement called the Governor’s recommendations “nothing more than the Kerrigan Plan designed to evade the laws which require equal protection of black children.”

METCO, typically welcoming of additional funds, revealed a cool response to the Governor’s proposal. METCO Executive Director Jean McGuire did not desire a large expansion, telling a newscaster that even in the suburbs “there are just places I would not send black students.”

Despite McGuire’s hesitation, as Geismer has documented liberal METCO supporters sought to expand the program into several new towns in 1974, exacerbating the suburban backlash stoked by Boston’s tactical metropolitanism. Though liberal METCO supporters continued to push for the program’s expansion, they faced a Sisyphean task in light of the mounting suburban opposition prodded by tactical metropolitanism.

As tactical metropolitanism was ascendant, the urban-suburban civil rights alliance could only wither. The suburban commitment to civil rights in the spring of 1974 was far removed from that of 1964, when the Freedom Stayout of the Boston schools witnessed the emergence of the urban-suburban civil rights alliance. Tactical metropolitanism had clearly damaged that alliance.

**Morgan v. Hennigan and the Beginning of “Forced Busing” in Boston**

Despite Governor Sargent’s efforts to amend the state’s busing plan, “forced busing” would come to Boston. Even while attempting to replace the Racial Imbalance Act, Sargent knew busing remained possible. During his televised address Sargent informed Massachusetts citizens

---

81 Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 207-208. Geismer argues that “the fears of full-scale metropolitan integration and the expansion of the program into new communities produced a sharp backlash.” Given the Boston School Committee’s longstanding tactical metropolitanism, it is more accurate to say that proposals to expand METCO exacerbated an extant backlash.
that a federal court could still order the implementation of a compulsory busing plan regardless of the state’s modification of the Act. Here Sargent referred obliquely to a federal court case begun by black parents in the aftermath of the School Committee’s choice to segregate the Lee School.

The Lee School fiasco clearly demonstrated that the Boston schools were *de jure* segregated, not merely “racially imbalanced.” On March 15, 1972, the NAACP filed the case that became known as *Morgan v. Hennigan* after the primary plaintiff, Tallulah Morgan, a young mother of three, and School Committee Chairman James Hennigan. In addition to the Boston School Committee, the suit named the State Board of Education and its Commissioner, Neil Sullivan, as defendants. The suit charged the Boston School Committee with both creating and maintaining pupil segregation through the manipulation of district lines, the selective transportation of students, building upon residential segregation, and refusing to implement extant policies to remedy segregation. The plaintiffs’ initial complaint also charged that the Boston schools denied educational opportunities to black children by spending less on instructional expenditures in identifiably black schools and accused the Committee of discrimination in the hiring of teachers.  

At the outset of *Morgan v. Hennigan*, plaintiffs appeared open to metropolitan remedies. In asking the court for relief, plaintiffs urged the “inclusion of suburban school systems as appropriate in the plan for desegregation, in order to achieve, now and hereafter, the greatest...

---

possible degree of actual desegregation.” Although the NAACP’s complaint did not mention busing explicitly, its calls to include suburban systems was a particularly significant request as a similar case in Richmond, Virginia had recently resulted in an order for the mandatory metropolitan busing of students. Notably, defendant Sullivan was already on record as an advocate of metropolitanism. Though he did not think that Boston met the Richmond standard, Sullivan argued that the Boston area should nevertheless develop a metropolitan exchange. The NAACP justified naming the State Board of Education and Commissioner Sullivan defendants by pointing out that “education is a responsibility of the state and that the subdivisions of cities and towns are artificial boundaries and merely creatures of that state created for the state’s convenience.” If such boundaries produced unlawful segregation, they could be discarded. Despite naming the State Board of Education and Sullivan, the suit did not name the Governor as a defendant as Sargent was not yet on the record favoring the repeal of the Racial Imbalance Act. The NAACP hoped that the suit would “combine all of the various landmark decisions in education that have occurred within the last few years,” including “metropolitanization of school districts.” The NAACP’s request for suburban participation was long expected. Over a month prior to the filing of the case, the front page of the Globe informed readers that the NAACP planned to ask the courts to require suburban participation.

The Boston School Committee similarly requested suburban participation in Morgan v. Hennigan. On May 18, it voted four to one to ask the court to name the seventy-five cities and towns.”

---

85 NAACP Immediate Release, Massachusetts Public Schools Lawsuit, 15 March 1972, box: 22, folder: 39, METCO.
towns within a thirty-five mile radius of Boston its co-defendants. The School Committee’s motion argued that white flight necessitated a metropolitan solution. Claiming that white flight increased when the black student population reached the “tipping point” of 40 percent, the Committee stated that any “plan for desegregation which fails to take into account the outmigration of whites to the suburbs is doomed to failure from the start.”

The Committee also asserted that the Racial Imbalance Act placed the state in the position of solving Boston’s segregation. As the state withheld funds “only” twice and assented to previous plans that left Boston’s schools segregated, the state defendants were “legally responsible for the actions of the local defendants who function as agents of the state,” a tenuous piece of blame-shifting.

The Committee’s strongest metropolitan arguments pointed to clear suburban discrimination. Explaining his support of suburban involvement, Kerrigan noted that a majority of suburban legislators voted in recent weeks to repeal the state’s “Anti-Snob Zoning Law,” which allowed the construction of a moderate amount of low- and middle-income housing regardless of restrictive local zoning requirements. Tactical metropolitanists enthusiastically supported the Anti-Snob Zoning Law. As the Law seemed to provide an avenue for black residence in exclusive suburban communities, Kerrigan drew attention to suburban votes against it in order to demonstrate the “hypocrisy of the suburbs on racial balancing of Boston schools.”

By December, Chairman Hennigan, the lone objector to the Committee’s metropolitan request, joined with his colleagues in making metropolitan arguments. Hennigan emphasized the interconnected nature of the metropolis, telling the Globe that “few people realize that people in

87 Motion of the Defendant School Committee of the City of Boston to Join Certain School Committees as Parties Defendant, June 1972, part V, box: 953, folder: 4, NAACP-LOC.
88 Plaintiffs’ Answers to Interrogatories of the State Defendants, 22 June 1972, part V, box: 953, folder: 7, NAACP-LOC.
Brookline live closer to Boston’s non-white schools than do children” in the city’s East Boston, Charlestown, Brighton, Hyde Park, and West Roxbury neighborhoods. Hennigan’s remarks indicated little faith that the court would find the Boston schools free of segregation. For Hennigan and the rest of the Committee, metropolitan busing was preferable to intra-city busing given a finding of de jure segregation.

Indicative of how the Committee’s support for metropolitan solutions entered the Boston political mainstream, the City of Boston offered an amicus curiae in Detroit’s Milliken v. Bradley case in support of cross-district metropolitan busing. Milliken concerned a metropolitan plan supported not only by a group of anti-integrationist Detroit whites who shifted course in favor of a metropolitan solution designed to preserve white majorities, but by the NAACP and the city’s Board of Education as well. Though filed on behalf of the city rather than the School Committee, the amicus brief spun Boston’s metropolitanism as a “commitment to metropolitan approaches to education substantially predating a desegregation lawsuit in which its School Committee is presently a defendant.” Boston’s brief functioned as a celebration of the city’s METCO program, calling its provisions for voluntary transfers across district lines an “indispensable remedy,” and it requested that the Supreme Court not prohibit district courts from “entering any sort of metropolitan decree.” Though the brief did not specifically call for a metropolitan school district, it reflected Mayor White’s opinion that the suburbs needed to be included in desegregation remedies and his support of an expanded METCO program. With Milliken before the Supreme Court, Boston’s metropolitan solutions not only antagonized the suburbs, they had the real possibility of being implemented and the City of Boston was actively

---

90 Ibid.
91 Amicus Curiae Brief of the City of Boston, Massachusetts, October 1973, part V, box: 1049, folder: 4, NAACP-LOC.
92 For more on Milliken, see Chapters Four and Five.
pushing the Supreme Court for their implementation. Boston’s metropolitanism, far from being an outlier, paralleled and increasingly converged with similar developments in other cities.

Though the metropolitan discourse emerged in Boston from the urban-suburban civil rights alliance, metropolitanism was now most associated with the opponents of intra-city desegregation. Metropolitanism possessed radical possibilities for metropolitan reform and racial justice, but by 1972, neither civil rights nor reform was its prime motivator. A desire to repeal the Racial Imbalance Act, followed by a desire to disperse the black population in order to preserve white-majority schools, largely motivated white Boston’s metropolitanism.

Though its initial filing supported metropolitan solutions, the NAACP opposed the School Committee’s request to make suburban communities parties defendant as it did not want suburban involvement in the early stages of the trial. It reasoned that the addition of seventy-five new defendants would be unnecessarily burdensome and it maintained that the presence of the state of Massachusetts as a defendant left the metropolitan option open. Judge W. Arthur Garrity sided with the NAACP and ruled against the Committee’s request, stating his belief that “complete relief can be found among the present parties” within Boston.

Historian J. Anthony Lukas and social scientist J. Brian Sheehan argue that the Boston NAACP’s opposition to the Committee’s metropolitan request indicates that it feared losing influence in a desegregated metropolitan environment and was interested in control of the Boston school system more than in the educational benefits from suburban involvement. This

93 Not all antibusers trumpeted metropolitanism, however. As Geismer demonstrates, many segregationists positioned themselves as victims of “reverse discrimination” because METCO did not accept white children. Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 204.
94 Plaintiffs Memorandum Concerning Adding Defendants, June 1972, part V, box: 953, folder: 4, NAACP-LOC.
95 Order Denying City Defendants’ Motion to Join Surrounding Cities and Towns, 23 June 1972, part V, box: 953, folder: 4, United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, Opinion, Morgan v. Hennigan, 21 June 1974, LDH.
interpretation should be rejected. Above all, the NAACP remained open to metropolitan solutions. Its attorney, J. Harold Flannery, told the Boston Globe in October 1974, during the case’s remedial proceedings for the Phase II busing plan, that plaintiffs would accept a metropolitan solution as long as there was two-way busing. That the NAACP continued supporting METCO, which removed black students from Boston’s schools, reducing the overall percentage of African Americans in the school system in the process, illustrates more than a desire to control Boston’s schools. Furthermore, the NAACP’s efforts in Boston mirrored its strategy in pertinent cases such as Milliken v. Bradley, where it made metropolitan arguments in the case’s remedial proceedings, and where restrictions were placed on intervening suburban defendants who were only allowed to join the case in its later stages. NAACP lawyers hoped to replicate this situation in Boston. When the NAACP opposed a motion to join suburban systems as defendants in Milliken, it argued that the presence of the state as a defendant was sufficient prerequisite for a metropolitan plan. Likewise, Morgan v. Hennigan charged the state with aiding Boston’s segregation, thereby leaving the metropolitan remedy open.

Unlike the School Committee, however, the NAACP’s metropolitanism was not an all-or-nothing affair. While it supported metropolitan solutions, the NAACP expected that intra-city measures could successfully desegregate Boston’s schools. Unlike Detroit and Philadelphia, Boston’s demographics suggested that intra-city desegregation conforming to the original requirements of the Racial Imbalance Act was numerically possible. Of the 96,492 students in Boston’s public schools in 1971-72, African Americans accounted for only 30,562 pupils – a

__________

98 Memorandum, Nick Flannery to Roger Abrams, Nate Jones, John Leubsdorf, Bob Pressman, Steve Rosenfeld, Tom Simmons, and Eric Van Loon, 7 June 1972, part V, box: 953, folder: 4, NAACP-LOC. For more on the Detroit case, see Chapter Four.
clear minority. That the NAACP still urged suburban involvement in remedies demonstrates an interest in the superior resources suburban systems could provide. Contra Lukas and Sheehan’s arguments, the NAACP could not feasibly gain control of Boston’s schools even under an intra-city plan. With the School Committee elected through at-large citywide elections, a numerical majority within the schools would not necessarily translate to a majority of votes. Given the large number of white children in private and parochial schools, African Americans constituted a much smaller percentage of Boston’s electorate than its percentage of public school students. For any black organization, political control of Boston’s schools was an impossibility.

There could be little doubt that Judge Garrity would find Boston’s public schools *de jure* segregated. In separate cases, the Boston School Committee had already run afoul of the Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. On June 21, 1974 Judge Garrity issued the Court’s binding opinion in *Morgan v. Hennigan*, finding the School Committee of Boston guilty of deliberate segregation. Garrity’s meticulously detailed opinion ran over 100 pages – much longer than similar cases – and revealed the full extent of the Boston schools’ *de jure* segregation. It did not, however, find that the state of Massachusetts contributed to segregation, nor could it reference Governor Sargent’s recent decision to concede to public opinion and support repeal of the Racial Imbalance Act. Rather, Garrity pointed to the Act and the persistence of the State Board of Education in pushing for its implementation as evidence of the state’s commitment to desegregation.100

Ruling in late June, Garrity only had a little more than two months until school began in September. In this short time, the Judge decided to impose a remedy rather than wait another year. Garrity ordered the implementation of Charles Glenn’s intra-city plan that paired the poor

---

100 United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, Opinion, *Morgan v. Hennigan*, 21 June 1974, LDH.
neighborhoods of Roxbury and South Boston and left several white neighborhoods untouched.\footnote{101} Oddly, considering the meticulousness of Garrity’s opinion in \textit{Morgan v. Hennigan}, the Judge implemented the plan without first reading it. Six days after his ruling, Garrity told the courtroom that he “saw the plan for the first time myself late yesterday afternoon,” a claim he continued to make throughout the day.\footnote{102}

The state plan became known as Phase I. Over the coming year, Garrity embarked upon his own Phase II Plan which could possibly include metropolitan solutions. Garrity’s Opinion in \textit{Morgan v. Hennigan} avoided a lengthy discussion of metropolitanism. A footnote noted that the Court denied the Committee’s motion to make suburban communities defendants in the case “partly on the ground that the proposed defendant cities and towns had not been charged by the plaintiffs with contributing to the violation of their constitutional rights.” However, Garrity left the metropolitan option open, even if he did not relish it. By leaving metropolitanism on the table, Garrity left room for a courtroom alliance in the case’s remedial hearings between the School Committee and the NAACP, such as that which emerged during Detroit’s \textit{Bradley v. Milliken} case. Garrity’s decision stated that “the ordering of busing across governmental boundary lines – the transportation of students between the suburbs and the city – remains of challengeable validity.”\footnote{103} This was because the Supreme Court did not deliver a precedent-setting decision on the Richmond case. With Justice Lewis Powell, a former Chairman of the Richmond School Board, excused from the proceedings the Supreme Court deadlocked four to four. The tie upheld a Court of Appeals reversal of a metropolitan busing order. Phase II and any future challenges to Boston’s segregation would ultimately be bound by the Supreme Court’s

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{101}{Ibid.}
\footnote{102}{Lukas, \textit{Common Ground}, 240.}
\footnote{103}{United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, Opinion, \textit{Morgan v. Hennigan}, 21 June 1974, LDH.}
\end{footnotes}

**Conclusion**

Through its tactical metropolitan appeals, the Boston School Committee succeeded in its primary aim of weakening suburban legislative support for desegregation and diminishing the urban-suburban civil rights alliance. In the face of proposals calling for mandatory metropolitan desegregation, suburban enthusiasm for voluntary desegregation waned, the Racial Imbalance Act became newly toothless, and Massachusetts’ reputedly liberal suburbs were becoming noticeably more conservative on civil rights issues.

Boston’s tactical metropolitanism prodded the state’s Democratic Party rightward even prior to the 1973 recession and the proposals to expand METCO in the 1974-75 school year that Geismer argues were behind the suburban backlash to METCO. By arousing suburban anti-metropolitanism, the Committee’s tactics meant that widespread metropolitan desegregation was only possible through the courts, not through legislation. Mandatory metropolitan desegregation in Boston would ultimately require the Supreme Court’s acceptance of a metropolitan remedy in Detroit’s *Milliken* case.

Though born of ignoble aims, Boston’s tactical metropolitan proposals provided the possibility of meaningful, lasting school desegregation. The Boston School Committee, in making its metropolitan proposals, functioned not only as an opponent of integration and defender of the segregated status quo, but as a voice of metropolitan reform capable of significantly combatting metropolitan educational inequality. It did so not from a commitment to racial justice, but because of a racist desire to arouse suburban opposition so as to defeat integrationist legislation and, should that fail, as a failsafe designed to disperse black students
that it viewed as a burden throughout the metropolis in the aim of preserving white majority
schools. But the mandatory metropolitanism laid out in the proposals of the Committee and other
Boston politicians had benefits. Voluntary efforts such as METCO allowed suburbs to eschew a
commitment to metropolitan desegregation at any time. Mandatory plans, by locking the suburbs
into desegregation and preventing many well-heeled whites the opportunity to flee from the
desegregation mandate by simply crossing municipal boundaries, would stitch integration into
the regional fabric in a way that voluntary measures never could.

Though the Committee’s metropolitanism rested upon a transparent strategy and a racist
presentation of black students as inferior, similar metropolitan arguments being made in Detroit,
Philadelphia, and elsewhere by both segregationist and integrationist sources demonstrated the
potential for disparate urban groups, sharing little more than urban residence, to align and
challenge metropolitan inequality. Though Boston never witnessed a formal metropolitanist
alliance, the support of the Boston School Committee and the NAACP for metropolitan solutions
indicated that a courtroom alliance was not out of the realm of possibility in the early 1970s. As
Chapter Four demonstrates, such an alliance had already emerged in Detroit’s Bradley v.
Milliken case, one which the City of Boston contributed to in filing an amicus curiae brief in
support of metropolitan desegregation remedies. As Boston’s amicus brief recognized, Detroit’s
metropolitan desegregation battles would have national implications. From these converging
metropolitan arguments emerged an alternate vision of metropolitan integration and educational
equality. This vision, capable of radically reshaping American metropolises, still seemed
realizable in the early summer of 1974.
Chapter 3


Convinced of a plot to eliminate Philadelphia’s segregated system of neighborhood schools, members of Save Our Schools (SOS), an anti-integration and antibusing organization, brought a coffin to one of their 1965 meetings. The coffin symbolized the death of the neighborhood school. Though hyperbolic, this gesture revealed an awareness of the existence of significant challenges to the Philadelphia Board of Education’s segregated system of such schools. While at this point calls for school reform focused mainly on the city itself, in the following years reformist challenges expanded to blast not only segregated neighborhood schools but the existence of unequal school districts throughout the metropolis. By the late 1960s, school desegregation efforts in Philadelphia came packaged with arguments about the need for metropolitan solutions and calls for structural reform.

Challenges to Philadelphia’s system of neighborhood schools and metropolitan inequality came from a broad spectrum of Philadelphians, many of whom did not fit the conception of the classical urban reformer who values efficiency and order. Philadelphia’s school reformers included the city’s major civil rights organizations, its Board of Education under the leadership of former mayor and archetypal reformer Richardson Dilworth, and even the school board leadership produced by Philadelphia’s white backlash election of Mayor Frank Rizzo, which found extant metropolitan desegregation arguments both a convenient way to delay the implementation of desegregation and a valid recognition of regional spatial inequality. Though segregated schools came under attack from diverse groups, they never coalesced into a unified challenge. In Philadelphia’s early battles over school desegregation from the 1960s to the early
1970s, three discrete constituencies for metropolitan reform emerged in sequence, each characterized by disparate sources and motivations but a similar recognition that segregation was – and that its remedies should be – metropolitan in scope.

As in Boston, civil rights groups served as Philadelphia’s initial voice of educational and metropolitan reform. A 1961 lawsuit filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) first raised the incendiary issue of busing. The resolution of the suit entailed a small amount of busing, though primarily for reasons of overcrowding. Following the issuing of a continuance in the case in 1963 came the end of the NAACP’s role in leading the charge against the Philadelphia schools. When the national organization split the local chapter into multiple branches in 1967, the divided NAACP neglected to reopen the case. This did not end the leading reformist role of civil rights groups, however. Into the breach stepped other integrationist organizations, such as the Urban League of Philadelphia and the Fellowship Commission, whose activism grew to articulate a tentative metropolitanism. The Urban League demanded a conversion of the system of neighborhood schools into one of educational parks – a campus-style collection of multiple schools designed to attract a broad spectrum of students from beyond the schools’ immediate neighborhoods in aid of integration. The Fellowship Commission quickly echoed the call, supporting educational parks as a way to transcend not only the boundaries of neighborhood, but of municipality as well, making Philadelphia’s segregation a metropolitan issue in the process. Advocates of educational parks turned a 1967 Philadelphia Board of Education bond issue into a referendum on neighborhood schools, but they proved unsuccessful in swaying the city’s voters. Civil rights activity prodded white Philadelphians to respond with a defense of neighborhood schools that combined valid educational concerns with overt racism. Unable to produce meaningful change within the structures of interracial liberalism, black protest in Philadelphia increasingly took on a community control and black
power orientation, one largely incompatible with wide-ranging metropolitan desegregation schemes. Following the bond campaign, metropolitanism was left largely to the authorities.

On the heels of the failed campaign for educational parks, the Philadelphia Board of Education, under the leadership of Richardson Dilworth, emerged as the primary voice of metropolitan reform. Dilworth, who served as Philadelphia’s mayor from 1956 to 1962 and became Board President in 1965, had accrued considerable civil rights credentials. Dilworth nonetheless opposed educational parks, only assenting to the construction of three as a sop to park advocates. But a 1968 order from the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) demanding that the Philadelphia Board of Education submit a desegregation plan for its system of neighborhood schools prodded the reformer Dilworth to revisit his long-held dreams of efficient metropolitan government. He responded to the desegregation order by placing segregation in its metropolitan context, contrasting the predominantly white suburban school systems with Philadelphia’s largely black schools. First proposing only voluntary metropolitan desegregation, by 1971 Dilworth’s Board demanded metropolitan school districts and mandatory suburban involvement in desegregation.

The Dilworth Board’s perceived willingness to concede to the demands of black students prodded an already extant white backlash to civil rights. But the political representatives of this backlash quickly emerged as Philadelphia’s third major voice of metropolitan reform. Attacking the Board’s links to black civil rights proved a major theme of Frank Rizzo’s successful 1971 mayoral campaign. Though Rizzo engineered the removal of Dilworth and his integrationist Superintendent of Schools Mark Shedd, Rizzo’s Board echoed the metropolitan arguments made by its unpopular predecessor. Like the Boston School Committee, it embraced the opportunity to weaken suburban legislative support for integration and preferred metropolitan desegregation only in the face of mandatory desegregation. As did Dilworth, it argued that integrating a
majority-black system on its own was an impossibility. But in contrast to the situation faced by the Boston School Committee, the PHRC did not raise the issue of *de jure* segregation, press its case with alacrity, or show any willingness to consider metropolitan solutions, allowing the Rizzo Board’s metropolitanism to be primarily a tactic of indefinite delay. In the absence of a conventional desegregation lawsuit, mandatory metropolitanism seemed less likely in Philadelphia than in Boston.

The history of sequential metropolitan impulses is largely absent from the existing literature on school desegregation in Philadelphia, which focuses instead on community activism and white racial backlash in the years prior to the PHRC’s desegregation litigation. Much of the community activism discussed was incompatible with wide-ranging metropolitan desegregation schemes. Abigail Perkiss’s *Making Good Neighbors* focuses on attempts to manage integration in the city’s West Mount Airy neighborhood. But rather than seek a citywide or a metropolitan desegregation plan, Mount Airy’s integrationists sought increased community control of their neighborhood schools, not large-scale busing.1 Similarly, Matthew Countryman’s excellent *Up South* focuses on Philadelphia’s black power politics, an ideological orientation incompatible with metropolitan desegregation schemes designed in part to disperse the black population. Though Countryman acknowledges the metropolitanism of figures like Richardson Dilworth and the push for educational parks, he leaves issues of metropolitanism to others, focusing instead on the grassroots origins of black power politics and the importance of white racial backlash and

---

postwar liberal policy-making in limiting the success of black power initiatives. Jon S. Birger’s article, “Race, Reaction, and Reform” offers the most overt discussion of Philadelphia’s metropolitanism, briefly contrasting Philadelphia’s experiences with Boston’s to argue that there existed no metropolitanist sentiment in the city’s white working-class neighborhoods. Birger, focusing on white racial backlash to school reform, finds no evidence of reactionary metropolitanism. This is because Birger’s analysis stops in 1971, before Frank Rizzo became mayor and his Board of Education had to confront the PHRC’s desegregation order. Birger is not alone in ending his analysis before metropolitanism reached the representatives of white backlash. The temporal and analytical scope of existing scholarship explains metropolitanism’s near absence from the historical record. Countryman’s focus on black power in schools ends with Rizzo’s election, and other works focusing on educational activism by Matthew Delmont and Anne Ellen Phillips end with the PHRC’s desegregation order. Only by bringing Philadelphia’s desegregation battles into the mid-1970s and beyond can the full scope of the city’s metropolitanism be revealed.

This chapter demonstrates the breadth of metropolitan challenges to school segregation in Philadelphia, but a comparison with Boston and Detroit highlights an importance difference between Philadelphia and those cities. In Philadelphia, a broad reformist alliance, or even the potential for one, failed to emerge. This is partly due to divergent motivations. As historian Matthew Countryman has shown, black Philadelphia’s increasing gravitation toward black

---

power and all-black protest emerged out of frustrations with the limits of interracial liberalism in producing genuine racial equality. A black power ethos of community control was seemingly incompatible with programs of metropolitan desegregation that would disperse the black student population. But in other cities such as Detroit, divergent motivations proved no barrier to a metropolitan courtroom alliance. The main reason for the absence of such an alliance in Philadelphia was structural. Unlike in most desegregation cases, a black plaintiff such as the NAACP did not file Philadelphia’s main desegregation suit. Instead, the case was the product of a state agency, the PHRC. The absence of a black plaintiff in the headiest years of Philadelphia’s desegregation battles ensured that desegregation would largely be conceived of, and conducted in, a technocratic top-down fashion, one dominated by Board of Education officials and state bureaucrats, and not directly informed by the concerns of black Philadelphians. Black Philadelphians did not spark the PHRC’s desegregation efforts in Philadelphia, or have the ability to define its aims or tactics. The structure of the case robbed it of the interracial organizational opportunities that a conventional suit could provide. Without a lawsuit in which urban whites could intervene, there was no space where a metropolitan courtroom alliance like that found in Detroit could emerge. Furthermore, the very nature of the PHRC worked against radical solutions. The PHRC would not consider transcending the boundaries of municipality, demanding instead that desegregation be conducted according to the principles of “local control,” a stance at odds with effective desegregation in a largely black school system operating in a web of predominantly-white parochial, private, and suburban school systems. The PHRC, a creation of the state subject to political whims, was unwilling to challenge another creation of the

---

state, the region’s municipal boundaries. As Philadelphia’s diverse educational reformers realized, the maintenance of these boundaries perpetuated educational inequality.

**Black Activism and Neighborhood Schools**

Civil rights activists brought the first challenges to Philadelphia’s system of segregated neighborhood schools. In doing so, they functioned as Philadelphia’s first agents of school reform when it came to desegregation. Led by the NAACP, this effort focused initially on the city alone, winning only a modicum of integration while prodding the emergence of a sizeable white backlash.

The first legal challenge came in the form of a June 1961 NAACP lawsuit charging the Board of Education with racial discrimination in the adjustment of school attendance areas, the transferring of students, and the promotion of teachers. The NAACP filed the suit, known as *Chisholm v. Board of Public Education* in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania on behalf of eight children attending the 95-percent black Emlen Elementary School, located on the border of the integrated Mount Airy and majority-black Germantown neighborhoods. The suit charged the Board with depriving the plaintiffs of their Fourteenth Amendment rights to equal protection of the laws and asked the court to order the defendants to submit a desegregation plan to correct the violations. Though the suit concerned only the discrimination present at Emlen, those behind it sought to use the case as a catalyst for system-wide desegregation. While residential segregation accomplished without the involvement of the
school board accounted for many segregated schools, Emlen indicated that much segregation was by design.\(^6\)

The School Board’s decision in April 1961 to construct portable classrooms to relieve overcrowding at Emlen rather than redrawing attendance boundaries or busing students provided the catalyst for the suit. Board Superintendent Allen Wetter denied that the School Board acquired the portables with the aim of perpetuating segregation, claiming that the Board entered into a contract for their construction “with the express purpose of taking care of the overcrowded situation existing there.” Certainly, Emlen was overcrowded. For the 1960-61 school year, Emlen accommodated 1,493 pupils – 156 more than its capacity. Board projections anticipated 1,610 pupils for the following school year. Overall, 183 pupils were bused due to overcrowding to five other schools. Wetter considered portable classrooms a better option than busing, claiming that the Board did not have a sufficient number of school buses and that, even if it did, the cost for their purchase and operation would exceed the cost of six portable classrooms within two years. Wetter also noted the Board’s policy of minimizing busing due to many students missing the arrival of buses in the mornings and the detrimental effects of busing on students’ extracurricular activities.\(^7\) Significantly, Wetter did not point to school attendance boundaries. Overcrowded Emlen was in the same vicinity as the newly constructed Day School. In drawing local boundary lines, the board used an east-west axis rather than a north-south one. This decision ensured that the Day School opened predominantly white and that Emlen remained

---


predominately black. Given that a north-south axis would have integrated both schools, Board decisions segregated Emlen.8

Despite evidence of boundary manipulation, the case presented the plaintiffs with some considerable difficulties. Officially, the Board maintained a policy of nondiscrimination. Unanimously adopted in July 1959, this policy committed the Board to a color-blind stance while not mandating any affirmative efforts on its part. The Board’s resolution, drafted by its only black member, stated that non-discrimination “continued to be” Board policy – a formulation that denied past instances of discrimination.9 A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., President of the Philadelphia NAACP, lamented that this policy robbed the plaintiffs of any “smoking gun,” such as public statements from the Board favoring segregation.10

Changes within the Philadelphia NAACP posed further challenges for the plaintiffs. In December 1962, Higginbotham, who had been leading the legal team, resigned as President of the Philadelphia Branch after accepting a position with the Federal Trade Commission. The brash Cecil B. Moore replaced Higginbotham as branch president. Moore’s election campaign targeted the local NAACP leadership and deepened considerable fault lines within the organization. Following Moore’s selection in the spring of 1963, twenty-three of the twenty-four members of the legal team withdrew from the case, leaving it in the hands of Isaiah Crippins, a Moore ally.11 In September 1963, presiding Judge Harold Wood ordered the Board to adopt a desegregation plan that included boundary changes and required it to modify its building site selection policies in order to foster integration. At the same time, Wood issued a continuance in

---

11 Ibid., 117; Delmont, The Nicest Kids in Town, 114.
the case, allowing it not to go to trial on the condition that both parties submit biannual progress reports.\textsuperscript{12}

On January 7, 1964, the Board produced a progress report that included busing. However, the Board’s main goal for busing was the reduction of overcrowding – not integration. Associate School Superintendent David Horowitz declared that “[b]oundary changes, transfers, and busing are all to relieve overcrowding, improve the quality of education, and, where possible, to foster integration.”\textsuperscript{13} The Board left no doubt that it did not advocate busing. Superintendent Wetter noted that “[b]using in the Philadelphia Public Schools has always been held to an essential minimum and it will continue to be,” and contemplated a return to part-time classes as an alternative to busing.\textsuperscript{14}

Even under its \textit{Chisholm} mandate, the Board sought to defend the neighborhood school concept and worked to ensure that white students would remain in predominantly white schools.\textsuperscript{15} The Board’s required report on school integration declared its “unanimous belief in the principal of integrated public education” but recommended that the busing of white children to black schools to promote integration receive “no further consideration.”\textsuperscript{16} Once the Board released the details of its busing plans, the limitations were clear. Only four schools that had no black pupils at all were to receive any black students, while no white students would be bused to

\textsuperscript{12} Delmont, \textit{The Nicest Kids in Town}, 118.
\textsuperscript{13} Notes on Meeting of Citizens Advisory Committee on Civil Rights, July 1, 1964, box 21, folder 4, Acc. 469, Floyd L. Logan Papers, Urban Archives, Temple University (hereafter: “FL”).
\textsuperscript{16} Delmont, \textit{The Nicest Kids in Town}, 122.
schools that were presently all-black. The plan included a very low number of black students overall. Though the Philadelphia public schools educated roughly 260,000 pupils, the plan called for busing only 2,900 black pupils in the first year.

This limited busing program ran afoul of a growing number of whites who believed that busing placed the neighborhood school concept at risk. Quickly following the Board’s announcement of its busing program, two civic groups – the Parents’ and Taxpayers’ Association of Southwest Philadelphia and the Roxborough-Manayunk-Wissahickon Parents’ and Taxpayers’ Association – merged to form an ostensibly city-wide group, the Parents’ and Taxpayers’ Association of Philadelphia (PAT). With a base in northwest and southwest Philadelphia, PAT members came from areas adjacent to black neighborhoods. Though the combined neighborhoods of Roxborough, Manayunk, and Wissahickon seemed an enclave removed from the rest of Philadelphia, bordered by the Schuylkill River and Wissahickon Creek, the neighborhoods were a short drive from black sections of North Philadelphia. Mindful of the proximity, white residents worked to preserve their separateness from the city and its black population, including efforts to prevent the construction of integrated public housing in the neighborhood. For PAT members, integration was a real possibility, not an abstract concept. Within one week of PAT’s formation, the group claimed to represent over 1,000 families.

---

PAT was a segregationist organization. PAT’s President, attorney Joseph Frieri, desired to keep white students in neighborhood schools and demonized black children. Frieri discussed busing through the metaphor of infection, suggesting that a main problem affecting the schools was not overcrowding but the black children themselves: “if you take people from those infected areas all you do is spread the infection around. If your toe is infected, you wouldn’t put iodine in your eye.” Frieri repeatedly raised the specter of white flight, predicting busing would cause so much flight that “there just won’t be enough whites to integrate with.”21 Frieri characterized the rationale behind integration as being akin to osmosis, noting that PAT did not “subscribe to the theory that the only way for a Negro to get a good education is to sit next to a white.”22

Antibusing activity accelerated in 1965 when the Board of Education announced additional busing. In September 1965, the Board bused 7,000 students, 5,000 of whom were black.23 For the first time, the Board bused black students into the overwhelmingly white northeast section of the city, earning it qualified commendations from NAACP officials and the Urban League of Philadelphia, and an intensified white opposition.24

By the spring of 1965, four white groups dominated antibusing politics. In addition to PAT, the United Southwest Civic Association, the Neighborhood Schools Association (NSA), and the Save Our Schools South Philadelphia Civic Association (SOS) worked to mobilize whites in opposition to busing. These groups revealed a flair for the theatrical. At one SOS meeting, white men in dark suits wheeled out a coffin to symbolize the death of the

At another protest, parents wore elephant and donkey masks – the symbols of the Republican and Democratic parties respectively – suggesting that their support was up for grabs by antibusing politicians of either party. Demonstrators insisted neighborhood schools were advantageous in case of illness and for extracurricular activities, but these practical concerns came paired with a belief that the presence of black children caused an educational decline in schools.

This white backlash only grew in strength when the Board of Education unwittingly served as a potential voice of integrationist reform. Coinciding with the uptick in anti-busing activity, the Board of Education decided to hold hearings in January 1966 on a proposal to reshapen the grade structure in its schools. This proposal had its genesis a few years previously and was not designed with an eye toward integration. In 1963, the Board hired William Odell of Stanford University to conduct a comprehensive educational survey of the Philadelphia Public Schools. Odell’s completed report proposed curricular and structural improvements and largely neglected the issue of integration. Only three of the report’s 389 pages concerned integration. Yet Odell’s recommended reshuffling of the schools’ grade structure from 6-3-3 (six years of elementary, followed by three years each of junior high and high school) to K4-4-4 provoked sharp criticism from those opposed to integration. Shifting grade structures meant changing school attendance boundaries citywide. Still subject to the court’s order in Chisholm that it submit biannual progress reports, any change in attendance boundaries by the Board seemed certain to lead to additional integration. Whereas the Board’s busing for overcrowding involved

26 Clipping, “125 March in Protest of Pupil Busing: They Represent Groups in Various Sections of City,” 13 May 1965, box 3, folder 6, HO.
only one pupil for every forty in the system in 1965 and did not bus white students to predominantly black schools, all pupils would be affected in some way by changed grade structures.29

Public hearings and letters to the Board from local Home and School Associations (HSA) revealed a general pattern of white opposition and qualified black support for the K4-4-4 plan.30 The HSAs of white schools typically asserted that K4-4-4 would cause a mass exodus from the city of middle-class families. A letter to the President of the Board of Education from the Lamberton HSA noted that “If K4-4-4 is given preference because of its possibly resulting in faster integration, we strongly urge you to consider that this would eventually result in the loss of the present middle-class children.”31 The Franklin Spencer Edmonds HSA pointed to the “particular need for improvement of educational opportunities for the culturally deprived” before noting questions about whether this could be accomplished “without sending the middle class population fleeing from the area.”32 The parents of northeast Philadelphia’s Laura H. Carnell HSA argued that they bought their homes in the area “because of the location of the schools” and warned that depriving any child of their neighborhood school could lead to a “mass exodus from the city of responsible tax-paying citizens.”33 Similarly, the parents of the William B. Mann School quoted an individual who stated that he was “considering relocating our home, and probably our business as well, if K4 is established for a certainty.”34

29 Ibid., 186.
30 The files of the citywide Home and School Council are particularly demonstrative of this. See box 4, folders 42-51, Home and School Council Records, Urban Archives, Temple University (hereafter: “HSC”).
31 Letter, Lamberton Home and School Association to Richardson Dilworth, 30 September 1965, box 4, folder 42, HSC.
32 Letter, Franklin Spencer Edmonds Home and School Association to Richardson Dilworth, 20 October 1965, box 4, folder 2, HSC.
33 Statement of Laura H. Carnell Home and School Association, 1 February 1966, box 4, folder 44, HSC.
34 William B. Mann Home and School Association Testimony on Dilworth Task Force Reports, 1 February 1966, box 4, folder 45, HSC.
Many of the white responses indicated a belief that integration was the sole motivator behind K4-4-4 and portrayed integration as race-conscious and therefore discriminatory. The Shawmont HSA from Roxborough, home base of PAT, declared its opposition to K4-4-4 because “[i]ts primary purpose is to promote integration and thereby places this paramount and education secondary.”  

Similarly, the President of the Disston HSA, Mildred Poole, wrote that she suspected that integration was the “only purpose behind the K4-4-4 program.”

The John Story Jenks HSA, from affluent Chestnut Hill, testified before the school board that it felt that “immediate wide-scale use of K4-4-4 will benefit children in ‘underprivileged’ areas at the expense of children in other neighborhoods.” The Jenks testimony portrayed integration as a racist affront to a colorblind outlook: “We fear the selection of a student body which would achieve ‘a cross-section of urban area children’ or an ‘ethnic and racial balance.’ We believe that choosing a student body according to race, creed, color or national origin is discrimination of the most invidious sort.”

Overall, the white objections possessed such similarities that the new President of the Philadelphia Board of Education, Richardson Dilworth, felt convinced of the existence of a “sinister whispering and telephone campaign, obviously highly organized and widespread” which created “a condition of near panic in lower middle income white areas.” Writing to the editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer, Dilworth noted that “The letters are not form letters but clearly have been inspired by a single line of prejudice. Each letter starts off by saying that the writer is informed that the true purpose of K4-4-4 is to bring vast quantities of Negroes into their

---

35 Shawmont Home and School Association Testimony, box 4, folder 45, HSC.
36 Letter, Mildred Poole, President, Disston Home and School Association to Richardson Dilworth, 28 January 1966, box 4, folder 46, HSC.
37 John Story Jenks Home and School Association Statement to the Task Force Committee Hearing on January 31, 1966, box 4, folder 46, HSC.
schools, and in turn, send their children to Negro schools in North-Central and West Philadelphia.” Dilworth noted that the letters “invariably concluded” with threats to remove children from the school system, to move out of the city, and to advocate the impeachment of the school board. \(^{38}\)

Buried under the extensive white opposition to K4-4-4 was a moderate amount of support for the plan from integrationist black Philadelphians, many of whom urged the Board to embrace integration. The Educational Equality League of Philadelphia (EEL), an integrationist organization founded in 1932 and led ever since by black activist Floyd Logan, supported the K4-4-4 plan so long as permanent facilities, not portable classrooms, were made available. The EEL urged open support of integration, admonishing members of the Board of Education that they “might as well reconcile themselves to the inevitability of the use of ‘busing’ both for relieving overcrowding and fostering interracial pupil integration.” \(^{39}\) Similarly, the C.W. Henry HSA, representing a majority-black school in the integrated Mount Airy neighborhood, supported K4-4-4, but argued that it was not enough to address the persistent inequalities in Philadelphia’s schools. It called for a “comprehensive plan for quality integration” entailing system-wide integration, diverse teaching staffs, educational materials that “reflect the role of all ethnic groups in the building of our country,” and a reexamination of school boundary lines. \(^{40}\) K4-4-4, developed without an eye toward integration, could not accomplish all of this on its own.

---


\(^{39}\) Testimony of the Educational Equality League of Philadelphia, 1 February 1966, box 4, folder 47, HSC.

\(^{40}\) Statement of C.W. Henry Home and School Association, 31 January 1966, box 4, folder 45, HSC. The Henry HSA reflected the larger project of white and black activists in the West Mount Airy Neighbors Association (WMAN) to foster and maintain the racial integration of the neighborhood in the 1950s and 1960s. The Henry HSA’s background as an organization representing white and black parents suggests that while white opposition to K4-4-4 was extensive, it was not unanimous. Henry’s student body stabilized as roughly two-thirds black and one-third white by the early 1960s, due to a concerted integrationist effort by such parents, but overcrowding produced in part by Board of Education decisions threatened that balance in the middle of the decade. See: Perkiss, *Making
Faced with overwhelming white opposition toward K4-4-4 the Board quickly reneged on the plan. Though it had unwittingly entered a conversation about integration, the Board did not yet serve as a coherent voice of reform. The Board’s reversal put it at odds with reformist civil rights activists. Declaring that the NAACP had been patient with the school board, Cecil Moore stated that the members of the Board of Education “have demonstrated that they won’t come through with a practical plan for integration,” and immediately announced plans to reopen the *Chisholm* case.\(^{41}\) However, Moore did not clear those plans with lead attorney Isaiah Crippins. Following Moore’s announcement, Crippins resigned as lead counsel. Crippins possessed much faith in Richardson Dilworth, as the new President of the Board of Education, elected by his colleagues to that position in 1965. Crippins, who had worked for Dilworth when Dilworth served as Philadelphia District Attorney in the early 1950s, declared that “I know of no reason to believe that the new school board will not seek a quality education and an integrated education,” adding that Dilworth was “a man of integrity, sincerity, and conscience.”\(^{42}\)

Preoccupied with internal NAACP conflicts, Moore never reopened the *Chisholm* suit. In the spring of 1967, the national NAACP divided the Philadelphia branch into three separate chapters. Moore had been fighting the plans to split the branch since 1965, viewing them as an attack on his power.\(^{43}\) Though the NAACP applied its multiple branch program to several cities, in Philadelphia it also desired curbing the divisive Moore’s authority. In July 1967, it suspended Moore from his position as President of the North Philadelphia branch, ostensibly for using his

---

\(^{41}\) “NAACP Urges Halt of Gov’t Funds to City – Education Board Accused of Fraud in Phila. Schools,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, 8 February 1966.


office for personal gain by continuing to work as a lawyer, for not contributing funds raised to the national organization, and for “continuing misconduct.” Internal NAACP documents revealed a belief that Moore alienated potential NAACP members and that integrationist officials opposed Moore’s support of black nationalism. Though Moore urged school integration, a recent broadside Moore signed representing the NAACP urged “Do Not Buy or Spend Any Money With the White Man.” Moore’s use of “vile, divisive, threatening and profane language towards officers and members of the Association” was noted by rival leader Alphonso Deal. The in-fighting and branch division brought the NAACP’s leading role in pushing for the desegregation of Philadelphia’s schools to a close. But the NAACP’s withdrawal did not end the reformist period led by other civil rights organizations such as the Urban League and the Fellowship Commission. Their activism grew from attacking the borders of neighborhood to articulate a tentative metropolitanism that recognized that segregation was metropolitan in scope.

**From Neighborhood Boundaries to Municipal Borders**

Despite the collapse of NAACP efforts to challenge school segregation in the city, segregationist whites still had reason to fear an assault on Philadelphia’s segregated neighborhood schools. Rather than diminishing, in the aftermath of the unresolved *Chisholm* case and the defeated K4-4-4 plan, the integrationist challenges to Philadelphia’s neighborhood school system grew more radical. Quickly, the Urban League of Philadelphia and the city’s interracial Fellowship Commission urged a profound departure in school building policy, one incompatible with a

---


45 Letter, Alphonso Deal to Roy Wilkins, 13 July 1967, Part IV, box C2, file: Moore, Cecil B. Controversy (1 of 2), NAACP-LOC.
system of neighborhood schools. Calling for educational parks, a set of schools covering the same grade-span located at a common site, activists first attacked the boundaries separating neighborhoods, but soon positioned these parks as capable of crossing the boundaries of municipality. With the ascent of educational parks, Philadelphia’s desegregation battles became a metropolitan concern.

The Urban League of Philadelphia first challenged Philadelphia’s segregated education in 1962, taking aim at the Board of Education’s building plan. The League argued that by not taking into account potential desegregation in selecting building sites, the Board would cement existing segregation. Black children accounted for 51 percent of Philadelphia’s public school enrollment in 1962. Of that 51 percent, 71 percent attended schools with black populations between 90 and 100 percent. Conversely, 62 percent of all white students attended schools with fewer than 10 percent black pupils. Faced with such figures, the Urban League’s 1962 criticism of the Board’s building plan revealed a fatalism about desegregation. Recognizing that in a starkly segregated city, building site selection could not be a panacea for segregation, it conceded that in “many areas of our city it will be impossible at the present time to achieve desegregated elementary school bodies because of the large pockets of racially and ethnically segregated ghettos.” As a result, the Urban League’s suggestions merely involved finding “creative means to facilitate intergroup contact” and requested that the board desegregate those schools that it could.\(^{46}\) A system of neighborhood schools, no matter the adjustment of boundaries, could not fully accomplish desegregation within Philadelphia.

---

\(^{46}\) The Urban League of Philadelphia, A Statement on the Proposed Building Plan of the Board of Public Education, 15 October 1962, box 26, folder 13, FL.
Following the Board of Education’s *Chisholm* mandate, the Urban League’s criticisms grew more forceful. By 1964, the League took explicit aim at the concept of neighborhood schools. It argued that the construction of any school in a neighborhood where integration could not be achieved “contradicts the Board’s stated intentions to foster integration.” According to the group, “in almost every instance” integration proved impossible where the board proposed a new school. To remedy segregation, the Urban League demanded a “radical departure in building planning.”

In place of the neighborhood school, it called for a system composed entirely of educational parks.

Educational parks first gained currency in academic circles for their integrative possibilities as an alternative to neighborhood schools in a time of rapid white flight. In educational parks, the Urban League saw the means to end Philadelphia’s school segregation. It proposed replacing all of Philadelphia’s schools with twenty educational parks by 1980. A radical attempt at modernist urban planning, each park would contain eight elementary schools of roughly 750 pupils, four middle schools of 1,200 students, and two high schools housing 2,400. Each park required 100 acres of land and would be located in a section of the city where the pupil composition could reflect the overall racial composition of the city’s schools. Given the concentration of pupils on one site, the plan required a massive increase in busing from the 7,000 pupils bused for overcrowding in the 1965-66 school year.

---


The Urban League’s proposal echoed calls for educational parks by school reformers in “nearly every major northern city” in the mid-1960s, as historian Thomas Sugrue has described. Few cities actually acted on them and those that did proceeded on a small scale. Though Sugrue correctly terms educational parks “a short-lived fad,” they occasioned Philadelphia’s first major discussion of metropolitan school desegregation.\(^{50}\)

The Fellowship Commission, Philadelphia’s most prominent interracial human rights organization, provided considerable support for educational parks. While not desiring the transformation of the entire school system into one of parks, in April 1967 it called on the Board of Education to establish enough parks to educate 100,000 pupils. Although this represented a diminution of the Urban League’s proposal, its suggestions went beyond those proposed by the Urban League in another way. The Fellowship Commission envisioned these parks attracting not just students from Philadelphia’s public schools, but from Philadelphia’s parochial schools and the schools of the inner-suburbs. Where the Urban League proposed obliterating neighborhood boundaries for the purpose of education, the Fellowship Commission articulated a challenge to the separation of school systems and of city and suburb – the first of the metropolitan appeals that would soon characterize Philadelphia’s struggles over school integration.\(^{51}\)

Educational parks united the aims of integration and urban renewal. The Fellowship Commission believed an improved educational system would diminish white flight, arguing that a “vastly improved school system would be one of the most crucial factors in stabilizing a city and metropolitan area like Philadelphia.” It felt that educational parks avoided the stigma

---

50 Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 470-471.
attached to Philadelphia’s majority black schools and would both keep white residents and help bring white suburban families back to the city voluntarily, a common urban renewal aim.²⁵²

Both the Urban League and the Fellowship Commission had reason to be hopeful for the incorporation of a significant number of educational parks in school building plans in 1967. In the hopes of financing its 1967-1972 capital plan, the Board of Education asked Philadelphia’s voters to approve a bond amendment to the city’s Education Home Rule Charter that would increase the borrowing power of the school district to $150 million. The 1967 battle over the charter amendment became a referendum on neighborhood schools. A coalition of civil rights groups – including the NAACP, the West Philadelphia Schools Committee, the Baptist Ministers Conference, Citizens Against Segregated Schools, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Urban League – branded itself the Coalition for Integrated Quality Education and fought against the Board of Education’s borrowing plans.²⁵³

The West Philadelphia Ministers Association argued that the capital budget of the Board of Education existed as “a program to build neighborhood schools,” which could only result in cementing “segregation in schools according to neighborhood housing patterns.” The ministers declared their support for the Urban League’s proposed network of educational parks, and urged “the Board of Education to continue to study and investigate closer cooperation with the parochial and suburban school systems.”²⁵⁴ Similarly, the West Philadelphia Schools Committee, whose activism focused on giving West Philadelphia’s schoolchildren an integrated education, termed the 1967-72 capital program “a half-billion dollar investment in a neighborhood school

²⁵² Ibid.
system.” It depicted the plan as “a proposal to extend *de facto* segregated schools by administrative act which, in consequence, is identical with *de jure* segregation” and marshalled evidence to show that even new neighborhood schools in black neighborhoods remained unequal to schools in white areas.\(^\text{55}\)

Board of Education President Dilworth sought to nip this reformist impulse in the bud. Faced with the mounting opposition to the Board’s capital program, Dilworth addressed the criticism by authoring a column in the *Philadelphia Tribune*, the city’s leading black newspaper. Equating integrationists and segregationists by warning that “reactionaries may block school construction plans,” Dilworth noted that challenges to the Board’s capital program came from both civil rights activists and white segregationists. Dilworth wrote that both sides targeted the budget, with one saying it was “designed to preserve segregation, while the other says it is designed to destroy the neighborhood schools.” Dilworth urged readers “not to permit either the most ardent of the civil rights groups or the reactionary neighborhood school groups to succeed in a policy of rule or ruin.” But Dilworth made a mild concession to the reformers, revealing that the Board’s new budget contained a plan to begin three experimental educational parks. Previously, these parks had not been part of the capital budget. They functioned as the Board’s response to the “vote no” campaign.\(^\text{56}\)

No further concessions to civil rights advocates were required. Philadelphia’s voters indicated their preference for neighborhood schools. A 57 percent majority of voters approved the Board’s charter amendment in May 1967. Never possessing the support of the white


electedoritate, the “vote no” campaign could not succeed. The ambitious parks proposals lingered in an October 1967 report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights, which suggested that desegregation might be accomplished in Philadelphia through a fully metropolitan system of educational parks and possible unification of the metropolitan area’s individual school systems. But the failure of the charter amendment ended meaningful attempts to institute an extensive system of educational parks in Philadelphia and suggested that parks were unlikely to succeed elsewhere.57 Dilworth’s three proposed experimental parks were not built, though he continued to advocate for the construction of one in the Temple University area of North Philadelphia provided the state provided the funds. But this proposed park had more in common with a series of neighborhood schools than it did with an educational park. Rather than be located on a single site, Dilworth envisioned a “ribbon” of schools stretching through North Philadelphia with the schools far enough apart that they could “be put back into unit form” if the park was not successful. Dilworth wrote City Council President and neighborhood school advocate Paul D’Ortona to assure him that the Board of Education was not embracing a radical shift. Dilworth told D’Ortona that “what we are proposing is not the type of Educational Park advocated by the militant groups,” noting that civil rights groups “denounced our proposed experimental park, calling it a sham and a fraud.”58 Only political expediency and a desire for funds motivated

58 Letter, Richardson Dilworth to Paul D’Ortona, 9 August 1967, box: 143, folder: 3, RD.
Dilworth’s support of educational parks. Just one year previously, Dilworth called educational parks “destructful (sic) of our city” and referred to them as “Soviet” in concept. 59

As the failure to substantially alter the Board’s building plan clearly indicated the limits of interracial activism in the electoral realm, a black power orientation of community control increasingly dominated black educational protest in Philadelphia, most obviously among students themselves. Yet the failed campaign for educational parks did not doom metropolitanism in Philadelphia. In the face of a state desegregation order, metropolitanism found a new advocate.

Dilworth’s Metropolitanism

Though it withdrew its support of K4-4-4 and resisted the widespread construction of educational parks, the Board of Education under Richardson Dilworth quickly emerged at the fore of metropolitan school reform. A legal challenge from the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) fueled this reformist transformation. Though Dilworth devoted considerable attention to improving black education, only a legal challenge to the city’s schools caused him to return to his long-held desire for efficient metropolitan government in Philadelphia. In advocating metropolitanism, Dilworth produced a radical solution to segregation in line with the classical reformist aim of efficiency and order.

Dilworth’s leading role in fighting for metropolitanism was aided by the structure of the desegregation conflict. With the PHRC at the helm, Philadelphia’s desegregation battles proceeded absent a black plaintiff, ensuring that deliberations would be dominated by the

---

schools’ political leadership rather than directly informed by Philadelphia’s civil rights activists. Though black Philadelphians no longer led the charge for integration, the deliberations over K4-4-4, educational parks, and the PHRC’s order revealed that metropolitan solutions possessed significant black support.

For black Philadelphians, Dilworth – even prior to advocating metropolitan reform – represented an improvement over his Board predecessors. Dilworth’s most notable predecessor was Add Anderson, the Board’s business manager, who from 1936 to 1962 made all major decisions on budgets, school taxes, and the assignment of teachers. Though judges from the city’s Court of Common Pleas selected individual Board members, in practice the judges relied on the advice of political bosses who themselves relied on Anderson. With a history of forwarding conservative candidates who would not raise expenditures, Anderson’s recommendations proved safe for politicians.60 Indicative of his commitment to keeping costs low, Anderson once turned down a federal plan that would supply free meals to undernourished children because he believed the costs of cooking the food would be too high.61

Anderson refused to take affirmative steps to address segregation. Instead, under Anderson, the Board crafted its 1959 policy of nondiscrimination, which implicitly declared that the Board had never engaged in discrimination.62 Anderson contributed to the growing segregation of Philadelphia’s schools. In 1957, construction finished on the new Northeastern High School located in a rapidly expanding, and white, outer section of the city. In the middle of the school year, half of the students and a substantial majority of the teachers left the old integrated Northeast High for the new segregated one. Overnight, the old school lost its name, its

best teachers, and even its school trophies. Renamed Thomas Edison High, the school now possessed a substantially reduced number of course offerings, with students tracked into vocational courses. The new Northeast High maintained the old school’s full complement of academic courses in addition to the vocational offerings. Edison’s student population was now overwhelmingly black, in sharp contrast to the new school, which retained a 99 percent white student body through the mid-1960s. Though segregated housing patterns made integration difficult, the Board’s building policies during Anderson’s tenure entrenched school segregation.

By the time of Anderson’s death, the Greater Philadelphia Movement, a classically reformist organization of prominent metropolitan businesspeople, had begun advocating for school board reform. It published a report in 1962 that urged the elimination of judicial appointments. In their place, the report recommended that the mayor appoint members to the Board of Education from a list supplied by a citizens’ nominating panel. In 1965, the reformers succeeded, with the city’s voters approving Philadelphia’s Home Rule Charter. The new system avoided both ward-based politics and lacked the direct election of Board members. However, by making the mayor responsible for selecting those members it provided for an increase in political accountability.

In the wake of the Home Rule Charter vote, Dilworth, who had left the mayor’s office in 1962, let it be known that he would accept a position on the Board of Education provided he be selected as president and that he be granted a veto over the selection of other members. Dilworth’s mayoral successor, James H. J. Tate, made the appointment. Although the Board itself elected its own president, Tate evidently told his other appointees that he preferred

---

63 Ibid., 88-91.
64 Binzen, Whitetown U.S.A., 278.
Dilworth’s presidency grew out of a political compromise. In return for Tate’s selection of him as president, the popular Dilworth promised not to run against Tate in 1967.

Black Philadelphians frequently responded with ambivalence to the Dilworth Board. Certainly, much in Dilworth’s past was appealing. As District Attorney under Mayor Joe Clark, Dilworth formed a key player in Philadelphia’s New Deal-inspired reform coalition in the 1950s. Under Dilworth and Clark, the city passed a charter that banned racial discrimination, and black Philadelphians, long neglected within the city’s Republican machine, emerged as a major part of Philadelphia’s Democratic coalition. As President of the Board of Education, Dilworth embraced aspects of black power. In a 1968 speech, Dilworth lamented that too many whites saw only black power’s “militant and destructive aspects rather than its constructive possibilities.”

Yet Dilworth’s habit of sticking his foot in his mouth revealed a less than complete commitment to civil rights. In January 1964, Dilworth took issue with black opponents of blackface in the city’s annual Mummers Parade. Dilworth declared that “those who opposed the use of the make-up were making a big stink over nothing” and accused them of “setting back Negro-white relations in the city by ten years.” Although in the same speech, Dilworth lamented the lack of suburban housing opportunities for black people, he reserved his harshest criticism for the victims of racial discrimination. The same year that Dilworth praised the “constructive possibilities” of black power, he told a crowd at Princeton University that he would “prefer not to see any more Negroes on the Board of Education because they would have to vote black regardless of the educational merits of the issue.” Facing an uproar over his comments, Dilworth

---

65 Ibid., 279-80.
66 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 186.
68 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 193.
refused to retract them fully, only noting that he would not “actively oppose” an increase in black members.  

Dilworth’s arrival as Board President in 1965 produced quick educational improvements. Within his first year, Dilworth increased per pupil spending by $145, established seven ‘magnet’ schools designed to attract pupils from beyond the schools’ neighborhoods, contracted for $66 million worth of school construction, doubled the money devoted to instructional supplies, bused pupils to alleviate overcrowding, and initiated efforts to move toward a K4-4-4 grade structure. Thereafter, the Board continued pumping money into the school system at a staggering rate. Over Dilworth’s tenure as Board President, from 1965 to 1971, the Board’s operating budget increased by 141 percent. Dilworth’s Board took advantage of the city charter’s 5 percent rule to appoint 5 percent of managers without adhering to seniority; the Board used this opening to promote black candidates. Its Parkway Project, an experimental “school without walls,” held classes throughout the city, providing an additional option for students to escape segregated neighborhood schools. Its building program, though perpetuating a system of neighborhood schools, nevertheless brought needed new facilities into the system.

Dilworth’s highest profile move was the hiring of integrationist Mark Shedd as the Board’s new superintendent in 1967. Prior to his arrival in Philadelphia, Shedd achieved prominence in education circles for integrating schools in Englewood, New Jersey. Though the previous superintendent resigned when faced with a state-mandated desegregation plan, within

---

71 Binzen, Whitetown U.S.A., 283.
72 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 188-190.
five years Shedd ensured that all six of Englewood’s schools had black student populations of between 38 and 50 percent.\footnote{Ibid., 177-78.}

While it worked to improve Philadelphia’s schools, only a mandate from the PHRC to desegregate them prodded the Dilworth Board’s metropolitanism. In its response to the order, the Dilworth Board articulated Philadelphia’s boldest challenge to metropolitan school segregation. Unlike the situation in Boston and Detroit, the protracted legal battle for school desegregation in Philadelphia was not initiated by a federal court case. Instead, as per the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of 1955, the PHRC held jurisdiction to compel individual school districts within Pennsylvania to desegregate. Following its successful prosecution of a segregated school system in nearby Chester in 1967, in February 1968 the PHRC ordered the School District of Philadelphia to prepare a desegregation plan by June 30, 1968.

After receiving an extension, the board released a draft of its desegregation plan in September 1968.\footnote{District Reports of Cluster Meetings of the Philadelphia Public Schools, 1 December 1968, box 22, folder: 4, FL.} Although limited in its action regarding Philadelphia’s inner-city schools, this proposal soon developed into an audacious challenge to the borders separating those schools from the overwhelmingly white ones of the suburbs. The plan’s metropolitanism bore the influence of the recent Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, which concluded that the United States was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.”\footnote{Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1 March 1968), 1.} Dilworth’s Board stated that white society could be found in the suburbs and argued that any meaningful and lasting desegregation “must depend on a metropolitan approach, that is, on inter-district programs.”\footnote{Desegregation Plan: Report to the PA Human Relations Commission, 1968, box: 22, folder: 20, FL.} But the response also drew on
Dilworth’s personal desire for metropolitan government, evident since at least 1959. That year, Dilworth, representing the U.S. Conference of Mayors, called for the establishment of metropolitan government under a single executive for all of the nation’s urban areas for reasons of efficiency and equity. These classic reformist motivations similarly colored his response to the PHRC.

Though a radical challenge to the educational status quo, the Board’s first response to the PHRC contained much ambivalence toward integration, indicative of the competing forces – white opposition, black power demands, and the PHRC’s order – clamoring for the Board’s attention. The Board pledged to maintain its policy of no “reverse busing” (the busing of white students to predominantly black schools) and sought to downplay the need for integration by noting that what it called a “growing and articulate segment of the black community” simply wanted improved education “with or without integration.” This served both as a dodge of the integration mandate and a recognition of the increasing attractiveness of black power to many Philadelphians. However, the Board did propose a measure of integration within the Philadelphia schools, suggesting the pairing of black and white schools to provide part-time desegregated learning experiences, estimated to be at most once or twice per week. Its most radical proposal suggested finding a “means of exchanging pupils” between city and suburban schools, “enough to be a meaningful proportion of the pupils in the city and suburban schools.” Within Philadelphia’s borders, white opposition coalesced around the proposal to pair white and black

---

77 Buzz Bissinger, *A Prayer for the City* (New York: Random House, 1997), 209. In making arguments that aligned with the progressive quest for efficiency, Dilworth serves as a representation of the type of metropolitan reformer historians have been most comfortable looking to. But as the long history of metropolitan desegregation in Philadelphia and elsewhere reveals, he was hardly the only type of metropolitan reformer.
schools. This opposition led the Board of Education to request an additional extension until December 1968 in order to reconsider aspects of the plan.\footnote{District Reports of Cluster Meetings of the Philadelphia Public Schools, 1 December 1968, box 22, folder: 4, FL}

Prior to submitting its revised plan, in November 1968 the Board of Education held a series of cluster meetings, involving school personnel, parents, and members of the community, to provide recommendations as to the form the plan should take. The Board held 35 meetings with a total of 1,500 participants.\footnote{Research Council of the Great City Schools, “The Philadelphia Story,” 1970, box: 151, folder: 1, RD.} Echoing the K4-4-4 fault lines, the cluster meetings revealed a city split along racial lines, with white districts opposed to integration and black districts generally favoring proposed methods to achieve integration and suggesting additional measures. Going beyond the Board’s recommendations, heavily black District Four, covering West Philadelphia, called for the adoption of black history in all schools, demanded two-way busing from all sections of the city, and called for the adoption of a metropolitan school district through a merging of city and suburban systems. Similarly, District Seven, covering the east side of black North Philadelphia, suggested that the board “extend regional districting to include parochial and suburban school systems,” and urged that schools “should be made available (or constructed) on county boundaries for enrollment of both city and suburban children.”\footnote{District Reports of Cluster Meetings, 1 December 1968, FL.} As the cluster meetings revealed, metropolitanism had attracted grassroots black support by 1968.

Some districts witnessed a significant amount of disagreement between groups along racial lines. Southwestern Philadelphia’s District One had two meeting groups which called for crossing municipal boundaries and creating educational parks, while another group asked the Board to publicly disseminate its policy of opposing reverse busing. Similarly, multiple groups from District Five called for crossing district boundaries. But this district also included the white
working-class area of Kensington, which made its opposition to desegregation clearly known. A participating Kensington citizens’ group declared that as “taxpayers” they expected “quality education in response for our tax dollars,” and asserted that “[b]using has no educational value.”

The staunchest opposition to the Board’s proposed integration plan came from the city’s heavily white and middle-class Northeast. The Board’s official report noted, with characteristic understatement, that District Eight’s “conferees opposed involuntary busing, many vehemently.” More than any other district, District Eight played upon the existence of a black desire for community control. Yet District Eight possessed the fewest number of black pupils in the city. With only 1 percent black enrollment in its high schools and 3 percent in its elementary schools in 1967, District Eight’s representatives spoke for black Philadelphians without consulting them. Echoing the white-dominated school board, District Eight’s cluster group trumpeted “the feeling that in many parts of the Black Community the demand is no longer for quality integrated education, but rather for quality separate education.” Conceding that integration remained the goal as recently as three years before, the district’s representatives argued that since then “times have changed” and suggested that the PHRC “should study the situation as it exists today in order to make more realistic demands.” In the meantime, the group urged the maintenance of neighborhood schools.

For its 1969 submission to the PHRC, the Board dropped its proposal to provide part time integrated experiences for Philadelphia’s students. However, the Board’s most radical suggestion – that students traverse the boundaries separating urban and suburban school systems – remained

---

81 Ibid.
the central element of its desegregation plan. Not offering a specific plan beyond vaguely asserting that this could be achieved through “good will” from both the city and its suburbs and “administrative encouragement from the state,” the Board justified metropolitanism by pointing to regional demographics.\textsuperscript{83} Thirteen school districts in three counties adjoined Philadelphia. Only two of the thirteen districts had more than a 10 percent minority public school population. Indicative of the stark regional segregation, the PHRC had already mandated that one of these districts, Darby Township, submit a desegregation plan. Philadelphia’s neighboring suburban districts educated 96,884 pupils, of whom only 4,613 were “nonwhite,” a total under 5 percent of the student population. Philadelphia’s public schools educated 279,774, 162,733 of whom were “nonwhite,” 58.2 percent of the total student body.\textsuperscript{84} Drawing attention to this demographic discrepancy, the Board argued that the 58-percent black Philadelphia schools “cannot successfully desegregate,” while the “districts adjoining Philadelphia cannot, by themselves, desegregate their wholly white schools.”\textsuperscript{85}

Both the 1968 and 1969 plans focused above all on voluntary efforts. The Board pointed to its Parkway Program, which enrolled several suburban students, as evidence that voluntary approaches could bring urban and suburban students together. Within Philadelphia, the Board pledged to construct additional magnet schools to voluntarily produce integrated enrollments.\textsuperscript{86} However, under continuing pressure from the PHRC to produce a workable desegregation plan for Philadelphia, by 1971 Dilworth abandoned voluntary approaches, reasoning that desegregation “will never come about voluntarily, for reforms, particularly the most important

\textsuperscript{83} Though short on details, the Board’s suggestion of voluntary metropolitan integration resting on state encouragement suggests something akin to Boston’s voluntary METCO busing program. For more on the founding of METCO, see Chapter One.

\textsuperscript{84} Report to the Pennsylvania Commission on Human Relations, 18 June 1968, RD.

\textsuperscript{85} Desegregation Plan: Report to the PA Human Relations Commission, 1968, box: 22, folder: 20, FL.

\textsuperscript{86} Proposed Desegregation Plan, 1 July 1969, box: 151, folder: 1, RD.
and basic reforms, rarely do come about voluntarily.” In a letter to the editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dilworth now demanded the creation of metropolitan school districts and sought to institute metropolitan government.  

While advocating that the entire five-county region be converted into one regional government, Dilworth suggested that this regional government should contain twelve decentralized public school systems. Each system would contain approximately 50,000 pupils and incorporate a slice of Philadelphia. Dilworth was first drawn to metropolitanism in the late 1950s for reasons of efficiency, but in light of the PHRC’s order he justified metropolitan solutions in terms of racial justice as well, pointing to the realities of suburban segregation, particularly the harassment and structural barriers that African Americans faced in securing suburban housing. 

Dilworth’s metropolitanism ran afoul of the stated policies of the PHRC. In March 1968, the agency developed a set of desegregation guidelines for Pennsylvania’s public schools. Guideline number four explicitly stated that “Desegregation is a local responsibility.” The PHRC argued that “in keeping with the spirit of local control,” the work of “coping with segregation rests with local school authorities.” Though Dilworth broadened the definition of “local” to mean the interconnected metropolitan region, the PHRC steadfastly maintained that local meant the existing political boundaries of the school system. The PHRC’s guidelines indicated that it would not approve efforts toward black community control of Philadelphia’s black schools or proposals for metropolitan integration – two options that offered both clear educational benefits for Philadelphia’s schoolchildren and possessed grassroots black political support. Despite this,

---

87 Letter, Richardson Dilworth to Philip Joyce, 20 January 1971, box: 143, folder: 19, RD.
88 Letter, Dilworth to Joyce, RD.
89 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Desegregation Guidelines for Public Schools, 29 March 1968, box: 151, folder: 1, RD.
the Philadelphia Board continued advocating for metropolitan desegregation, insisting that effective integration of Philadelphia’s schools alone was impossible in light of regional demographics.

By 1971, metropolitan desegregation proposals had garnered support from key constituencies in Philadelphia, including integrationist civil rights groups, ordinary black Philadelphians, and the city’s Board of Education. As in Boston and, as will be seen, Detroit, metropolitanism increasingly characterized Philadelphia’s desegregation battles. But this metropolitanism had not only failed to gain significant white support, it fed a growing white backlash.

**White Backlashes**

The Dilworth Board’s civil rights activity led to distinct urban and suburban white backlashes. The suburban backlash focused above all on metropolitanism. In response to metropolitan demands, suburbanites articulated a bipartisan meritocratic defense of suburban privileges that blamed the city for its own financial troubles. Suburbanites argued that Dilworth’s metropolitanism grew entirely from an interest in suburban financial resources. Despite its moments of ostensible colorblindness, racism played a major part in the suburban backlash. Suburbanites readily coupled their meritocratic arguments with racist claims of black incapacity.

This demonization of the black population linked the suburban and urban backlashes. In contrast to the suburban backlash, white urbanites avoided metropolitanism and focused more generally on the Board of Education’s links to civil rights. Absent a conventional desegregation lawsuit and not home to a Board of Education that built its support off of opposition to civil rights, Philadelphia did not possess an equivalent organization to Detroit’s CCBE and had yet to have a school board figure akin to Boston’s John Kerrigan suggest metropolitan busing in the
aim of antagonizing the suburbs and whitening the city’s schools. More overtly racist than the suburban backlash, white backlash urbanites opposed Dilworth’s perceived willingness to accede to the demands of black students and did not forward potentially productive remedies to segregation. This white backlash led directly to the election of Mayor Frank Rizzo.

Dilworth’s metropolitanism provoked an immediate suburban opposition devoted to reaffirming suburban autonomy and disavowing links to the central city. Responding to the Philadelphia Board of Education’s 1968 proposal for voluntary suburban participation in Philadelphia’s desegregation, the cover of the August/September 1968 issue of *Suburban Life North*, covering Eastern Montgomery Country, featured a cartoon of Dilworth, dressed as the pied piper, leading scores of unsuspecting children into Philadelphia. A sign in the cartoon pointing to Philadelphia stood apart from one pointing to the independent suburbs of Abington, Jenkintown, Elkins Park, and Cheltenham, a visible reminder that Philadelphia stood apart from these four independent suburban communities united in their opposition to metropolitan school desegregation.90

Suburbanites positioned themselves as the hard-working, taxpaying beneficiaries of a meritocratic system and argued that regional discrepancies in school financing reflected their success. Dilworth, they maintained, was only interested in the suburban tax dollar which the city did not deserve. The Chairman of Cheltenham Township’s Republican Study Group on Preservation of Local Government, Barry L. Deutsch, declared that “Many of our people moved to the suburbs because of these schools, often at great financial sacrifice.” Suggesting that Cheltenham residents earned all they had and practiced sound government, Deutsch asserted that the people of Cheltenham “see no reason that we should have to pay for the impecurities [sic] of

---

recent city administrations” and suggested that “the real reason the Philadelphia School Board is seeking a wider base is because they want the suburban tax revenues.” A letter writer from Melrose Park, an unincorporated part of Cheltenham Township, accused Dilworth in 1971 of attempting to “shift your responsibilities into the suburbs, who pay for everything they use in the city including city wage tax.” The writer, claiming financial sacrifice to attend suburban schools, lamented that Dilworth “want[ed] to send blacks for nothing.”

Some suburban officials drew on urban grievances to articulate their opposition. After noting that “Dilworth’s budget is not balanced,” Bensalem School Board Vice President Joseph Kennedy suggested that Dilworth neglected heavily white Northeast Philadelphia, implying that Dilworth worked only for the city’s black population. Significantly, Bensalem and Cheltenham bordered the city. As Kennedy’s statement about Northeast Philadelphia’s grievances with Dilworth made clear, each suburb possessed intimate connections to Philadelphia. Yet the suburban responses above all revealed a desire to keep the city and its suburbs in separate educational worlds.

Other suburbanites questioned how students would arrive in the suburbs, raising the divisive issue of busing. Cheekily taking suburban claims that they opposed busing, not integration, at face value, an internal Board of Education document of May 1968 proposed avoiding the use of buses altogether. In place of buses, limited numbers of Philadelphia students would travel to suburban schools by using the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) commuter rail network. The plan required subsidized transportation costs and proposed that no suburban school accept more than fifty city pupils. The suburban schools’

---

92 Letter, Mrs. J.K. to Richardson Dilworth, 19 January 1971, box: 148, folder: 12, RD.
increased expenditures would be compensated on a per-pupil cost basis. This plan possessed at least two attractive elements for the Philadelphia Board. By avoiding the use of buses it did not allow opponents to sidestep their opposition to desegregation by casting it as an aversion to busing. Secondly, even a cursory glance at a map of SEPTA’s services revealed a clearly interconnected region with Philadelphia at its center. Many workers used SEPTA to cross municipal borders on a daily basis and the state considered transportation policy important enough to require a form of regional governance. Why, the Board implicitly asked, was education not treated similarly? Ultimately, the Board’s proposal did not provide an ideal solution. Railroads cost more than buses and few railroad stations were located within close walking distance of public schools.

A racist belief that black students lowered the overall educational quality of schools also motivated suburban opposition. Portraying black children as more prone to violence and less intelligent than whites, one suburbanite wrote to Dilworth of his “fear of physical violence to our children, and probable decline in the overall scholastic level.” To many whites, adhering to stereotyped conceptions of African Americans as a problem population, it seemed as if Dilworth simply proposed to spread this problem around. As did PAT’s Frieri, the Bucks County Courier-Times employed the metaphor of infectious disease to discuss integration. An anti-integrationist editorial declared that the “way to treat cancer is to attack it directly, not to weaken the surrounding tissue so the malignancy can spread.”

96 Letter, J.R. Woodward, Jr. to Richardson Dilworth, 14 January 1971, box: 143, folder: 19, RD.
In the suburbs, residence, rather than party affiliation, proved most important in shaping political responses to metropolitanism. A bipartisan suburban opposition to metropolitan school integration emerged in tandem with Dilworth’s metropolitanism. In 1968, Cheltenham’s Republican Study Group on Preservation of Local Government endorsed House Resolution 166, introduced by two Democrats from Bucks County. The Resolution declared that merging school districts was an inappropriate response to Philadelphia’s financial challenges and called on the city to solve its own issues. Chairman Deutsch said the group approved the resolution because it “clearly emphasizes the opinions of all suburban citizens that such a plan would be detrimental to the excellent school systems which have been developed in the suburbs.”

Pennsylvania’s moderate Republican Governor Raymond P. Shafer championed this suburban opposition, telling Pennsylvanians in September 1968 that “I prefer children to go to school in their own neighborhood” and asking the PHRC to grant a Board of Education request to delay proceedings. Given that the PHRC was a state agency, Shafer’s recommendation raised questions about the Commission’s ability to operate independently. A governor’s statement would have no effect on a decision made by a federal court, but for the PHRC Shafer’s opinion mattered considerably. Go slow the PHRC did. Finally, on June 7, 1971 the PHRC ordered the school district to end all racial segregation in the system by the beginning of the 1974-75 school year. But by then, the Board would look very different, having fallen to a white backlash.

White Philadelphians associated the Dilworth Board not only with integrationist civil rights efforts, but with an especially galling commitment to black power. Though a black power

ethos of community control contained much that would seemingly be beneficial for white proponents of a neighborhood school system who championed racially separate schools, this white opposition is indicative of what historian Matthew Countryman terms Philadelphia’s “almost symbiotic relationship between black student and community activism and white resistance to educational change.”

Superintendent Mark Shedd revealed a willingness to meet with and listen to the demands of Philadelphia’s black students. In line with the aims of black power, students pressed for classes on black history, name changes for certain schools, the approval of black student clubs, and the right to wear African clothing and Afro hairstyles. In response to these demands, Shedd agreed to a meeting with student representatives on Friday, November 17, 1967, at school board headquarters on the city’s Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Though the board anticipated only 350 students would attend, actual attendance numbered between 2,500 and 3,000.

Initially, the assembled crowd acted peacefully. The first disturbance occurred at roughly 11 a.m., when two students climbed onto the roof of a parked car and broke its antenna. Police radioed for backup. Seven blocks away at City Hall, Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo, presiding over a swearing-in ceremony for 111 new police sergeants and corporals, responded to the request. Rizzo ordered the 111 officers into buses and headed down the Parkway. Upon arrival, the officers entered the crowd of students with clubs swinging, striking both students and school board members. While Rizzo succeeded in dispersing the crowd, groups of fleeing students headed toward Center City just as many downtown workers were beginning their lunch

100 Countryman, *Up South*, 247.
102 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 165.
hours. Outbursts of violence and vandalism followed, including assaults on individuals unconnected to the rally.\textsuperscript{103}

In a joint statement following the events of “Black Friday,” Dilworth and Shedd unequivocally sided with the students and criticized the police response. They maintained that the initial demonstration provided “real evidence of a desire to improve the quality and relevance of education.”\textsuperscript{104} While Shedd later told an out-of-town reporter that the demonstration “was the beginning of our credibility in the black community,” it had a very different effect on much of the city’s white population.\textsuperscript{105}

Black Friday exacerbated Philadelphia’s white backlash to civil rights that had been apparent since the Chisholm case and the K4-4-4 controversy. Although the police struck the first blows against the students, a number of observers felt that the subsequent student violence provided post facto rationale for the police’s actions and celebrated Rizzo in particular. Declaring that Dilworth and Shedd were “bending over backward to meet Negro demands” while law and order “are being trampled upon,” the Philadelphia Daily News noted “a need for someone like Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo to balance the scales.”\textsuperscript{106} The Sunday Bulletin opined that “Black Power – as an instrument of force – is not going to take over the city or its public schools and if the leaders of this movement are encouraging youngsters that it can, they are doing them a vast disservice.” The paper concluded by stating that “the vast majority of the community supports Police Commissioner Frank L. Rizzo in his determination to preserve law and order.”\textsuperscript{107} Dilworth concurred with this judgment. In a letter to a friend, Dilworth lamented

\textsuperscript{104}Joint Statement of Dilworth and Shedd, box: 7, folder: 31, HSC.
that the riot made Rizzo “virtually a folk hero in Philadelphia” and noted that “90% of the white community is cheering him on and hissing us.” Dilworth feared that further student demonstrations would lead to demands for the resignation of the entire Board of Education “on the ground that you cannot temporize with crime, and the overwhelming majority of the whites believe that any meetings with the militant young Negroes are criminal.”

Rizzo furthered his own political ascendancy by explicitly targeting Shedd and fanning the flames of white opposition. On Black Friday, Rizzo returned to Board of Education headquarters to meet with Shedd. Declaring that Philadelphia “is my town,” Rizzo warned Shedd that “No softie from the outside is going to come in and screw it up. If you don’t keep those kids in school, I’m going to run your ass out of Philadelphia if it’s the last thing I do.” Rumors advanced by Tony Zecca, a childhood friend of Rizzo’s and one of Mayor Tate’s deputies, linked Shedd romantically to two black women television reporters in Philadelphia in an attempt to delegitimize his efforts to improve black education. The rumor, according to *Philadelphia Magazine*, “said that Shedd’s doing too much for Negroes and it must be sex.” Rizzo kept Shedd in the public eye. Rizzo’s opposition to Shedd formed a centerpiece of Rizzo’s successful 1971 campaign for mayor, with Rizzo telling campaign audiences that “I used to say Shedd wouldn’t last eight minutes after I’m elected. Now I say he won’t last eight seconds.”

In the years following Black Friday and preceding Rizzo’s election as mayor, the Dilworth Board grew less responsive to black demands as it grappled with an increasing white backlash. This backlash articulated itself most forcefully in 1968 in the predominantly white

108 Letter, Richardson Dilworth to Stanley Bergman, box: 35, RD.
109 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 168.
111 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 169.
South Philadelphia neighborhood surrounding majority-black Edward H. Bok Technical High School. At issue were battles between the school’s students and the neighborhood’s residents over the simple act of walking to and from school. Primarily a vocational school, Bok possessed little attractiveness to the residents of its immediate area. According to Dilworth, the improved economic status of South Philadelphia and the fact that many of the area’s whites abandoned the public school system in favor of parochial schools accounted for Bok’s predominantly black enrollment.¹¹² Most of Bok’s black students came from outside the immediate neighborhood. Many commuted via subway, then faced a ten-block walk through a hostile white neighborhood.¹¹³ Others came from the Wilson Park housing project, a mile and a half away, and faced similarly lengthy walks.¹¹⁴

Bok’s black students complained of harassment at the hands of the white residents, and white residents complained of the same from black students. According to a black student, Bok pupils “had to fight our way through this neighborhood to get to school.” Two high school seniors called attention to the harassment they received from neighborhood residents every morning: “The white people call you black bitches and throw trash as you come to school. And you better not say anything back or they will sic their dogs and cats on you.” In contrast, a white resident claimed the area’s white population had “been pushed too long by blacks and we’ve had it.” Whereas black students argued they needed to walk to school together in groups in order to stay safe, whites perceived these groups as threatening, with one young woman telling the Philadelphia Tribune that “Those niggers get out of school and they always walk down the streets in a noisy crowd.” A white youth similarly couched his fears of black groups in overtly

¹¹² Letter, Richardson Dilworth to Harold J. Wiegand, 22 October 1968, box: 158, folder: 1, RD.
¹¹³ Countryman, Up South, 238.
racist terms: “The women and children get pushed around by those niggers when they get out of school.” One white woman blamed the conflict entirely on black outsiders, stating that while the “local colored at the Catholic school are ok,” the non-resident students from Bok make it so that “you can’t even be out on the streets when they go to and from school.”115 These conflicts reached their crescendo following the stabbing of a white student outside the school by a black teenager. Although the culprit was not a Bok pupil, neighborhood residents retaliated by intensifying their harassment of Bok students.116

On Monday October 7, 1968, 200 black students walked out of Bok, demanding greater protection as they commuted to and from school.117 Following the black students’ walkout, on Wednesday October 9, a crowd of 1,000 whites attempted to march on the school, demanding that the Board of Education shut it down. The crowd chanted “we want Rizzo,” until Rizzo arrived and told them marching was not the way to solve their issues and asked them to “do it for me and go ahead home.”118 In addition to championing Rizzo, the crowd proclaimed its loyalty to segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace and shouted “burn down Bok.”119 The demonstrators carried signs proclaiming “White is Boss,” “Bus Dilworth,” and “All the way with Wallace.” The Board responded to this hostility by loading black students onto buses that took them away from the school, then closing both Bok and nearby South Philadelphia High School until the following week.120

116 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 196.
While the school sat shuttered, white protests continued. The largest protest, occurring on Sunday afternoon, witnessed a crowd of 800 to 1,300 marching for five hours to demand the permanent closure of the school. Led by a speaker on a truck with a “Wallace for President” sticker, the marchers revealed a cross-ethnic commitment to whiteness, with many chanting “white power.” The leader of the march encouraged this multi-ethnic white solidarity, proclaiming, “We don’t care if you’re Polacks or Jews. We want whites!”121 Two nights later, white residents occupied Bok. Two thousand residents gathered in the school’s auditorium and developed a set of demands that no longer included closing the school. Now they strived to attract white students to the school, aiming for a white student proportion of 40 percent, rather than the current 12 percent. They also requested that all black students from outside the school’s immediate vicinity be bused to the school.122

The white residents sought to turn Bok back into something approximating a neighborhood school, yet Bok had not been reflective of the neighborhood’s demographics for a long time. Although residents claimed that the school’s population being sharply out-of-step with the neighborhood’s composition was the ultimate source of the confrontation, Bok’s student population had been more than 70 percent black since the mid-1950s.123 That this situation only came to a head in 1968, and not before, testifies to the role of the white backlash to black power and a Board of Education viewed as too sympathetic to black issues in fomenting the conflict. In remedying the crisis, the Board of Education met with the white residents directly, agreeing to make curriculum changes to attract more white students, to institute stronger disciplinary measures, and to increase the number of security personnel stationed at the school.124

121 Countryman, *Up South*, 252.
122 Ibid., 254.
123 Birger, “Race, Reaction, and Reform,” 196.
agreement, made with the white residents rather than with the affected black students, ended the Bok crisis.

The Board’s response to black student complaints against a white teacher at West Philadelphia High School in the fall of 1969 similarly reveals clear limitations to its post-Black Friday commitment to civil rights issues. Black students brought complaints to the board concerning the quality of instruction offered in their history classes taught by George Fishman. Students’ specific complaints against Fishman alleged that the teacher insulted students, would not discuss controversial issues, refused to teach or discuss black history, and felt he was giving students a “treat” by distributing articles on Reconstruction.\(^{125}\) Alongside the complaint, black students boycotted Fishman’s classes.

Battles over civil rights ripped apart the very New Deal-style liberal coalition of workers, reformers, and African Americans that Dilworth helped construct in the early 1950s. During the Fishman controversy, Dilworth received letters from Democrats who demanded the Board take a harsher line on black students. One letter-writer recalled working for Dilworth’s campaign when he ran for public office. Although black Philadelphians formed an integral part of Dilworth’s mayoral coalition, this writer revealed a brazen commitment to biological racism, declaring “It is a tragedy what is occurring to Mr. Fishman, a product of high learning who does not desire to cow-tow to the jungle product of the younger generation of blacks.” The letter-writer concluded by noting that “it will take not only a generation of our time, but more than a hundred to release the jungle blood that is still in the veins of these so called high school graduates (sic).”\(^{126}\)

---

\(^{125}\) Students Complaints Against Mr. Fishman, box: 148, folder: 1, RD.

\(^{126}\) Letter, Jean Gomer to Richardson Dilworth, 30 October 1969, box: 148, folder: 7, RD.
In the face of this opposition, the Board did not side with the students. Shedd decided to keep Fishman as a teacher at the school, though he ruled that Fishman would “be required to comply with all reasonable requirements of the principal and district superintendent concerning the improvement of his teaching.”\footnote{Decision of Superintendent of Schools in the Case of George Fishman, Teacher at West Philadelphia High School, 10 November 1969, box: 148, folder: 3, RD.} Though the Dilworth Board’s ardor for civil rights waned in the years following Black Friday, Rizzo still campaigned against it and his 1971 election meant its end. Rizzo’s new Board of Education was nonetheless confronted with the same order from the PHRC that it desegregate its schools. Its response to this desegregation mandate would borrow heavily from its predecessor.

Both the urban and the suburban backlashes proved significant. The suburban backlash illustrated that metropolitanism would not proceed voluntarily, despite the hopes of the Board’s 1968 and 1969 desegregation plans. Only a conventional desegregation case could produce metropolitan desegregation. The urban backlash helped lead to Rizzo’s election, producing a more conservative Board of Education that embraced tactical metropolitanism. Philadelphia never witnessed the equivalent of a CCBE pushing for metropolitan desegregation, and the absence of an NAACP lawsuit left no opening for white antibusers to enter into a courtroom alliance with integrationist civil rights advocates. But through electing Rizzo mayor, the white urban backlash helped produce a tactical metropolitanist Board that, much like the Boston School Committee and the Detroit’s CCBE, worked to keep metropolitanism at the center of school desegregation battles.

**Metropolitanism in the Rizzo Years**
Though the city’s Home Rule Charter allowed Rizzo broad powers to remake the Board of Education, going forward Rizzo’s Board of Education embraced the Dilworth Board’s metropolitanism. In light of the PHRC’s continuing efforts to compel desegregation, the new Board found Dilworth’s arguments ready-made, capable of raising salient points about the realities of metropolitan segregation, and, most importantly, indefinitely delaying the implementation of a potential intra-city order through judicial appeal. In tandem with this strategy, events beyond Philadelphia’s borders suggested the validity of metropolitanism, as a 1971 ruling by a federal judge concerning school segregation in Richmond, Virginia suggested that a metropolitan solution was feasible.

On April 5, 1971, U.S. District Judge Robert Merhige ordered Richmond’s predominantly black schools integrated with the majority white schools of its politically autonomous suburbs. Though the Richmond School Board immediately appealed the decision, and the case would need to be settled in the Supreme Court, metropolitan advocates took inspiration from the case. They included Dilworth. Though now retired from the Board of Education, Dilworth in January 1972 urged the new Board not to “be so reactionary” that it refused to take the opportunity offered by the Richmond decision to launch its own lawsuit “for merging Philadelphia schools with the suburban ones.”

Though the Rizzo Board did not possess Dilworth’s commitment to integration and failed to initiate a new lawsuit, it nevertheless found Dilworth’s metropolitan arguments a convenient way to fight against mandated intra-city desegregation.

---

Under new School Superintendent Matthew Costanzo, a Rizzo appointee, the Board continued to press for metropolitan solutions while fighting against integration. Its metropolitan arguments rested upon two pillars. It claimed that full compliance with the PHRC’s order within the city was impossible due to financial and demographic realities and that, as school districts existed only as a creation of the state, the state of Pennsylvania, not the city itself, possessed the responsibility for providing children with an integrated education. As did Dilworth, it marshaled statistics to paint a portrait of worsening metropolitan segregation. By 1973, black pupils accounted for 62 percent of Philadelphia’s public school enrollment, while the black proportion of adjacent districts remained at 5 percent. The Board argued that this discrepancy “developed as the result of state laws… and in many instances they have developed by authority and power delegated to a wide variety of local governmental agencies which are themselves artificial creations of the state.” What happened just outside of Philadelphia’s borders affected Philadelphia itself, but the PHRC’s guidelines mandating local solutions neglected this reality. In the eyes of the Board, the PHRC’s guidelines erroneously suggested that the Philadelphia schools existed “in an educational, social, cultural, and political vacuum.”

Echoing Dilworth, the Board asked for “the formation of a Metropolitan School District for the entire area.” Reasoning that the “State created the monster,” the Board called upon the state to “create a system that will effectively serve all children.”[129] Though opposed to integration, the Rizzo Board’s tactical metropolitanism was in line with that found in other cities and court challenges nationwide indicated the potential for comparable metropolitan solutions to be implemented. As Chapter Seven reveals, civil rights groups renewed their metropolitanist charge in concert with the Rizzo Board’s battles with the PHRC. The North Philadelphia

NAACP petitioned the PHRC for a metropolitan solution and the Fellowship Commission urged
the Board in 1974 to take the necessary legal steps toward establishing a metropolitan school
district. The resolution of national metropolitan challenges would ultimately determine the
course of the backlash Board’s metropolitanism. With the Supreme Court deadlocking four-to-
four on the Richmond case, the feasibility of metropolitanism depended upon a Supreme Court
case involving Detroit and fifty-three autonomous suburban school districts.

Conclusion

Philadelphia witnessed three distinct if overlapping periods of metropolitan educational activism
tied to three distinct reform constituencies. The first, led by civil rights activists, began by
attacking Philadelphia’s segregated system of neighborhood schools. In its final stages, it grew to
articulate a tentative metropolitanism that suggested a need to attract predominantly white
suburban students to Philadelphia’s majority black public schools. In demanding a radical
departure in building policy, these activists ran afoul of the Board of Education under former
Mayor Richardson Dilworth. Yet once the Dilworth Board faced a 1968 desegregation order
from the PHRC, it emerged as a strong voice of metropolitan reform. By 1971, it demanded
metropolitan government and metropolitan school districts.

Dilworth’s perceived willingness to accede to the demands of black student protesters
helped prod a backlash that elected Frank Rizzo mayor. Beginning his term in 1972 and able to
appoint new leadership for the Board of Education, Rizzo’s Board nevertheless continued in the
metropolitanist vein of its predecessor. Though it aimed to dodge the integration mandate, as
events outside of Philadelphia indicated a willingness on the part of federal courts to order
metropolitan desegregation, its metropolitan arguments contained plausibility should a
conventional desegregation lawsuit emerge.
Philadelphia’s metropolitan school desegregation battles paralleled events in Boston. As in liberal Massachusetts, Philadelphia’s suburbs witnessed the rise of a bipartisan, anti-metropolitanist politics in the face of potentially redistributive civil rights remedies. In both cities, white urbanites served as a hostile force opposed to such remedies, but their political representatives embraced metropolitan solutions in the face of a mandatory desegregation order. Likewise, Philadelphia demonstrates metropolitanism’s broad urban constituency, from classical reformers such as Dilworth who, once presented with a desegregation order, returned to advocating for metropolitanism for reasons of efficiency, to civil rights activists, to even the representatives of white backlash who, for reasons far removed from a quest for racial justice, nevertheless articulated a metropolitan solution in line with remedies before courts in other cities.

The differences between Philadelphia, on the one hand, and Boston and Detroit on the other, are as instructive as the similarities. Covering three distinct periods and constituencies, these disparate Philadelphia reformers failed to coalesce into a unified challenge for structural reasons. With the desegregation charge led by the PHRC instead of a conventional desegregation lawsuit as in Detroit and Boston, the grievances of ordinary black Philadelphians took a back seat to a technocratic, top-down process of delayed deliberation dominated by state bureaucrats, Board of Education representatives, and the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court. Without a black plaintiff, black Philadelphians did not have a permanent seat at the table in the battles between the Philadelphia Board of Education and the PHRC. Without a federal court case, black and white urbanites lacked the venue required for the kind of alliance that was possible in Boston and which, as will be seen, emerged in Detroit. Detroit’s metropolitan reformers possessed motivations just as divergent as Philadelphia’s. In Detroit, however, civil rights proponents, the Board of Education, and the representatives of a white backlash concurred before a federal court
on the need for metropolitan desegregation. Ascending to the Supreme Court, their challenge to metropolitan segregation carried implications not only for Detroit, but for Boston, Philadelphia, and the nation as a whole.
Chapter 4

Compared to Boston and Philadelphia, Detroit arrived last to debating metropolitan solutions to school segregation. Prior to 1970, Detroit possessed an integrationist Board of Education that did not run afoul of integrationist civil rights advocates or arouse extensive white opposition, delaying the desegregation battles needed to advance the metropolitanist discourse. Despite Detroit’s tardiness, its metropolitan arguments ascended to the Supreme Court and held lasting implications for integration not only in Detroit, but for Boston, Philadelphia, and the rest of the nation. Detroit’s battles demonstrated the productive potential of the tactical metropolitanism found in Boston and Philadelphia. Before the courts, Detroit’s anti-integrationist whites embraced metropolitanism and, in fact, played the leading role in pushing for a lasting plan of metropolitan desegregation capable of integrating the region’s schools and mitigating the extant white flight that promised to make the city’s public schools almost uniformly black.

In Detroit’s *Bradley v. Milliken* school desegregation case, an argumentative cohesion developed between parties on both sides of the courtroom. The defendant Detroit Board of Education, after failing in its fight against charges that it operated a segregated system, argued that Detroit’s schools were segregated in the metropolitan context and urged a metropolitan remedy. The plaintiff NAACP similarly argued for the necessity of metropolitan integration, though it also supported intra-city busing on the chance that the court would not permit a metropolitan solution. But the most influential party in pushing the court to order a metropolitan desegregation plan was an explicitly anti-integrationist white parents’ organization, the Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE). In 1970, just one year before it made metropolitan
arguments in court, the CCBE formed to remove integrationist Board of Education members from office. In fact, it was this agent of white backlash, the CCBE, which first stressed the need for metropolitan desegregation in court. Like their tactical metropolitanist counterparts elsewhere, CCBE members supported metropolitan desegregation not in a quest for racial justice, but rather because they recognized that the schools would be found segregated and knew that a desegregation area reaching beyond the city to include the predominantly white suburbs would ensure that the city’s white children continued to attend schools with white majorities.

Unlike Philadelphia and Boston, Detroit witnessed the emergence of a broad metropolitan alliance. Such an alliance was only possible in a desegregation case’s remedial hearings and did not translate to a new politics outside of the courtroom. As the CCBE’s metropolitan arguments did not require a genuine transformation in outlook among its members, its white parents were free to continue fighting against integration politically, including supporting segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace’s 1972 campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination and pushing for a constitutional amendment banning the use of busing to integrate schools. Outside of the courthouse, CCBE members and their counterparts in the NAACP possessed little common ground. At the very moment that the CCBE urged metropolitan integration, its membership was firmly ensconced in America’s bipartisan rightward shift and could not be counted on to support civil rights initiatives electorally.

This functionally integrationist courtroom alliance replicated Detroit’s New Deal coalition between working-class whites and African Americans torn asunder in post-World War II battles over housing integration. It linked race, class, and residence in a productive partial

1 The racial fissures that fractured Detroit’s New Deal coalition can be found in Thomas J. Sugrue’s *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially Chapters Two, Three, Eight, and Nine.
solution to spatial inequality. It did so even as the racialized conflict over schools precluded the existence of such a coalition in the electoral realm, where urban whites remained committed to the politics of race and sought to defeat civil rights initiatives such as busing that would affect them. But in the courtroom, the politics of urban residence became a force capable of uniting disparate groups against racial inequality, albeit for strikingly different reasons. At the same time that white Detroiters contributed to America’s rightward shift, in the courtroom they provided radical solutions capable of meaningfully combatting racial inequality by obliterating the municipal boundaries that, in tandem with exclusionary suburban building and zoning policies, allowed suburbs to be home to well-funded schools and a racially homogenous population.

Enveloped in an “urban crisis” marked by urban economic decline and population flight, urbanites articulated a class- and residence-based appeal that sought to reaffirm the centrality of the city to the metropolis as a whole, one capable of lessening the structural educational inequality plaguing urban areas nationwide.

There is a particularly rich body of literature on the *Milliken* court proceedings.² David Riddle’s work, in particular, is indispensable in highlighting the role played by the CCBE in driving a courtroom consideration of metropolitan desegregation and in provoking a suburban backlash.³ But aside from books by Gary Orfield and Thomas Sugrue, very little of this material places *Milliken* in its national context.⁴ That an explicitly comparative engagement with

---

reactionary white metropolitanism is missing from the scholarship implies that Detroit was an outlier and that its metropolitanism was an isolated incident. Instead, by placing Detroit into such a comparative conversation we can see that Detroit’s reactionary metropolitanism was the most advanced expression of similar processes occurring elsewhere.

That it was the CCBE that most vociferously pushed for metropolitan desegregation and, by extension, metropolitan reform, demonstrates once again a need to broaden historical conceptions of the urban reformer. Typically presented as a progressive, good-government type in search of order or as a boosterish metropolitan businessperson, the image of the metropolitan reformer excludes reactionary white homeowners and their politics. This is a mistake. The CCBE’s metropolitanism, like that of urban whites in Boston and Philadelphia, emerged out of its reactionary and racist politics. CCBE members did not want to integrate but, in the face of mandatory integration, they reasoned that the solutions to metropolitan inequality should affect all of the residents of the metropolitan area equally. Metropolitanism had benefits both for integration and for the segregationist worldview of CCBE members. Metropolitan desegregation would not allow for well-heeled whites simply to flee the desegregation mandate by moving beyond the borders of the central city and, most importantly for the CCBE, would preserve white majorities in area schools. This metropolitan challenge was profoundly urban, emerging from beleaguered urbanites, not – as, to a modest degree, in Boston – suburban liberals ensconced in politically autonomous and racially exclusive suburbs loathe to give up the privileges of

5 Representations of the metropolitan reformer come frozen in Progressive Era conceptions. For a discussion of such common images in the historical literature on urban reform, see the Introduction. Classical reformers do matter to metropolitan desegregation. In the preceding chapters, Philadelphia’s Richardson Dilworth and Boston Redevelopment Administrator Ed Logue made metropolitan desegregation arguments for reasons of efficiency and urban boosterism respectively. But, as the metropolitan moment reveals, they were hardly the only type of reformers. metropolitan business reformers.
suburban residence. Nor did this tactical metropolitanism bear the imprint of arguments of reform for the sake of efficiency common among elite reformers since the nineteenth century.

In *Bradley v. Milliken*, the NAACP, the Detroit Board of Education, and the CCBE articulated an understanding of the interconnectedness of city and suburb and drew on academic literature to fashion a class- and residence-based argument that stressed the need for not only racial, but also socioeconomic, integration. From these disparate sources emerged an alternate vision of how American education – and by extension, American metropolitan areas – could be governed. In these proposals, disparate metropolitan advocates found the possibility of transcending the racially discriminatory residential patterns increasingly familiar to Americans – that of poorer black central cities ringed by predominantly middle-class white suburbs – all without changing their own underlying motivations, be they a quest for racial justice and improved education or a segregationist desire to preserve and privilege white majorities.

**Integration Ascendant**

Though the CCBE emerged as the most influential metropolitanist voice in Detroit, it was a profoundly reactionary organization. Without black parents and the work of the integrationist Detroit Board of Education, the CCBE would have had nothing to react to. As in Boston and Philadelphia, the development of a metropolitanist discourse in Detroit required the work of integrationists.

In 1964, a liberal-labor-black coalition evident since at least 1956 succeeded in taking control of the Board of Education.\(^6\) Quickly, the Board moved to advance integration within

---

Detroit’s schools. Under the direction of its Superintendent, Norman Drachler, the Board undertook a review of instructional material. Openly confronting textbook publishers on their portrayal of African Americans, the Board adopted a policy statement on “The Treatment of Minorities in Textbooks and Other Instructional Materials” which stated that “the content, the illustrations, and the general tone of all instruction materials to be used in the Detroit schools should be such as to constitute fair treatment for all groups in our society.” Similarly, the Board refused to participate in apprentice training programs if there was any charge that admission to such programs proceeded on a discriminatory basis. This was not a hollow promise. In the 1964-65 school year, an apprenticeship program was only allowed to continue following a Civil Rights Commission investigation that indicated “that the necessary conditions had been met to eliminate the charge of racial discrimination.”

Quickly, the Board worked to advance integration within Detroit’s schools. In 1965, it inaugurated two programs – Projects One and Two – designed to promote racial integration. Project One focused on racially transitioning neighborhoods where integration currently prevailed and sought to prevent resegregation by improving area schools and increasing funds for in-service training on intergroup relations for school personnel. Recognizing that such racially transitioning neighborhoods were not the norm, Project Two sought to provide a semblance of “biracial” integrated education for the clear majority of “pupils who reside in areas where residents are entirely or predominantly of one race.” Project Two – quickly renamed the

---

7 A Proposal to Provide for Training and Action Programs to Assist in Solutions to Problems Incident to the Desegregation of Public Schools in the City of Detroit, Michigan, box: 6, folder: 12, The Detroit Public Schools Community Relations Division Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University (hereafter: “DPS”).
9 Board of Education Minutes, 22 June 1965, box: 12, folder: 23, NAACP-D.
Shared Experiences Program – paired white and black schools in integrated learning experiences outside of the classroom in order to develop “skills necessary to successful and productive citizenship in an integrated society.” In the 1966-1967 school year, the Shared Experiences Program involved over 23,000 students in integrated activities.\(^{10}\)

Individuals within the Detroit schools recognized the limitations of these activities and urged additional integration. Black Board member Dr. Remus Robinson cast the lone vote against Projects One and Two. In registering what he called his “protest vote,” Robinson declared himself in favor of the programs but called for a more far-reaching program because the two measures were not “an adequate plan towards integration.”\(^ {11}\) The Board’s Task Force on Quality Integrated Education concurred. In February 1968, noting the accelerated white flight following Detroit’s 1967 Riot, the Task Force argued that integration within the city’s boundaries alone was impossible. Given Detroit’s black student population of 56.7 percent and rising, the Task Force concluded that any integration plan would have to “include large numbers of pupils presently studying outside of the public school system, and the Detroit School District must move to develop on an interschool district basis.” The Task Force envisioned a system of educational parks and the creation of an inter-district school authority.\(^ {12}\) The Board of Education did not act on the Task Force’s metropolitan recommendations.

Other integrationist Board actions possessed strict limits. The Board argued that its use of busing to relieve overcrowding contributed to integration. It claimed that when “such busing is necessary, children are assigned to the nearest school with available space” and noted that “in a number of instances, this has brought Negro children into schools with an all-white

\(^ {10}\) Pamphlet, Shared Learning Experiences Program, box: 6, folder: 3, DPS; A Progress Report on the Detroit Program for an Integrated School System, NAACP-D.

\(^ {11}\) Board of Education Minutes, 22 June 1965, NAACP-D.

\(^ {12}\) The Task Force on Quality Integrated Education in Detroit Public Schools, February 1968, DPS.
membership.” Despite this policy, the Board continued to bus black students from overcrowded black schools to other identifiably black schools. This practice often involved busing black students past white schools with available seats. Though it bused black students, the Board was silent on the integrative possibilities in busing white students to predominantly black schools.\footnote{A Proposal to Provide for Training and Action Programs to Assist in Solutions to Problems Incident to the Desegregation of Public Schools in the City of Detroit, Michigan, DPS; Sidney Fine, \textit{Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations, and the Detroit Riot of 1967} (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 48.}

Busing for overcrowding provided some measure of integration for individual schools, but integration was not the policy’s priority. Although Robinson and the Task Force on Quality Integrated Education noted that the Board’s integrationist activities did not extend to extensive boundary shifts or metropolitan political reform, the Board enjoyed commendations from and a close working relationship with the NAACP. The NAACP formally honored A. L. Zwerdling, President of the Detroit Board of Education, and Superintendent Norman Drachler for their accomplishments in integration. The Board’s Deputy Superintendent, Arthur Johnson, had served as the executive secretary of the Detroit Branch of the NAACP from 1950 to 1964. In his capacity as Deputy Superintendent, Johnson approved school boundary alterations and student transfers.\footnote{Wolf, \textit{Trial and Error}, 16-17.} Coinciding with its close relationship with the NAACP, the Board remained supportive of moderate integration and uncomfortable with black radicalism, particularly black demands for community control of schools.

\textbf{Community Control and the Limits of Integrationism}
While the Detroit Board of Education proposed modest integrationist activities that would not run afoul of urban whites, black students grew increasingly frustrated with the inadequacies of the system’s majority-black schools and cautious liberal integrationism. Like their student counterparts in Philadelphia, Detroit’s pupils evidenced an increasing attachment to black nationalism and contributed to pushes for community control of schools. This push for community control soon found legislative success, portending a significant reorganization of the Detroit schools.

In April 1966, black students at Northern High walked out of class to protest the poor education offered at the school following a decision by school principal Albert Carty not to allow publication of an editorial in the school newspaper. The editorial, written by honors student Charles Colding, criticized the school’s failure to adequately prepare students for college. Colding pointed out the inadequacies of other black schools and asked if the Board operated the schools “on the principle that Negroes aren’t as capable as whites, so why bother with them?”\(^{15}\)

Responding to the walkout, the school system canceled classes on April 8, the final day before Easter Break. Although the Board convened a meeting of students, faculty, parents, and community leaders on April 19 to discuss the situation, students continued boycotting classes. On April 21, a freedom school for boycotting students opened at St. Joseph’s Church. Attendance proved high enough that organizers mobilized two additional churches to provide needed space. On April 22, while 964 students attended their regular classes, over 1,000 attended the freedom schools. The boycott clearly split black Detroiters. While prominent black nationalist leader Reverend Albert Cleage called for a city-wide walkout of other schools for April 27, the NAACP and the school system urged the students to return. The boycott officially

\(^{15}\) Fine, *Violence in the Model City*, 53.
ended on April 26, as the students themselves voted to return to Northern after receiving promises from the Board that Carty would be removed as principal and that students and their parents would be participants in an investigation of the school’s quality.\textsuperscript{16}

The resolution of the Northern crisis not only contributed to a growing divide between white and black Detroitors, but to one among black Detroitors favoring black separatism and those supporting integration. This divide grew further with the publication of a \textit{Detroit Free Press} article in September 1966. Written by a reporter who spent seven days as a substitute teacher in an inner-city junior high school, the article focused on apathetic teachers. “Most of these kids are just dumb,” the paper reported one teacher saying; “you’ll never teach them anything.”\textsuperscript{17} Such attitudes combined with the poor performance of predominantly black schools gave credence to black demands for increased black control over black schools. Cleage’s new organization, the Inner City Parents Council (ICPC), suggested that the inferior education in black schools could be remedied through stressing black history in instruction and focusing on black culture in writing and the arts in order to instill a sense of self-pride in students. In the ICPC’s June 1967 report on the conditions of black education in Detroit, Cleage argued that the “ultimate threat to the Afro-American racial pride and self-image is the preponderance of white administrators and teachers in inner city schools” who serve “as white power symbols.” Cleage’s remedy entailed a dramatic increase in the number of black teachers and administrators in black schools.\textsuperscript{18}

The IICPC’s advocacy of black nationalism placed Cleage at odds with the Board of Education and the Board’s black members rejected the Inner City Parents Council’s proposals.

\textsuperscript{16} Fine, \textit{Violence in the Model City}, 52-55; Jeffrey Mirel, \textit{Rise and Fall}, 301.
\textsuperscript{17} Fine, \textit{Violence in the Model City}, 45.
Speaking in response to the Council on behalf of the entire Board, Robinson stated that “we reject bigotry whether it be white or black.” Robinson added that he personally rejected any implication “that all Negro schools such as those in the South are superior to Detroit schools.”

By 1968, however, Cleage and other community control advocates succeeded in getting a representative of the community control position, black attorney Andrew Perdue, elected to the Board of Education.

Black nationalist proposals reached the Michigan Legislature in 1968. James Del Rio, a black Democrat from Detroit, introduced a bill that sought to divide the Detroit school system into sixteen autonomous school systems. Though Del Rio’s bill received Cleage’s support, it encountered significant opposition and was defeated in a floor vote. Simultaneously, liberal white Democrat Jack Faxon proposed a more limited version of decentralization that divided the school system into regions but maintained the existing centralized school board. Faxon’s measure floundered in committee, but found new life in April 1969 when black state Senator Coleman Young introduced a revised version of the bill. Demands for community control had continued mounting to the point that the Board of Education indicated cautious support for some measure of school decentralization. Young’s measure easily passed in both the House and the Senate. Only five votes in the Senate went against Young’s bill, while the House passed it by a vote of 83 to 18. Governor William Milliken signed the measure, known as Public Act 244, into law on August 11, 1969. Though the Act appeared to be a triumph of black power and beneficial for white advocates of segregated neighborhood schools, it ironically marked the first

---

19 Mirel, *Rise and Fall*, 309.
20 William R. Grant, “Community Control vs. School Integration – the Case of Detroit,” *The Public Interest* 24 (Summer 1971), 68.
21 Ibid., 67.
22 Baugh. *The Detroit School Busing Case*, 75-76.
moment that the Detroit Board grappled meaningfully with the actual integration of individual schools.

**From Community Control: An Integration Plan**

Community control proved most influential in prodding the Board of Education toward its most integrationist act to date. Though decentralization seemed to promise white areas and black areas additional control over their neighborhood schools, the Board saw in the law an unintended integrationist opportunity to reshape the pupil composition of the new districts.

Public Act 244 left the drawing of the new regional boundaries up to the Board itself. Speaking to an audience of Detroit school administrators in October 1969, Board President A. L. Zwerdling revealed that he saw this as a chance to “maximize the opportunity for an integrated experience for all public school children,” a significant departure from the legislative mandate. In fact, Zwerdling desired a much greater level of integration than the act made possible, lamenting that the legislature mandated decentralization for Detroit only. He noted that by prohibiting “crossing the boundaries into the suburbs” Public Act 244 made “effective integration most difficult,” and he called on the state to “face up to the constitutional mandate that children are entitled to equal opportunity for quality education” by “redistricting across city lines.”

Zwerdling proceeded with planning integrated decentralized regions within Detroit’s political boundaries. However, the composition of the seven-member Board posed a challenge to the integrationist project. In addition to Perdue, voters in 1968 elected conservative James A.

---

Hathaway, a white attorney who supported the original intention of the decentralization measure. Board member Patrick A. McDonald, also a white attorney, consistently opposed Zwerdling’s integrationist programs and could be counted on to continue doing so. Ordinarily, that would leave four votes in favor and up to three against, including Perdue. But in early 1970 integrationist Remus Robinson was battling cancer and confined to his hospital bed. With Robinson unable to vote on Zwerdling’s boundary plan, Zwerdling needed to look elsewhere for allies to avoid a deadlocked vote.24

Unexpectedly, Zwerdling found an ally in community control advocate Perdue. Most surprisingly, Perdue’s support hinged on Zwerdling strengthening his integration proposal. Zwerdling’s initial decentralization plan entailed simply producing integrated regions, leaving unchanged individual school attendance boundaries. Perdue argued that integrated regions did not equal integrated schools and made it clear that he would only support Zwerdling’s plan if it changed actual attendance boundaries. Anything less than this, argued Perdue, marked “smokescreen” integration. Absent such a change, Perdue would support the separate black and white schools that community control seemed to promise.25 Whether the final plan was integrationist or separatist, the tactically flexible Perdue simply wanted better schools.

Zwerdling complied with Perdue’s request for physical integration, producing a final plan that altered feeder patterns at eleven of the city’s twenty-two high schools and sent roughly 9,000 students to schools other than the one they currently attended. On April 7, 1970, the Board voted four to two to adopt Zwerdling’s plan, with Robinson providing an additional letter of support.26 What became known as the April 7 Plan marked the first time that the integrationist board

---

24 Grant, “Community Control vs. School Integration,” 70-71.
25 Ibid., 71.
changed individual school feeder patterns to integrate. Ironically, this firmly integrationist plan resulted from the community control legislation and an elected Board of Education representative made possible by growing black dissatisfaction with the limits of liberal integrationism. Without Public Act 244, Deputy Superintendent Johnson argued, the Board might not have moved toward boundary changes: “It was the law that started Board members thinking on this issue and gave them a deadline.”

The Board passed the April 7 Plan following a divisive public meeting that attracted hundreds to the Schools Center Building. Outside the building’s auditorium, a closed-circuit television system was set up for the overflow crowd that could not fit inside. The Board invited citizens’ comments and heard from thirty people, most of whom firmly opposed the measure. Although the Board held nine public meetings concerning boundary changes prior to April 7, none drew the rancor of this meeting. Board member Patrick McDonald helped attract the overflow crowd, having leaked the Board’s integration plan to the press days before. On April 5, both major daily newspapers carried news of the plan on their front pages and informed readers of the upcoming meeting.

Perdue received the lion’s share of black opposition. John Webster, speaking on behalf of Reverend Cleage’s church, the Shrine of the Black Madonna, the Inner City Parents Council, the Ad Hoc Committee for Community Control of Schools, and the Black Teachers’ Caucus, stated that “the black community rejects any plan that does not transfer meaningful power or self-determination to the black community.” Echoing Ellen Jackson, founder of Boston’s Operation Exodus, Webster proclaimed that “so-called integration is not only destructive of the best

28 The Boundary Plan for School Decentralization in Detroit, 7 April 1970, DPS.
29 Mirel, Rise and Fall, 340.
interests of black people, in fact it is a form of genocide from our point of view.” Addressing
the integrationist argument that white students were needed in classes to raise educational
achievement, Webster declared that integration “suggests an acceptance of the white man’s
declaration of white superiority and black inferiority.” Webster carried several statements with
him, which he left for “Mr. Perdue and other Board Members.” Though opposed to the actions of
the Board majority, Webster only addressed Perdue by name, suggesting particular feelings of
betrayal and animus resulting from Perdue’s shift from community control to integration.31

**White Backlash: The CCBE’s Recall Campaign**

The rancor from black community control advocates over the April 7 Plan paled in comparison
to the outrage of white Detroit. Many white Detroiters supported decentralization because they
thought it meant racial separatism and because it confirmed their belief that their neighborhood
choices suggested the racial composition their children’s classrooms should have. This belief led
white Detroiters to articulate an ostensible defense of neighborhood schools that rested on a
maintenance of white majority classrooms for their children. In tandem with this defense of
neighborhood schools, white Detroiters launched a grassroots backlash recall election campaign
targeting the integrationist Board members.

White opposition to the April 7 Plan manifested itself through Detroit’s longstanding
anti-integrationist neighborhood civic and homeowners’ associations. These homeowners’
associations formed to fight against housing integration and, in the 1940s, helped break Detroit’s

30 For more on Jackson, Operation Exodus, and the tactical metropolitanism of the openly discriminatory Boston
School Committee, see Chapter One.
Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (hereafter: “BVM”).
New Deal coalition through overtly racist appeals.\textsuperscript{32} Though shorn of some of the more egregious examples of vitriolic racism that characterized earlier challenges, the central aim of these neighborhood associations – preserving segregated white environments – remained the same in 1970 as in the 1940s.

White opponents of the April 7 Plan raised the issue of white flight, with many pledging to move to the suburbs to escape integration. Judy Flandorfer, a mother fearful of sending her children to Mackenzie High, promised that “my kid won’t go… I will move, I will go out to the suburbs.” Harold Ryan, representing the East Warren Avenue Businessmen’s Club argued “that people bought their real estate and their houses in the belief that their children could attend schools within an approximate area of their homes,” which he called “one of their basic civil rights in America, one of their constitutional rights.” Ryan reported that many now pledged to move and pointed out the already high rate of white flight from the city. Similarly, Henry Dodge of the Northwest Detroit Council of Civic and Consumer Associations predicted that the April 7 Plan would provide integrationist members of City Council an opportunity to construct scattered-site public housing throughout the city, long a fear of white homeowners and their associations. Such public housing could proceed, suggested Dodge, “because many people will provide instant scattered housing sites by rapidly moving out of Detroit.” Dodge predicted that within “maybe four or five years the whole City of Detroit will have completely black schools.”\textsuperscript{33}

Zwerdling knew the integration plan would provoke massive opposition. He cast the Board as boldly fighting for integration “at a time when the President of the United States and


\textsuperscript{33} Board of Education, Regular Meeting, 7 April 1970, box: 1, folder: 45, BVM.
most others are saying we should give up on integration. But the school board in the nation’s largest school system is going ahead and saying ‘nuts’ to all of them.” “Most others” in the nation and in Detroit did oppose school integration. A March 1970 Harris poll asked 1,600 respondents if “there was no more busing of school children than there is now in each community and in each state – would you favor or oppose using busing to achieve integrated schools?” Seventy-three percent said they would oppose busing to integrate even if it meant no additional busing, indicating that most opposition to busing was never about the method of transport, but rather about integration and attitudes toward black civil rights.

The sizeable white opposition posed a significant challenge not only to the Board’s actions, but to its composition. Speaking at the Board’s April 7 meeting, Lucille Zacharias, President of the Osborn Community Council of Northeast Detroit, predicted the coalescing of white opposition. Zacharias told the Board that its opponents would “have one general meeting… to put things into motion” and pledged that the Board “will hear from us in the near future.” One day previously, such a meeting had occurred with Zacharias in attendance. Concluding a day when parents at four junior high schools kept their students home to protest integration, white parents met to form the Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE). As historian David Riddle demonstrates, the support and organizational apparatus of Detroit’s anti-integrationist white homeowners’ associations aided the CCBE’s recruitment efforts.

Recognizing a political opportunity, on April 7, upon leaving the rancorous Board of Education meeting, Board member Patrick McDonald not only positioned himself as a champion of the

---

36 Board of Education, Regular Meeting, 7 April 1970, BVM.
37 David Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 11.
parents’ cause, but suggested that those unhappy with the integrationists on the Board of Education should pay attention to the state’s recall law. The CCBE heeded McDonald’s suggestion and on May 4 announced a bid to recall the four members of the Board who voted in favor of the April 7 Plan.\textsuperscript{38}

The recall campaign required a Herculean effort on the part of the CCBE. To get its measure on the August ballot, the CCBE needed to collect a daunting 114,000 signatures – the equivalent of one-fourth of the total local votes for governor as per the state’s recall law. Extensive opposition to the Board’s modest integration proposal allowed the CCBE to quickly achieve this number. On June 15, the CCBE filed petitions bearing 130,000 signatures. It next had to overcome a series of legal challenges that threatened to keep its measure off the ballot. Only three days before the August 4 election, the State Court of Appeals overruled a lower court decision and allowed the recall to proceed.\textsuperscript{39}

On election day, over 60 percent of voters cast ballots to remove Board Members Zwerdling, Perdue, Peter Grylls, and Darneau Stewart from office. Voting results revealed a stark racial divide. White areas of the city voted in favor of the recall by a ratio as high as six to one, while black neighborhoods recorded similar margins against.\textsuperscript{40} Although Cleage and others opposed the April 7 Plan, a majority of black voters proved unwilling to remove the integrationists from office. Of major importance to the result was the low voter turnout. With the election occurring in August, only 23 percent of eligible voters turned out, with higher percentages in white neighborhoods than black ones.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38} Grant, “Community Control vs. School Integration,” 72.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Grant, “Community Control vs. School Integration,” 75.
The November election produced a white-dominated school governing structure. Black representatives made up the majority on only two of the eight new regional boards despite predictions that white and black Detroiters would control four boards apiece. Three regions did not have a single black representative. The new thirteen-member central board counted six anti-integrationist whites and only three African Americans. Although white segregationists fared well, a black separatist slate headed by Reverend Cleage performed poorly.42

The April 7 Plan also found itself under attack in the state capitol. On April 8, James Del Rio and white Detroit conservative E. D. O’Brien reintroduced a bill that called for a referendum on decentralization and added an amendment requiring the Board to send every child to the school nearest their home. On April 9, the bill passed with 68 votes in favor and 31 against. Del Rio absented himself for the vote and not one of Detroit’s black representatives voted for the measure.43

In light of the overwhelming opposition to the April 7 Plan, Senator Young decided to attempt to pass new legislation that outlawed it but still allowed decentralization to proceed. Though Young publicly criticized the Board for adopting what he called “this chicken shit integration plan” and was himself largely responsible for the initial decentralization law, Young had in fact expressed his support to the Board for its April 7 Plan.44 On May 6, Young was one of several representatives to sign his name to a telegram to Superintendent Drachler that congratulated the Board “for this long awaited and needed step.” The telegram declared that racism was the motivating force behind opposition and ended with the representatives pledging to “stand united and completely opposed to any form of repealer (sic) act at this time.”45 Yet by

42 Grant, “Community Control vs. School Integration,” 76-77.
43 Ibid., 72-73; Baugh, The Detroit School Busing Case, 81.
44 Grant, “Community Control vs. School Integration,” 74.
45 Telegram, Representative Jackie Vaughn III et al. to Norman Drachler, 6 May 1970, box: 7, folder: 29, DPS.
late June, the representatives who signed the telegram lined up behind Young’s measure to repeal the April 7 Plan. With Governor Milliken pledging to sign the bill only if Detroit’s entire delegation approved it, Young assured his fellow legislators that they could support the bill because any state measure that outlawed integration would likely be found invalid in court.\textsuperscript{46}

On July 7, 1970, Governor Milliken signed Public Act 48 into law. Act 48 divided “first class school districts,” of which Detroit was the only one in the state, into discrete regions with their own local boards. Act 48 mandated open enrollment, allowing white students to flee increasingly black schools, and, in what the CCBE’s recall made a redundancy, shortened the terms of Detroit’s integrationist Board members by a year.\textsuperscript{47} Though some legislators supported Act 48 with the understanding that the CCBE would call off its recall campaign if the legislation passed, the CCBE refused. CCBE Chairman Aubrey Short justified proceeding with the recall, pointing out that “a lot of people have decided they don’t like the Board of Education. If they have changed their minds, then they can vote against the recall on election day.”\textsuperscript{48} By August, few had changed their minds.

In the electoral realm, with Public Act 48, Detroit’s white voters and Michigan’s legislators codified the existence of racially separate schools. Through electoral politics, a successful challenge to school segregation was clearly impossible. There existed no mass political movement dedicated to either intra-city or metropolitan integration. Desegregation required a legal challenge.

\textit{Bradley v. Milliken}

\textsuperscript{46} Baugh, \textit{The Detroit School Busing Case}, 81.
\textsuperscript{47} Public Act 48 of 1970, 7 July 1970, box: 7, folder: 29, DPS.
\textsuperscript{48} Grant, “Community Control vs. School Integration,” 74.
Faced with the overwhelming opposition of white Detroiter to integration, the NAACP knew the only way to successfully challenge Detroit’s segregation would be through the courts. In its legal challenge, the plaintiff NAACP did not limit its evidence to Detroit’s political boundaries, choosing instead to emphasize the extent of metropolitan segregation. With the commencement of the legal challenge, metropolitan school desegregation was suddenly a real possibility despite the bipartisan opposition of a majority of Michigan’s legislators and white citizens.

The planning of the legal challenge to Detroit’s school segregation was the final act of the alliance between the old integrationist school board and the NAACP. Indicative of the integrationist Board’s close ties to the NAACP, on July 30, 1970 – five days prior to the recall election – top Board officials secretly met with NAACP lawyer Louis R. Lucas and NAACP Education Director June Shagaloff in New York City to urge the filing of a suit challenging the constitutionality of Act 48. At the meeting, Board attorney and member of the Detroit NAACP’s board George E. Bushnell pledged that the school system itself would prepare the case and undertake all legal groundwork while remaining a silent partner. The NAACP’s main contribution would be providing a lawyer and serving as the public face of the legal challenge. Bushnell’s generosity did not last long, however, as Lucas suggested naming the Detroit Board of Education as a defendant. This, Lucas pointed out, could allow the Board to achieve its desired integration without having to suffer the political consequences of appearing to have been working for it. Given the aversion of the vast majority of white Detroit voters to school integration, Lucas’s suggestion possessed merit. Bushnell, however, did not consent to the plan. After stressing the Board’s integrationist bonafides, Bushnell pointedly told Lucas that “if you sue us, I will beat your ass.” The meeting ended with an agreement that the NAACP would sue the state but not the Detroit Board. The next day, NAACP General Counsel Nathaniel R. Jones, himself absent from the meeting with the Board, announced the imminent filing of a suit against
state-imposed segregation. Days later, the CCBE’s successful recall campaign removed any NAACP concern about stepping on the Board’s toes.49

On August 18, 1970, the NAACP filed the suit known as Bradley v. Milliken, charging the State Board of Education, the state superintendent of public instruction, Governor Milliken, and the Detroit Board of Education with perpetuating de jure segregation within Detroit’s schools. Furious at the NAACP’s naming of the Detroit Board as a party defendant, Bushnell resigned from the Detroit NAACP and began preparing his defense of the school system.50 For the moment, the NAACP and the Detroit Board operated at cross-purposes.

The NAACP’s legal filing recognized that racial equality could not be achieved electorally and maintained that Act 48 was motivated by racism. It understood that Detroit’s liberal electoral coalition was dead and acknowledged the long-running aversion of white Detroiters to integrated neighborhoods. As a remedy to de jure segregation, plaintiffs sought not only an “immediate reinstatement” of the April 7 Plan but an “expeditious preparation and institution of a complete plan for desegregation of all of the Detroit public schools” and an equitable distribution of black and white faculty throughout the school system.51

At this point, only the NAACP advocated integration before the court and a metropolitan alliance did not seem to be on the horizon. The defendant Detroit Board’s response portrayed the system’s segregation as de facto rather than of its own design. The Board attempted to have it both ways, basing much of its defense off of the achievements of its integrationist predecessor while attacking the rationale behind those same actions. It argued that there existed no constitutional duty to eliminate de facto segregation, then pointed to its own record of attempting

---

50 Ibid.
51 Plaintiffs’ Memorandum Brief, August 1970, box: 1, folder: 2, BVM.
to counteract *de facto* segregation. The Board argued that its use of busing to relieve overcrowding, its policy of open enrollment, and its overturned April 7 Plan indicated an “unbroken and ongoing commitment… to promote integrated education and to equalize educational opportunities for all students in the Detroit system.” Finally, the Board suggested that the extant litigation and remedies that plaintiffs marshalled in support of their claim were inappropriate as they pertained to *de jure* segregation. The Board remained silent on the state’s rescission of the April 7 Plan, itself a clear act of *de jure* segregation.\(^{52}\)

The Board coopted black nationalist arguments to claim that “black residents in Detroit today do not perceive predominantly black schools as inherently inferior to schools having substantial white populations, but rather find such a notion demeaning and suggestive of racial inferiority.” It also attacked busing from this perspective, rationalizing that “massive transportation of pupils to achieve integration, either within the City of Detroit or within the Detroit metropolitan area, would be completely inconsistent with community control as made possible through decentralization and would prevent black people in the inner city from participating in the control of their schools.”\(^{53}\)

Although Act 48 provided cut-and-dried proof of the state acting to perpetuate segregation within Detroit’s schools, plaintiffs faced an uphill climb in court. The judge in *Bradley v. Milliken*, Stephen J. Roth, appeared less enthusiastic about integration than some of those on trial. Appointed by Democrat John F. Kennedy, Roth possessed a conservative reputation on racial matters. The judge proved sympathetic to the idea that segregated living patterns between black and white Americans were comparable to the propensity of ethnic

\(^{52}\) Memo Brief of Defendant board of Education, August 1970, box: 1, folder: 3, BVM.

\(^{53}\) Detroit Board of Education, Findings of Fact, 28 July 1971, box: 8, folder: 10, DPS.
minorities to congregate together in large industrial cities.\textsuperscript{54} According to the \textit{Saturday Review}, Roth used racial epithets in private conversation.\textsuperscript{55} Roth’s only other major trial of note was the Algiers Motel case, concerning an incident during the 1967 Detroit Riot where three white police officers were charged with murdering three black men in a motel room. A jury acquitted the officers.\textsuperscript{56}

Roth displayed his conservatism at the preliminary hearings. Pledging to move slowly, Roth told the NAACP not to “expect pushbutton relief here… I am not going to move hastily.” Roth then rejected the plaintiffs’ request for the immediate reinstatement of the April 7 Plan, reasoning that its “principle aim is to improve integration by the ‘numbers,’” and calling the plan “forced feeding.”\textsuperscript{57} Instead of the April 7 Plan, Roth ordered the adoption of a magnet school plan designed by Patrick McDonald and announced an indefinite postponement of the trial. The judge coupled this decision with a press conference in which he echoed classic segregationist arguments that any trouble over desegregation was caused by “outsiders” who needed to let Detroit “solve its own problems.”\textsuperscript{58} Unwilling to abide by the judge’s dictates, the NAACP appealed the decision to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati. Though upholding Roth’s selection of McDonald’s magnet plan, the Court of Appeals overruled Roth’s indefinite postponement of the case. Roth then set April 6, 1971 as the beginning date of the trial.\textsuperscript{59}

At trial, plaintiffs linked residential segregation and educational matters. Although the Detroit Board found itself a defendant in the case, much of the evidence plaintiffs presented

\textsuperscript{54} Dimond, \textit{Beyond Busing}, 44.
\textsuperscript{56} Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 12.
\textsuperscript{57} Wolf, \textit{Trial and Error}, 19.
\textsuperscript{59} Baugh, \textit{The Detroit School Busing Case}, 90.
concerned matters beyond its purview and outside of the city itself. Plaintiffs emphasized pervasive residential segregation throughout metropolitan Detroit. This strategy proved effective. Observers noted that Judge Roth seemed particularly moved by the testimony of black real estate salesman John Humphrey, who discussed his own experiences attempting to purchase a home in the suburbs in 1968. After Humphrey responded to a newspaper advertisement, the listing’s realtor cautioned him against purchase, claiming that the house flooded every time it rained. At another listing’s open house event, the home’s owner quoted the sale price to Humphrey as $65,000, well above the house’s actual listing price of $45,000.\footnote{Ibid., 100.} Despite open housing laws, many other black real estate salesmen noted the difficulty of finding homes in suburbs to show their black clients. Although in 1948 the Supreme Court invalidated restrictive covenants that specifically outlawed selling to African Americans, plaintiffs revealed that the Burton Abstract and Title Company employed restrictive covenants in its real estate contracts in 1969.\footnote{Serrin, “The Most Hated Man in Michigan,” Saturday Review, 26 August 1972.} Plaintiffs also addressed suburban Grosse Pointe’s notorious “point system,” in use from 1943 to 1960, which ranked potential homeowners on their desirability. This system worked to exclude African Americans and Jews from the community, affecting the racial composition of Grosse Pointe’s neighborhood schools and those of the metropolitan area.\footnote{Inter-faith Centers for Racial Justice, Inc., Motion for Leave to File a Brief Amicus Curiae Affidavit, box: 54, folder: 13, Detroit Commission on Community Relations/Human Rights Department Records, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University (hereafter: “DCCR”). For a larger discussion of Grosse Pointe’s “point system, see: Kathy Cosseboom, Gross Pointe, Michigan: Race Against Race (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1972).} Finally, plaintiffs demonstrated the role played by the Federal Housing Administration and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in advancing discriminatory mortgage policies.\footnote{Baugh, The Detroit School Busing Case, 96-97.}
Plaintiffs’ focus on residential segregation had its desired effect when on September 27, 1971, Judge Roth ruled that “[g]overnment actions and inactions at all levels, federal, state, and local, have combined with those of private organizations, such as loaning institutions and real estate associations and brokerage firms, to establish and maintain the pattern of residential segregation throughout the Detroit metropolitan area.” Roth eschewed his earlier equating of white ethnic concentration with racial segregation. Though noting that “racially unrestricted choice of black persons and economic factors may have played some part in the development of residential segregation,” he found that segregation was mainly “the result of past and present practices and customs of racial discrimination, both public and private, which have and do restrict the housing opportunities of black people.” With African Americans “located in separate and distinct areas within the city” and the fact that black citizens “are not generally to be found in the suburbs,” Roth felt that “on the record there can be no other finding.”

Roth’s most damning conclusions concerned housing, not education. He lauded the Detroit Board’s integrationist efforts. Beyond the April 7 Plan, Roth commended the Board for denying its facilities to groups that practiced racial discrimination, for opposing state legislation designed to segregate local districts, for increasing the number of black students in its apprenticeship classes, for becoming the first public agency in the state requiring affirmative action on the part of its third-party contractors, and for its pluralistic instructional material. The precedent-setting result of successfully charging an avowedly integrationist Board with segregation was not lost on the plaintiffs. An NAACP spokesperson noted that “if we can win with this evidence in Detroit, we can win in any northern city.”

---

64 Ruling on Issue of Segregation, 27 September 1971, BVM.
65 Ibid.
Roth’s ruling appeared to be significant in other ways as well. By linking housing segregation and school segregation, Roth blurred the boundary between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation. Given the role of the federal and state governments in providing for and maintaining segregation, Roth revealed that ostensibly *de facto* residential segregation actually had roots in *de jure* government action. Such intentional housing segregation cast the resulting school segregation as less than innocent, which in turn justified school desegregation as a remedy.67

The case’s most significant judicial precedent was its metropolitan focus. By placing Detroit in its metropolitan context throughout, Roth suggested the possibility of a metropolitan solution to school segregation. Roth underscored the metropolitan links by pointing to white flight from Detroit’s schools. In the 1960-61 school year, African Americans constituted 45.8 percent of the total public school population. One decade later, in 1970-71, Detroit’s black pupils numbered 63.8 percent of the total enrollment. Noting this rate of growth, Roth predicted a virtually 100 percent black enrollment by the 1992 school year. No such growth in black student population was noted for suburban systems.68

Metropolitan spatial inequality in concert with extant white flight and the continual pledges of Detroit whites to move from the city in the face of intra-city integration suggested a need for metropolitan desegregation. One day after Roth found defendants guilty of *de jure* segregation, the front page of the *Detroit Free Press* noted it was possible that Roth could order up to 85 suburban school systems in the tri-county area to participate in a metropolitan integration plan, though Roth had yet to make such a decision.69 By October, however, Roth ordered the State Board of Education to prepare an integration plan that included suburban

---

68 Ruling on Issue of Segregation, 27 September 1971, BVM.
systems. Though he also ordered the Detroit Board to produce a plan for intra-city desegregation, Roth revealed a preference for the metropolitan approach when, from the bench, he claimed to have “serious reservations about a plan of integration which includes only Detroit.”  

While the NAACP’s mountain of regional evidence led to Roth’s awareness of metropolitan segregation, Roth’s nascent metropolitanism ultimately bore the imprint of a most surprising source – the reactionary CCBE.

The Courtroom Transformation of the CCBE

Roth’s turn toward metropolitanism echoed a similar transformation of the CCBE, which transitioned from an avowed anti-integrationist organization into Detroit’s most vociferous advocate of metropolitan integration. In contrast with Roth’s shift, however, the CCBE’s transformation was a change of tactics, not a change of heart. As was the case with the Boston School Committee, the CCBE’s metropolitanism grew out of its reactionary racism, not in spite of it. The CCBE’s opposition to the April 7 Plan resulted from members’ desires to maintain white majorities in their children’s schools. But when faced with the NAACP’s clear evidence of segregation in Detroit and its suburbs, CCBE members realized that Roth would likely order the integration of Detroit’s schools, and they understood that a much larger integration area, one reaching beyond the confines of the central city into the predominantly white suburbs, would mean that white children would still attend predominantly white schools. With stunning speed, the CCBE shifted into a courtroom advocate of metropolitan integration. Although the CCBE’s corporate purpose was to “preserve the neighborhood school,” this was incompatible with its

newfound metropolitanism. The CCBE’s true purpose, that of maintaining white majority classrooms for white children, remained its animating focus.

The CCBE first entered the case adhering to its defense of residential segregation in the guise of neighborhood schools and homeowners’ rights. Its successful August 1970 Motion to Intervene in *Bradley v. Milliken* argued that students “have a constitutional right under the Fourteenth Amendment to attend the school nearest their home without the necessity that this school be racially balanced in accordance with the demands of the plaintiffs.” Claiming not to be propelled by racial animus, the CCBE articulated a defense of neighborhood schools and denied that its recall campaign “was racially motivated.” It defended this claim by pointing to the existence of Detroit’s Open Housing Ordinance, stating that black Detroiter resided “in varying degrees of numbers and density throughout the City,” and by asserting that black voters “in large numbers” approved the recall effort. As to these latter claims, it provided no numerical evidence.

Less than a year after petitioning to intervene in the case, on July 16, 1971, the CCBE filed a motion to join all eighty-six independent school systems of the tri-county area as parties defendant in the case. This was not an unexpected development. The CCBE had already been the first party to raise metropolitanism in court three weeks into the trial phase in April 1971 and it did so because it realized that Detroit’s schools would be found *de jure* segregated and

---

71 Motion to Intervene as Defendant in a Class Action on the Basis of Common Question in Law and Fact, August 1970, box: 3, folder: 8, BVM.
72 As CCBE lawyer Alexander Ritchie recounted to historian David Riddle, CCBE members responded favorably to the possibility of metropolitan desegregation rather than integration limited to the city alone with “We’ll be in the majority, so why not?” See: Riddle, “The Rise of the Reagan Democrats,” 199.
73 Ibid.
74 Answer to Complaint by Intervening Defendants, August 1970, box: 3, folder: 8, BVM.
believed that intra-city desegregation would provoke further white flight and exacerbate segregation.\textsuperscript{76}

More than any other person, lawyer Alexander J. Ritchie turned the CCBE into a metropolitan advocate. Ritchie claimed to have undergone a genuine transformation in outlook during \textit{Bradley v. Milliken}, believing that integration was desirable but that intra-city busing would affect only the urban working class. However, Ritchie did not see a similar transformation in the CCBE members he represented. Discussing how he helped the CCBE change course with historian David Riddle, Ritchie recalled that he “had a special meeting with the CCBE and I told them, ‘This case is going down the tubes! You can’t win’… So I said, ‘Well, think about it. Your kids are going to go to school, and they’re going to be bused, whether you like it or not… Now do you want your kids to go to school where they’re the minority in a basically black school system, or do you want them to go to school where you’re still the majority?’”\textsuperscript{77} Ritchie reasoned that CCBE members would support integration if it affected the metropolitan area equally and maintained white majorities in their children’s schools. In October 1971, Ritchie proposed incorporating sixty suburban school districts in a metropolitan busing remedy that would produce a 60 percent white enrollment. Others wanted a whiter student body. CCBE Chairman Aubrey Short presented a plan to the \textit{Detroit Free Press} that involved eighty-five suburban school districts and called for a 79 percent white student population.\textsuperscript{78}

Short justified metropolitanism through explicit class-based arguments and by pointing to white flight, echoing points made by members against the April 7 Plan. Short asserted that “the imposition of a plan of relief only on Detroit would result in an ever increasing exodus of

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{76} Wolf, \textit{Trial and Error}, 74-75; Riddle, “The Rise of the Reagan Democrats,” 197-198.
\item\textsuperscript{77} Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 13-14.
\end{footnotes}
families here” and “would only increase polarization of the races.” Additionally, Short drew on academic research, such as the work of sociologist James Coleman, to argue that Detroit needed socioeconomic integration, not merely racial integration. Pointing out discrepancies in wealth between the central city and its surrounding suburbs, Short asserted that Detroit was “taxed to the limit now” and did not “have the number of children of middle-class socioeconomic level to remedy this situation.” Cognizant that metropolitanism meant attacking suburban sovereignty, Short rhetorically asked “what gives people the right to erect artifacts like school boundaries and hide behind them?”

Short failed to justify the CCBE’s transformation as being in line with its official rationale for existing – the maintenance of neighborhood schools. According to Short, the defense of the neighborhood school was never motivated by race, but rather by the “safety of the children.” Short implausibly claimed that the modest April 7 Plan would mean that his daughter “would have to take three buses, then walk a half-mile to school through a neighborhood I wouldn’t walk through at night.” Though Short still professed to be an advocate of neighborhood schools, the group’s metropolitanism portended a massive busing scheme that would involve much more than busing to an adjacent school. Rides would be much longer and children would be farther from their neighborhoods. Clearly uncomfortable advocating for civil rights, Short, a General Motors worker and union member, excelled in using the mantle of class to blast suburbanites who now opposed the CCBE. Noting that much past integrationist support had come from the suburbs, Short linked class and residence when he complained of “limousine liberals… telling Detroit how to clean its linen” from their “white enclaves.”

80 Speaking to the Detroit Free Press, Short stated awkwardly that “the people of Detroit should not be asked to bear the burden of… let’s say, the problem… alone.” Ibid.
81 Ibid.
Because metropolitanism did not require a genuine shift in outlook, CCBE members were as free as suburbanites to fight against integration politically, by voting for politicians demanding an anti-busing amendment to the U.S. Constitution and supporting segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace’s 1972 campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination. Outside of the courtroom, white urbanites and suburbanites had much in common. A May 1972 survey on busing in the Detroit metropolitan area found that only 5 percent of suburban whites and 6 percent of Detroit whites agreed that “large-scale busing across county lines to achieve racial integration through the metropolitan area” provided benefits. That summer, George Wallace won the state’s Democratic Primary with 50 percent of the statewide vote while campaigning on an anti-busing platform. Though Wallace proved anathema to black voters, he nevertheless won in Detroit thanks to extensive white support. Only in the courtroom did residence clearly divide white urbanites and suburbanites and potentially unite black and white Detroiters. The CCBE’s metropolitanism would only succeed in court because it vanished outside the courthouse.

Outside of the courtroom, Short sought awkwardly to cultivate anti-integrationist suburban support, telling a suburban newspaper in July 1971 that if suburbanites “want to help us fight the NAACP busing plan… they can help with support, not by lulling the people to think we are a bunch of liberals.” Yet the NAACP and other “liberals” had yet to propose a metropolitan solution in court; as of that month, only the CCBE took this step. The only thing dividing anti-

---

82 For a discussion of metropolitan anti-busing politics in Southeastern Michigan, see Chapter Five.
85 Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 15n.
integrationist urbanites from their suburban counterparts was the divergent tactics suggested by the municipal boundary.

On October 19, 1971, suburban Macomb County residents held a meeting at Sterling Heights High School to discuss the case. In addition to prominent suburban antibusers, organizers invited Ritchie. Ritchie told the audience that “I think you realize you wouldn’t be in opposition on the other side of Eight Mile Road.” He cited the plaintiffs’ expert testimony that “a black child cannot be properly motivated in a predominately black school… Every school district must have blacks but maintain a substantial white majority.” Given Detroit’s majority black student population, Ritchie used the arguments of the NAACP’s witnesses to tell the suburban audience that integration required the suburbs. Suburban antibusers tried to distance themselves from Ritchie’s academic rationale. Philip Lee, chairman of the suburban antibusing group Save Our Children (SOC), told the audience that “misery likes company, so white Detroiters drag us into it” and suggested that suburbanites “don’t owe the blacks a thing.” The audience sided with Lee. At the end of the meeting, Ritchie required a police escort to his car.86

In drawing attention to the demographic disparity between Detroit and its suburbs, the CCBE was not telling suburbanites anything they did not already know. Those who commuted into the city received daily evidence of the paucity of suburban black residents and the heavy concentration of African Americans in the central city. Just one month prior to the Sterling Heights meeting, in September 1971 the Detroit Free Press ran a series of articles highlighting the lack of African Americans in Detroit’s suburbs. The paper reported that the percentage of African Americans residing in those suburbs declined in the preceding decade, meaning that the metropolis had grown more segregated. Constituting 3.8 percent of all suburban residents in

86 Ibid., 28-29.
1960, African Americans numbered only 3.6 percent by 1970. This small percentage was not evenly distributed throughout the suburbs. African Americans had long resided in older areas such as Inkster, Pontiac, River Rouge, and the impoverished Royal Oak Township. Newer, more affluent suburbs did not have many black residents. Wealthy Birmingham, for example, housed 26,048 whites, but only eighteen African Americans.  

Racism, class prejudice, and exclusionary zoning laws worked to keep many black people out of the suburbs. In September 1969, residents in suburban Livonia adopted an anti-apartment zoning law by a three-to-one voting majority. By requiring only single-family houses, Livonia excluded low-income residents. Given the higher instance of black poverty, Livonia’s ordinance disproportionally affected African American homeseekers. Though Livonia’s planning director, John Nagy, claimed that the ordinance was not designed specifically to keep out African Americans he conceded that “some of those who voted for the ordinance probably felt that way.” Livonia was home to ample working-class employment in its Cadillac, Ford, and Chevrolet auto plants, but only forty-four of its 111,000 residents were black. Similar ratios existed throughout the suburbs. Combined, the working-class communities of Warren, Livonia, and Dearborn – Detroit’s three largest suburbs – housed nearly 400,000 residents, just 186 of whom were black. Similarly, wealthier Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham, Southfield, Farmington, and the five Grosse Pointe communities totaled a population of 275,000, of whom only 261 were black. Some suburbs had never experienced black residency. Even in 1980, Farmington had yet to have

a single black resident.\textsuperscript{91} All of these communities stood in stark contrast to Detroit and its majority black schools.

By January 1972 the CCBE voluntarily submitted a metropolitan remedy to the court that involved 99 percent of the metropolitan area’s black public school students and 86 percent of its white students. The CCBE’s plan covered as much of the metropolitan area as feasible in order to avoid creating refuges for parents who wished to remain in the area but avoid integration. While 14 percent of the region’s white students would avoid the desegregation mandate, they lived in communities deemed sufficiently rural so as not to provide a haven for fleeing white families.\textsuperscript{92}

The CCBE’s metropolitan plan bore the imprint of educational professionals. At Ritchie’s urging, Dr. Richard Morshead, a member of Detroit’s Region Seven Board of Education and a faculty member at the University of Michigan’s Dearborn Campus, led a team of specialists that formulated the CCBE’s metropolitan proposal. Morshead’s team included several of his academic colleagues as well as representatives from the Detroit Public Schools.\textsuperscript{93} This group had little sympathy for the CCBE’s ideology. In a letter to Ritchie that accompanied the plan, Morshead wrote that “it should be clearly understood, Mr. Ritchie, that in submitting this document to you, its authors are not necessarily endorsing any of the educational or political views, other than a commitment to metropolitan school desegregation, which might be held by your clients.”\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{92} Transcript, Remedy Proceedings, Metropolitan Plan, Book I, 28 March 1972, box: 7, folder: 16, BVM.
\textsuperscript{93} Others in the group included Dr. Freeman A. Flynn, of Detroit Publications and the Detroit Board of Education’s Intergroup Relations task force; Prof. Cloyzelle Jones of the University of Michigan, Prof. Bernard Klein of the University of Michigan Dearborn and an ex-comptroller of the City of Detroit, Detroit Board of Education member Donald J. Krebs, Prof. Robert B. Smock of the University of Michigan, Stanley Webb of the Detroit Public Schools, and Robert Torrie, Morshead’s administrative assistant.
\textsuperscript{94} Letter, Richard Morshead et al. to Alexander Ritchie, 25 January 1972, box: 2, folder: 1, BVM.
permanent and meaningful integration. In contrast, the CCBE remained motivated by a desire to ensure white majority schools. But as was often the case with metropolitanism, divergent motivations nevertheless produced similar results.

**Metropolitan Alliance**

The CCBE’s metropolitanism would have been but a curious footnote had other parties in the case not accepted its arguments. In the months that followed the CCBE’s metropolitan shift, both the Detroit Board of Education and the NAACP began pushing for metropolitan solutions, leaving the state defendants as the only party arguing in favor of suburban sovereignty. In the case’s remedial proceedings, echoes of a New Deal-type alliance between urban working-class whites and African Americans quickly emerged. In the courtroom, if not in the voting booth, the attachments of residence trumped those of race.

The newly conservative Detroit Board of Education echoed the CCBE’s transformation, but without its rapidity. While the CCBE began advocating metropolitanism in the summer of 1971, the Board continued its purge of integrationists. Its most notable early success had been the resignation of Superintendent Norman Drachler. In November 1971, the Board forced the resignation of its lawyer, George Bushnell. Though Bushnell had been the subject of the new Board’s criticism for a while, the revelation of the secret New York meeting that launched *Bradley v. Milliken* proved his undoing. Bushnell’s forced resignation occurred at a particularly difficult time in the case’s litigation, as in four weeks the Board would have to present an intra-city desegregation plan in accordance with Judge Roth’s orders.95

Bushnell’s resignation occurred while a significant power struggle played out behind the scenes. On September 22, 1971, the Detroit Board prepared a possible introductory statement for its December 3 submission of an intra-city desegregation plan. This document echoed CCBE arguments on the necessity of metropolitanism to combat white flight and allow for meaningful socioeconomic integration. It also drew on the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, created partially in response to Detroit’s 1967 riot, that spoke of the increasing polarization of the United States into two societies, one white and the other black. Noting that this “white society resides largely in the suburbs,” the Board’s statement argued that “any desegregation plan which does not involve the larger metropolitan community must be seen as temporary and as insufficient in solving the basic problem.” In short, this statement argued against the very solution the Board was legally required to produce.

Ironically, it was Detroit’s regional school boards, the product of the community-control school decentralization measure, that pushed most insistently for metropolitanism. Following two days of meetings on November 29 and 30 between the regional boards and their citywide counterpart, regional board members voted sixteen to five to demand the submission of a metropolitan plan to Judge Roth, despite the opposition of the central board which favored voluntary remedies alone. Days later, the Board submitted three plans for school desegregation to Judge Roth. Of the three plans, the Board made its request for metropolitan desegregation its

---

97 Detroit Board of Education, Possible Introductory Statement for December 3 Report to Judge Roth, 22 September 1971, box: 51, folder: 24, DCCR.
first priority. Having only decided to submit the plan days before, the Board was unable to provide details concerning the number of students or suburban school systems involved.\(^99\)

In favoring a metropolitan solution, the conservative Board now agreed with former Superintendent Norman Drachler, whom it recently chased out of office.\(^100\) On June 28, while the Board was arguing against a finding of *de jure* segregation, Drachler provided *de bene esse* testimony that argued that because “the metropolitan area can’t survive if the central city is allowed to deteriorate or decay… metropolitanism will have to be an answer.” The Board’s newfound metropolitanism far outdid Drachler’s, however. Whereas Drachler proposed educational parks along Detroit’s borders to attract urban and suburban students, the Board urged the wholesale inclusion of multiple sovereign suburban school systems.\(^101\)

Given that he had ordered the Detroit Board to produce a workable program of intra-city desegregation regardless of the future possibility of a metropolitan solution, Judge Roth gave the Board’s metropolitan submission a frosty reception. NAACP attorney Louis R. Lucas also criticized the Board for the same reason.\(^102\) Though the NAACP was not averse to a metropolitan solution, it feared an outcome ruling a metropolitan solution impermissible. With the CCBE essentially arguing for metropolitan integration or nothing at all and the Detroit Board’s milquetoast other options appearing close to this position, the NAACP needed to ensure that in the absence of a metropolitan plan integration would still occur.


\(^100\) This is a striking parallel with Philadelphia’s conservative Rizzo Board adopting the arguments of its integrationist predecessor. See Chapter Three.


In contrast to the CCBE and the Detroit Board, the State Board – the only defendant ordered to develop a metropolitan plan – argued against a metropolitan solution, portraying it as an antidemocratic affront to non-segregated suburban districts. In lieu of submitting a single metropolitan plan, as ordered, the state defendants submitted six plans without recommendation. Of the six plans, only five involved the movement of students. Plan One allowed for minority student populations of as high as 75 percent so long as the school’s “educational assessment measures are up to state norms.” Plan Two provided for metropolitan integration, but it only sent black students to the suburbs and allowed all white students to remain in their schools. Plan Four provided for metropolitan magnet schools, while Plan Five proposed a “neighborhood school based metropolitan plan.” Under this plan, students would be bused “at least on the average of twice a week to a school having a racial majority different from his or her own school.” With a home-based teacher accompanying students to the receiving school, little educational integration could take place under this plan. Whereas the preceding plans did propose some movement of students, Plan Six revealed an overriding opposition to metropolitan integration. Little more than an accumulation of verbiage, Plan Six’s “essence” was its recommendation “that courts evaluate all proposals for school desegregation at least partly on the basis of the effect they can be expected to have on the performance of black pupils.” Implicit was the false suggestion that other plans did not concern themselves with black education. With no suggestions on the physical integration of pupils, Plan Six spoke in clear opposition to desegregation. State Board Member Marilyn Jean Kelly noted that this plan “is no plan at all… it is an anti-plan.”

---

103 A Summary of Six Plans to Achieve Racial Desegregation in Public Schools of the Detroit Metropolitan Area, February 1972, box: 2, folder: 3, BVM.
104 Introductory Statement to Metropolitan Desegregation Plans, February 1972, BVM.
Kelly only saw one plan that “could conceivably be said to be responsive to the Judge’s Order,” and she urged her colleagues to recommend it to Roth. Plan Three proposed incorporating thirty-six school districts in its initial operating zone (IOZ), with provisions for incorporating the metropolitan area’s remaining fifty if needed. Aiming for a total student population of 65 percent white and 35 percent black, the plan entailed the creation of six regional districts and the elimination of thirty-six extant elected boards. The other fifty districts would remain, but would no longer have the power to allocate funds.

This state plan was insufficiently metropolitan, according to the Detroit Board. Particularly objectionable was the concept of an IOZ, which could perpetuate segregation. Instead of providing for full integration, the IOZ constituted “an arbitrary line” where “desegregation efforts in the community are to cease.” The Detroit Board found it galling that the IOZ excluded several middle and upper-middle class suburbs from desegregation. With areas such as Birmingham-Bloomfield, Troy, Rochester, North Warren, Utica, West Bloomfield, Farmington, and Livonia excluded from the IOZ, a significant number of students of high socioeconomic status would not be included in remedying Detroit’s segregation.

With the CCBE and the Detroit Board both arguing for metropolitanism, the plaintiff NAACP’s response possessed much power to shape the proceedings. At the outset of the court’s hearings on metropolitan remedies, Judge Roth requested that each party provide a brief on the permissibility of metropolitan solutions. The NAACP’s brief first noted that its preexisting plan for intra-city segregation “would be constitutionally adequate if it were legally permissible or

105 A Summary of Six Plans to Achieve Racial Desegregation in Public Schools of the Detroit Metropolitan Area, February 1972, BVM.
106 Transcripts, Remedy, Metropplans, Book I, 29 March 1972, box: 7, folder: 17, BVM.
107 Objections of the Board of Education for the City of Detroit and Other Defendants to the Metropolitan Plan Submitted by the State of Michigan and by way of an Alternative, a Submission Herein by Said Board of a Metropolitan Detroit Area Integration Plan, March 1972, box: 1, folder: 48, BVM.
practically sensible to constrain the operation of a plan to Detroit proper.” However, the NAACP chose to champion metropolitanism because an intra-city plan “would not… accomplish now the greatest possible degree of actual desegregation.” The NAACP concurred with the Detroit Board’s arguments that an intra-city plan would result in the maintenance of racially identifiable schools within the larger metropolitan context and, with the likelihood of white flight, lead to resegregation. In addition to these arguments, the NAACP provided new evidence drawn from a 1959 school boundary guidebook indicating that black children from the suburban Carver School District were assigned to black schools in the city because no white schools in either the city or its suburbs would take the children. “These black children did not trip (nor, subsequently did their buses pause) on the school district line,” the NAACP told the court.

An astonishing alliance emerged in the metropolitan remedial hearings in *Bradley v. Milliken*, as the plaintiff NAACP, the defendant Detroit Board of Education, and the intervening CCBE, an explicitly anti-integrationist parents’ organization, argued the same thing: that any school desegregation plan for Detroit should not be limited to the central city alone. That each group arrived at this argument differently is a testament to how divergent motivations – be they a quest for racial justice or a racist drive to maintain majority-white schools – could nevertheless lead to similar results. The metropolitan plans advanced by the CCBE and NAACP proved comparable. The CCBE’s proposal included 62 school districts and 777,000 students, of whom 25.4 percent were minority; the NAACP’s plan, which used the CCBE and Detroit Board proposals as its starting point, involved 54 school districts, 780,000 pupils, and a 25.3 percent

---

109 Brief of Defendant School Board for the School District of the City of Detroit and other Defendants in Support of Metropolitan Plan Based on Testimony Elicited at Hearing on Detroit-Only Plan, box: 1, folder: 24, BVM.
110 Plaintiffs’ Memorandum of Law on Metropolitan School Desegregation, March 1972, box: 1, folder: 28, BVM.
black student population. So similar were the CCBE and NAACP plans that Judge Roth called their geographic coverage “roughly approximate.”

**Metropolitanism Ordered**

The metropolitanists succeeded when Judge Roth delivered his desegregation order on June 21, 1972. Reasoning that “school district lines are simply matters of political convenience and may not be used to deny constitutional rights,” Roth asserted that “the Court must look beyond the limits of the Detroit school district for a solution to the problem of segregation in the Detroit public schools.” Though Roth had taken no arguments concerning whether the individual suburban school districts had committed acts of *de jure* segregation, the judge reasoned that because school districts were creations of the state and the state had committed a constitutional violation, the court possessed the duty to move beyond district lines. To support joining local school districts, Roth noted that local governments in southeastern Michigan had long banded together to confront common issues, pointing to recreational authorities, the metropolitan sewage system, the regional transit authority, and the voluntary Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments as examples.

The CCBE’s courtroom transformation from defender of segregation to advocate of metropolitan integration played the most significant role in Roth’s decision. Roth reasoned that the CCBE’s metropolitanism, combined with the Detroit Board’s eventual embrace of metropolitan solutions, meant that “the parties most directly involved with the lot of the students in the Detroit school system” saw a common need for inter-district solutions. Curiously, Roth

---

111 Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law in Support of Ruling on Desegregation Area and Development of Plan, box: 9, folder: 17, BVM.
112 Ibid. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) grew increasingly controversial because it raised the specter of further metropolitanism.
neglected to mention that the plaintiff NAACP also represented aggrieved parents involved in the school system.113 Ritchie’s courtroom arguments, more than anything else, prodded the judge toward metropolitanism. Ritchie had first raised the issue of a metropolitan remedy in court, and it was he who first asked Roth to include the suburbs in any desegregation order. The Detroit Board and the NAACP in turn followed the CCBE’s lead. Recognizing Ritchie’s influence on the litigation, NAACP counsel Paul Dimond noted that “if there hadn’t been an Alex Ritchie in this case, we would have had to invent one.”114 Ironically, the courtroom party initially most opposed to desegregation played the most decisive part in bringing Roth to issue his metropolitan desegregation order.

From July 1972 to June 1973, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals heard several appeals of aspects of Roth’s ruling. In December 1972, the Sixth Circuit first upheld the validity of metropolitan busing. On June 12, 1973, following an en banc rehearing of the case, the Sixth Circuit again upheld metropolitan busing though it returned the case to Roth on a legal technicality for another hearing on the submitted metropolitan proposals.

Ritchie greeted the Court of Appeals’ December 1972 metropolitan affirmation with great enthusiasm, telling the Free Press that “this is really stunning. The old man did it. I didn’t think they could dismantle that work of art. This is great.”115 However, the Sixth Circuit’s June 1973 decision did not provide a clear victory for metropolitanism. Though Roth’s decision relied extensively on metropolitan residential patterns to demonstrate the extent of metropolitan segregation, the Court of Appeals rejected this evidence as its basis for supporting a metropolitan ruling.116 Going forward, only the violations of school authorities would serve as the basis for

113 Ibid.
114 William Grant, “Lawyer Key Figure in Busing Plan,” Detroit Free Press, 15 June 1972.
declaring the region’s schools segregated *de jure*. Sociologist Eleanor Wolf argues that Roth’s *Bradley v. Milliken* decision involved a “wobbly superstructure,” the violations by integrationist school authorities, being placed on “a considerably firmer foundation,” the evidence of residential segregation. With its decision, the Court of Appeals removed the case’s foundation.117

While the Sixth Circuit upheld the concept of metropolitan busing, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals rejected metropolitan busing in a similar case in metropolitan Richmond, Virginia. This discrepancy ensured that the Supreme Court would hear arguments concerning metropolitan busing.118 Amidst rising national concern and suburban outrage that simultaneously declared racial innocence and acted to discriminate, *Bradley v. Milliken* was heading to the Supreme Court. At stake was the future of national metropolitan school desegregation.

**Conclusion**

In its shift from a defense of the segregated status quo to demanding metropolitan desegregation in the courtroom, the reactionary CCBE grew to function as an important agent of metropolitan reform. Its proposals, which proved decisive in Roth’s metropolitan desegregation order, were capable of both providing solutions for long-running patterns of American development that privileged predominantly white suburbs and for retarding white flight from America’s central cities. Though articulating radical metropolitan reform, CCBE members do not conform to dominant historical conceptions of the reformer, which call to mind middle class technocrats and metropolitan businesspeople. In contrast, the CCBE was comprised of working- and middle-class urbanites who identified not with the fortunes of the region as a whole but with their particular

---

turf. In Detroit’s desegregation battles, the CCBE seized on the nature of the region’s spatial inequality to act as the driving force for the solution most capable of providing lasting integration for the entire metropolis.

Racism remained the driving force of the CCBE’s politics, and its calls for integrationist reform were limited to the courtroom. This suggests lessons for reformers today, particularly the adherents of the “metropolitics” movement that seeks to unite the “unfavored three-quarters” of the metropolis in political coalitions to push for metropolitan reform.119 *Bradley v. Milliken* reminds us that the most radical challenges to spatialized inequality occurred in the legal realm where traditional political divisions could be discarded and other attachments, such as shared residence, could be privileged for tactical reasons. So long as minority residence remains overwhelmingly urban and the largely white suburban populations dwarf those of the nation’s central cities, electoral alliances dedicated to eradicating racialized spatial inequality are unlikely to emerge. Less pessimistically, the CCBE also reminds us that reformers need not be morally unblemished or of the heroic persuasion. The CCBE’s metropolitanism emerged not from a desire for racial justice, but rather from the aim of ensuring majority white public schools for the children of its members. Outside of the courtroom, CCBE members were firmly ensconced in America’s rightward shift, aiding George Wallace’s victory in the 1972 Michigan Democratic Primary and prefiguring the Reagan Democrats of the 1980 election. Despite this, the CCBE’s solutions to racialized spatial inequality found common ground with black integrationists.

Only tactics divided the CCBE’s anti-integrationists from their white suburban counterparts. While the CCBE would not vote for desegregation, it would support it as a last

---

resort in a courtroom, the only venue in which the attachments of residence could take equal billing with those of race. But the CCBE’s metropolitanism never discarded members’ commitments to race, demonstrating not only that integrationism and racism could coexist, but that urban white racism, when confronted with a legal challenge, could lead to a program of radical metropolitan desegregation. In advocating a far-reaching program of integration, the CCBE simply wanted as few black children in the public schools as possible. Metropolitan desegregation privileged white majorities in a way comforting to white urban anti-integrationists and meant a dispersal of what CCBE members saw as a problem population. When prominent black community control advocates hyperbolically equated integration with “genocide,” they were nevertheless on to something.

Despite the CCBE’s impure motivations, the NAACP accepted its metropolitan solutions because they had the potential to partially remedy racial injustice and improve black educational outcomes. Metropolitanism’s emphasis on socioeconomic status deftly linked race and class in a courtroom politics of residence capable of mitigating patterns of spatial inequality in the Detroit metropolitan area. Evidenced by the very different reasons that the NAACP and CCBE advocated metropolitan desegregation, the gulf between segregationist and integrationist could be bridged in court. Bridging this divide did not even require a shift in an individual’s underlying motivations.

By the early 1970s, in the lead-up to the Supreme Court’s Milliken decision, reactionary urban white metropolitanism was reaching its height in Detroit and manifesting in Philadelphia and Boston. In all three cities, conservative school boards were making metropolitan arguments and demanding that if they were required to integrate, that the suburbs be involved as well. That urban metropolitanism went furthest in Detroit demonstrates the decisive role of timing and structural considerations. Metropolitanism remained somewhat on the periphery in Philadelphia
because the state’s Human Relations Commission, which led that city’s desegregation fight, refused to consider metropolitan solutions. For metropolitanism to be on the table required a conventional desegregation lawsuit with a black plaintiff. Both Detroit and Boston possessed such a case, but Detroit’s case reached its remedial proceedings – where metropolitan remedies could be considered – the earliest. Whether Boston would witness a courtroom metropolitan alliance – a possibility left open by Judge Garrity’s decision in *Morgan v. Hennigan* – would ultimately depend in part upon the Supreme Court’s decision in *Milliken*. 
Chapter 5

Preserving Suburban and Sectional Distinctions: Antibusing in Detroit’s Suburbs, 1971-1974

By the time that Judge Stephen Roth found Detroit’s schools de jure segregated in September 1971, considerable antibusing sentiment was coalescing in Detroit’s suburbs. Just weeks before Roth’s verdict, students in Pontiac, an industrial suburb twenty miles north of Detroit, first rode buses to integrate local schools. Pontiac’s anti-integration protests provided ready-made arguments and the first antibusing organization for suburbanites soon facing a metropolitan busing order. When Judge Roth ordered the State Board of Education to prepare a metropolitan desegregation proposal in October 1971, Detroit’s suburbs united in opposition. This opposition intensified in May 1972 when Roth indicated that a metropolitan solution was required to remedy metropolitan Detroit’s segregation.

In fighting metropolitan integration, white suburbanites made distinctions between southern de jure segregation and the North’s supposedly de facto racial imbalance in order to claim their racial innocence. Suburbanites drew on Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which supported remedying de jure segregation, but did not require solving “racial imbalance.” With “racial imbalance” or de facto segregation understood to be the reality in the North and de jure segregation confined to the South, the Civil Rights Act, at the urging of Northern and Western representatives, codified sectional distinctions.¹ While outwardly proclaiming their racial

¹ As historians Joseph Crespino and Matthew Lassiter have argued, the erroneous de jure-de facto distinction “attributes episodes of racism and racial violence inside the South to the social and political structures of the region, while portraying similar events elsewhere as anomalous incidents that really should have happened down in Mississippi or Alabama.” See Matthew D. Lassiter and Joseph Crespino, eds, The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9. On the inconsistent treatment of the de jure-de facto distinction in school desegregation cases prior to the Milliken decision, see: Thomas J. Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North (New York: Random House, 2008), 197-198, 460-466, 477-479.
innocence in the face of an allegedly natural “racial imbalance” and reasoning that it was integrationists who made decisions based on race, suburbanites reworked the colorblind language of civil rights in order to perpetuate discrimination. Supporting politicians at all levels who fought integration and defended the segregated status quo, suburbanites furthered the state’s complicity in Michigan’s supposedly de facto “racial imbalance.”

Consensus, more than conflict, characterized suburban antibusing. Defenses of white racial privilege and residential exclusion under the guise of homeowners’ rights marked suburban responses to metropolitanism. Suburbanites elaborated the longstanding politics of suburban secession, disavowing ties to the central city and reveling in their communities’ political autonomy. Though connected to Detroit through daily processes of exchange, suburbanites positioned their communities as being in direct competition with Detroit and as safe havens from a dangerous and racially different city. In seeking to codify the segregated status quo, suburbanites participated in an ongoing city-building effort that sought to exclude those they saw as not deserving of the privileges of suburban citizenship. While fighting to preserve suburban autonomy, suburban anti-metropolitanism ironically rested upon a considerable degree of metropolitan activity. Antibusing organizations crossed municipal boundaries and affected suburbs strategized and banded together in court. For suburbanites, metropolitanism could be beneficial so long as it did not include racially distinct Detroit. Because of the region’s spatial inequality, where the vast majority of the metropolis’s African Americans resided in Detroit, this

Historian Kevin Kruse coined the term “suburban secession” to indicate the suburban desire to cut all ties with the central city in order to preserve municipal isolation. With suburban secessionist politics proving especially attractive to newly-fled suburbanites, Kruse calls the politics of suburban secession the “logical conclusion” of white flight. See Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 234.
commitment to suburban separatism functioned as a defense of segregation and white racial privilege.

Though the antibusing furor ultimately benefitted the Republican Party, suburban anti-integrationism was a bipartisan affair. Race and residence proved more indicative of stances on busing than party affiliation. Politicians with solid civil rights records, such as Republican Senator Robert Griffin and Democratic Congressman James G. O’Hara, stoked and responded to rising suburban antibusing sentiment. Though both Griffin and O’Hara supported black civil rights in the South prior to Detroit’s busing controversy, they, like many others, were unwilling to champion redistributive civil rights measures at home. When faced with the metropolitan busing order, both men endorsed an antibusing constitutional amendment.

Because suburban antibusing was bipartisan, the busing controversy wreaked havoc on the Democratic Party, splitting its multi-racial representatives and constituency. With the state Democrats first responding to Pontiac’s protests by adopting a statement that supported busing as an “imperfect and temporary mechanism” and the Democratic Party’s national platform in 1972 providing a modicum of support for busing, the Republican Party was least associated with pro-busing sentiment and benefitted accordingly. As Southeastern Michigan’s Republicans presented a more unified antibusing front, the state’s Democrats were deeply divided along racial lines and faced segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace’s divisive campaign in their 1972 Presidential Primary. In that election, Wallace won all but one Michigan county. A longer U.S. Senate campaign that year between Republican Robert Griffin and Democratic Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley revealed the extent of anti-integration sentiment in Michigan. As both candidates attempted to outdo the other in their opposition to busing, Kelley’s identification

with the Democratic Party contributed to his defeat. Both the Wallace campaign and the Senate battle between Griffin and Kelley demonstrated that extensive white support was available across the political spectrum for candidates who opposed busing and racial integration.

Consensus marked Southeastern Michigan’s desegregation conflict in another sense as well. In seeking to preserve their racial privilege, white suburbanites had much in common with Detroit’s anti-integrationist Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE). Though the CCBE grew to advocate metropolitan desegregation, it did so with the aim of preserving white majorities in area schools. White suburbanites similarly desired white majorities, but municipal boundaries and demographics suggested divergent tactics. Not needing to enlarge the desegregation area to produce white majorities, suburbanites could maintain their white classrooms by preserving local autonomy. Tactics divided urban and suburban whites in the courtroom, but in their electoral politics they remained united. Whites regardless of residence flocked to antibusing politicians of both parties and Michigan witnessed a bipartisan rightward political shift. Only in the courtroom was the politics of race met by a politics of residence.

Historical explanations examining the role of race in America’s rightward political shift are polarized between arguments emphasizing racial backlash and those claiming that suburbanites possessed a colorblind outlook. Racism figures in both accounts. Historians advancing colorblind explanations focus on the structural nature of racism rather than individual actions. Pointing to intentional processes of suburban city-building and federal policies hidden behind a narrative that portrayed spatial inequality as the inevitable outcome of free market

---

4 Historian Matthew Lassiter has called for a “political history beyond the red-blue divide.” The bipartisan antibusing politics of Southeastern Michigan reveal a rightward political shift that encompassed both parties, while still ultimately benefitting the Republicans. See Matthew Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide,” *Journal of American History* 98, No. 3 (Dec 2011): 760-764. On the burgeoning historical literature on the collapse of the “New Deal order” and the rise of the right in the late twentieth century, see the Introduction.
forces, they demonstrate the state’s complicity in perpetuating spatial discrimination. Because the hidden nature of structural discrimination was not apparent to suburbanites, colorblind accounts tend to take middle-class suburban arguments positioning suburban spatial privileges as the products of individual merit at face value. They suggest that the civil rights movement succeeded in making overt racism unpalatable to the middle class.\(^5\) In contrast, historians emphasizing racial backlash tend to focus on the white working class who, far more than the suburban middle class, were in direct competition with African Americans for jobs and housing opportunities. Drawing a line from the racial appeals of George Wallace to the Reagan administration and beyond, these historians focus on often-coded racial appeals and argue that the United States shifted to the right in defense of white racial privilege.\(^6\) While historians have been comfortable viewing the rhetoric of the white working class in coded or “dog-whistle” terms, they have been far more hesitant to interrogate middle class suburbanites in a similar fashion. In contrast to the racist working class, we are told that middle-class whites believed earnestly in their meritocratic arguments.

The arbitrary division between backlash explanations and ostensibly colorblind ones in explaining both the rise of the New Right and America’s bipartisan rightward drift is inadequate. Colorblind appeals and overt racism proved co-constitutive in moving suburban Detroiter rightward, whether within the Democratic Party or toward the Republican fold. Colorblind

---


tactics did not exclusively belong to the middle class and racism to the working class. Local citizens and their political representatives used both tactics. The white working class proved capable of making colorblind arguments, and the suburban middle class waded into the racist muck with ease. Moments of white supremacist terrorism, such as the bombing of unoccupied school buses in suburban Pontiac, made it clear that the antibusing constituency was not purely colorblind. The crafting of colorblind arguments depended, in part, on persistent efforts to whitewash overt racism. While racism was most obvious among the working class, white Michiganders of all classes supported segregationist candidates such as George Wallace. Wallace’s margins of victory were highest in working-class areas, but he still dominated metropolitan Detroit’s wealthy Oakland County. Though Wallace used “coded” appeals, no historian has ever accused him of being colorblind. Wallace voters knew what they were voting for.

While the busing controversy dominated regional politics, fueled opposition to busing nationally, and held lasting city-building implications, the fate of school integration was determined by the Supreme Court. In *Milliken v. Bradley*, the Court overlooked structural patterns of discrimination, overturned metropolitan desegregation, preserved local autonomy, and sanctioned the myth of colorblind Northern suburban racial innocence while cementing the separation of city and suburb and black from white. In short, the Court codified the arguments underlying the politics of suburban secession.

**The Pontiac Precursor**

When Judge Stephen Roth ordered metropolitan desegregation, suburban Detroiter already possessed antibusing experience. Suburban Pontiac’s busing controversy of 1971-72 provided ready-made rationales and an organization within which to mobilize against busing. In suburban
Detroit’s first fight against busing, Pontiac residents combined colorblind arguments with explicit racism. Despite claims of colorblindness, Pontiac’s antibusing political activity possessed overt ties to the politics of white supremacy, suggesting the folly of taking its colorblind rhetoric at face value.

An industrial and largely working-class city of 85,000 people, Pontiac housed three General Motors plants that provided considerable integrated employment opportunities. Its public schools educated 23,000 pupils, of whom nearly 8,000 were African American. Aside from the high school level, where large school attendance areas reached beyond segregated neighborhood boundaries, Pontiac’s student body was not integrated. White students could typically be found in the city’s northern sections; black students were most likely to reside and attend schools in Pontiac’s southern end, an area known among whites as “colored town.”

In February 1970, Judge Damon J. Keith found Pontiac’s public schools segregated. Ruling that the Pontiac Board of Education never considered racial integration as a factor in delineating school boundaries and that the construction of schools along the neighborhood school pattern intentionally perpetuated segregation, Keith ordered a busing plan which reorganized schools according to grade. Elementary schools would each contain kindergarten and three grades (either grades one through three or four through six), while the system’s junior high schools would educate only one grade each. Pontiac’s two high schools, already integrated, remained untouched by the plan.

---

8 Ibid.
Opposition to busing in Pontiac coalesced in a group first known as the Northside Action Group (NAG). NAG formed in October 1970 to protest layoffs of city policemen. The busing order led to a change in name to the National Action Group, which portended both a realization that school integration was a national issue and the national goals of the group’s founder, thirty-six-year-old mother Irene McCabe.\(^9\) NAG positioned itself as a matronly and colorblind defender of the family. A NAG pamphlet proclaimed that “a mother is a mother, no matter what her color, creed, or ethnic background. Her first concern is her child, who she wants to be near.”\(^10\) Its previous activity, such as supporting Pontiac’s policemen and fighting against pornography, advanced a socially conservative agenda.\(^11\)

Pontiac greeted integration in September 1971 with significant protest, high absenteeism, and threats of terrorism. On the first day, as NAG’s boycott of schools saw a majority of elementary students not attend their classes, fourteen Pontiac residents were arrested in desegregation protests and three bomb threats were reported at two schools. Those arrested included nine women who attempted to prevent busing by chaining themselves to the bus yard. NAG’s Norma Jean Logan, one of those arrested, pledged that “We’ll be here every day, if this is what it takes. Children are being kidnapped from their parents and sent to the south side of town where firemen won’t go unless they have police protection.”\(^12\) The second day unfolded

---


similarly, with several bus blocking incidents, twelve arrests, and a bomb threat to Pontiac Superintendent Dana B. Whitmer’s home.\footnote{13 John Oppedahl and William Schmidt, “12 arrested, Absenteeism High in Pontiac’s 2d Day of Busing,” \textit{Detroit Free Press}, 9 September 1971.}

NAG’s direct action campaign targeted the white working class. On September 14 NAG supporters, mostly women and children, collected at the gate of the Fisher Body Division Plant. Though both General Motors and the United Auto Workers urged employees to report to work, NAG persuaded a majority of the plant’s 4,200 workers to boycott the first and second shifts. This forced a second auto plant, located a block away, to close that morning after running out of the bodies constructed at Fisher. While the Fisher Plant was integrated, integration in the workplace did not mean white workers supported integration in housing or in their children’s schools. McCabe trumpeted NAG’s success, and celebrated the boycott as a sacrifice made by “the men who can least afford it.”\footnote{14 John Oppedahl and Maryanne Conheim, “Anti-Busing Pickets Stop 2 GM Plants,” \textit{Detroit Free Press}, 15 September 1971.} After its successful action at the Fisher Plant, McCabe sought to make anti-busing metropolitan in scope, announcing plans for an October 1 solidarity boycott of all of metropolitan Detroit’s suburban schools as a show of support for Pontiac’s anti-integrationists.\footnote{15 Jim Neubacher, “Anti-Busing Leader Calls Suburban School Boycott,” \textit{Detroit Free Press}, 20 September 1971.}

At the beginning of September 1971, Detroit was the farthest McCabe had ever been from her Pontiac home. Over the next three weeks, she traveled to antibusing events in Virginia, Texas, and Tennessee. McCabe also traveled to New York City for national television appearances with David Frost and David Suskind, and media attention turned her into a national figure.\footnote{16 Maryanne Conheim, “Bus Fight Keeps Her on the Go,” \textit{Detroit Free Press}, 23 September 1971. For an especially detailed account of McCabe and the NAG’s portrayal in the national news media, see: Matthew F. Delmont, \textit{Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation} (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).} Much of the media’s coverage of McCabe focused on her looks. In addition to quoting
her remarks, stories in the Detroit Free Press noted what she wore, including “a tight, wine-red mini dress,”17 “a purple knit dress she bought on the chance she might see the President,”18 and “short skirt and hot pants.”19 The same woman whose anti-pornography crusade brought obscenity charges against an Oakland County store proved adept at using sex appeal to fight integration. Speaking before an anti-busing group in Memphis, McCabe conducted something of a striptease on her way to the stage. Slowly unbuttoning the top of her two-piece suit while telling the crowd that “I have to leave in a little while,” McCabe removed the top only to reveal a shirt underneath that read “Bus judges, not children.” McCabe justified her reliance on such tactics by stating that “We women have to do our share of stirring up people power somehow.”20

The Memphis event demonstrated NAG’s comfort with the politics of white supremacy. Twenty members of the white supremacist Memphis White Citizens’ Council attended, and racism permeated the gathering. Ron Weston, the head of the Memphis antibusing organization which organized the event, used racial slurs to reporters. Weston told the media of a supportive phone call he had received the night before from Nebraska, exclaiming, “Imagine that – they don’t have but seven niggers in the whole state of Nebraska.”21

NAG claimed not to be motivated by racism while it consorted with avowed racists. A NAG pamphlet asserted that “over 20% of our supporters are Black.”22 The number was closer to zero. McCabe’s response of “I certainly hope so” in August 1971 to a reporter’s question of whether black people participated in NAG inadvertently revealed that African Americans were

21 Ibid.
22 Pamphlet, National Action Group – Citizens Opposed to the Forced Busing of School Children, SW.
not involved in the organization’s founding.\textsuperscript{23} NAG and its membership had few qualms about associating with explicit racists or using racist vitriol. On the first day of school that September, NAG pickets chanted “nigger, nigger” at black children filing into school.\textsuperscript{24} Overall, overt racism and violence figured prominently in Pontiac’s anti-integrationism. In late September, assailants fire-bombed the home of Bethune Elementary School’s black principal, James Hawkins. Bethune was one of several schools involved in Pontiac’s busing plan.\textsuperscript{25} Hawkins was not the first metro Detroit principal to be targeted by white terrorists. In the spring, a group of Ku Klux Klan (KKK) members had pulled Willow Run High School Principal Wiley Brownlee out of his car at gunpoint and tar-and-feathered him. Brownlee’s organization of a two-day human relations program and his reputation as an advocate of racial equality motivated the attack.\textsuperscript{26}

If NAG wished to properly distance itself from white supremacist terrorism, it would not have chosen to demonstrate at Pontiac’s bus yard on the first two days of school, the site of a recent attack by the KKK.\textsuperscript{27} One week before NAG members chained themselves to the bus yard, on the night of August 30 KKK members detonated bombs attached to six unoccupied school buses. The resulting fires destroyed ten buses in total. A planned second act of terrorism, involving a mortar attack following a diversionary assault on a power station, was planned for sometime after September 8, but never took place.\textsuperscript{28} At least two of the bombing’s perpetrators attended NAG’s protest at the bus depot on the first day of school, with one, Alexander Distel, Jr., claiming to have been injured after allegedly being hit by a bus. Distel continued protesting

the next day, telling a reporter that he opposed busing because “they want to ship our kids down to Bagley where all the dope, mugging, and prostitution is” and adding that “Anyone who isn’t with us is a black-hearted white scum.” NAG’s choice of protesting at the bus yard did not offer a renunciation of racially motivated violence. From the outset, overt racism, not just colorblind appeals, undergirded Southeast Michigan’s antibusing efforts.

Crafting “Colorblind” Antibusing

Despite its overt racism, politicians took advantage of NAG’s protest and the coming Roth ruling to craft a respectable portrait of antibusing activity that focused on an ostensibly colorblind discourse of parents’ and homeowners’ rights and denied the presence of de jure segregation in Northern metropolises. Republican U.S. Senator Robert Griffin served as a key figure in whitewashing NAG’s racism into colorblind politics. Reworking the language of civil rights, Griffin argued that integrationists, not antibusers, made invidious distinctions based on race. Quickly, other politicians, including many suburban Democratic officials, would echo this stance.

Griffin bolstered NAG’s flagging efforts. On the morning of September 24, 1971, newspapers carried word that NAG’s school boycott had ended. As more and more students returned to school, the boycott lost its effectiveness. While newspaper readers pored over NAG’s announcement, Griffin chose that morning to issue a statement on busing. Griffin’s statement reinvigorated NAG and positioned the senator as one of the state’s leading opponents

---

of busing, just days before Judge Roth found Detroit’s public schools *de jure* segregated on September 27.

Griffin’s statement trumpeted his ostensible commitment to civil rights while portraying Northern busing as an ill-advised remedy for mere “racial imbalance.” Claiming that he aimed “to make more and more progress toward racial equality and an integrated society,” Griffin stated that “forced busing solely for the purpose of achieving racial balance is counter-productive.”31 Nowhere did Griffin mention that Pontiac’s busing sought to remedy *de jure* segregation. Along with his statement, Griffin asked the Justice Department to intervene on the side of the Pontiac School Board and predicted that the Supreme Court, soon to receive two new Republican justices, would welcome a chance to “clarify the law.”32 Irene McCabe responded to Griffin’s statement by pledging to renew her efforts to fight busing in the courts and declaring her support for an antibusing constitutional amendment.33 Not only did Griffin thereby help to revitalize NAG, his crafting of an ostensibly colorblind opposition to busing combined with his extant civil rights record to lend NAG respectability.

When, on October 4, 1971, Judge Roth ordered the State Board of Education to prepare a possible plan of metropolitan desegregation, Griffin provided Michiganders with an immediate response. Griffin’s October 5 remarks in the Senate, reprinted and mailed to constituents, attacked metropolitanism: “If this theory of comprehensive integration were carried out in a city such as Washington D.C., logic would dictate that the plan reach across District of Columbia

boundary lines into sovereign states. Where does it all lead, and where does it all end?”

Griffin articulated a politics of suburban secession that privileged municipal borders and rested upon a constructed artifice of colorblind innocence that charged integrationists with racial discrimination. Introducing a constitutional amendment that would prohibit the use of busing to achieve racial balance, Griffin adopted civil rights language, telling the Senate, “It is fundamentally wrong for any instrumentality of government – including a court – to discriminate in the treatment of children on the basis of race.”

Griffin’s timely appeals capitalized on a growing groundswell against integration. In the first week of October, his office reported receiving 4,312 letters and telegrams on busing, with only two in favor of it. Similarly, his Michigan colleague in the Senate, Democrat Philip Hart received 2,910 such pieces of correspondence, of which just sixty-four favored busing.

While Griffin aligned Michigan’s Republicans with antibusing sentiment, state Democrats officially provided a modicum of support for busing that split their party along racial lines. In a Detroit press conference in late September, Michigan’s Democratic Party Chairman James McNeely stated that “[m]y position is that any inequality of education based on housing or other discrimination has to be eliminated” and that “busing is a prerequisite for righting this.” Though McNeely claimed subsequently that his support of busing only extended to intra-city desegregation, when asked whether he supported metropolitan busing during the press conference he replied “In principle, yes, I don’t see any other answer.” Days later, the

---

35 Remer Tyson, “Anti-Busing Drive Led by Griffin,” Detroit Free Press, 8 October 1971. Tactically casting school integration as a form of racial “discrimination” against whites because it took race into account had already surfaced by the early 1960s in desegregation battles in the Northeast. See: Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty, 466-467.
Michigan Democratic Party officially adopted a statement favoring busing “as an instrument for immediate implementation of the courts’ rulings” and “as an imperfect and temporary mechanism to help erase the imbalances in our education system.” The statement was adopted in a sixty-seven to forty-nine vote following a one hour and forty-minute debate.\footnote{Remer Tyson, “Dems Favor School Busing,” \textit{Detroit Free Press}, 3 October 1971.}

The Democratic Party’s support of busing ran afoul of most suburban Detroiters. Letters expressing outrage poured in to McNeely’s office, with many predicting that busing would lead to a massive Democratic defeat. One Pontiac resident suggested that NAG supporters “probably constitute a Democratic majority” and would oppose McNeely’s stand.\footnote{Letter, Mrs. Donald Johnson to James McNeely, 30 September 1971, box: 19, folder: Busing, Democratic Party of Michigan Records, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (hereafter: “DPM”).} Similarly, a Birmingham woman argued that the Democratic Party’s support for busing meant that it “no longer represents me – but instead a select minority!” After renouncing her lifetime affiliation with the Democratic Party, the writer pledged to actively work for a Democratic defeat “thanks to your stand on busing!”\footnote{Letter, Mrs. Paul Kulmanjian to James McNeely, box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.} A Dearborn resident predicted that McNeely “lost the 1972 election for the Democrats in Michigan when you came out in favor of busing.”\footnote{Letter, Thomas Brennan to James McNeely, 1 October 1971, box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.}

Some letters echoed Griffin’s claim that it was integrationists who were guilty of making distinctions based on race, asserting that an anti-racist impulse motivated their opposition to busing. A Warren woman called the integrationist rationale “the most insulting valuation of the Negro since before slavery,” because it argued that “the Negro is so inferior he must be put with the white to learn anything.”\footnote{Letter, Mary Lou Williams to James McNeely, box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.} However, letters expressing outright racism that linked black people to an overreliance on welfare far outnumbered those professing a colorblind outlook, likely due to their private nature. Suburban letter writers did not have to worry about their private
missives being made public. With allegations of welfare abuse common, these suburban responses articulated a belief in a black cultural pathology and implied that suburban whites achieved their success through a meritocratic reliance on the free market rather than government aid. One such letter argued that African Americans “ruin anything they touch” and “never pay a cent towards the schools because they are on rent, welfare or ADC.”

A resident of the independent suburb of East Detroit called for the establishment of “our own National Assoc. for the Advancement of White People” because white people “are the ones paying all the high taxes and supporting all the welfare activities and we are the ones getting the royal shaft.”

A Warren woman echoed such claims that all black people were on welfare and argued that this constituted “inequality” for white people. This letter, in a step farther than most, ended by raising the possibility of forcibly sterilizing black women.

Many equated civil rights for African Americans with a loss of white status. A Detroit woman stated that black civil rights “are getting out of hand when white people begin to suffer in the outcome of their achievements” and urged the Democrats “to interpret the white man’s feelings on this matter.”

Prominent colorblind appeals coexisted with, and obfuscated, a politics of race.

Responding to this massive opposition, suburban Democrats quickly proclaimed their independence from the official party platform. After reading the party’s pro-busing statement, Vice President of the State Board of Education Michael J. Deeb authored a confidential letter to his fellow Democrats that pledged not to “be bound by decisions of such magnitude arrived at in haste and without due consultation, reflection, and debate.”

---

43 Letter, “To You,” box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.
44 Letter, Mrs. Eric Crocker to James McNeely, 30 September 1971, box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.
45 Letter, Irene McMahon to James McNeely, 1 October 1971, box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.
46 Letter, Mary Jane Detter to James McNeely, 29 September 1971, box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.
47 Letter, Michael J. Deeb to “Fellow Democrats,” box: 17, folder: Desegregation and Busing, JGO.
Thomas Guastello of Macomb County wrote McNeely and urged “immediate reconsideration of the position,” feeling that victory would be “impossible if the Michigan Democratic Party continues its present stand on bussing.”48 Before writing McNeely, Guastello joined with all other Macomb County Democratic legislators to renounce the official party position. In its place, Macomb’s Democrats created their own antibusing county platform, one entirely suburban in outlook and indistinguishable from Republican responses to busing.49

Following Judge Roth’s order to the State Board of Education to prepare a metropolitan plan for the court’s consideration, on October 28, 1971, twenty-seven suburban Democratic representatives signed their names to an antibusing policy statement. The statement declared “complete support for the neighborhood school concept” and “complete opposition to the assignment, transporting, or the compelling of any students to attend any particular public school in the State of Michigan on account of race, religion, color, national origin, or any other purpose without the written approval of the parent or guardian.”50 Like Griffin, these Democrats claimed a colorblind outlook that opposed civil rights remedies because the remedies took race into account.

The same day that antibusing Democrats released their statement, the Michigan Legislature appealed to Congress to call a convention for proposing an antibusing amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Adopting colorblind language, the Legislature proposed that the amendment read, “No student shall be assigned to nor compelled to attend any particular public school on account of race, religion, color or national origin.”51 Just one day previously, both

---

48 Letter, Thomas Guastello to James McNeely, 7 October 1971, box: 19, folder: Busing, DPM.
51 Concurrent Resolution No. 172, 28 October 1971, box: 1, folder: Miscellaneous Materials, 1971-1974, JTK.
houses of the Legislature passed bipartisan resolutions urging the State Board of Education to appeal Judge Roth’s ruling. The Senate resolution passed with a vote of twenty-seven to four, while the House’s identical resolution passed seventy-two to sixteen. The House also defeated two pro-busing statements offered by black Detroit representatives.⁵²

As it did at the state level, opposition to integration split Michigan’s congressional delegation along racial lines. Both of Detroit’s black Congressmen, John Conyers and Charles Diggs, came out in support of metropolitan busing, with Diggs saying he supported busing “[u]ntil such time as there is an alternative developed to the neighborhood school concept, which by its very nature… is making racist institutions out of our schools.”⁵³ All of metropolitan Detroit’s white Congressmen took an antibusing stand in the face of the metropolitan order. Just one day before Roth ordered the State Board to prepare a metropolitan plan, Democratic Congressmen William D. Ford, Lucien N. Nedzi, and James G. O’Hara declined to comment on the issue.⁵⁴ Following Roth’s order to the State Board, all came out against busing. In an October mailing to constituents, Nedzi stated his ostensibly colorblind support “for the concept of the neighborhood school,” where “schoolchildren, without regard to race, color, or creed go to schools nearest their home.”⁵⁵

Such colorblind appeals both ignored and obfuscated individual and structural racism. They denied known history and accused integrationists of being the lone party making racial distinctions. Nedzi, representing a district that included Grosse Pointe, a community whose “point system” had prohibited African American residence, avoided mentioning how

---

⁵⁴ Ibid.
⁵⁵ Lucien N. Nedzi, Report From Congress, October 1971, box: 17, folder: Desegregation and Busing, JGO.
neighborhoods achieved their particular demographics. Though historians, pointing to the state’s oft-hidden complicity in perpetuating racial discrimination, have been apt to position suburban colorblind arguments as the earnest outcomes of a misguided meritocratic outlook, colorblind appeals also entailed the willful ignorance of overt discrimination and its city-building consequences.

Metropolitan Antibusing Organizing

Suburban antibusing rested on a foundation of local and regional organizing. In fighting integration, suburbanites mobilized just as quickly as did the Detroit whites who founded the Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE) when faced with a modest intra-city integration plan. Like their urban counterparts in the CCBE, suburbanites rallied to defend their racial spatial privilege that allowed for white majorities in their schools and neighborhoods. Articulating a politics of suburban secession that disavowed links to the central city and celebrated municipal autonomy, suburban anti-integrationists nevertheless relied on metropolitan organizing that united suburbanites across municipal borders.

Just hours after Judge Roth found the Detroit schools guilty of *de jure* segregation in September 1971, Phillip Lee launched Save Our Children (SOC). An owner of the Wayne Kim Lee Real Estate Company in suburban Warren, Lee organized SOC to fight metropolitan busing, though Roth had yet to rule on this issue. SOC’s first major action was a one-day boycott of Macomb County schools on September 30, held one day before McCabe’s proposed solidarity boycott of all metropolitan schools. On that last day in September, SOC succeeded in having 22

---


percent of Macomb County’s students absent themselves from school. In Warren, 13,500 of the suburb’s 34,000 public school students failed to attend classes.\textsuperscript{58} Within two weeks of its inception, SOC claimed to have more than a dozen branches. NAG grew quickly as well, with McCabe stating in early October that the group had chapters in twenty suburbs.\textsuperscript{59} Another antibusing organization Unity Pledge, claimed to represent over 200,000 families in twenty-four suburbs by June 1973. Its leader, former Detroit resident Alex Brown, spoke of escaping Detroit and never going back: “Nobody, not even the U.S. Supreme Court, can force me to send my kids back there, into the violence.” Officially, Unity Pledge professed a colorblind outlook, but individual members acknowledged to an out-of-town reporter that race motivated their opposition.\textsuperscript{60}

In October 1971, another metropolitan antibusing group, Tri-County Citizens for Intervention in Federal School Action No. 35257 announced its intention to intervene in the Bradley v. Milliken desegregation case to fight against metropolitan busing. By February 1972 the group numbered 20,000 members from across the metropolis, all of whom paid at least one dollar to hire legal representation. Tri-County Citizens chose Robert Lord as its attorney. Lord had a history of fighting black suburban residence. In 1970, Lord helped a Warren group create a petition after hearing rumors that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) had picked Warren as a “target city” for racial integration. Fearing an influx of African American residents, Warren rejected HUD funds.\textsuperscript{61} That same year, Lord helped a group of homeowners


\textsuperscript{60} Stef Donev, “Busing is the Talk of Detroit,” Atlanta Journal, 14 June 1973.

from Walled Lake defeat a low-cost housing project that could have allowed African American residence in the community. Most recently, Lord defended a white homeowner charged with refusing to sell to a qualified black couple in a discrimination case brought by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. Although Tri-County Citizens professed a colorblind outlook, presenting the issue as whether or not “to have your child sent to a school outside your neighborhood,” its choice of lawyer clearly placed the group against black civil rights.62

While Tri-County Citizens lamented what they saw as an activist judiciary, one judge provided support for the group. Don Binkowski, a district judge from Warren, backed the group “as a counterpart to the NAACP to fight for the rights of us suburbanites.” Binkowski claimed to be “directly responsible for attorney Robert Lord’s involvement” in both Warren’s HUD controversy and the Tri-County Citizens’ intervention.63 Binkowski also provided funds for other antibusing groups. In a message coupled with a check and written on District Court stationery, Binkowski wrote the Roseville Action Group that he was “completely dismayed at the breakdown of our three traditional divisions of government.”64 Though Binkowski did not explicitly claim to be defending white people, his suggestion that the NAACP needed an opposing organization of “suburbanites” rested upon a unified white suburban opposition and racial exclusion. While Binkowski pledged that his “children will not be bused into the intercity (sic),” he was not opposed to busing in and of itself.65 Throughout the mid-1960s, Binkowski worked with a group fighting to have Michigan provide free busing to parochial schools.66

64 Letter, Don Binkowski to Alex Brown, 14 July 1972, box: 7, folder: Antibusing Campaign, 1972-1979, DB.
65 Untitled Position Statements, 15 October 1972, DB.
66 Ten folders pertaining to Binkowski’s involvement with the Citizens for Educational Freedom can be found in boxes 7 and 8 of the Don Binkowski Papers at the University of Michigan’s Bentley Historical Library.
While antibusing support grew exponentially, suburban city councils worked to present a unified suburban opposition to metropolitan busing. In November 1971, the city council of Grosse Pointe Woods resolved that busing constituted “a serious invasion of the ‘home rule’ concept of local government” that “will usurp the right of every American parent to choose for their children an environment in which to live and rear their families.” The council pledged to “utilize all legal avenues available to it to maintain the rights of Grosse Pointe Woods citizens.” The resolution passed unanimously, with one council member absent.67 Other councils concurred, with many supporting Griffin’s proposed antibusing constitutional amendment and with most noting the 1964 Civil Rights Act’s prohibition on using busing for “racial balance.”68 Most of these statements were boilerplate, testifying to inter-suburban cooperation.

The white working-class suburbs of Dearborn and Warren quickly emerged at the fore of suburban anti-integrationist politics. Both cities had a suburban secessionist history of refusing to partake in metropolitan planning lest it bring them into a closer relationship with Detroit. Both cities declined to join the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), a voluntary planning agency whose purview did not include education.69 Though education was beyond SEMCOG’s reach, as early as 1967, before any Detroit proposals for metropolitan busing, suburban SEMCOG opponents warned that metropolitan government could lead to two-way busing between Detroit and its suburbs.70 Similarly, an eight page leaflet circulating in wealthy

68 An extensive sample of these boilerplate sentiments can be found in box: 11, folder: 29 of the Bradley v. Milliken Case Files, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.
Grosse Pointe stated that SEMCOG’s founders aimed “to do away with city governments and local school systems.”

Dearborn’s local government responded first to Roth’s order through ostensibly colorblind means. On October 19, 1971, Dearborn officially called Roth’s decision the work “of one isolated judge” conducting “an attack on the very basis of family life, as we know it today.” Colorblind arguments were not the norm for Dearborn. Since 1943, its voters had elected Orville Hubbard mayor. Hubbard worked to keep Dearborn white and trafficked in racial animus. In 1944, Hubbard fought a federal plan to provide wartime housing for some of the 12,000 African Americans working in Dearborn and contributing to the war effort. Stating that “When you remove garbage from your backyard, you don’t dump it in your neighbor’s,” Hubbard asserted that “Housing the Negroes is Detroit’s problem.” Time did not alter Hubbard’s views. In 1967, Hubbard told the Detroit News that “I just don’t believe in integration. When that happens, along comes socializing with the whites, intermarriage, and then mongrelization.” In 1969, the New York Times quoted the mayor stating that “if whites don’t want to live with niggers, they sure as hell don’t have to. Dammit, this is a free country. This is America.” Voting for Hubbard constituted an individual act of racism. During Detroit’s desegregation controversy, Hubbard was an active antibuser and an outspoken proponent of NAG, including providing its 1972 March on Washington with a sound car operated by two city employees.

---

72 Regular Meeting of the Council of the City of Dearborn, 19 October 1971, box: 11, folder: 29, BVM.
73 Amy Maria Kenyon, Dreaming Suburbia: Detroit and the Production of Postwar Space and Culture (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 140.
75 Ibid., 32.
The city of Warren’s antibusing efforts grew out of its efforts to avoid housing integration. The same politicians who led the fight against HUD recognized the political opportunities antibusing politics provided in advance of the city’s 1971 mayoral election. That year, incumbent Democratic Mayor Ted Bates faced a challenge from Richard Sabaugh, a Democratic city councilor who was the city’s most vociferous opponent of HUD and its links to housing integration. In July 1971, Sabaugh introduced a resolution opposing the CCBE’s request to include eighty-five suburban school systems in *Bradley v. Milliken*. Though city councils could express their opposition to busing, the matter was before the court. Despite the issue of jurisdiction that made Sabaugh’s action purely symbolic, the council’s president saw the potential gains of Sabaugh’s strategy: “If he can convince people he is against busing and the others are for it, they won’t elect him. They’ll crown him king. He’ll rule by decree.”

Mayor Bates responded to Sabaugh’s resolution by calling busing “an infringement on the will of the people,” urging support of a constitutional amendment, and criticizing Sabaugh for making busing a political issue. Yet Bates politicized busing as well. In early October, the mayor led a delegation to Washington D.C. that carried antibusing petitions containing over 40,000 signatures. With signatory privileges limited to those over eighteen years of age and only 69,000 registered voters in Warren, this was a sizeable opposition. After meeting with Warren’s Democratic Congressman James G. O’Hara, the mayor’s group sought unsuccessfully to meet with Louise Day Hicks, the Boston antibusing leader who sat in Congress and remained opposed to tactical metropolitanism.

---

78 Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 17.
80 Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 25.
Suburban antibusing took on added urgency when, on March 28, 1972, Judge Roth announced that remedying Detroit’s school segregation required metropolitan busing. Downplaying the *de jure* violations found in court, suburbanites increasingly targeted the judge himself. Dearborn’s Hubbard revealed a nativist streak when he argued that Roth, having been a “U.S. citizen only for 39 years… should be crated up and shipped back” to his native Hungary.⁸¹ Other attacks on the judge himself were similarly crude. A demonstration outside the Federal Building in Detroit organized by Breakthrough, a metropolitan Detroit reactionary group devoted to anti-communism, anti-civil rights, and white supremacy, featured a child holding a sign that read “Judge Roth Child Molester.”⁸² This sentiment found its way onto bumper stickers spotted throughout the suburbs.⁸³

In July 1972, anti-integrationists held a mock trial in suburban Wyandotte’s Bishop Park that charged Roth with violating ten colorblind “commandments.” Roth’s crimes included “killing the neighborhood schools,” “taking the taxpayers’ money in vain,” and “stealing school districts.” In lieu of the actual judge, suburbanites tried a stuffed dummy, which they dressed in a top hat and seated atop a portable toilet. A jury of twelve women, with Irene McCabe its foreperson, found Roth guilty on all counts. While the charges against Roth conformed to a professed ethos of colorblindness, the justice meted out carried a segregationist tinge – another instance of colorblind claims coexisting with white racial backlash. In a scene redolent of a lynching, Roth’s effigy was hanged by the neck as punishment. Following the hanging, the dummy was placed in a coffin labeled “Here Go the Judge” and sent down the Detroit River.⁸⁴

---

Emphasizing the separation of city and suburb, the rally’s leader intended for the coffin to “float back to Detroit where it belongs.”  

While defending suburban autonomy, suburban antibusing rested upon a high degree of metropolitan organizing across suburbs that united claims of colorblindness with clear moments of overt racism. As witnessed by Warren’s Washington delegation, suburbanites increasingly aimed to make metropolitan Detroit’s antibusing activities go national. Once again, Irene McCabe would be leading the charge.

**Mrs. McCabe Goes to Washington**

McCabe’s presence at the Wyandotte “trial” was something of a coup for the event’s organizers. By this point, McCabe and NAG possessed national renown, testifying to the attractiveness of its politics that combined a professed colorblind ethos with an undergirding of racism. Stating that “God loves us and hates busing because he gave us this election year,” McCabe worked to make antibusing politics a central component of the 1972 national election campaigns.

In late February, NAG held a two-day antibusing conference to plot strategy. Eager to refute charges of racism, NAG invited Clay Smothers, a black George Wallace supporter from Dallas, to speak.  

Smothers was the only black person present at the meeting. In an inversion of the psychological rationale of the *Brown v. Board* desegregation mandate, Smothers told those assembled that being told to “sit next to whites” in order to get a good education could lead to

---

85 Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 20. As Wyandotte is downstream from Detroit, it is highly unlikely that the coffin reached its intended destination.

86 A useful example that not all antibusers were white, Smothers was also welcomed by anti-integration activists in Philadelphia and Boston. His antibusing career also took him to the 1972 Democratic National Convention where Smothers took advantage of a rule allowing anyone nominated for Vice President to have a fifteen-minute nominating speech as well as two follow-up speeches. For his efforts, Smothers received seventy-four votes, or 2.5 percent of the total. For more on Smothers at the Democratic National Convention see Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail ’72* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1973).
the development of inferiority complexes in black children. Smothers’ argument echoed national *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry’s claims of ten days previously. Raspberry, an African American opponent of busing, wrote that busing “reinforces in white children whatever racial superiority feelings they may harbor, and it says to black children that they are somehow improved by the presence of white schoolmates.”

To an entirely white crowd, Smothers declared his preference for being among black people: “I live in the middle of the black community; I go to an all-black church; my son goes to a model black school and I go to all-black nightclubs because I want to.”

Although Raspberry and Smothers demonstrated that not all antibusing sentiment was white, NAG’s efforts at presenting itself as a colorblind organization were tarnished by a fight that broke out at the conference between members of Youth Against War and Fascism and white supremacists from the Pontiac KKK and Breakthrough.

McCabe’s conference announcement that she would undertake a mothers’ march to Washington earned NAG extensive media coverage. Beginning on March 15, the trek was designed to run 620 miles, with the distance inspired by House Joint Resolution 620, a proposed antibusing constitutional amendment. Immediately, George Wallace announced both his intention to join McCabe for a portion of her march and his entrance into Michigan’s Democratic primary. Though unwilling to endorse a particular candidate, NAG officials, noting their policy of taking “support from any respectable and responsible quarter,” welcomed Wallace’s participation. McCabe, while accepting Wallace, noted as well that she would “be walking with

---

Clay Smothers” and expressed her hope that “President Nixon and Vice President Spiro Agnew will also join me.”

McCabe planned to end the march with a massive rally in Washington at the Ellipse, just south of the White House. Although she predicted that a quarter of a million people would attend, police estimated the actual crowd size at 900. NAG claimed 1,500 attended. In light of the march’s national press coverage, the poor attendance was an unexpected setback.

A further blow came one week later, when one of the marchers to Washington publicly quit the group and punctured NAG’s claims of colorblindness in the process. In an interview with the Detroit Free Press, Ardith Heineman stated that racism motivated NAG. Heineman’s experiences marching to Washington played a major role in her decision. Walking through counties in Virginia subject to court-ordered busing, Heineman thought that the communities “looked completely peaceful and integrated.” Fears of intermarriage had motivated Heineman’s busing politics: “All I could think when I heard they’d be mixing was ‘One of these days it’ll be Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner.’ That’s racism.” Like Judge Binkowski, Heineman’s antibusing had only extended to busing for integration, as one of her sons used a cross-district busing program to travel to nearby Clarkston for occupational opportunity classes.

Within one year of NAG’s march, NAG was in disarray and McCabe withdrew from the organization’s leadership. She resigned following infighting between two Dearborn groups that each claimed to be the city’s legitimate chapter. In late January 1973, McCabe declared a group led by Barbara Coleman “null and void.” Coleman nevertheless attended a NAG meeting held in February at a Dearborn bowling alley where, according to the Free Press, “The meeting broke

---

up into a free for all marked by name calling, near-fights and the ripping off of one woman’s wig by another woman.” Jealousy aroused by McCabe’s leadership played a role in the infighting, with Coleman claiming, “What it’s all about is that Irene McCabe wants to be Queen Bee and we won’t let her.” Following the fight, McCabe called the melee’s participants “animals” and announced her resignation. McCabe’s exit marked the end of NAG’s leadership in Southeastern Michigan’s antibusing fight. Although NAG suffered an ignominious decline, it would be a mistake to link its fate with that of Michigan’s antibusing movement and to assume that the low attendance at NAG’s Washington rally indicated a lack of national support for its agenda. Though antibusing opponents did not descend on Washington, they could still be counted on at the polls.

**Mr. Nixon Goes to Macomb County**

Richard Nixon seized the political opportunities Northern antibusing provided to win Michigan in the 1972 presidential election. The shift of Michigan’s electorate to the right prefigured the famous Reagan Democrats discovered in Macomb County in 1980. But the Reagan Democrat was not a new development. Eight years previously, antibusing Democrats prodded Michigan’s rightward shift.

Historian David Riddle argues that a long series of shocks, beginning with Warren’s HUD controversy in 1970 and followed by reactions to antiwar protests, the cross-district busing

---


96 Pollster Stanley Greenberg, who conducted research in Macomb County in the 1980s, popularized the term “Reagan Democrat.” It refers to traditionally Democratic voters who rebelled against the party in the 1980 elections. Greenberg’s causes for this rebellion, including a response to upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s such as campus radicalism, urban riots, and desegregation busing, all predate the Reagan candidacy, suggesting that the term itself is something of a misnomer. See Stanley Greenberg, *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (New York: Times Books, 1995).
controversy, women’s increasing participation in the workforce, and the decline of the American auto industry culminated in Warren’s support of Ronald Reagan in the 1980 election. But as will be seen, the busing controversy made metropolitan Detroit’s antibusing national in scope and drew both Democrats and Republicans rightward, suggesting that busing was particularly formative in the reorientation of Southeastern Michigan’s politics overall and had national implications.

While McCabe marched to Washington, on March 16, 1972, Nixon proposed two pieces of antibusing legislation. The first, named the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1972, required that no state or municipality could deny equal educational opportunity on account of race or national origin. Nixon told Americans that this legislation did not require racially balanced student populations and would preserve neighborhood schools. Should desegregation be mandated, the Act required that busing only be used as a last resort and placed strict limits on the time desegregation orders would be in effect. Desegregation mandates could last up to ten years, but if remedies required “student transportation” the limit was five years. Nixon’s second piece of legislation, the Student Transportation Moratorium Act of 1972, “would hold in abeyance further busing orders while the Congress investigated and considered alternative methods.” The moratorium would last “until July 1, 1973, or until Congress passed the appropriate legislation, whichever was sooner.”

Nixon defended antibusing claims of colorblindness. Though conceding “that some people oppose busing because of racial prejudice,” Nixon called the idea that all antibusing arguments were racist “an exercise in arrant unreason” and “dangerous nonsense.” Like Griffin

---

98 President Nixon’s Message to Congress, 17 March 1972, box: 3, folder: 21, BVM. Though Nixon spoke on the night of the 16th, Congress received the President’s remarks on the 17th.
and other Michigan politicians, Nixon shifted the blame for discrimination to integrationists, suggesting that “those who insist on system-wide racial balance insist on a condition in which, in most communities, every school would be run by whites and dominated by whites, with blacks in a permanent minority.” This, Nixon argued, would “deny blacks the right to have schools in which they are the majority.” While Nixon’s argument accurately portrayed the motivations of Detroit’s opportunistic CCBE, which sought majority white schools for white children, it could not account for why many African Americans supported integration both in majority black cities like Philadelphia and Detroit, and in minority black cities such as Boston. Nor could colorblind appeals explain the roots or the maintenance of existing segregation.

Though stopping short of endorsing an antibusing constitutional amendment, Nixon agreed with the motivations of those who called for one. Nixon said that proposals to amend the Constitution “should continue to receive the particularly thoughtful and careful consideration by the Congress that any proposal to amend the Constitution merits.” However, Nixon reminded Americans that the amendment process was a long one, requiring two-thirds support in both houses and the ratification of three-fourths of the states. “What is needed is action now,” the President told Americans; “a constitutional amendment fails to meet this immediate need.”

Though Congress failed to approve Nixon’s proposed legislation, Nixon’s address rallied Michigan’s antibusers to his side, portending success in the 1972 presidential election. Throughout the long 1972 campaign, Nixon responded to developments in *Bradley v. Milliken*. In May 1972, Nixon told John Ehrlichman to “[h]it busing hard in Michigan.” In August, Nixon capitalized on suburban Detroit’s antibusing sentiment by making his first visit to

99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 41.
Macomb County in twelve years. On August 24, 1972, he attended the dedication of Shelby Township’s newest school, the Dwight D. Eisenhower High School. After being greeted by an assembled crowd of 13,000, of whom only 3,000 could fit in the school’s auditorium, Nixon issued a statement declaring that “[b]using forced by a court to achieve an arbitrary racial balance is wrong. It adds nothing whatever to the children’s learning.” Busing “will, if anything, impair the education process whatever a child’s race or color.” At the dedication, Republican Senator Robert Griffin accompanied the President, as did Democrat James G. O’Hara. All stood united in a bipartisan defense of suburban spatial privilege.

Suburban politicians leaned on their votes for civil rights in the South in a way that positioned them as principled anti-racists at the very moment they opposed busing. But these actions also made them vulnerable as well. As the busing battles intensified, even support for Southern civil rights could tarnish a candidate. Suburban Democrats therefore charted a course that emphasized Northern distinctiveness at the same time that they shifted to the right. Congressman James G. O’Hara, a prototype for subsequent Reagan Democrats, embodied this trend. Once an enthusiastic supporter of civil rights in the South, O’Hara helped blaze a rightward shift, elaborating an ostensibly colorblind politics in opposition to Northern school integration and affirmative action.

Prior to Bradley v. Milliken, O’Hara frequently received letters of thanks from civil rights proponents, such as one from Ruby Martin of the Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare (HEW) lauding “the consistently strong support you have given to the civil rights compliance efforts of the Federal Government in general and to HEW’s Office for Civil Rights,

in particular." O’Hara received further commendations for his 1970 stand against the Stennis Amendment, which many civil rights advocates thought could hinder further school desegregation efforts. But despite such praise, O’Hara’s transformation into a leading antibuser was not out of character.

O’Hara’s response to the Stennis Amendment, just predating Detroit’s desegregation controversy, aimed to keep desegregation busing confined to the South. The measure, put forward in 1970 by Democratic Senator John Stennis of Mississippi as an amendment to a federal education bill, sought “uniformity” in the civil rights remedies used “without regard to the origin or cause of such segregation.” The Stennis Amendment sought to remove the distinctions between Northern de facto and Southern de jure segregation, maintaining that the effects of both forms of discrimination were the same.

With its author a longtime opponent of integration, the Stennis Amendment possessed impure motives. If remedies for segregation had to be applied uniformly, Stennis reasoned, this might arouse enough national opposition to preclude further desegregation. A tactical measure similar to the early metropolitan maneuverings of the Boston School Committee, the Stennis Amendment aimed to weaken legislative support for integration by demanding suburban involvement in remedies. Separating the Stennis Amendment from similar Southern attempts to weaken the desegregation effort was the support it drew from Senator Abraham Ribicoff, an integrationist Democrat from Connecticut. Before the Senate, Ribicoff asserted that “[t]he North is guilty of monumental hypocrisy in its treatment of the black man. Without question, northern

103 Letter, Ruby G. Martin to James G. O’Hara, 7 March 1969, box 12, folder: School Desegregation, JGO.
105 Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Stennis Amendment on “Uniformity,” box: 13, folder: Elementary and Secondary Education Bill Conference Committee, JGO.
106 For more on the tactical metropolitanism of the Boston School Committee, see Chapters One and Two.
communities have been as systematic and as consistent as Southern communities in denying the black man and his children the opportunities that exist for white people.” The Stennis Amendment, according to Ribicoff, could help address “the fundamental problem” of “the dual society that exists in every metropolitan area – the black society of the central city and the white society of the suburb.”  

In 1971, Ribicoff offered his own proposal for metropolitan integration. Ribicoff’s Urban Education Improvement Act required state and local school boards to implement plans designed to reduce racial imbalance in their schools regardless of the cause of the imbalance. The legislation included a two-year planning period and allowed up to ten years to implement the plan’s requirements of making minority representation in schools equal to at least half the percentage of minority-group students in the metropolitan area as a whole. In addition to busing, Ribicoff suggested magnet schools, educational parks, and redistricting to bring about integration.  

Ribicoff’s plan never passed the Senate. A fear of a plan such as Ribicoff’s, entailing Northern integration and an assault on suburban racial exclusion, animated O’Hara’s opposition to the Stennis Amendment.

On March 29, 1972, one day after Judge Roth ruled in favor of metropolitan desegregation, O’Hara and four other Detroit-area Democratic representatives released a joint press release announcing their signing of a discharge petition to force a House vote on a constitutional amendment to prevent busing.  

Representatives O’Hara, John D. Dingell, William D. Ford, Martha W. Griffiths, and Lucien Nedzi had thus far refused to sign the petition.

108 Ribicoff, *America Can Make It!*; 42-44; Responses to Roth, Stephen, Federal Judge, box: 50, folder: 29, DCCR.
109 The very same day, the Michigan House voted to discharge from committee House Joint Resolution EEE, an antibusing amendment to the State Constitution. Indicative of the immediate opposition to Roth’s metropolitan order, an effort to discharge the amendment failed one day previously – before legislators knew of the judge’s metropolitan decision. Continuing Time for Action: HJR EEE and Federal Anti-Desegregation Efforts, box: 22, folder: Busing, DPM.
The five admitted that Judge Roth’s decision caused them to sign. Failure to do so would have had serious ramifications. Indicative of the extent of antibusing opposition in Detroit’s suburbs, in May 1972 a non-binding county-wide referendum in Macomb County asked voters “Do you approve of the busing of students across school district lines?” Macomb County voted 139,594 opposed to only 8,917 in favor. In Warren, part of O’Hara’s district, precinct voting percentages ranged from 82 to 99 percent opposed.

With an election looming in the fall, O’Hara’s pro-civil rights record proved worrisome. A suburbanite from Mount Clemens wrote the Macomb Daily that O’Hara provided consistent support for “busing so long as such busing was confined to the South” and noted O’Hara’s failure to sign several “crucial antibusing proposals.” For that reason, the suburbanite pledged to “vote on Nov. 7 to bus O’Hara back to Utica,” the congressman’s suburban home. In response to voters’ concerns, O’Hara reinterpreted his record as providing evidence of an ongoing opposition to busing. In the South, O’Hara argued, busing was used to send children past their neighborhood schools in order to perpetuate segregation. Northern busing, designed for integration, would similarly send some children away from neighborhood schools. Equating the use of busing for segregation with busing for integration, O’Hara claimed an opposition to “racially selective busing,” believing “that busing of school children on the basis of their race or color is wrong.” “My votes then, and my votes now,” prevaricated O’Hara, “are cast against the racial assignment of students and for neighborhood schools.”

---

111 Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 19.
113 Riddle, “Race and Reaction,” 19.
115 James G. O’Hara, “Question No. 1 – Neighborhood school concept vs. court-ordered busing to achieve integration,” box: 16, folder: Anti-Busing Amendment, JGO.
O’Hara voted “against Southern amendments cutting off funds for either busing or assignment to neighborhood schools – BECAUSE THEY THREATENED NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS, OUR STRONGEST BULWARK AGAINST BUSING.”116 As did Nixon and Griffin, O’Hara perpetuated the myth of Northern racial innocence in his fight against metropolitan busing.

**The 1972 Campaigns**

No greater indication of the coexistence of overt racism and colorblind appeals in antibusing efforts can be found than in George Wallace’s success in Michigan’s May 1972 Democratic presidential primary, where the Alabaman won every county but one, and in Griffin’s successful U.S. Senate campaign that fall. Both won because of a reactionary white vote that viewed the Democratic Party as catering to African Americans and because a majority of white voters wished to preserve their intertwined racial and spatial privileges.

Though there existed little doubt where the Governor of Alabama stood when it came to school desegregation, Wallace timed his announcement that he was entering the Michigan Democratic primary to coincide with Irene McCabe’s two-day antibusing conference in February 1972, making sure that his campaign was associated with antibusing sentiment.117 During his five-day campaign in the state, Wallace frequently attacked Judge Roth’s metropolitan order. At an antibusing rally in Warren, Wallace told the cheering audience that he had never heard of something “so cruel or asinine as busing little school children.”118

Wallace’s antibusing campaign led to a crushing victory. Of Michigan’s eighty-three counties, Wallace won all but Washtenaw. In an internal analysis of the results, the Michigan

---

Democratic Party tied support for Wallace to education levels. He received only 30 percent of the votes in Washtenaw, the party implied, because it was home to the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University. Wallace won all three metropolitan Detroit counties. Wallace dominated primarily working-class Macomb County with 66 percent of its vote and won 53 percent in wealthy Oakland County. Wayne County, home to Detroit and the vast majority of metropolitan Detroit’s black residents, nevertheless gave the candidate a 46 percent plurality, a testimonial to the support of its white voters. Whites of all stripes – not just the working class – gravitated to Wallace.\textsuperscript{119}

Just one day before the primary, Wallace was shot five times by a would-be assassin in Kalamazoo. Though paralyzed by the attack, Wallace survived. There exists little reason to assume that the shooting led to a significant increase in his support, however. On the day of the primary, the \textit{Detroit Free Press} interviewed 411 Wallace voters, nearly all of whom said that they voted the way they had planned to prior to the shootings.\textsuperscript{120} For white Michiganders to vote for the candidate most opposed to integration did not require a sympathy vote.

Wallace voters believed that the Democratic Party served African Americans and Detroit at the expense of whites. One Wallace supporter who wrote to Judge Roth indicated that his vote served “as a protest against the drive to enforce cross-district busing in the Detroit metropolitan area.” This correspondent recounted how he moved from Detroit to Royal Oak two years previously “when the conditions in our inner-city neighborhood became unbearable,” and how he hoped to maintain the racial privileges afforded by his newly-won suburban status, namely a “peaceful neighborhood” where his sons attended school with more than “a small handful of

\textsuperscript{119} A Brief Geographical Analysis of the May 16 Presidential Primary, box: 22, folder: Wallace, George (2), DPM.
\textsuperscript{120} Tyson, “Wallace Wins,” 17 May 1972.
white students.”121 More bluntly, another Wallace voter wrote to the Democratic State Central Committee to ask “why do you cater only to blacks?”122 Aside from Clay Smothers, few black voters could be counted on to support Wallace. Following Wallace’s victory, his lack of support from African Americans became readily apparent as the campaign was forced to search for seven black delegates to send to the Democratic National Convention in Miami. Party rules required that delegates reflect Michigan’s demographics in regard to race, sex, and age. While State Chairman McNeely acknowledged that the Wallace campaign would have little difficulty finding young people or women to send to the convention, he told a reporter that “they may have some trouble with blacks.”123

While the Wallace campaign exacerbated racial fissures within Michigan’s Democratic Party, the insurgent campaign was short-lived. In contrast, the 1972 race for the U.S. Senate between Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley and Senator Robert Griffin was Michigan’s longest and most visible campaign against busing. This election demonstrates the folly of taking suburban colorblind rhetoric at face value, as Griffin’s capacious definition of colorblind voters included those who supported Wallace.

In his position as attorney general, Kelley represented the state in appealing the Bradley v. Milliken order. Despite this, Griffin linked the attorney general to both the official policy statement of the Michigan Democratic Party that provided tepid support for busing and to liberal George McGovern’s presidential campaign. Though both Griffin and Kelley were lifetime members of the NAACP, their battle hinged on being the strongest opponent of busing.124

121 Letter, Harold Samuel Brickner to Judge Stephen Roth, 14 July 1972, box: 12, folder: 3, BVM.
122 Letter, Mrs. John Hannah to Democratic State Central Committee, 3 June 1972, box: 22, folder: Wallace, George (1), DPM.
At the outset of his campaign, Kelley quickly declared that he was “against busing,” but inconsistencies existed between this stance and his previous claims. Quickly, Kelley faced questions about the pro-busing statement adopted by the Michigan Democratic State Central Committee the previous fall, which Kelley signed. Though insisting that the statement only applied to Pontiac’s intra-district busing, Kelley’s signature clearly indicated a support for some busing.\textsuperscript{125} Considering that the statement’s author, James McNeely, offered public support for metropolitan busing at the time of the statement, Kelley’s remarks provided little comfort for suburban anti-integrationists. In a further setback to his campaign, Kelley was on the record favoring a modest form of cross-district busing. Unwilling to bus suburban children into the central city, Kelley believed that busing urban students to the suburbs offered benefits. In January 1972, Kelley told a conference of school administrators in Grand Rapids that “[w]e know that we should get inner city children out of the ghetto schools but we are not accomplishing anything by sending suburban children into the city.”\textsuperscript{126} Kelley’s opposition to busing suburban children to the central city rested on familiar suburban representations of Detroit as a hostile, crime-ridden territory: “It’s absurd to think that the courts are going to allow the busing of children into an inner-city high crime area. We’d be better off to close all the ghetto schools than to allow that to divide this country.”\textsuperscript{127}

In contrast to Kelley, Griffin had positioned himself as a staunch opponent of busing since September 1971. Benefitting from his exemplary civil rights record, Griffin assured antibusers that their opposition to busing was not racist. In one of his regular “Michigan Memo” mailings to his constituents, Griffin professed to be “for equal rights and against discrimination.”

\textsuperscript{127} Cooper and Tyson, “Kelley Attacks Griffin on Busing,” 26 November 1971.
“During my 15 years in Congress,” Griffin told Michiganders, “I’ve had the opportunity to support and vote for every civil rights bill that has become law since Reconstruction days following the Civil War.”128 While pointing to his support of civil rights, Griffin backed an antibusing constitutional amendment and sought to bring Wallace voters into the Republican camp. Maintaining his claim that Michigan’s opponents of busing were colorblind, Griffin denied the suggestion that racism led voters to support Wallace. Rather, it was “honorable, decent Americans,” not “racists or bigots” who voted for Wallace in order to oppose the “wasteful, ridiculous concept of forced busing.”129

The composition of the Democratic base prevented Kelley from ramping up his antibusing activity. Though Kelley wished to take a stronger antibusing stance, the state Democrats’ Black Caucus threatened to pull the support of black precinct workers in Detroit if he did so. In a closed-door meeting with the Black Caucus, Kelley pledged to never support a constitutional amendment against busing.130 This refusal proved his undoing. On election day, Griffin received 52.3 percent of the state’s votes to Kelley’s 46.3 percent. Michiganders chose the antibusing candidate who championed an antibusing constitutional amendment over the antibusing candidate who did not. Though the Republicans ultimately benefited from the antibusing furor, the 1972 campaigns, pivoting on opposition to a redistributive civil rights measure, indicated a bipartisan rightward shift on the part of a majority of the region’s white voters and political representatives.

This bipartisan shift continued within the Michigan congressional delegation in the lead-up to the Supreme Court’s *Milliken* decision. In July of 1973, Democrats O’Hara, Nedzi,

---

Griffiths, Dingell, and Ford joined with suburban Republicans William S. Broomfield and Robert J. Huber to propose House Joint Resolution 240, an amendment that stated that no school system assigning students on the basis of neighborhood attendance areas would be required to adopt any other method of assigning students.\textsuperscript{131} In August, Michigan members of the House Education and Labor Committee – Democrats O’Hara and Ford, and Republicans Huber and Marvin L. Esch – pledged to introduce an anti-busing amendment to a pending education bill. Among a host of anti-integrationist planks, the amendment called for recognizing the neighborhood as the appropriate basis for determining school attendance and banning all cross-district busing or school district mergers designed to achieve integration.”\textsuperscript{132}

By December 1973, Congressman Huber and North Carolina’s Senator Jesse Helms saw the antibusing opportunities afforded by the national energy crisis and proposed to outlaw busing in order to conserve fuel. Quickly, Congressman Dingell of Dearborn gave his support. When Democrat Brock Adams of Washington suggested that the proposal was irrelevant to the pending Energy Emergency Act, Dingell feigned both racial innocence and incompetence. “I read in the amendment nothing… relating to enforced school busing, nothing related to civil rights,” Dingell responded, adding that, “Quite to the contrary… I read into the amendment the conservation of energy, the conservation of petroleum products.” The amendment passed 221 to 192. Every Michigan representative but four voted in favor of the measure. Only Detroit’s two black Congressmen, Democrats John Conyers and Charles Diggs, Democratic Congressmen Don Riegle of Flint, a recently converted Republican opposed to Nixon’s Southern Strategy, and Republican Phil Ruppe voted against the amendment.\textsuperscript{133} That Dingell’s support of the

\textsuperscript{131} Press Release, 13 July 1973, box: 21, folder: Busing (4), JGO.
\textsuperscript{132} Press Release, 31 August 1973, box: 21, folder: Busing (4), JGO.
amendment required feigning ignorance demonstrates the pitfalls of taking suburban colorblind antibusing rhetoric at face value. Ostensibly colorblind representatives knew they were perpetuating inequality and that much of the opposition to busing was racially motivated. A professed colorblind outlook served as a useful veneer for discriminatory policies.

**Milliken Decided**

Despite what the political activity suggested, the fate of cross-district school busing in Michigan – and much of the nation – would be decided in the Supreme Court. On July 25, 1974, Justice Potter Stewart joined with Republican President Nixon’s four appointees to overturn the metropolitan remedy. The partisan nature of the decision stood in marked contrast to Southeastern Michigan’s bipartisan antibusing consensus, but in all other respects the decision reflected the suburban secessionist worldview. The Court’s majority opinion, written by Chief Justice Warren Burger, echoed suburban antibusers who claimed that Roth and the plaintiffs sought a metropolitan remedy “only because of their conclusion that total desegregation of Detroit would not produce the racial balance which they perceived as desirable.”134 The Court articulated a defense of suburban autonomy and held that “the notion that school district lines may be casually ignored or treated as a mere administrative convenience is contrary to the history of public education in our country.” “No single tradition in public education is more deeply rooted than local control over the operation of schools,” the Court added.135

The majority’s decision drew on the Court’s 1972 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* ruling. Although *Swann* provided for metropolitan busing in greater Charlotte, North Carolina,

---

this occurred because the Charlotte metropolitan area was governed by a single school district. According to the Court, the presence of multiple school districts in Southeastern Michigan precluded this option in the present case. Legally, violations in one part of a school district affected the district’s other schools. Urban segregation affected Charlotte’s suburbs because they belonged to the same school district, but the effects of this discrimination legally stopped at the school district boundary, wherever drawn. By remaining autonomous, metropolitan Detroit’s suburban school districts, aside from Pontiac with its extant desegregation mandate, were sufficiently insulated from mandatory integration. At the same time that it perpetuated the myth of suburban racial innocence, the Court provided a clear lesson for anti-integrationist suburbanites across the nation: by preserving autonomy from the central city and maintaining a predominantly white population, mandatory integration would be avoided. In a victory for the logic of suburban secession, racial exclusion prevented integration.

Justice Thurgood Marshall’s impassioned dissent recognized that *Milliken* codified the politics of suburban secession and exacerbated metropolitan inequality. By limiting desegregation to the central city and championing the supremacy of municipal boundary lines, *Milliken* enshrined school district boundaries “as fences to separate the races.” White parents would undoubtedly flee the city in order to continue enrolling their children in all-white schools. “In the short run,” Marshall cautioned, “it may seem to be the easier course to allow our great metropolitan areas to be divided up each into two cities – one white, the other black – but it is a course, I predict, our people will ultimately regret.”

But, as Michigan’s bipartisan rightward shift indicated, this was a course that the vast majority of white suburbanites desired.

---

In responding to metropolitan busing, Detroit’s suburbs witnessed a political shift indicative of both white racial backlash and an ostensibly colorblind discourse of parents’ and homeowners’ rights. Overlapping colorblind arguments and racial appeals proved co-constitutive in moving suburban Detroiters rightward, both within the Democratic Party and towards the Republican fold. While consensus, more than conflict, characterized suburban antibusing, the busing upheavals nevertheless helped contribute to an electoral shift as well. By wreaking havoc on the Democratic Party and its multi-racial constituency, busing benefitted the Republican Party. Metropolitan Detroit’s busing battles demonstrate the need for what historian Matthew Lassiter has called “political history beyond the red-blue divide” that focuses on national and bipartisan “defenses of racial privilege, class exclusion, and homeowners’ property rights.” But that the school desegregation controversy worked in the Republicans’ favor also reveals a need to grapple with conventional histories of electoral realignment to ensure a holistic understanding of both antibusing politics and political history more broadly.

Not only did busing help push Southeast Michiganders rightward, it held national implications even prior to Boston’s famous busing controversy of 1974-1976, as NAG and other suburban antibusers positioned busing as an issue concerning legislators in Washington and politicians from George Wallace to Richard Nixon championed the suburban antibusing position. By the time that busing arrived in Boston, antibusing politics had gone national and activists had begun cultivating national alliances. Going forward, the battles over school desegregation in Boston, Detroit, and Philadelphia would become ever more inextricably intertwined. Nowhere would this be clearer than in the impact of the *Milliken* decision.

137 Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide,” 762.
Alongside the massive white opposition accompanying busing in Boston existed little-remembered appeals for metropolitan school desegregation. Though the Supreme Court’s *Milliken* precedent made such mandatory metropolitan integration virtually impossible for Boston, the city’s metropolitanists continued pushing for metropolitan solutions. As buses rolled in Boston and antibusers engaged in massive resistance, Boston’s metropolitanists offered their most constructive proposals, ones increasingly shorn of tactical metropolitanism’s primary aim of defeating integration through legislative means. Though forgotten, these metropolitan appeals formed the backbone of white Boston’s political response to desegregation prior to the Phase II busing order implemented in the 1975-76 school year.

Between the July 1974 *Milliken* decision and the May 1975 Phase II busing order, the Boston School Committee’s metropolitanism captured the grievances of white working-class Bostonians expected to integrate while wealthier suburbanites were exempt and offered productive solutions. When ordinary white Bostonians drew on the city’s revolutionary tradition and the upcoming U.S. Bicentennial to portray themselves as akin to the Patriots suffering from a distant and unaffected elite, important Boston School Committee representatives such as the outspoken John Kerrigan and the thoughtful moderate Kathleen Sullivan trumpeted the seeds of truth in this overblown rhetoric. Understanding that busing primarily affected working-class urbanites, both proposed enlarging the scope of desegregation. Drawing on academic literature that demonstrated the importance of socioeconomic integration, a desire to mitigate white flight, and anger at suburban liberals who supported desegregation so long as their children were not
bused, the Boston School Committee and much of Boston’s political power structure argued that metropolitan school desegregation could be the only lasting solution to Boston’s segregation. Intra-city desegregation alone, they warned, exacerbated segregation.

The *Milliken* precedent forced Boston’s metropolitanists to make their appeal in the legislative realm. It came in the form of the Daly-Sullivan Bill, introduced in the Massachusetts Legislature in January 1975, which required affluent suburbs to reserve up to 10 percent of their classroom seats for black and white Boston students. In the State House, however, productive metropolitanism succumbed to the logic of tactical metropolitanism. The Boston School Committee’s tactical metropolitanism long sought to arouse suburban opposition to desegregation with the aim of defeating integrationist legislation. Though succeeding in fomenting suburban opposition, tactical metropolitanism could not defeat a court order mandating busing. Facing a hostile suburban-dominated legislature long primed by tactical metropolitanism to reject metropolitan arguments, mandatory metropolitan desegregation faced an impossible battle. Daly-Sullivan failed, undone by the votes of suburban legislators in late April 1975. Less than two weeks later, Judge W. Arthur Garrity issued his Phase II busing order, which rejected a popular intra-city solution that avoided the disastrous pairing of white South Boston and black Roxbury. Phase II confirmed that mandatory busing would be limited to Boston and it marked the end of Boston’s constructive metropolitanism. Following Phase II, the Committee went on the record in favor of an antibusing constitutional amendment and antagonized those committed to making intra-city school desegregation successful. The Committee’s resistance was now uncoupled from a potentially productive metropolitanism.

Only after Phase II did the Committee become the one-dimensional antagonists suggested by the literature on the Boston desegregation controversy. In that historical memory, the Boston School Committee is remembered simply as an adversarial force, and ardent antibuser Louise
Day Hicks serves as its central figure, even though she did not serve on the Committee during the controversy’s most important years.¹ This representation is understandable. The Boston School Committee continually denied black students access to decent education and worked for years to stoke white opposition to integration. But the Committee also produced important metropolitan desegregation proposals that held the potential to combat educational inequality. While its early metropolitan appeals endeavored to weaken suburban support for integration, the Committee’s proposals increasingly became constructive solutions capable of providing lasting integration and retarding white flight. Following a finding of de jure segregation in Morgan v. Hennigan and the imposition of busing, the Committee’s metropolitanism entered its most productive period, with the Morgan mandate making impossible tactical metropolitanism’s primary aim of defeating integration. Key figures such as Committee member Kathleen Sullivan advocated equitable metropolitan solutions no longer designed to defeat integration. Such efforts were firmly in line with those of metropolitan advocates in other cities, such as Detroit’s Citizens Committee for Better Education (CCBE), whose desire to keep schools majority-white was familiar to the Boston School Committee.² But as the CCBE demonstrates, such impure motivations did not make metropolitan solutions incapable of providing redress for racial inequality.

A broad alliance in favor of metropolitan desegregation in Boston, such as that found in Detroit’s Bradley v. Milliken case, never arose. Such an alliance could only emerge in the

---

¹ In J. Anthony Lukas’s Common Ground, Hicks is the only School Committee figure to receive her own chapter. J. Antony Lukas, Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families (New York: Vintage, 1985), 115-138; Ronald Formisano’s Boston Against Busing, though focused on white opposition more broadly, nevertheless casts Hicks as the most important School Committee member. See: Ronald P. Formisano, Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

² For more on the CCBE’s transformation from a segregationist to a tactical metropolitanist organization, see Chapter Four.
courtroom, the sole venue where the politics of race could be met by those of residence. In removing the courtroom as a site for metropolitanist planning, the *Milliken* precedent helped pit potential metropolitan coalition partners against each other politically. Without exception, institutional black Boston opposed white Boston’s metropolitan plans. Though it favored metropolitan desegregation, the Boston chapter of the NAACP immediately recognized that *Milliken* made mandatory metropolitan solutions implausible and worried that a focus on metropolitanism detracted from efforts to make intra-city desegregation succeed. Freedom House, the main hub for community activism in Roxbury, evidenced an increasing attachment to black nationalism and opposed the loss of black political power a metropolitan solution would entail. It also opposed the inherent racism of metropolitan solutions, which posited black students as a problem population that needed to be dispersed. The voluntary urban-to-suburban busing program Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) opposed mandatory metropolitan solutions because it feared a loss of suburban support for its program. Facing increased suburban opposition to metropolitanism, METCO downplayed its early goals of metropolitan integration and cautioned against supporting those who would “allow metropolitanization to be corrupted by attempts to make it primarily a desegregative tool,” strange words for a metropolitan organization designed to provide integrated learning and whose founders hoped for metropolitan desegregation.³ All of institutional black Boston, whether integrationist or nationalist, expressed understandable doubt about working with a School Committee that encouraged open defiance of the court and opposed intra-city desegregation. Metropolitanist alliances of convenience linking black integrationists and urban whites, such as

Detroit’s, were only feasible in the courtroom. *Milliken* ensured the absence of such an alliance in Boston.

Boston’s metropolitan proposals require considering the suburbs as central to its desegregation battles. Though a recent *Journal of Urban History* special issue devoted itself to “Rethinking the Boston ‘Busing Crisis,’” it neglected suburban politics and metropolitanism. This is a mistake. For a decade prior to busing, as Chapters One and Two describe, white Bostonians placed segregation in its metropolitan context. Not an afterthought, metropolitanism was formative to antibusing grievances in particular and the shape of Boston’s busing controversy overall.

The Boston School Committee’s demonizing of white suburbia had some truth, though overall the suburbs, through METCO, contributed far more to actual desegregation than did the Committee. Despite their participation in voluntary integration, suburbanites nevertheless reinforced their image as hypocritical and removed from the impact of desegregation. Suburban legislators defeated Daly-Sullivan and suburban support for METCO declined in tandem with the rise of metropolitanist arguments from Boston. Even after *Milliken* ruled out the possibility of mandatory two-way busing, suburbanites worked to reaffirm their communities’ political autonomy, with some raising the specter of metropolitan government and higher taxes to oppose METCO and other forms of voluntary metropolitan integration. Though METCO continued in most of its communities, testifying to the persistence of Massachusetts suburban liberalism, its period of expansion came to an end.

---

4 See special section “Rethinking the Boston ‘Busing Crisis,’” *Journal of Urban History* 43, Issue 2, March 2017. The special issue’s co-editor, Matthew Delmont, has erroneously written that the Boston School Committee opposed METCO. Coupled with the neglect of the Committee’s metropolitan arguments, this presents an inaccurate reading of the Boston desegregation controversy that ignores important grievances and potential solutions. See Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 90.
The decline of suburban support for integration and metropolitan cooperation was most visible in the Metropolitan Planning Project (MPP), a federally funded initiative with the quixotic mandate of eradicating metropolitan segregation within ten years. Prior to the busing order, fifty-six suburban school systems approved MPP, which proposed integrated educational programs on neutral third-sites and field trips pairing urban and suburban schools. In 1976-77, MPP’s first full year, however, a mere 210 students from Boston and three suburbs participated in its school pairing program. Though among the communities to propose the program, liberal suburbs such as Newton and Framingham withdrew prior to participating, with fears of mandatory metropolitan desegregation forming the core of their opposition. Historian Lily Geismer has pointed to tax considerations amid a recession and a suburban individualist worldview alongside concerns about metropolitanization as at play in Newton’s decision and in declining suburban support for voluntary integration more broadly. She correctly argues that suburban support for voluntary desegregation was shallow and hinged on such programs being free. Yet the groundwork for fears of mandatory metropolitan desegregation in Newton, Framingham, and other suburbs had been laid by a decade of radical metropolitan proposals emanating from Boston. As the courts divorced the suburbs from responsibility for metropolitan segregation, suburbanites already wary of such calls and defensive of their communities’ autonomy proved increasingly eager to sever their ties with the city.

The Boston School Committee stoked the anger and violence that accompanied school desegregation in Boston, anger that targeted Judge Garrity, suburbanites, and – above all – black children. But the Milliken precedent also fueled continued white resistance by making school

---

desegregation only for those unable or unwilling to escape Boston’s schools. Like tactical metropolitanism, such resistance emerged primarily from white racism, but racism was not its only influence. Both resistance and metropolitanism emerged from a valid understanding of the inadequacy of an integration order that mandated integration for the poorest only, in spite of academic work suggesting that this provided little benefit. Though antibusers opposed integration, many felt it only fair that if the courts required integration it should affect the metropolitan area equally.

In light of the heightened white flight that accompanied busing in Boston, producing a city school population that was and is overwhelmingly minority, impoverished, and segregated in the metropolitan context, a revisiting of these largely forgotten metropolitan proposals from the Boston busing crisis is in order. Though not a panacea, metropolitan solutions proved capable of narrowing achievement gaps and providing lasting integration by reducing opportunities for white flight.6 That proposals for metropolitan desegregation in Boston typically came from the “bad guys,” those most associated with fomenting the massive opposition accompanying mandatory busing, should not blind us to their possibilities for meaningful racial and socioeconomic integration. Like their counterparts in Detroit’s CCBE, white Bostonians proved capable of envisioning far-reaching radical solutions to segregation for the entire metropolis. Their racist desire for fewer black students in local schools pushed them to grapple with white flight and led to possible solutions far beyond the cautious proposals of true integrationists. The Boston School Committee deserves the scorn it earned for fomenting massive resistance to integration, but there is plenty of blame to share. Blame should also be reserved for suburbanites

---

and their political representatives who decided that mandatory desegregation was for urbanites alone and for the five Supreme Court justices whose *Milliken* decision ensured the continuation of separate and unequal education in America’s metropolises. The “antibusing” villains of the Boston controversy are not only more complex than they have been portrayed, they are more numerous.

**Violence and Desegregation Planning**

Metropolitanism was hidden behind white Boston’s most obvious response to intra-city busing: massive resistance and racialized violence. Traveling to his new school of South Boston High on the first day of school in September 1974, sixteen-year-old black student Clarence Teague experienced this ire. “Before we reached South Boston High School,” Teague recounted, “the bus was struck with rocks, tomatoes, and eggs.” Told to hurry inside upon arrival to avoid the large crowd of whites milling in front of the school, Teague was hit by a thrown can as bottles crashed around him. Leaving the school entailed a similar ordeal. On the way home, whites pelted Teague’s bus with rocks, bricks, cans, eggs, and tomatoes, breaking the windshield and several windows. On another bus in the convoy, ninth-grader Linda Merritt had her window struck with a rock, showering her with glass and sending a piece into the eye of the girl seated next to her. A nearby student required eight stitches from the attack. On the second day of busing, demonstrations continued. Teague was hit in the head by what he called “a heavy bolt” thrown through his bus’s window. For Merritt, there was no repeating of the day previous.
Though one of 124 students out of a projected attendance of 1,300 on the first day at Southie High, Merritt chose not to attend school the following day.\footnote{Affidavit of Clarence Teague and Affidavit of Linda Merritt, part V, box: 955, folder: 3, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records, Library of Congress (hereafter: “NAACP-LOC”); Robert S. Dentler and Marvin B. Scott, \textit{Schools on Trial: An Inside Account of the Boston Desegregation Case} (Cambridge: Abt Books, 1981), 173.} Thus began Phase I of busing.

Among the whites gathered outside of Southie High on the first day was Louise Day Hicks, the former School Committeewoman whose antagonism toward the NAACP’s quest for integration vaulted her to prominence in 1963. Now, over a decade later, Hicks stood with 500 demonstrators, many of whom supported her new antibusing organization, Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR). Inspired by a toy lion in a friend’s car, ROAR’s very name indicated a willingness to fight.\footnote{Formisano, \textit{Boston Against Busing}, 71.} Three days before the opening of school, Senator Edward Kennedy felt ROAR’s aggression. Invited to speak to a crowd of 8,000 antibusers at a ROAR rally at Government Center, Kennedy was drowned out by hecklers as members of the audience threw tomatoes and eggs. As Kennedy retreated to City Hall, members of the crowd followed him, shattering the glass panes in the building’s entryway.\footnote{Dentler and Scott, \textit{Schools on Trial}, 173.}

Antibusers’ treatment of Kennedy prefigured the more vicious attacks on African Americans in South Boston. On the third day of school, a group of 300 converged on Andrew Square Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) station, assaulting black riders and committing acts of vandalism.\footnote{Formisano, \textit{Boston Against Busing}, 77.} That day, antibusing leaders Hicks, State Representative Michael Flaherty, and State Senator William Bulger released an inflammatory statement titled “A Declaration of Clarification.” The statement claimed not to be motivated by racism at the same time that it trafficked in animus toward black Roxbury, where “there are at least one
hundred black people walking around… who have killed white people during the past two years.” The statement expertly played on white fears of black crime, fears that had reached a crescendo one year earlier following the gruesome murder of Renee Wagler, a white woman burned alive by black youths. But despite the claims of antibusers, white violence was prominent in the fall of 1974. On October 7, 1974, one year after the Wagler murder, Andre Yvon Jean-Louis, a Haitian maintenance worker, drove into South Boston to pick up his wife from work. Seeing a black face, antibusing demonstrators dragged him from the car and proceeded to beat him, with national television cameras looking on. Only a policeman who fired his gun into the air while rushing in managed to stop the near-lynching.

While outbursts continued throughout the fall, a stabbing at South Boston High School on December 11 reignited white opposition at a moment when the Boston School Committee was debating a commitment to making intra-city desegregation work. That day, Michael Faith, a white student who had previously been arrested at South Boston High, was stabbed in the stomach by a black student. Upon hearing the news, a large crowd of whites gathered outside the school, with some throwing rocks, bottles, and eggs at police as others shouted, “Get those niggers.” In a reversal of her role in September, Louise Day Hicks pleaded with the crowd to “allow the black kids to be bused back to Roxbury.” Many responded with “bus them back to Africa.” Police in riot gear eventually cleared a path for the arriving school buses, while antibusers rained objects down on the buses and the police and slashed tires on buses and police cars. The arriving buses served as a decoy, distracting the crowd from public transit buses, first used to transport police, that waited at the bottom of a hill behind the school for the escaping

---

12 Dentler and Scott, Schools on Trial, 185.
13 Ibid., 174.
black students who ran for safety. Only this elaborate ruse could get the students out of South Boston.\textsuperscript{14}

A clear example of the violence and racial animus accompanying the desegregation of South Boston High School, the stabbing was of crucial importance for its effect on the Boston School Committee. Due in court on December 16 to present its court-ordered plan for permanent desegregation, the Committee had been moderating its opposition to intra-city busing.\textsuperscript{15} According to Robert Dentler, one of Judge Garrity’s court-appointed experts, ROAR leaders were only certain of School Committeeman Paul Ellison’s antibusing stance.\textsuperscript{16} But even Ellison’s support was not guaranteed. On November 27, Ellison told an anti-busing meeting in Boston’s Brighton neighborhood of his visit to Minneapolis where he witnessed successful school desegregation: “Minneapolis is farther advanced than us. Though the school system is much smaller, I’ve never seen anything like it. There was no friction whatsoever because the parents and the teachers were involved in the desegregation plan and were given a chance to come up with the plan.” Ellison then told the antibusers that successful school desegregation required suburban involvement, stating that “The real failure of the Garrity decision, the real failure of the Supreme Court’s Detroit decision, is that suburban areas weren’t involved.”\textsuperscript{17}

Throughout the fall, School Committee President John Kerrigan continued advocating for metropolitan desegregation, though inconsistently. At a meeting of the Great Cities School Council, Kerrigan joined with the new African-American president of the Detroit Board of

\textsuperscript{15} Order Establishing Filing Dates and General Contents of Student Desegregation Plan, 31 October 1974, box: 39, folder: 2, Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc. Records, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University (hereafter: “METCO”).
\textsuperscript{16} Dentler and Scott, \textit{Schools on Trial}, 175.
\textsuperscript{17} “Anti-busing organizers get mixed reception in Brighton,” \textit{Allston-Brighton Citizen Item}, 28 November 1974.
Education, C.L. Golightly, to announce a new national movement calling for metropolitan school
reverse their opposition to national antibusing legislation. Kerrigan provided identical reasons for
supporting national antibusing legislation and for metropolitan desegregation, arguing that an
end to “racial isolation” could not “be accomplished within the city of Boston” because intra-city
busing hastened white flight.\footnote{Stephen Wermiel, “Kennedy, Brooke unchanged on busing,” \textit{Boston Globe}, 25 November 1974.} For Kerrigan, the solution to white flight entailed either
metropolitan desegregation or no busing at all.

Kerrigan preferred no desegregation at all. In October, he took aim at school integration
in Charlotte, North Carolina. With a group of Boston students visiting Charlotte’s schools to
witness desegregation, Kerrigan called for the students to return (on what was already their last
day in Charlotte) and lamented the “pretty-boy deep-throat and deep-voiced announcers on TV
[who] talked about great things down there, but it’s not the truth.”\footnote{Ross and Berg, \textit{I Respectfully Disagree,} 269.} Kerrigan neglected events in
Charlotte that conformed to his metropolitan arguments. Because its school district reached into
otherwise autonomous suburbs, Charlotte’s desegregation proceeded on a metropolitan basis.
Making arguments similar to Kerrigan’s, Charlotte’s white residents launched a successful class-
based challenge that sought to equalize busing throughout the region. Working- and middle-class
Charlotte residents organized as Citizens United for Fairness (CUFF) challenged the exemption
of wealthier suburbs from two-way busing. CUFF members cultivated black allies and sought a
redistribution of the superior resources of Charlotte’s southeastern suburbs.\footnote{Lassiter, \textit{The Silent Majority}, 175-196.} Though a more
diverse organization from the outset than Detroit’s CCBE, some CUFF members similarly
transitioned from reactionary anti-integrationists to productive agents seeking racial and class fairness. Evidenced by his remarks on Charlotte, Kerrigan’s metropolitanism remained primarily a tactical move designed to weaken suburban support for school desegregation. Only secondly did it serve as a regrettable option preferable to intra-city desegregation alone. But despite Kerrigan’s antibusing posturing, it appeared as if he too would vote to submit a plan mandating intra-city desegregation to the court. Kerrigan, a lawyer, told antibusers that he would not risk potential disbarment by attempting to defy the court’s order.\(^2\)

For its December 16 submission to the court, the Boston School Committee’s Educational Planning Center (EPC) prepared an intra-city desegregation plan that ended the Roxbury-Southie pairing and created up to fifty new magnet schools. The plan allowed for parent selection of a voluntary desegregation option, but students would be assigned as required to bring about desegregation if the voluntary selections failed to produce an integrated student body. Though vague on individual student assignments, the plan relied on mandatory busing, with an estimated 31,248 students to be bused out of a projected system-wide student population of 71,957, well above the 17,000 students bused in Phase I.\(^3\)

Though an intra-city plan, the major thrust of the December 16 proposal was its metropolitan recommendations. The 300-page plan’s loftiest section was its chapter titled “Metropolitan Concerns,” which alone ran 120 pages. It argued that the Brown v. Board of Education decision that “separate education is inherently unequal education” required equal educational opportunities for urban and suburban children. Metropolitan Boston “should

\(^2\) Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 84.
integrate because it is morally right. Integration should not be morally and legally right for urban areas only.” To support its metropolitanism, the plan noted Boston’s steadily rising minority student population and contrasted it with the largely white suburban and parochial school systems. In Boston’s public schools, 1974 marked the last year that white students outnumbered minority students, a stark contrast with other schools in the region. As of December 1974, Boston’s parochial schools had 23,218 white students and only 1,701 black students. Suburban schools were whiter still, educating 56,052 white students and only 569 local black students (METCO students were not part of the plan’s calculations). The plan devoted a full page to noting that a racial census of area private schools was not made available, the whiteness of the blank page implying the schools’ racial composition.24

The EPC offered a constructive solution to school segregation. Though advocating metropolitanism, it did not seek to evade Boston’s desegregation mandate. The plan’s metropolitan recommendations were voluntary. Through “mutually developed plans and proposals” between city and suburb, the plan argued that “sufficient interest in a metropolitan approach to education will be generated which will enable meaningful, large scale student integration efforts to begin.”25 Whether or not this optimism was to prove misguided, the plan required substantial intra-city busing. But in light of the renewed militancy provoked by the stabbing of Michael Faith, any mandatory busing became unacceptable to a majority of the Committee. On December 16, in a three to two vote, Committee members John McDonough, Paul Ellison, and John Kerrigan voted against submitting the plan to Judge Garrity, with

25 Ibid.
Kathleen Sullivan and Paul Tierney dissenting. School Committee counsel submitted the EPC’s plan anyway in an unsuccessful attempt to avoid a contempt of court charge.26

In order for the three members to purge themselves of the contempt charge, Judge Garrity ordered the School Committee to submit a desegregation plan by January 7, 1975. Hours before the deadline, the School Committee instructed its planning staff to present the court with an entirely voluntary plan without mandatory busing.27 Though the Committee’s plan suggested a once-weekly use of third site “resource centers” for the mixing of students from their various “home schools,” the plan did not promise that schools would be permanently desegregated.28 The EPC’s metropolitan exhortations remained, but were decoupled from a productive vow to desegregate Boston’s schools. Despite noting a courtroom statement of Kerrigan’s that “the only way you are going to desegregate city schools is through forced busing,” Judge Garrity decided that the submission of the Committee’s antibusing desegregation plan was enough to purge the three Committee members of contempt.29

Though it chose to reaffirm its hardline anti-desegregation stance in the wake of the stabbing, the fall of 1974 witnessed something of a constructive impulse from the Boston School Committee alongside its program of massive resistance. This entailed a recognition that massive resistance could not go on forever and that metropolitan desegregation and intra-city busing did not constitute an either-or proposition. Though it led to a retrenchment, the stabbing did not signal the end of the Committee’s metropolitanism. Rather, the metropolitan idea found a more respectable spokesperson.

---

27 Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 86.
28 Memorandum to Masters from Robert A. Dentler, 5 February 1975, box: 39, folder: 1374, FH.
29 Memorandum and Conditional Order as to Three Defendants’ Civil Contempt, 8 January 1975, box: 2, folder: 3, Louise Day Hicks Papers, City of Boston Archives and Records Center (hereafter: “LDH”).
Metropolitanism’s Selective Resentments

In the wake of the intransigence of her three colleagues, Kathleen Sullivan emerged as the Committee’s most prominent member and most productive advocate of metropolitan desegregation. Though born in suburban Wellesley and the daughter of the owner of the National Football League’s New England Patriots, Sullivan was first elected in 1973 on her class-based opposition to the state’s Racial Imbalance Act. Despite her pedigree, Sullivan’s class-based appeals and tendency to view educational issues through a metropolitan lens remained a consistent aspect of her politics. And her politics were popular. Sullivan became the leading vote-getter in the 1975 School Committee elections and led every municipal candidate in citywide vote totals in 1977. Voters responded to her metropolitan proposals that seized the productive aspects of antibusers’ anti-suburban grievances and eschewed racist vitriol.

Sullivan trumpeted the metropolitan implications of an opinion survey conducted in December 1974. With 600 respondents from a total of thirty-six cities and towns in greater Boston, the survey provided a reasonably in-depth overview of metropolitan attitudes toward busing. According to the survey, though only 2 percent of suburbanites advocated strict segregation and only 4 percent said they would not be willing to have their children attend a school in which some children were black, 56 percent of suburbanites indicated an opposition to busing while another 14 percent claimed “mixed feelings.” Despite substantial antibusing sentiment, the survey indicated a majority of suburbanites were open to the one-way busing of a modest percentage of Boston students, both black and white, to suburban schools with available

---

31 Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 105.
32 Suburban Coalition, Statement in Support of Increased Suburban Involvement in Desegregation before Joint House-Senate Education Committee hearing, 2 April 1975, box: 39, folder: 55, METCO.
seats so long as the state covered all costs. Sixty-nine percent of suburban respondents favored allowing 10 percent of inner city children per class, 48 percent approved of as many as 25 percent, and 28 percent favored classes of up to 50 percent Boston children. Suburban busing had appeal for black Bostonians as well. Following the fall’s outbreaks of violence at South Boston High, only 40 percent of black respondents supported busing. They were outnumbered by the 44 percent who opposed busing. Yet when it came to one-way busing to the suburbs, 69 percent of black respondents provided support with only 24 percent opposed.33

With the survey indicating suburban support for a modest amount of metropolitan integration, Sullivan teamed with Democratic State Representative Michael Daly to introduce the Daly-Sullivan Bill in January 1975. The proposal required all suburbs with a median family income higher than the metropolitan average to set aside up to 10 percent of their classroom seats for black and white students from Boston. Daly-Sullivan marked Boston’s first serious legislative proposal for metropolitan integration in the post-Milliken era, one recognizing the strict limits of suburban liberal integrationism. Daly-Sullivan did not require that suburban children ride a bus to the city and mandated that the state would pay the full costs of transport.34

By including only the wealthiest suburban communities, Daly-Sullivan provided a solution in line with sociologist James Coleman’s findings that racial integration produced measurable academic benefits only if middle-class children predominated.35

Daly-Sullivan earned a sizeable urban constituency. In February, the Boston Globe editorialized in its favor. Though noting Daly-Sullivan was “less than ideal” because it

33 Preliminary Report: A Study of Attitudes Toward School Integration in the Boston Metropolitan Area, box: 37, folder: 57, METCO.
34 Daly-Sullivan Bill, box: 39, folder: 55, METCO.
“envisions busing only for city youngsters,” would allow the continuation of “neighborhood schools” only in suburban communities, and “would subject underprivileged city students to the competitive rigors… of the suburbs forced to admit them to their schools,” the *Globe* compared the proposal to the Marshall Plan’s rebuilding of Western Europe. The *Globe* noted that Daly-Sullivan addressed “the legitimate grievances of the anti-busing forces… without compromising the basic objective of integration.” Daly-Sullivan seized the productive kernel hidden in typical antibusing grievances to produce a sincere, non-tactical metropolitan solution that discarded antibusers’ visceral racism and committed Boston to making integration work.

Daly-Sullivan built off of antibusers’ anti-suburban resentments. Boston’s antibusers would concur with an anonymous letter-writer who characterized busing as “an experiment imposed on the working people of Boston by a tyrannical judge with the support of an arrogant and insensitive social elite.” Antibusers argued that by virtue of excluding the poor and black, elite communities avoided being subject to the same desegregation mandate as Boston. No writer harped on the theme of liberal suburban hypocrisy more than antibusing columnist Dick Sinnott, whose “City Hall Scene” column appeared in dozens of neighborhood weekly newspapers. Following the Phase I busing order in June 1974, Sinnott attacked “the liberals and the pseudos who, from their safe sanctuaries in suburbia, tell us what to do but will not help us do it.” In contrast, Sinnott claimed to stand for “the poor sunuvabees who pay our taxes and sweat tuitions, sweat mortgages and car payments and the cost of groceries and fuel, get no handouts, give our blood, take our turn in line, volunteer for charities, and work two jobs, sometimes three.”

---

36 “Suburbs should help,” *Boston Globe*, 9 February 1975
37 “To the Citizens of Boston,” 4 September 1975, box: 3, folder: 21, Citywide Educational Coalition Records, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University (hereafter: “CEC”).
38 Dick Sinnott, “City Hall Scene: Sinnott will take respite,” 20 June 1974. part: 100.001, box: 1, folder: 30, Congressman John Joseph Moakley Papers, Moakley Archive and Institute, Suffolk University (hereafter: “JJM”).
Despite his anti-suburban resentments, Sinnott believed efforts to gain mandatory suburban involvement were futile and his grievances never turned into a productive metropolitanism.\textsuperscript{40}

Sinnott served as a counterpoint to the \textit{Boston Globe}, which antibusers considered suburban-dominated and partial to African Americans. Throughout the busing controversy, antibusers targeted the \textit{Globe}. In November 1974, Kerrigan announced an economic boycott against the paper’s advertisers. The \textit{Globe}’s headquarters just outside of Southie was repeatedly targeted by drive-by shootings and bomb threats. For Kerrigan, this was worth celebrating: “It pleases me to no end when the \textit{Globe} has to put bulletproof shields up and when the [Tactical Police Force] has to stand guard at the \textit{Globe} and not the \textit{Herald}.”\textsuperscript{41} Underscoring the \textit{Globe}’s suburban attachments, the following summer ROAR took its protest to the suburban home of the president of the \textit{Globe}’s parent company. In a forty-minute demonstration in the rain, 1,000 antibusers sang “God Bless America” and called for a boycott of the newspaper.\textsuperscript{42} The \textit{Globe} was keenly aware of its reputation as the voice of ostensibly liberal suburbia. State Senator Billy Bulger made the oft-repeated joke that reaching the \textit{Globe}’s “urban team” after five o’clock required a long-distance phone call. There was truth in this quip. An internal \textit{Globe} memo ended with the recommendation that “it might be a good idea for a \textit{Globe} editor to live in Boston.”\textsuperscript{43}

Anti-suburban resentments permeated antibusers’ targeting of Judge Garrity, a resident of the exclusive suburb of Wellesley. On the eve of Phase I, a student from South Boston High wrote Garrity to express dismay that a “Fedral (sic) Judge who does not live within the city of Boston” could force Boston residents to do something that he would not be subject to. Revealing

\textsuperscript{40} Formisano, \textit{Boston Against Busing}, 190.
\textsuperscript{42} “ROAR protests Globe coverage,” \textit{Boston Globe}, 9 June 1975. Antibusers also announced a boycott of the United Way, a charity organization which they claimed used funds to support busing.
\textsuperscript{43} Lukas, \textit{Common Ground}, 499.
a common misunderstanding of busing’s origins, the student claimed that those who “voted for forced busing have children who attend private or boarding schools of their choice.”\textsuperscript{44} Other antibusers revealed that they would support metropolitan desegregation, if only to spite Garrity. One wrote Garrity hoping “that the NAACP is successful in obtaining metropolitanization so areas like Wellesley” will be required to “take part in this plan which they so heartily endorse from a distance.”\textsuperscript{45}

Given Boston’s revolutionary past and the coming U.S. Bicentennial, Boston’s antibusers drew on the symbolism of the American Revolution to articulate their opposition to integration in explicitly anti-suburban ways. The anti-suburban revolutionary metaphor, used primarily to oppose busing, nevertheless implied that a metropolitan remedy was more equitable than intra-city busing and indicated potential support for metropolitan solutions such as Daly-Sullivan.

Much of Boston’s collective antibusing action revolved around South Boston and Charlestown High Schools, two settings imbued with symbolic importance. Immediately behind Southie High juts the Dorchester Heights National Monument, erected to celebrate the fortification of Dorchester Heights and the British evacuation of Boston during the Revolutionary War. Charlestown High sat across the street from the Bunker Hill Monument, commemorating the first significant battle between American and British forces in 1775. In these settings, Boston’s antibusers positioned themselves as the Patriots and cast the suburbanites in the role of the British. For the role of tyrannical King George III, antibusers selected Garrity. Employing this revolutionary symbolism, a frequently used sign at antibusing rallies read

“\textsc{WELCOME TO BOSTON/ THE CITY IS OCCUPIED/ A BOYCOTT EXISTS/ LAW IS BY}

\textsuperscript{44} Letter, “Someone who just wants to be EQUAL” to Judge Garrity, 9 September 1974, box: 49, folder: 4, Garrity, W. Arthur, Jr.: Papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case, Archives and Special Collections, University of Massachusetts Boston (hereafter: “WAG”).
\textsuperscript{45} Unsigned Letter, “To Whom it May Concern,” 23 September 1974, box: 49, folder: 5, WAG.
DECREE.” One side of the sign read “1774,” the other “1974.” Indicative of such appeals to Boston’s revolutionary tradition, Garrity received multiple letters from individuals who signed their name as Thomas Paine. One such letter, doubling down on the fictional pretense, took the form of a suggested letter from the judge to the people of Boston. The letter attacked Garrity’s suburban residence and its pretend-Garrity vowed to “move to an integrated part of Boston.” So too did many of metropolitan Boston’s prominent liberals: “Ted Kennedy is coming in from Hyannis and his children will be attending Roxbury schools on a voluntary basis… Kevin White’s children are being pulled out of their private schools and will attend Roxbury schools.”

John Kerrigan proved the most outspoken employer of the revolutionary metaphor. In a July 1974 televised editorial Kerrigan told the audience that “in 1776, and again in 1812, a bright lantern in the North Church alerted us to attack from without. Today in Boston, the light of academic and parental freedom casts a sickly glow reminding us that outsiders decide, in the sterile vastness of their remote estates, that Boston is sick and suburbia has the remedy: bus our children.” Claiming that “no alien combine has ever dictated its self-serving philosophy to Boston with success,” Kerrigan noted that if America’s founding fathers had accepted outside interference “today we would be standing to attention to the strains of ‘God Save the Queen’ at our soccer and cricket matches.”

Though outlandish, Kerrigan’s revolutionary appeals rested upon a conception of the city at the heart of an interconnected region and portrayed metropolitan solutions as democratic. At a January 1975 School Committee meeting, Kerrigan called for the “spirit of 1775” to be

---

“renewed.” Kerrigan envisioned a “twentieth century Paul Revere… not shouting, ‘the blacks are coming,’ but proclaiming the mutual dependence of the city and suburb.” Viewing Boston as the hub of a regional wheel, Kerrigan argued that failing to incorporate the suburbs in desegregation was akin to destroying the wheel “so that no spokes could ever again connect the center of the wheel to the suburban rim.” As Kerrigan told his colleagues, the “mutual dependence” of city and suburb required metropolitan solutions to inequality, including the eradication of the subtle suburban discrimination taking place in “realty offices, banks and zoning board meetings and hid[ing] behind euphemisms like ecology, conservation and open space.” To buttress his attack on suburban discrimination, Kerrigan’s speech drew on sources ranging from the United States Civil Rights Commission to Ebony magazine.49

Racism was the major thrust behind antibusing. Kerrigan’s occasional rhetorical antiracism cannot be allowed to camouflage his visceral racism, such as when he called black ABC television report Lem Tucker “one generation away from swinging in the trees” while imitating a monkey.50 A gendered opposition to interracial sex motivated many antibusers. A poster placed around South Boston by a group calling itself the South Boston Liberation Army complained of friendliness between white and black students, “Especially white females to black males.” The group demanded “that white girls keep away from black students and aides” and vowed “revenge on anyone who violates this rule.”51 Parents wrote Garrity expressing concern over their daughters attending an integrated school. Their sons did not receive as much worry. A South Boston resident with sons and daughters pledged to “take no chances in the safety of my

49 Proceedings of the School Committee, 2 January 1975, box: 1, folder: 58, METCO. On suburban battles that pitted advocates of affordable housing against those of “open space,” see Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 173-198.
50 Lukas, Common Ground, 137-38.
51 Poster, South Boston Liberation Army, box: 34, folder: 1190, FH.
daughters” by letting them go to Roxbury.\footnote{Letter, Francis J. Coughlin to Judge Garrity, ca. August 1974, box: 49, folder: 3, WAG.} A white man from suburban Winchester fearful of metropolitan integration wrote Mayor Kevin White to ask him “what good is this so called ‘quality education’ for a white family” who “one day will answer a knock on the door, a Black man there at your front door to take out your beautiful daughter on a date.”\footnote{Letter, Carl F. DeFilippe, Sr. to Mayor Kevin White, 11 October 1974, box: 49, folder: 7, WAG.}

Daly-Sullivan and other proposals for metropolitan school desegregation offered no salves to hardline racists unwilling to have white children educated in an integrated environment. Not designed to bypass Boston’s desegregation mandate, for racist opponents of integration Daly-Sullivan could only offer a small reduction of the number of black students found in a Boston classroom. Daly-Sullivan provided a productive response to the valid concerns over suburban exemption and the lack of socioeconomic integration provided by an intra-city desegregation plan that underlay antibusers’ screeds against suburban elites. But post-\textit{Milliken} metropolitan proposals such as Daly-Sullivan proved incapable of crossing the chasm that separated black Bostonians and the School Committee, of coexisting with a rising tide of black nationalism, or of offering a realistic chance of achieving victory in a suburban-dominated state legislature that Boston’s tactical metropolitanism made increasingly opposed to integration.

\textbf{Black Boston and the Metropolitan Idea}

In returning metropolitanism to the legislature, \textit{Milliken} helped pit potential coalition partners against each other. Though supportive of metropolitan solutions, the NAACP, understanding that \textit{Milliken} made mandatory metropolitanism unlikely, pushed for extensive intra-city busing. The NAACP’s push for intra-city measures was coupled with Freedom House’s opposition to
mandatory metropolitanism. Committed to black nationalism, Freedom House opposed dispersing black students throughout the metropolis and feared a concomitant loss of black political power that perpetual minority status would entail. Believing that *Milliken* concluded Boston’s metropolitan moment, the NAACP proved more apt to align with the nationalist Freedom House than to support the Committee’s metropolitanism.

In contrast to the desegregation plans submitted to Judge Garrity by the Boston School Committee, the plaintiff NAACP proposed an intra-city redistricting plan. Aiming to ensure that every school educated an integrated student body, the NAACP proposed extensive busing to put every Boston school within 15 percent of the overall racial mix of the school system.\(^{54}\) The NAACP did not oppose metropolitan solutions, but it recognized that the *Milliken* precedent made metropolitanism implausible and believed that desegregation was possible within Boston alone.

*Milliken* dictated NAACP strategy. The *Milliken* precedent required plaintiffs to prove gerrymandering of district lines between the city and the suburbs. As school district lines in Massachusetts were drawn when few African Americans resided in the state and had not been altered, the NAACP conceded there existed “virtually no chance” of achieving mandated metropolitan desegregation in Phase II.\(^{55}\) Despite this, NAACP attorney J. Harold Flannery, a veteran of both the Detroit and Boston cases, stated that plaintiffs would support a metropolitan order as long as there was two-way busing.\(^{56}\) The NAACP’s March 1975 response to Mayor White’s motion to include the suburbs in desegregation indicated its understanding of the post-*Milliken* implausibility of metropolitanism. The NAACP stated that its opposition to White’s

---

motion “does not represent a belief that metropolitanization is generally undesirable,” and noted that plaintiffs raised the possibility of metropolitan relief in their original complaint. Rather, the NAACP opposed the motion because it was untenable “in light of the Detroit decision” and could “lead to confusion, false hopes, and distraction from the weighty concerns already before the court.” Judge Garrity agreed with the NAACP, stating that “to give hope to a suburban solution is not fair to the people of this city… The concept of metropolitanism would be great if there was some legal precedent for it.”

Not all black organizations favored metropolitan desegregation. Freedom House, a Roxbury hub for community activism, campaigned against metropolitanism. Freedom House argued that the “public discussion of metropolitanism over the last several months” constituted “a mischievous diverting of attention from the obligation of the Boston schools to cease abuse of its Black students.” Long a participant in battling the inferior education provided to Boston’s black pupils, Freedom House could not envision working with the Committee or embracing an aspect of its politics.

More than an understandable aversion to cooperating with the Boston School Committee animated Freedom House’s response. Freedom House’s deepening commitment to the tenets of black nationalism and community control stood at odds with metropolitanism. Metropolitanists pointed to sociologist James Coleman’s contention that improved educational outcomes required that middle-class children predominate in every school, reasoning that poor black pupils dragged down overall class performance. “Thus, metropolitan desegregation is advocated to make Black...

57 Plaintiffs’ Response to the Motion to Modify the Decree, 31 March 1975, part: V, box: 956, folder: 7, NAACP-LOC.
59 Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education, Boston School Committee: ‘Student Desegregation Plan’: A Response, 3 February 1975, box: 43, folder: 1534, FH.
children a perpetual minority,” observed Freedom House.60 During the metropolitan moment, many urban whites advocated metropolitanism for precisely this reason.

Freedom House’s criticism here could also apply to Massachusetts’s 1965 Racial Imbalance Act, which held that any school over 50 percent “nonwhite” was “racially imbalanced.” Yet Freedom House was instrumental in providing support for the law, illustrating how the organization’s aims changed over the decade. Black educational activism in Boston first sought access to better schools and to the structures of power. Unsuccessful in the latter aim, it turned to busing to gain access to schools throughout the city. Now with a black majority school system seeming inevitable, Freedom House redoubled its efforts at securing “greater Black access to the instruments of decision making in public schooling” and fought against metropolitanism.61

In April 1975, Freedom House campaigned against Daly-Sullivan. Director of Freedom House’s Institute on Schools and Education Ellen Jackson, the founder of Operation Exodus, delivered its statement to the State House. While lauding METCO and noting that Daly-Sullivan appeared to be a rapid expansion of the program, Jackson argued against such an interpretation. METCO’s goals of improved education stood in clear contrast to the “largely political” goals of Boston’s white metropolitanists. Jackson observed that metropolitan proposals offered “one more specious ‘way out’ of school desegregation” and were made with the aim of “sharing the burden.” Predicting that Daly-Sullivan could convert METCO into a state operation, Freedom House let it be known that it would oppose “the removal of the METCO administration from the Black community to the State Department of Education.”62

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education Press Release, 2 April 1975, box: 42, folder: 1491, FH.
Though its founders hoped for metropolitan desegregation, METCO echoed many of Freedom House’s concerns. A product of extensive urban and suburban cooperation with a Board of Directors drawn from both constituencies, METCO celebrated its organizational base in the heart of black Roxbury. METCO portrayed a mandatory metropolitan desegregation program as a “paternalistic/colonial administration which removes whatever vestige of decision-making power from the Black Community that exists as a result of the programs operating within and for that community.” Like Freedom House, METCO argued that Daly-Sullivan intended to “blunt” Boston’s desegregation effort by removing students from Boston. Though Daly-Sullivan would not prevent intra-city busing in Boston, METCO estimated that the bill’s provisions for one-way busing to the suburbs would involve up to 25 percent of Boston students. That this would require the highly unlikely situation of all schools in every affected suburban district being able to educate the maximum number of Boston students allowed – 10 percent of their total enrollment – did not receive mention. Given the lack of available seats, the number of students involved would likely be much lower. In line with the Milliken precedent, potential metropolitan coalition partners like METCO and the NAACP aligned with nationalists like Freedom House and pressed for intra-city solutions rather than embrace the School Committee’s metropolitanism. Facing judicial precedent and suburban opposition, intra-city desegregation proved more realizable than mandatory metropolitanism. Milliken helped to push METCO away from larger metropolitan solutions and a potential metropolitanist coalition in another way. By forcing metropolitanism into the legislative realm, Milliken created a situation where METCO felt its very existence was threatened, as Daly-Sullivan helped accelerate a larger suburban backlash against metropolitanism that at times included METCO as a target.

---

63 METCO Press Release, 4 March 1975, box: 38, folder: 1302, FH.
Suburbs and Metropolitanism

The Daly-Sullivan Bill, unmentioned in all major works about the Boston busing controversy, produced meaningful city-building consequences prior to coming to a vote. By increasing suburban opposition to integration and prodding suburbanites to defend suburban sovereignty, Daly-Sullivan inadvertently contributed to the further estrangement of Boston and its suburbs, and helped erode suburban support for voluntary metropolitan measures such as METCO.

METCO’s response to Daly-Sullivan not only had to take black reactions into account, but the growing opposition to metropolitanism from its participating suburbs. While it echoed Freedom House’s black nationalist concerns, the main thrust of METCO’s opposition to mandatory metropolitanism reflected worries about METCO’s suburban support. As Geismer has described, suburban liberal activists responding to Boston’s busing crisis pushed for a modest expansion of METCO in the fall of 1974, seeking more seats for METCO students in participating suburbs and succeeding in extending the program into seven new towns. This effort to expand into “more politically conservative and squarely middle-class communities” combined with fears aroused by Daly-Sullivan to provoke a backlash against a perceived threat of metropolitanization. This backlash led METCO to distance itself from Daly-Sullivan and downplay its commitment to metropolitan integration. By early 1975, METCO warned against metropolitanization “being corrupted by those who would use it primarily as a desegregative

---

64 For example, Daly-Sullivan is unmentioned in Lukas, Common Ground; Formisano, Boston Against Busing; Delmont, Why Busing Failed; Sheehan, The Boston School Integration Dispute; and Buell and Brisbin, School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods. Only Geismer, focusing on suburban politics rather than the busing controversy, mentions Daly-Sullivan as a factor encouraging suburban opposition to METCO. Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 205, 208.
65 Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 206-207.
66 Ibid., 208.
tool,” a sharp departure for an organization founded upon metropolitan cooperation for the sole purpose of providing integration.67

In this climate, METCO tailored its response to Daly-Sullivan to suburbanites, telling them that METCO was not “a two-way program” that would send suburban students to city schools, function as “a metropolitan school district,” or be “mandatory in suburban communities.” Daly-Sullivan, though mandatory, did not entail a metropolitan school district or two-way busing. METCO’s response catered more to suburban fears than it engaged the legislation itself.

METCO likewise argued that Daly-Sullivan would do “irreparable damage to the progress and process of urban-suburban cooperation.”68 While tactical metropolitanism led to a decline in suburban enthusiasm for METCO evident since at least December 1971, when an internal METCO memo questioned whether “METCO can take its continued existence for granted,” Daly-Sullivan provided further ammunition for anti-integrationist suburbanites and stoked the fears of suburban residents otherwise content to let Boston integrate so long as mandatory desegregation never reached the suburbs.69

In February 1975, taking stock of growing bipartisan suburban resistance to metropolitan desegregation, antibusing columnist Dick Sinnott predicted that suburbanites would reject Daly-Sullivan. Sinnott quoted Democratic Dedham State Representative Charlie McGowan calling busing a “disease” that “should be controlled at the source.”70 Dedham’s city government

67 METCO Press Release, 4 March 1975, box: 38, folder: 1302, FH.
68 Ibid.
69 Memo, “Suburban Communities’ Support for METCO,” 9 December 1971, box: 9, folder: 59, METCO.
70 Dick Sinnott, “City Hall Scene,” 7 February 1975, box: 40, folder: 31, METCO. Geismer notes that McGowan and many of those he represented in Dedham opposed “any kind of busing,” but McGowan himself staked a colorblind position: “I am not opposed to the black man who can buy a house next to me and afford to take care of his property and raise his children in the same way I do.” Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 208.
concurred with McGowan, and its Board of Selectmen passed a resolution opposing mandatory busing of any type.\footnote{Jack Hoey, “Busing views to be aired tonight,” \textit{Dedham Daily Transcript}, 28 January 1975.} Republican Gilbert W. Cox, Jr. of Needham argued that participating in METCO absolved Needham of aiding Boston’s desegregation further.\footnote{Dick Sinnott, “City Hall Scene,” 7 February 1975, METCO.} Needham had 30,000 residents, of whom only sixty-three were African American. The eighty students enrolled in METCO more than doubled Needham’s black population during the day.\footnote{Dick Sinnott, “City Hall Scene,” ca. 1975, box: 40, folder: 31, METCO.} In a letter sent to METCO parents, Republican State Representative Ann Gannett of Wayland wrote that Daly-Sullivan threatened the educational opportunities which METCO provided. “I do not believe that METCO and Daly-Sullivan can operate jointly – one or the other would fail,” she wrote. Gannett argued that the mandatory nature of Daly-Sullivan would produce hostility. “Children should not go, even voluntarily, into a hostile atmosphere out of town,” reasoned Gannett, at a time that hundreds of Roxbury children were involuntarily bused on a daily basis into a hostile environment within the city.\footnote{Representative Ann Gannett, “Letter to METCO Parents,” 8 April 1975, box: 20, folder: 9, METCO.}

That both suburban Democrats and Republicans balked at Daly-Sullivan – and some, particularly in less liberal towns like Dedham, bristled at METCO’s expansion – suggested the bipartisan nature of suburban opposition to metropolitanism, some of it fueled by a mobilization of previously less vocal moderate and conservative voters.\footnote{On this mobilization, see: Geismer, \textit{Don’t Blame Us}, 207-208.} Yet even suburban liberals, who did far more to advance integration than their counterparts in metropolitan Detroit and Philadelphia, had always qualified their support of METCO, as the program hinged on state incentives and being voluntary. Massachusetts Secretary of Educational Affairs Joseph M. Cronin embodied this suburban liberalism when he lauded METCO for introducing his daughter to Roxbury
children whom she otherwise would have never met. Cronin called for increased state aid for metropolitan programs, but opposed the creation of a metropolitan school district. Stating that the state should “pick up a majority of the costs,” Cronin reflected the type of suburban liberal who supported METCO so long as it was paid for, provided benefits to their children, and did not raise the specter of metropolitan governance or two-way busing.76 As Geismer has argued, “Individualist and rights-based programs like METCO that advocated for one-way busing and did not threaten property values or inconvenience white children… directly complimented the material priorities of suburban liberals as well as their forms of political activism.”77

Yet Daly-Sullivan did not envision metropolitan government or two-way busing, hinged on the state providing transportation, and would only place children in seats otherwise unoccupied. What ultimately set Daly-Sullivan apart was that it entailed mandatory desegregation and could bring larger numbers of black students to suburban schools. Real-world suburban support depended on voluntary measures and integrating only a small number of black students. But in the context of Daly-Sullivan, even miniscule voluntary efforts could earn suburban opposition. Some opponents cast Daly-Sullivan and METCO as emblematic of the same metropolitan threat.

The increasing suburban opposition to integration and concomitant reassertion of suburban autonomy played out most visibly in suburban Winchester, whose School Committee proposed joining METCO and accepting forty-five black students. Winchester’s debate hinged on metropolitan fears, with both METCO supporters and opponents claiming to be best positioned to preserve the privileges of suburban autonomy. Winchester School Committee

77 Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 12.
Chairman Stephen R. Parkhurst argued that participating in METCO could preclude mandatory metropolitanism. “To the extent that communities such as Winchester assist in educating some minority group children, the chances of some kind of a forced or mandated plan are reduced,” argued Parkhurst, who noted that Winchester would be free to leave the program at any time. Opponents argued that METCO functioned as a Trojan horse for mandatory desegregation. One resident claimed that Daly-Sullivan was patterned on the METCO program, and that the only difference was that “the word ‘voluntary’ has been replaced with the word ‘required’ for the suburbs.” When the Winchester School Committee approved participating in METCO, its opponents organized a referendum on the matter.

Metropolitanism dominated Winchester’s referendum campaign. After opponents organized the antibusing organization Citizens for Responsible Education in Winchester (CREW) and reached out to Boston’s ROAR, METCO supporters portrayed the urban-suburban antibusing alliance as an introduction of metropolitanism to Winchester. A member of the town government observed that a group “exhorting Winchester to protect home rule, and to guard against metropolitanism, is now itself part of a political movement flung across Greater Metropolitan Boston and beyond.” Parkhurst portrayed attendees at a CREW meeting as “outside agitators” and termed those who attended a subsequent demonstration in front of his home “import[ed] outsiders.” Though some demonstrators likely came from beyond Winchester, they would be ineligible to vote in the town’s referendum. On voting day, 61 percent

---

81 Stephen R. Parkhurst, Letter to the Editor, Winchester Star, 1 May 1975. Parkhurst also compared the demonstrators to the Nazis, writing that “The parallel with Germany in the 1930s is all to (sic) clear to see.”
of voters indicated their opposition to METCO. In spite of the vote, the School Committee announced it would proceed with plans to participate in METCO, prompting a move to recall the Committee from office.\textsuperscript{82}

METCO never came to Winchester. In spite of the Committee’s pleas for funding, the state did not provide the $110,000 the Committee requested to join METCO.\textsuperscript{83} Absent full funding, METCO advocates withdrew the community’s participation. In writing of Winchester’s METCO battle, Geismer argues against explanations that emphasize racism, noting instead that “support for the program outside a small circle of activists was always relatively shallow and conditional on it being free.”\textsuperscript{84} But METCO’s shallow support does not diminish charges of racism. Sixty-one percent of Winchester voters opposed the program – and by extension, the presence of forty-five black students – even if the program came free to Winchester. The fears of mandatory metropolitan desegregation stoked by both sides of the debate revealed an opposition to increasing ties to Boston and its increasingly black schools beyond a token level.

METCO did expand modestly in the 1974-75 school year, but not to the extent its backers hoped. Both Beverly and Georgetown voted to enter the program but were denied entry because of a lack of funds. In referendums, voters in Chelmsford, Peabody, and Middleton rejected participating in METCO.\textsuperscript{85} At the very time that mandatory busing was imposed on Boston only, METCO’s expansion stalled.

Given the intensity of suburban battles over the small METCO program, it was unsurprising that the Massachusetts Legislature rejected Daly-Sullivan by a vote of 190 to 34 on

---

\textsuperscript{82} Ross and Berg, ‘I Respectfully Disagree,’ 449.
\textsuperscript{83} Letter from Winchester Supporters of METCO to Governor Michael Dukakis, 25 August 1975 and Letter from Winchester Supporters of METCO to Paul Parks, Secretary of Education, 25 August 1975, box: 20, folder: 22, METCO.
\textsuperscript{84} Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 211-12.
\textsuperscript{85} Clipping, Brenda Payton, “Are We Losing Our Enthusiasm for METCO?,” ca. 1976, box: 45, folder: 5, METCO.
April 30, 1975. Republicans were unanimous in their opposition, while the Democrats revealed a stark regional divide. Suburban Democrats joined with their Republican colleagues, while Speaker of the House, Democrat David M. Bartley of Western Massachusetts and several Boston Democrats provided votes in favor. As in Philadelphia and Detroit, residence helped dictate responses to metropolitanism. In defending their communities’ autonomy from the threat of metropolitanism, suburbanites articulated a bipartisan defense of their spatial privileges. This bipartisan suburban anti-metropolitanism suggests a need, as historian Matthew Lassiter has put it, to “look beyond electoral realignment and plotlines of left-right polarization to argue that the politics of ‘suburban secession’ illuminate national and bipartisan/nonpartisan defenses of racial privilege, class exclusion, and homeowners’ property rights.” As Geismer notes, even ostensibly liberal Massachusetts, the only state to vote for George McGovern in 1972, fits comfortably into a national narrative of political reorientation toward the economic and material priorities of suburbanites. Consensus, more than conflict, marked the suburban response to mandatory metropolitanism. Residence, rather than party affiliation, proved the most important fissure.

**Devising Phase II**

Despite metropolitanism’s defeat, successful intra-city desegregation seemed numerically possible within majority-white Boston’s public schools. Over the course of the 1974-1975 school year, deliberations produced an intra-city plan – the so-called Masters’ Plan – that many white and black residents might have been able to live with, one that earned grudging admiration from

---

88 Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us*, 1-16.
white anti-integrationists and the support of black nationalists. Yet this was not to be. The busing plan that ultimately emerged exacerbated existing tensions, affected working-class Bostonians the most, and prolonged the busing controversy. With the arrival of the Phase II busing plan, which maintained the pairing of Roxbury and South Boston and entailed no metropolitan solutions beyond a stagnant METCO, the Boston School Committee dropped its productive metropolitanism and reverted to massive resistance.

Faced with several submitted desegregation plans, in February 1975 Judge Garrity appointed a panel of four “masters” to conduct hearings and make recommendations to the court on the shape of the final desegregation plan.89 The resulting Masters’ Plan proposed nine community school districts and one citywide district. The citywide district entailed thirty-two magnet schools designed to attract students from all areas of the city and aimed to educate a student body roughly corresponding to the system’s overall racial ratio of 51 percent white and 36 percent black. Community district schools reflected the racial composition of their individual districts. With the exception of East Boston, the Masters’ Plan affected all city schools, though district racial percentages varied widely.90 East Boston, exempted from the plan due to traffic concerns, remained 95 percent white. Middle-class West Roxbury retained an 80 percent white student body, while two districts would be predominantly black. White students would number only 25 percent of the enrollment in the Burke District in Dorchester and 30 percent in Roxbury’s Madison Park. Overall, the Masters’ Plan proposed more desegregation than currently prevailed in Phase I while reducing the number of students bused from 17,000 to a maximum of

89 Order of Appointment and Reference to Masters, 7 February 1975, box: 2, folder: 3, LDH.
14,900. The plan had the additional appeal of eliminating the disastrous Roxbury-South Boston pairing.\footnote{Report of the Masters in Morgan v. Kerrigan, box: 22, folder: 16, WAG; Lukas, Common Ground, 249.}

The Masters’ Plan earned a sizeable constituency. Both the Globe and the Herald editorialized in its favor, and it received the endorsement of Mayor Kevin White, Governor Michael Dukakis, and Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Parks.\footnote{Lukas, Common Ground, 249; Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 101.} Thayer Fremont-Smith, lawyer for the intervening Boston Home and School Association (HSA), commended the Masters for “coming up with something positive and imaginative, with an emphasis on improving the quality of education.” Though impressed with the plan, Fremont-Smith pledged to continue advocating for a metropolitan solution and reaffirmed his belief that it was “unfair to ask people in Boston who have a lower mean income than the suburbs to bus their kids, while people who can afford to live in the suburbs, like myself, are exempt.”\footnote{Joe Pilati, “NAACP commends school plan,” Boston Globe, 24 March 1975.}

Support for the Masters’ Plan crossed racial boundaries. The Bay State Banner, the state’s most prominent African American newspaper, endorsed the plan.\footnote{Ross and Berg, ‘I Respectfully Disagree,’ 419.} Ellen Jackson, speaking on behalf of Freedom House, called the plan “imaginative” and expressed appreciation that it “attempted to take into consideration everyone’s concerns in the community.”\footnote{Pilati, “NAACP commends school plan,” Boston Globe, 24 March 1975.} Unconcerned about the presence of majority-black districts, Jackson used the Masters’ Plan in her campaign against Daly-Sullivan, urging “Bostonians and suburbanites alike to direct their energies toward implementation of that plan rather than toward large-scale metropolitan desegregation schemes.”\footnote{Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education Press Release, 2 April 1975, box: 20, folder: 9, METCO.}
Predictably, the Masters’ Plan did not please ardent antibusers. Though labelling it a “retreat” from the “horrendous” Phase I, State Senator Bulger did not endorse the Masters’ Plan, preferring instead that Judge Garrity “admit that he has made a terrible mistake with other people’s lives.”97 South Boston State Representative Ray Flynn railed against the inclusion of any busing in the Masters’ Plan. Yet an element of grudging appreciation colored Flynn’s response when he acknowledged the plan’s “repeatedly stated intention of reducing forced busing to a minimum” and labeled it too early to fully judge the plan.98

While the Masters mobilized a broad middle ground of support, they did not count the plaintiff NAACP among their backers. Boston NAACP President Thomas Atkins questioned the exclusion of East Boston from desegregation.99 Unlike Freedom House, the NAACP viewed predominantly black school districts as unsatisfactory and pressed for more extensive and consistent integration.100 Judge Garrity agreed, and his Phase II order of May 10, 1975 sought to ameliorate the NAACP’s objections.

Phase II altered significant portions of the Masters’ Plan. Designed in concert with two court-appointed “experts,” Robert A. Dentler, Dean of Boston University’s School of Education and his academic colleague Marvin B. Scott, Phase II retained major components of the Masters’ Plan, such as the citywide district and several of the community school districts. But its changes were significant. Phase II eliminated the heavily black Burke District and required a more consistent racial ratio throughout the school system, though it maintained the exclusion of East

98 Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 100.
99 Pilati, “NAACP commends school plan,” Boston Globe, 24 March 1975. Atkins expressed qualified support for aspects of the plan, but it did not earn his support despite the article’s misleading title.
100 Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 100-101; Ross and Berg, ‘I Respectfully Disagree,’ 420.
Boston. Most notably, Phase II reinstated the Roxbury-Southie pairing and increased the number of students bused to 25,000.101

Phase II reinvigorated the antibusing movement and marked the end of any productive contributions from the Boston School Committee. Kathleen Sullivan testified before the United States Commission on Civil Rights that “[a] lot of parents said to me that… if Garrity would have accepted the Masters’ Plan… that we would have been better off. But since he didn’t, people in South Boston and Charlestown are saying they will not send their children to school next year either.”102 John Kerrigan argued that Phase II told parents that “the safety of your children will be pitted against the racial hatred that Garrity has given the city.” Kerrigan’s solution for parents: “Leave the city.”103

Massive Resistance

Though the Boston School Committee stoked resistance to desegregation since the NAACP first challenged discrimination in its schools in 1963, the Committee’s protracted resistance, while ultimately harmful, made salient points about the realities of metropolitan discrimination and proved capable of suggesting remedies. With the adoption of Phase II and the nearly simultaneous defeat of the Daly-Sullivan Bill, which confirmed the inability to enlarge the suburbs’ role in desegregating the city’s schools, the Committee uncoupled its anti-suburban hostility and arguments of white flight from any productive solution to segregation. For the 1975-76 school year, the Committee advanced a simple hostility to busing that stoked the embers of white resistance.

102 Formisano, Boston Against Busing, 102.
The Committee’s renewed militancy marked its treatment of the Citywide Coordinating Council (CCC). Created for Phase II, the CCC consisted of forty appointed members who monitored Boston’s compliance with the desegregation order. Though Garrity designed the CCC to be representative of Boston’s population, its members included several suburbanites. Eleven of the CCC’s twenty-six white members resided outside of the city, as did three of its eleven African American members. Arthur Gartland, the former Boston School Committee member whose support of black civil rights demands led to his defeat in 1965, was named Chairman. The CCC did provide some representation for antibusing parents however, as Garrity appointed moderate antibusers K. Marie Clarke, Moe Gillen, and Jane Margulis.104

School Committee Chairman James Hennigan began the Committee’s first meeting with the CCC on June 30, 1975 by calling CCC members “agents of a tyrannical judge” aiding “the forceful implementation of a plan which denies parents the right to control the destinies of their children and which will eventually destroy the City of Boston by driving out of the City those parents who have the means and the will to resist your tyranny.” Hennigan next compared the CCC to the Vichy government of occupied France, before concluding “Foreign to the people of Boston, callous to their needs, you are the enemy to us.” When Gartland suggested that all subsequent meetings be public and forwarded Faneuil Hall as a venue, the Committee objected, citing Faneuil Hall’s association with liberty.105 By the Committee’s design, this was not to be a productive relationship.

105 Boston School Committee Minutes, Morning and Afternoon 1975 June 30, box: 10, folder: 15, Citywide Coordinating Council Records, Archives and Manuscripts Division, John J. Burns Library, Boston College (hereafter: “CCC”).
Given its calls for metropolitan desegregation, the Committee had never endorsed an antibusing constitutional amendment. Phase II changed this. In October, Kerrigan introduced a motion to indicate to Congress that the Committee favored such an amendment. Kerrigan justified his motion by claiming that busing caused “racial disharmony,” white flight, and resegregated schools. Kerrigan’s colleagues, including Kathleen Sullivan, the only School Committee member to vote against appealing Judge Garrity’s 1974 decision, unanimously supported his motion. 106 Though Sullivan called on the Committee to propose a better desegregation plan for a potential Phase III and suggested that the vote was at best a symbolic one, she nevertheless indicated her support. When Sullivan asserted that busing could have been avoided had the Committee not blatantly engaged in discrimination, Kerrigan disclaimed responsibility and linked Boston with other cities experiencing white flight: “Why didn’t the School Committee correct it in Detroit? Why didn’t they correct it in all the other major cities? As long as we have unfair housing patterns, we are going to have segregated schools and predominantly non-white schools, and we are going to have two Americas.” 107

The Committee based its arguments for resistance mostly on white flight, which Kerrigan had been trumpeting since before the decision. In 1973, Kerrigan claimed that year’s white enrollment decline of 3,000 meant that “white parents are fleeing the city under the threat of a balance plan” and predicted that if a busing was implemented “Our white population will be sitting in the suburbs and this city will die.” 108 In 1974, Kerrigan authored a column for the *New York Times* that criticized the courts’ reliance on academic experts. Ironically basing his own arguments on academics, Kerrigan pointed to the work of sociologist James Coleman – the

---

107 Boston School Committee Minutes, 8 October 1975, box: 10, folder: 28, CCC.
academic whose “Coleman Report” of 1966 was used in support of busing – and Harvard professor David J. Armor to claim that white flight rendered intra-city busing ineffective.\(^\text{109}\)

Focusing on white flight had the appeal of portraying the suburbs as the foil to integration.

Injecting himself into the Boston case directly, on June 13, 1975, Coleman filed an affidavit in support of the intervening HSA. Coleman argued that “the reseggregative effect of rapid desegregation in large central cities” required a more limited desegregation order.\(^\text{110}\)

Because his work suggested that the children of middle-class whites were needed in order for scholastic improvement to accompany integration, in October Coleman proposed that states provide each city child an entitlement to attend a school elsewhere in the metropolitan area, a right that “would be extremely valuable in a place like Boston.” Limiting out-of-district children to 20 or 30 percent of total enrollment, Coleman’s proposal constituted an expanded version of Daly-Sullivan.\(^\text{111}\)

Though opposed to an antibusing amendment, Coleman had no qualms about appearing on behalf of antibusers.\(^\text{112}\) On March 30, 1976, Coleman addressed the Massachusetts Legislature on busing. On the speaker’s platform, Representative Flynn and Senator Bulger sat behind him while hardline antibusing School Committee member Elvira “Pixie” Palladino sat to his side. Coleman told legislators that “Boston presents an example, though far from the most extreme, of what happens when extensive desegregation is imposed in a central-city school district.” Noting the Boston schools’ loss of approximately 4.5 percent of white students per year

---


over the five years before the 1974 busing order, Coleman detailed the loss of 16.1 percent of white students in 1974 and 15.5 percent in 1975. He noted that compulsory desegregation in rural areas and urban areas with metropolitan school districts had not led to extensive white flight, as whites subject to a metropolitan order could not as easily flee desegregation. In contrast, Coleman stated that intra-city desegregation “has proved disastrous to social integration, by greatly accelerating the loss of whites from the cities, and leading to racially divided metropolitan areas, with a black central city and white suburbs.” While Coleman overstated the case by saying that school desegregation led to racially divided metropolitan areas – in 1970, four years prior to the beginning of busing, one in six Boston residents was black while the corresponding figure for its suburbs was one in one-hundred – the white flight enabled by the *Milliken* precedent exacerbated regional spatial inequality.

Antibusers saw the reality of flight. When the Boston NAACP first confronted the School Committee in 1963, the Boston schools educated 70,703 white pupils. In 1973-74, on the eve of the Phase I busing order, Boston’s white students numbered 53,593. By 1976-77, only 31,476 white students remained. Yet many academics continued to deny the reality of flight, providing further animus for antibusers’ anti-elite rhetoric. The court’s experts, Dentler and Scott, denied the existence of flight as late as 1976. That fall, when questioned by reporters at Logan Airport, Dentler quipped that the only flight he knew about was his flight out of town. Dentler and Scott pointed to studies by their Boston University colleague Christine Rossell and

---

113 Malloy, *Southie Won’t Go*, 235.
Harvard’s Thomas Pettigrew that argued that busing had little or no effect on white flight.\textsuperscript{116} Though Rossell provided evidence of the Boston School Committee’s artificial inflation of pre-desegregation attendance numbers, achieved by counting Spanish-surnamed students white one year but not the next, by 1978 she conceded that white flight increased substantially following busing.\textsuperscript{117} Dentler and Scott took longer to concede. By 1980, when white students numbered 24,017 out of a total student population of 65,620 – 36.6 percent of the total enrollment – their book \textit{Schools on Trial} conceded that “There is no question” that court orders stimulated white flight.\textsuperscript{118} In their long refusal to recognize white flight, the two experts provided Boston’s antibusers with proof of elite incompetence and delegitimized the court’s expertise.

\textbf{Suburban Retrenchment}

Those who fled to the suburbs contributed to an environment increasingly eager to cut integrationist ties with Boston. While suburban liberalism remained, METCO experienced increasing challenges, and a new initiative to provide metropolitan integration was stillborn. Having defeated the Daly-Sullivan Bill and protected by \textit{Milliken}, Boston’s suburbanites continued to reaffirm their opposition to metropolitan desegregation.

In September 1975, over a year after \textit{Milliken} and well after the defeat of Daly-Sullivan, representatives of twenty-two suburban antibusing organizations formed an umbrella group, Suburban United (SUN). Aiming “to fight metropolitanization, or integration plans involving

\textsuperscript{116} Formisano, \textit{Boston Against Busing}, 209-10; Rossell, “Boston’s Experience with School Desegregation and White Flight,” CCC.
\textsuperscript{117} Formisano, \textit{Boston Against Busing}, 209.
\textsuperscript{118} Dentler and Scott, \textit{Schools on Trial}, 12.
busing between Boston and the suburbs,” SUN indicated its willingness to work in an alliance with Boston’s ROAR, announcing a metropolitanized antibusing movement.\textsuperscript{119}

METCO, whose declining suburban popularity had been most visible in its increasing inability to attract new communities, now faced a considerable loss of support in two of its stalwarts. While suburbs continued to reject the program, Framingham and Newton announced cutbacks to their participation.\textsuperscript{120} At issue was state funding in the midst of a state budget crisis brought on by recession. The state’s Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity recalculated the money paid to participating communities. Both Governor Dukakis and Secretary of Education Paul Parks suggested that communities used METCO as a profit opportunity. As the seat occupied by a METCO student would have gone otherwise unoccupied, they reasoned that the cost of educating a METCO student was significantly lower than what the communities were paid. Under the new funding formula, Newton received $81,000 less than the previous year and Framingham $11,000 less. Indicating an unwillingness to go along with reduced funding, Newton cut three staff positions and student services. Only when Governor Dukakis transferred $150,000 from his emergency fund to the METCO fund, of which $47,000 was earmarked for Newton, did Newton reinstate the positions and continue in the program.\textsuperscript{121}

Though both communities ultimately remained in the program, Framingham and Newton’s challenges caused Parks to contrast the enthusiasm of METCO’s founding with the present climate: “Initially, the towns said they were in the program because it was good for their children… If we are at a point when the only reason blacks are going is because the suburbs want

\textsuperscript{119} “Plans to organize suburban anti-busing to be discussed,” \textit{Dedham Daily Transcript}, 9 September 1975.
\textsuperscript{120} Lawrence DiCara and Charles F. Kindregan, “Public Education in Greater Boston: Does America’s Commitment to Equality and Integration Stop at the City Line?,” \textit{Suffolk University Law Review} Vol. XI, No. 5, box: 22, folder: 3, WAG.
\textsuperscript{121} Brenda Payton, “Are We Losing Our Enthusiasm for METCO?,” METCO. On the situation in Newton and the proposed state budget cuts to METCO more generally, see Geismer, \textit{Don’t Blame Us}, 211-212.
to be paid, then maybe we need to stop the program.” As the Globe noted, “Times have changed. These are not the mid-60s, the years of the interracial freedom marches and the Great Society, when suburbia was gung-ho for liberal causes.”

The tandem developments of declining suburban integrationism and a reassertion of suburban autonomy were most apparent in the Metropolitan Planning Project (MPP). First funded under the Federal Emergency School Aid Act of 1972, MPP was a collaborative of fifty-six independent school districts, including Framingham and Newton. MPP aimed to eliminate “racial and ethnic isolation of the schools of the Boston metropolitan area by voluntary means.” In granting MPP funding, the federal government gave it the mandate of eliminating minority group isolation entirely within ten years rather than aiming for a reduction. It required MPP to develop a “formula plan” ensuring that each school in the metro area would educate a percentage of minority students at least one half of the percentage of minority children in the metropolitan area as a whole. Though it developed such a plan, MPP immediately rejected it, and future requests for funding reaffirmed a commitment to voluntary measures. MPP public relations material assured suburbanites that MPP “is not a plan for forced integration or busing” or “a plan for establishing a metropolitan school district.” Though MPP proceeded on a “general recognition that the boundary lines dividing Boston and its suburbs are arbitrary,” it did not seek to redraw these boundaries.

122 Ibid.
123 Ian Menzies, “Is Metco effort dying in the suburbs?,” Boston Globe, 27 September 1976. This quotation also appears in Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 221.
124 Metro Ethnic Heritage Resource Centers, July 1975, box: 25, folder: 33, METCO.
MPP conducted two educational programs called METROPATHWAYS and METROPAIRWAYS. METROPATHWAYS was designed to educate secondary school students “in third sites along mass transit routes in order to reduce ethnic and racial student isolation.” The location of programs along transit lines underscored that mass transit services were metropolitanized, suggesting communities’ receptivity to certain types of metropolitan programs. Requiring individual students to voluntarily enroll, METROPATHWAYS launched in the spring of 1975 without major protest.

Similar to the Detroit Board of Education’s 1968 Shared Experiences Program, METROPAIRWAYS consisted of pairs or triads of elementary and middle schools that participated in shared educational programs in order to reduce racial and socio-economic isolation. Unlike the Shared Experiences Program, METROPAIRWAYS’ paired schools came from different school districts, not different city neighborhoods. This cross-district intermixing of elementary-age suburban and city students, entailing the occasional shifting of suburban students, earned METROPAIRWAYS considerable suburban opposition.

In January 1976, Framingham’s School Committee voted four to three against participating in METROPAIRWAYS, despite previously approving the program and having only one school set to participate. The discussion before the vote centered around METCO, metropolitanism, and the location of the paired school in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood. Framingham School Committee Chairman Winston Anderson explicitly voted against aiding minority Boston students. Suggesting that suburban children would not benefit from integration

---

128 The Roxbury Dorchester Communities as an Environmental Learning Laboratory Final Report, ca. 1975, box: 25, folder: 34, METCO.
or the program’s educational offerings, Anderson remarked, “I don’t think that I should vote to carry the inner-city load,” adding that Bostonians “have to solve their own problems.” School Committee member Claire Lavin concurred: “The answer to these minority problems is quality education. It isn’t busing. I’m not at all in favor of things like this or METCO either. I feel strongly about developing things like neighborhood schools.” In Framingham, the desire for “neighborhood schools” and the concomitant fears of metropolitanization carried the vote.\(^{130}\) In an internal discussion of Framingham’s withdrawal, MPP claimed that many Framingham residents “revealed that they had once lived in Boston, had worked hard to establish an economic base which would allow them to leave, and had no intention of exposing their children to the urban experience.”\(^{131}\) For these residents, a move beyond the political boundaries of Boston meant a move away from integration. White flight reinforced suburban autonomy.

Newton exited METROPAIRWAYS two months after Framingham. Newton Mayor Theodore D. Mann argued that MPP aimed for “a metropolitanized Greater Boston School district which would encompass all the schools in Greater Boston.” School Committee member Roger Cohen concurred, stating that “The ultimate goal of the Metropolitan Planning Project is metropolitanization.” Fearing metropolitan desegregation, the Newton School Committee voted six to three to terminate Newton’s participation.\(^ {132}\)

Cohen, who first rose to prominence in Newton for his opposition to low-cost housing, embodied the rising tide of anti-integrationism in the community that grew in tandem with


Boston’s proposals for metropolitan desegregation. Newton’s vote against METROPAIRWAYS capped nearly a decade of increasing anti-integrationism sprouting from the desire to preserve the privileges arising from Newton’s residential exclusivity, such as low taxes, superior services, and a homogenous population.

Cohen entered local politics to oppose public housing. In 1968, twenty-two religious leaders, aiming to introduce low- and moderate-income housing into the community, launched the Newton Community Development Foundation (NCDF). Proposing scattered-site construction of attractive two-story wood-frame houses, their development would not ghettoize residents in one location. Designs combatted the monotony associated with public housing, with varied setbacks and roof lines aiming to “provide the same atmosphere we find on all Newton streets.” NCDF proposed ten sites in total, and hoped to provide up to 508 housing units. Though Massachusetts possessed its “Anti-Snob Zoning Bill,” a law supported by urban antibusers that allowed the construction of affordable housing at variance with local zoning requirements, NCDF professed its confidence that it would not need to use the legislation.

Responding to community opposition, NCDF downplayed the integrationist possibilities of its proposal and denied that it aimed to “bring Negroes in from Roxbury” to live in Newton. NCDF claimed its housing would primarily benefit city workers, whose pay was not high enough to comfortably reside in the community. NCDF opponents, the Newton Land Use and Civic Association (NLUCA) and Cohen, its lawyer, attacked this claim and obliquely made integration the basis of their opposition. In a flyer distributed throughout Newton, NLUCA claimed that “A

---

133 On Cohen’s career, see: Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 192-193, 214. On the scattered-site housing controversy in Newton, see ibid., 173-198.
134 Pamphlet, Housing for families of moderate and low income in Newton, box: 4, folder: 50, Phyllis M. Ryan Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University (hereafter: “PMR”).
recap of all city employees’ wages reveals that, except for a few custodians and sanitation workers, all full time male employees earn more than the limits set by NCDF.” NLUCA made it clear that the right type of municipal worker would not benefit from low- and moderate-income housing, demonstrating that only five police cadets and six firefighters made under $8,000 a year. Though the Association did not explicitly say that the project would house black people from Boston, its publicity materials clearly stated that it would not be Newton residents, before inviting Newton residents to jump to conclusions.136

NLUCA succeeded in reducing the number of affordable housing units constructed in the community. In the face of Cohen’s delaying tactics that resulted in forty-two hearings on the case between August 1971 and October 1972 alone, NCDF succeeded only in getting one fifty-unit townhouse project approved in 1974, six years after its first proposal. This was Newton’s first subsidized housing project, but it did not portend similar developments.137 The project’s costly legal battles functioned as a warning to developers.

Cohen figured prominently in another grassroots organization, called VOICE, that aimed to take control of Newton’s “out of touch with reality” and “spendthrift” local government. Robert Stiller, NLUCA’s founder, became a VOICE candidate for alderman and Cohen one of its candidates for the Newton School Committee. Cohen campaigned against metropolitanization and targeted integrationist programs, stating that Newton “must cope with the problems of the City of Newton, not the problems of Boston.” In November 1975, VOICE succeeded in gaining a conservative majority on Newton’s School Committee.138 It was this newly conservative Committee that rejected METROPAIRWAYS and refused to participate in METCO should the...
state follow through on its funding cutback. Concerns about metropolitanization and racial integration shifted liberal Newton rightward.

The loss of support for MPP in Newton and Framingham was not unique. Though fifty-six school districts approved MPP prior to the arrival of mandatory busing in Boston, MPP conducted only three urban-suburban METROPAIRWAYS in 1976-77. Only Boston and the suburbs of Burlington, Needham, and Wellesley participated in the program. Two hundred and one students meeting roughly twice per month constituted the extent of the program’s contribution to metropolitan integration.139 Though pledged to eradicating minority group isolation in the Boston metropolitan area within ten years, the anemic MPP did not live up to this task. Voluntary metropolitanism never approached the effectiveness of mandatory metropolitanism.

Conclusion

Writing about Framingham’s withdrawal from METROPAIRWAYS, Boston Globe columnist Mike Barnicle lamented that suburbanites “think that living out off of Route 9 gives them a passport from America’s problems. And the tragedy is that, so far, they’re right.”140 They were right because of the Milliken decision, which excluded the suburbs from responsibility for aiding urban desegregation. They were also right because the suburban opposition prodded by Boston’s tactical metropolitanists precluded securing the legislative support metropolitanism needed in the post-Milliken era. Tactical metropolitanism combined with the strict limits of an individualist suburban liberalism averse to mandatory structural solutions to doom legislative attempts at

139 Torbert, Berry, Bickley, and Wohlstetter, “The METROPAIRWAYS Pilot Year Evaluation,” METCO.
fashioning a regional remedy to school segregation. Absent a metropolitan-wide judicial mandate, even sincere metropolitanist measures such as Daly-Sullivan fell to suburban opposition. After *Milliken*, metropolitanism, regardless of its motivation, could not succeed in Greater Boston.

Metropolitanism’s internal logic aided its collapse. Boston’s pre-*Milliken* tactical metropolitanism eroded the suburban political support for integration needed in the post-*Milliken* era. Metropolitanism required the courts in order to survive. When the Supreme Court overturned Detroit’s metropolitan remedy, it returned the question of metropolitan desegregation to legislatures primed by tactical metropolitanism to oppose metropolitan desegregation, suggesting divergent tactics to potential metropolitan coalition partners. While the Boston School Committee sought the maximum metropolitan and minimum intra-city desegregation busing possible, the NAACP and METCO, knowing a metropolitan remedy was politically out of reach, backed a plan that limited mandatory integration to the city itself. *Milliken* set in motion the events which ultimately doomed Boston’s metropolitanism even as that metropolitanism was being shorn of its anti-integrationist tactical aims. Though a creative metropolitan proposal such as Daly-Sullivan would not dodge the desegregation mandate and did not aim to spark suburban opposition, suburbanites rejected it in a fashion long expected by tactical metropolitanists. In the process, *Milliken* also damaged the voluntary metropolitan desegregation efforts of METCO, which was swept up in the suburban backlash to the Daly-Sullivan Bill.

Suburban anti-metropolitanism brought both liberals and conservatives together to close ranks in defense of suburban spatial privilege and guard against initiatives mandating integrationist links between their communities and Boston. That suburban Democrats and Republicans joined together in defending suburban autonomy suggests the validity of historian Matthew Lassiter’s recent call for “political history beyond the red-blue divide,” one looking
more at issues of consensus than conflict. But, as Newton’s experiences demonstrated, anti-
metropolitanism and fears of integration more broadly could also shift a reputedly liberal 
community’s politics to the right along the lines of both local control and fiscal conservatism. In 
the reorientation of both the Democratic and Republican parties toward the priorities of 
suburbanites, the forces of conservatism stood to gain the most, suggesting that there remains a 
need to examine the “electoral realignment and plotlines of left-right polarization” that Lassiter 
implies we should move beyond.

Though METCO continued, testifying to the persistence of an individualist suburban
racial liberalism in Massachusetts, it did not experience any significant additional growth. Nor 
did METCO’s operations always run smoothly. Following the battles in Framingham and 
Newton, METCO’s highest profile story concerned the withdrawal of thirty-six of its students 
from the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School. The students left Concord in the face of threats 
from white classmates, six of whom boasted of Ku Klux Klan connections in the school’s 
yearbook. METCO parents argued that the yearbook incident was the latest in a string of anti-
black incidents, including the school’s denial of tenure to a black principal and use of an all-
white teaching staff. Though METCO brought a measure of integration to some suburban 
schools, it did not produce structural changes in suburban education or address persistent patterns 
of spatial inequality. Its individualist remedies proved no match for mandatory metropolitan 
desegregation.

Following busing, Boston’s schools all but lost their middle-class student population. By 
1985, 93 percent of Boston public school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches

---

141 Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide,” 760-764.
142 Ibid., 762.
143 Geismer, Don’t Blame Us, 224.
because of inadequate family incomes. Some black children managed to avoid an inferior urban education. While METCO remained an option, increasing numbers of black families of means sent their children to private schools.\textsuperscript{145}

Though it was difficult to find a black organization willing to support the Boston School Committee’s metropolitanism at the height of the busing controversy, by the 1980s that changed. Taking stock of the poor condition of Boston’s schools, NAACP Executive Director Thomas Atkins, the former President of the NAACP’s Boston Branch, proposed in July 1983 that suburbs be required to set aside a number of seats for urban students who wished to take them. Echoing Daly-Sullivan, Atkins envisioned allowing 15,000 Boston students to transfer to the suburbs – a number well above the 3,248 then participating in METCO. Atkins’s proposal was supported by the two black members of the Boston School Committee. John O’Bryant, who in 1975 became the first African American elected to the Committee in seventy-five years when he won the final at-large seat by a scant 128 votes, supported the proposal.\textsuperscript{146} So too did Jean McGuire, who as METCO’s Executive Director in 1975 warned against metropolitanism being “corrupted by attempts to make it a desegregative tool.” Now McGuire supported the very technique she had fought against nearly a decade before. With the Boston School Committee’s dire predictions of white flight leading to an impoverished school system coming true, it made sense to endorse a measure that could provide socioeconomic integration and superior educational resources.\textsuperscript{147} This plan never saw the light of day. Atkins revealed in a private letter that he had yet to fully form the plan and that he proposed it merely to “put it on the public’s agenda.”\textsuperscript{148} Similar

\textsuperscript{145} Formisano, \textit{Boston Against Busing}, 211.
\textsuperscript{146} Cynics point to his Irish surname as a partial explanation for O’Bryant’s success. Formisano, \textit{Boston Against Busing}, 195.
\textsuperscript{148} Letter, Thomas Atkins to Carol Fizer, 19 August 1983, part: V, box: 969, folder: 4, NAACP-LOC.
metropolitan proposals had been on the public agenda. When Atkins proposed metropolitan
desegregation, he called for something that the Boston School Committee advocated until the
beginning of Phase II. But by 1983, the metropolitan moment in Boston had long concluded.

Like Boston, both Detroit and Philadelphia faced school desegregation in the post-
*Milliken* era. Both cities also confronted the legacy of Boston’s busing. While *Milliken* codified
the municipal boundary as the natural ending point of desegregation, Boston’s massive resistance
and white flight made courts increasingly hesitant to order massive busing schemes. Americans
would not remember Boston’s metropolitanism, but Boston’s resistance to intra-city
desegregation busing combined with the *Milliken* precedent to help dictate the limits of
educational equality in Detroit, Philadelphia, and beyond.
Chapter 7
In the Shadow of *Milliken* and Boston: The Death of Metropolitanism and the Futility of Intra-City Desegregation in Detroit and Philadelphia

Following the Supreme Court’s decision in *Milliken v. Bradley*, school desegregation in Detroit and Philadelphia entailed a no-win situation. *Milliken* meant that busing in Detroit proceeded on an intra-city basis and it erected a further barrier to metropolitan desegregation in Philadelphia, ensuring that complete integration could not be achieved in either city’s majority-black public schools. But *Milliken* was not the only precedent working to undermine school desegregation.

Boston’s busing controversy, marked by outbursts of violence, student boycotts, and white flight from the public schools of the central city, eroded support for desegregation plans that included busing and made courts less likely to order massive busing schemes. Though Boston’s experiences indicated the futility of intra-city desegregation in segregated metropolises, courts, having to implement desegregation plans, chose modest solutions in the aim of avoiding another Boston. Together, both *Milliken* and Boston’s busing controversy helped dictate the limits of educational equality in Detroit and Philadelphia.

In the immediate wake of *Milliken*, metropolitanism still animated school desegregation battles. Detroiter worked to keep metropolitanism at the center of school desegregation politics. Though Detroit’s metropolitanists still included members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) committed to racial equality, urban and suburban white segregationists most frequently raised the specter of metropolitanism. They did so not to enlarge the desegregation mandate and ensure white majorities in schools, as the Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE) had done, but to maintain suburban antibusing opposition. Cohering in Mothers Alert Detroit (MAD), segregationist Detroit whites unwilling to
embrace the CCBE’s tactical metropolitanism sought alliances with antibusing suburbanites and Boston’s antibusers. Possessing a conspiratorial worldview, MAD warned suburbanites that intra-city busing, doomed to fail, would lead to metropolitan desegregation and regional government. Pledging to maintain suburban sovereignty, MAD sought a regional politics devoted to securing an antibusing constitutional amendment.

MAD witnessed little collaboration with suburbanites primed by tactical metropolitanism to reject associations with the city. Though largely indifferent to the plight of Detroit’s antibusers, suburbanites worked to maintain their spatial distinctiveness from the city and fought any proposals that involved metropolitan cooperation. Fearful of metropolitan schemes that could portend metropolitan desegregation, suburbanites helped defeat the implementation of a mandatory regional planning body that promised to link Detroit and its suburbs. Suburbanites recognized that Milliken preserved the privileges of suburban residence and they worked to maintain these privileges. Ensconced in the safety of the Milliken precedent, suburban secessionist politics grew stronger.

In Philadelphia, metropolitanism remained both a tactical measure advocated by the Philadelphia Board of Education and an aim of liberal civil rights organizations such as the Fellowship Commission and the North Philadelphia NAACP. The Board and the civil rights groups were not allies, however. That the challenge to Philadelphia’s school desegregation was led by the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC), a state agency, rather than a conventional desegregation lawsuit with a black plaintiff precluded a tactical courtroom metropolitan alliance. In Philadelphia, not only did the Milliken precedent and Boston’s busing controversy work against desegregation, so too did the PHRC.

Though the PHRC’s existence implied a liberal civil rights commitment in Pennsylvania, the PHRC precluded metropolitan school desegregation. Detroit’s metropolitanist alliance in
Bradley v. Milliken functioned only in the courtroom. In Philadelphia, the PHRC’s challenge convinced the North Philadelphia NAACP and the Fellowship Commission to withhold potential desegregation lawsuits because the schools were already in litigation, robbing civil rights organizations of a chance to articulate qualified support for the Board’s metropolitan plans. And unlike potential Philadelphia plaintiffs, the PHRC refused to consider metropolitan plans, holding fast to its desegregation guidelines developed in 1968 maintaining that desegregation was a local responsibility.

No politician understood that the PHRC allowed the state to blunt the impact of desegregation more than Democratic Governor Milton J. Shapp, who in 1974, 1975, and 1976 vetoed legislation to remove the PHRC’s authority to compel desegregation. Shapp knew that failing to maintain the PHRC’s role would result in a conventional desegregation lawsuit and provide evidence of *de jure* segregation that could result in mandatory busing or even in metropolitan desegregation. Precluding extensive integration in Philadelphia and its suburbs required maintaining the PHRC.

The PHRC’s wide-reaching integrationist mandate also worked against school desegregation. Charged with eliminating *de facto*, rather than *de jure* segregation, the PHRC did not have to prove segregative intent on the part of school authorities. This meant that on an appeal of the PHRC’s orders, the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania would not be able to draw upon any evidence of *de jure* segregation. Therefore, remedies for *de jure* segregation were not required for Philadelphia’s ostensibly *de facto* racial imbalance. Absent evidence of *de jure*, the Commonwealth Court sided with the Philadelphia Board of Education in 1976 and ordered a program of voluntary desegregation that sought to avoid Boston’s busing experiences by not mandating busing. The PHRC’s ongoing litigation meant that a charge of *de jure* segregation was never attempted in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia desegregation case lasted an astonishing
forty-one years and failed to meaningfully integrate schools. During these forty-one years, the PHRC’s ongoing litigation convinced civil rights organizations to withhold suits that intended to raise charges of *de jure* segregation and ensured that fears of replicating Boston’s busing experiences dominated desegregation planning.

Though subject to integration orders, neither Detroit nor Philadelphia desegregated its schools. In Detroit, concerns over mirroring Boston’s violence led to a small intra-city busing plan that by 1978 had the mandate of eliminating white majority schools, an ironic inverse of the metropolitan solution first proposed by white urbanites that sought white majorities in all area schools. Testifying to Boston’s impact, the mandated busing was below the level requested by both plaintiff and defendant. Philadelphia did not even attempt mandatory desegregation. Though the PHRC sought extensive intra-city busing, on appeal the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania ruled consistently in favor of voluntary desegregation plans.

Philadelphia and Detroit’s continuing desegregation battles demonstrated the futility of implementing intra-city desegregation in a majority-black school system. Regardless of technique or Boston’s influence, intra-city desegregation plans were doomed to failure. Neither intra-city busing, which accelerated white flight and could not integrate all schools in a majority-black system, nor voluntary desegregation, which accepted segregated schools and remained toothless to compel integration, accomplished desegregation. When the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania deliberated between mandatory busing and voluntary integration in 1976, it chose between two options that could not work. When the metropolitan moment died shortly after *Milliken*, so too did the chance to integrate most urban school systems surrounded by autonomous school districts. Believing Boston’s busing experience suggested avoiding extensive desegregation orders, courts could only neglect its most important lesson: that school desegregation exempting a large portion of the metropolis could not succeed.
The absence of metropolitan desegregation constituted a major defeat for urban public schoolchildren. To this day, Detroit and Philadelphia’s public schools are clear examples of educational apartheid, housing a predominantly minority and impoverished school population sharply out of step with metropolitan demographics. Lagging in both funding and educational achievement, these children are the victims of a white opposition to integration that manifests itself in a balkanized network of local governments and school boards, and a shadow system of private and parochial schools. School desegregation not affecting the entire metropolis not only amounted to no desegregation at all; by rewarding white flight and suburban secessionist politics it stitched inequality further into the regional fabric.

**Detroit’s Post-**Milliken Metropolitanism

Following *Milliken*, the specter of metropolitan desegregation permeated Southeastern Michigan’s politics. Detroit whites opposed to the CCBE’s tactical metropolitanism stoked metropolitan fears, attempting to persuade suburbanites that the only way to defeat metropolitan desegregation was through an antibusing constitutional amendment. White segregationists continued stoking these metropolitan fears even after *Milliken* ended the CCBE’s fight for metropolitan desegregation and the organization faded away. The CCBE long understood that busing would result from a finding of *de jure* segregation and shifted tactics accordingly, but not all Detroit whites accepted busing as inevitable. First organized as Northeast Mothers Alert (NEMA), then as Mothers Alert Detroit (MAD), Detroit’s segregationists tried to construct a regional antibusing politics that upheld municipal sovereignty. Though warning hyperbolically of a metropolitanist plot, MAD recognized correctly that metropolitanism retained a constituency among civil rights activists and it knew that intra-city desegregation alone could not succeed.
NEMA formed in August 1972 in opposition to the CCBE’s tactical metropolitanism. Its founder, Carmen Roberts, a mother of two, had been active in the CCBE but would not tolerate any integration. A lifelong resident of metropolitan Detroit, Roberts briefly lived in suburban Van Buren Township in the mid-1960s, only to return to Detroit’s East Side when black families arrived in Van Buren. After founding NEMA, Roberts secured a seat on Detroit’s Region Seven School Board in 1973, representing voters in the city’s majority-white northeast.

Throughout Detroit’s desegregation controversy, NEMA and its successor MAD provided a home for overt racism and conspiratorial politics. MAD collaborated with Donald Lobsinger’s extreme-right wing organization, Breakthrough, a home-grown version of the militantly anticommunist John Birch Society. That fall, in a widely publicized incident, Roberts and Lobsinger allegedly used a racial slur at a Region Seven School Board meeting. Opposed to all busing, MAD’s visceral racism precluded the tactical flexibility of a CCBE.

Seeking to prevent busing, MAD sought to intervene in the desegregation litigation. Its first request for intervention, written entirely by Roberts and antibusing leader Shirley Wohlfield in April 1975, revealed the extent of its extremist right-wing politics. While MAD professed its support of the “neighborhood school” and reaffirmed its “steadfast opposition to forced transportation of students,” much of the brief focused on matters outside of the case’s purview. MAD’s filing lamented the existence of unions, criticized Judge Arthur Garrity for relying on court-appointed experts in developing Boston’s Phase II desegregation plan, sought the abolition

---

2 “Biographical Field Notes,” box: 1, folder: Biographical Field Notes, Carmen A. Roberts Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (hereafter: “CAR”).
3 Hereafter, the organization is referred to exclusively as MAD.
of teacher tenure laws, claimed that teachers ignored “basic historical facts” by using textbooks with “open-ended questions,” fretted about feminism entering the curriculum, and lamented the teaching of “Secular Humanism (a godless religion).” On the actual matter at hand, MAD suggested that school desegregation was “a conspiratorial effort to bring more Title monies into Detroit” and called potential busing “court-ordered inhuman treatment of white minority students” and “cultural genocide.”

Unsuccessful in its quest to intervene in the case, Roberts later asked the judge for a private meeting in a request devoid of tact: “We the people, deserve a voice in this collusive act of oppression.”

Though associating with extremists and trafficking in overt racial animus, MAD desired suburban acceptance. MAD held frequent antibusing rallies from 1974-1976 at Northeast Detroit’s Heilmann Field. Located near Eight Mile Road, Detroit’s northern boundary, Heilmann was closer to suburban communities such as East Detroit and the Grosse Pointes than it was to much of black Detroit. At MAD’s first rally in 1974, shortly after the Milliken decision, Roberts told a modest crowd that metropolitan desegregation remained a possibility. Providing few details, Roberts claimed that revision of local zoning ordinances could lead to metropolitan school districts. Roberts vowed to expand MAD into the suburbs and assured suburbanites that MAD respected suburban autonomy. “Our organization is dedicated to the concept of

---

6 Brief in Support of Petition for Intervention, 17 April 1975, box: 1, folder: NEMA Anti-Bussing Brief, CAR.
7 Letter, Carmen Roberts to Judge DeMascio, 16 January 1976, box: 1, folder: Correspondence, August 1975-July 1976, SW.
8 Estimates are unreliable, but the crowd likely numbered in the hundreds. The October 31, 1974 edition of the Northeast Detroiter claimed 1000 attendees. A week later, the same paper claimed 600. One year later, the Detroit News claimed that the 1975 rally’s attendance of 1,200 was three times that of the 1974 rally. See: Photo caption, Northeast Detroiter, 31 October 1974; “Anti-Bus March,” Northeast Detroiter, 7 November 1974; “Hundreds march against bussing: Officials rally with northeast area parents,” Detroit News, 12 June 1975.
neighborhood schools,” Roberts asserted; “We’d even be upset if they assigned our children to schools in Bloomfield Hills,” an exclusive suburban community.10

MAD supported Boston’s non-metropolitanist antibusers. MAD allied with Louise Day Hicks, the former School Committee member as yet unequivocal in her opposition to busing. MAD’s first rally, held during the second month of busing in Boston in October 1974, linked Detroit and Boston. The poster for the rally screamed “Boston Now! Detroit Tomorrow!”11 Speaking at the rally, Roberts asserted that “Those who reside in the Detroit metropolitan area must show sympathy for Bostonians, currently involved in busing, and with Detroiter’s, who are under a Supreme Court order which could, in the near future, include the suburbs.” MAD hoped that Hicks would address the crowd. Hicks did not attend, but she sent a telegram. Addressed to suburbanites, rather than the Detroit whites who organized the rally, Hicks wrote that “You people in Macomb County just don’t know how bad things are here… Busing is not the answer to a good education as is proven in all cases.”12

MAD recognized that metropolitanism retained a constituency following *Milliken*, but Detroit’s metropolitanists were anything but united. In *Milliken*’s wake, NAACP lawyers vowed to regroup and return to court. By the fall of 1974, the *Detroit News* reported that the NAACP was drafting legal action that would return the suburbs to the desegregation case. Though it backed a Detroit-only plan as an interim measure, NAACP attorney Louis R. Lucas professed his faith that the NAACP could “prove what the Supreme Court said we have to prove” and gain a

11 Poster, “Boston Now! Detroit Tomorrow!,” box: 1, folder: NEMA: History + Notes, 1972-1973, SW. MAD’s alliance with Hicks has also been noted by scholar Gillian Frank, who demonstrates that Hicks and figures within MAD soon broadened their focus to opposing the legalization of abortion. See: Gillian Frank, “The Colour of the Unborn: Anti-Abortion and Anti-Bussing Politics in Michigan, United States, 1967-1973,” *Gender & History* 26, no. 2 (August 2014), 356.
metropolitan remedy. By August of 1975, the NAACP produced an amended complaint that charged that district boundary lines and school financing guidelines discriminated against Detroit’s black students. The NAACP succeeded in gaining increased state funds to pay for the desegregation plan, but its amended complaint failed to reintroduce the suburbs to the case.

Though it desired metropolitan desegregation, the NAACP’s metropolitanism was secondary to its aim of ensuring intra-city desegregation. Months prior to submitting its amended complaint, in April 1975 the NAACP submitted its intra-city busing proposal. Calling for each school to reflect the overall system-wide racial ratio, plus or minus 15 percent, the plan entailed busing an estimated 76,000 to 81,000 students within a majority-black school system. In the 1974-1975 school year, Detroit’s public schools educated a 71.5 percent black population. Aside from ten elementary schools that would be left more than 50 percent white, the NAACP plan eliminated white-majority schools, the very thing the CCBE’s metropolitanism sought to avoid.

In light of Boston’s busing controversy and demographic realities, intra-city desegregation split Detroit’s integrationist civil rights advocates. Officials within the NAACP knew that many who had supported metropolitan desegregation would not support an intra-city busing plan that promised white flight and little integration. In December 1974, NAACP lawyer Paul Dimond suggested to lead counsel Nathaniel Jones that the NAACP immediately secure the support of the majority-black Detroit Board of Education and black Detroit Mayor Coleman Young for the “prompt implementation of a minimally-adequate Detroit-only plan” with the

---

understanding that the NAACP would work toward a new metropolitan case over the next few years. Dimond argued that this support was needed to “avoid the wholly destructive scene of Mayor Young and a black school board actively opposing black plaintiffs in court and, worse, in public.”

Maintaining unity, Dimond argued, required keeping metropolitanism alive.

The NAACP had reason to fear the opposition of Mayor Young and the Detroit Board of Education to intra-city busing. The Board’s black integrationist President, C.L. Golightly, remained committed to metropolitan desegregation. In the fall of 1974, Golightly met with the Boston School Committee’s tactical metropolitanist John Kerrigan at a Council of Great City Schools meeting in Denver and the two announced their intention of creating a national movement demanding suburban involvement in desegregating city schools.

Golightly coupled his metropolitanism with criticism of intra-city busing, declaring it “a joke and a hoax that a school board with a majority of black members is required by law to integrate a minority of white students into a majority of black students in order to bring those black students into the mainstream of American life.” Realizing that the Court would have to order integration, however, Golightly said that the Board would be willing to “do something about any school that is more than 50 percent white,” but “a plan that involves 75 percent black students in every school is unacceptable.”

Fearing exacerbated white flight and a replication of the violence that accompanied busing in South Boston, Mayor Young opposed intra-city busing. Young called instead for additional funds for Detroit’s impoverished schools, telling Detroiters that “the only bus I asked

17 Letter, Paul Dimond to Nathaniel Jones, 5 December 1974, part: V, box: 1050, folder: 6, NAACP-LOC.
for was a bus full of money.” Young supported metropolitan busing, however, because it promised to bring additional resources to Detroit’s schools. In contrast, intra-city busing could divert needed educational funds and make leaving Detroit more attractive to middle-class white families. In the fall of 1975, Young joined with City Councilors Carl Levin and Nicholas Hood to submit a brief in *Bradley v. Milliken* that argued that “if the state is allowed to continue to provide for public education in a way that makes the level of educational services in Detroit suburbs substantially more attractive than in Detroit, this factor will promote segregation by encouraging those families who are able, to move to the suburbs.” The brief suggested ordering the state to provide financial relief to the Detroit schools at a level that would make them comparable to suburban schools.

Young’s stance received the support of Douglas Fraser, Vice President of the United Auto Workers, who had privately urged Young to oppose intra-city busing. Young received further encouragement from the city’s most prominent black newspaper, the *Michigan Chronicle*, which editorialized that “nothing will be solved by school busing in our city when some 70 percent of the students are black. It can only prove a costly, disruptive exercise in futility.” Capitalizing on this opposition, the antibusing *Detroit News* reported condescendingly that “Responsible Blacks oppose Detroit bussing.” Putting the onus for potential violence on integrationists, the *News* claimed that those pushing for busing would “make what happened in Boston look like a garden party.”

---


The Detroit NAACP remained steadfast in its support for intra-city busing, partly because the national NAACP feared that doing otherwise would harm its position in other desegregation cases.\textsuperscript{24} In response to the national organization’s influence on the local branch, Young lashed out, calling Thomas Atkins, the president of the Boston NAACP, and Louis R. Lucas, a lawyer from Memphis, “carpetbaggers,” the Reconstruction-era term used pejoratively by Southerners to refer to Northern whites who putatively moved south for personal gain. Young mused about beginning legal action to stop intra-city busing, but reaffirmed his support for metropolitan desegregation: “Now, if you’re talking about cross-district busing, I have a different attitude.”\textsuperscript{25} NAACP President Roy Wilkins admonished Young, telling him that his statements sounded like those made “by the worst Southern racists.”\textsuperscript{26}

More than just outsiders demanded the NAACP continue pressing for busing. Prominent member of the local NAACP chapter Dr. J.J. McClendon told NAACP attorneys that he would not be part of “any political deal.” McClendon recalled traveling in the South as a child when black people “had to go to kitchen windows to get something to eat. Goddamn that galled me. I’ve given money. I’ve spent forty years working with the NAACP to change that. Now when I go South I stay in the finest hotels and I eat in the finest restaurants, just like any respectable person.” McClendon stated that “It ill behooves those who have reaped the benefits of the work of the NAACP to be on the other side when we come to desegregate the Detroit schools.”\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} Don Tschirhart, “…And NAACP carpetbaggers,” \textit{Detroit News}, n.d., part: V, box: 1032, folder: 9, NAACP-LOC.
\textsuperscript{26} William Grant, “NAACP’s Reply to Young: You’re Talking Like a Racist,” \textit{Detroit Free Press}, 28 June 1975. Offended by the carpetbagger comment, Wilkins drew on Detroit’s civil rights history to demonstrate the value of outsiders. Wilkins reminded Young that the successful 1925 defense of Dr. Ossian Sweet, a black man charged with murder for defending his newly purchased home against rampaging whites, and the 1948 Supreme Court decision in \textit{Shelley v. Kraemer} that outlawed racially restrictive covenants on housing, required attorneys from beyond Detroit. The Sweet case is the subject of Kevin Boyle’s excellent \textit{Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age} (New York: Henry Holt, 2004).
Those on the “other side” maintained that intra-city busing in a predominantly black school system did not entail desegregation.

Required to produce a desegregation plan, the black members of the Detroit Board of Education advocated a modest intra-city busing plan before the Court. The Board submitted a busing proposal that would bring schools with a black enrollment below 25 percent to a level between 40 and 60 percent. The Board’s proposal was less extensive than the NAACP’s submission. Where the NAACP plan left twenty-eight schools unaffected by busing, the Board exempted ninety-five schools, most of which were more than 90 percent black and located in the inner-city. The Board’s vote to submit the proposal was split along racial lines. Since 1973, African Americans constituted the majority of Board members. In 1975, as the Board prepared its busing proposal, nine of its thirteen members were black. These nine members voted in favor of submitting the busing plan, with the four white members urging the adoption of a voluntary desegregation plan. The Board submitted both plans to ensure that its white members retained a voice, but a concern over white reactions permeated the Board’s busing plan as well. The Board’s busing plan aimed to provide integration while upsetting white neighborhoods as little as possible because, according to Golightly, “Detroit needs every one of the white students it has now.” The NAACP characterized this as “a craven bow to white pressure and white fears,” and asked the Court to mandate that schools be between 60 and 90 percent black, a far cry from the 25.3 percent black student population its metropolitan plan in Milliken projected.

After Milliken, the goal posts of integration shifted dramatically.

31 Plaintiffs Response to Submission by Detroit Board, 21 April 1975, part: V, box: 1051, folder: 3, NAACP-LOC.
Implementing Busing

Following Judge Stephen Roth’s passing from a heart attack in July 1974, Judge Robert E. DeMascio presided over *Bradley v. Milliken*. Appointed by President Richard Nixon in 1971 on the recommendation of antibusing Michigan U.S. Senator Robert Griffin, DeMascio opposed busing, believing like Mayor Young that it would cause white flight and a repeat of Boston’s violence. Bound by a finding of *de jure* segregation, DeMascio’s ruling would have to include busing, but his fears of white flight and desire to avoid a prolonged busing controversy resulted in a modest remedy that entailed significantly less busing than requested by either plaintiff NAACP or defendant Board of Education.

As did Golightly, DeMascio focused on retaining the whites present in the Detroit schools: “In a school district that is only 26% white, a remedy that does not take into account of the possibility of resegregation will be short-lived and useless if that percentage of whites further decreased.” DeMascio declared it “impossible to avoid having a substantial number of all black or nearly all black schools in a school district that is over 70% black.” Preventing resegregation, DeMascio argued, required accepting segregated black schools, a succinct indication of how *Milliken* ensured the inadequacy of Detroit’s desegregation. Noting that the NAACP’s plan entailed a majority of schools between 75 and 85 percent black, DeMascio argued that such percentages made schools racially identifiably black and would provoke white flight that would make “each and every school in the district identifiably black.” He further attacked the NAACP’s demand that schools be between 60 and 90 percent black, noting the absurdity in

defining a 56 percent black school as segregated and an 85 percent black school as desegregated. Not imposing a plan himself, in August 1975 DeMascio delivered guidelines to the Board of Education that indicated that a 30 to 55 percent black enrollment constituted an integrated school. When coupled with the acceptance of segregated black schools, DeMascio promised much less busing than anticipated. The Detroit News estimated that only sixty-nine schools out of a total of 290 would be involved in busing.

Indicative of busing’s declining support following Boston’s busing controversy, DeMascio’s order received widespread praise. The judge received commendations from Michigan Governor William Milliken and Board of Education President Golightly. Both of Detroit’s major daily newspapers editorialized in favor of limited busing. Mayor Young praised the decision for not having “the ingredients… for another Boston.” DeMascio’s decision even earned the praise of Boston’s Louise Day Hicks. Two weeks after the ruling, Hicks visited Detroit and after meeting with Mayor Young declared that Boston and Detroit were “much the same” and that Boston “should have the same type of federal court decision on busing as was handed down by Judge DeMascio.” In contrast, NAACP counsel Nathaniel Jones called the decision “a rape of the constitutional rights of black children,” while the Michigan Chronicle’s Ken Cockrel lamented the “specter of South Boston” suffusing the deliberations and the Court’s acceptance “as a fixed reality the racist intransigence of the majority population.”

33 Memorandum Opinion and Remedial Decree, Bradley v. Milliken, 15 August 1975, part: V, box: 1024, folder: 2, NAACP-LOC.
The NAACP appealed DeMascio’s decision to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and succeeded in gaining a modest uptick in busing, though it achieved nowhere near the level it desired. Most significant about the Sixth Circuit’s decision was its open criticism of the Supreme Court. Months before DeMascio’s ruling, Sixth Circuit Judge George C. Edwards noted in a routine appeal of a bus acquisition order that “conscience compels me to record how deeply I disagree” with Milliken, which “imbued school district boundaries in Northern states with a constitutional significance which neither federal nor state law had ever accorded them.”

Even as the Sixth Circuit ordered more intra-city busing, its judges reaffirmed their belief “that genuine constitutional desegregation cannot be accomplished within the school district boundaries.” But in light of Milliken, the Sixth Circuit could go no further than modifying DeMascio’s order. Overturning the decision, its judges believed, would be “an exercise in futility.”

By the time that the Sixth Circuit delivered its decision, the Detroit Board had already produced a busing plan that went beyond the minimum level of busing DeMascio required. In a vote again split along racial lines, the Board voted nine to three to require that no school be less than 40 to 50 percent black rather than the 30 percent minimum DeMascio allowed. DeMascio assented to the Board’s plan. The revisions meant busing nearly 22,000 students beginning in January 1976, a number still less than half that suggested in the Board’s April 1975 submission.

---

39 Order, United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals, 19 June 1975, part: V, Box: 1024, folder 2, NAACP-LOC.
With 247,500 public school students in Detroit, the busing of fewer than 22,000 made little positive impact and could not integrate a system that by September educated a 79.4 percent black student body. Ronald Bradley, the Detroit youngster who lent his name to the case upon its filing nearly six years previous, remained in his segregated neighborhood school. No uptick in white students joined him. Many schools witnessed an exodus of white students, as many white parents withdrew their children from public schools. In one northeast neighborhood, white parents acted *en masse* to remove forty-nine students from two schools, sending the children to private schools. MAD’s Carmen Roberts, a member of the Region Seven School Board, transferred her daughter to private school. In practice, busing entailed the elimination of white majority schools. Soon this became the official judicial rationale. By 1978, the District Court made the elimination of white majorities the explicit aim of its student reassignment plan, a feat that the exodus of white students had nearly accomplished.

The first black children bused to ostensibly white schools could not help but note the absence of white classmates. After riding a bus to the St. Clair Middle School in late January 1976, twelve-year-old Hosea Walker declared: “I don’t see any white kids here. Where are the white people at? They moved us for no reason.” Walker’s arrival at St. Clair did not mean access to superior facilities. Prior to busing, St. Clair served as an elementary school, meaning that its new middle school pupils would not have access to the industrial arts facilities, gymnasiums, and

---


45 “Biographical Field Notes,” box: 1, folder: Biographical Field Notes, CAR; Julie Morris, “School Officials, City Leaders Have No Kids Being Bused,” *Detroit Free Press*, 8 February 1976. Roberts allowed her son to remain at Denby, his neighborhood school, where he was not subject to busing. Roberts’ removal of her daughter but not her son implies that she possessed the same sexual fears over integration that motivated other antibusers.

46 Opinion and Order of the District Court on Student Reassignment, 7 August 1978, part: V, box: 1025, folder: 1, NAACP-LOC.
appropriately sized water fountains common to most middle schools. In Detroit, busing meant neither integration nor improved education. Intra-city busing’s largest contribution was its exacerbation of the divide between the city and its suburbs.

**Cementing the Urban-Suburban Divide**

With *Milliken* making Detroit’s boundary lines an escape valve from desegregation, intra-city busing accelerated white flight. Once ensconced in the suburbs, expat Detroiters joined white suburbanites in elaborating the politics of suburban secession and guarding against metropolitan initiatives that could link their communities to Detroit. Despite MAD’s goal of uniting metropolitan antibusers, its conspiratorial rhetoric helped feed suburban isolationism and regional polarization. Rather than mobilizing with Detroit’s antibusers, suburbanites recognized that the best way to avoid metropolitan desegregation was to disavow links with Detroit entirely.

Alongside intra-city busing, MAD’s metropolitan rhetoric grew more desperate and conspiratorial. In March 1976, Carmen Roberts traveled to suburban Warren to argue that intra-city busing was the first step of a “planned economy” that would “spread the city out over the suburban area.” Roberts argued that busing constituted “Phase I of an elaborate scheme which will eventually lead to metro or regional government with the bus used as the tool.” That same month, MAD issued a bulletin that claimed to have discovered the “formula for regional government.” This “formula” included Judge DeMascio’s busing decision, educational parks, equitable funding between wealthier and “deprived districts,” consolidating school districts, federal education grants, subsidized low-income and minority housing, mass transit, and regional...

---

Two months later, the suburban Moravian Village Neighborhood Association held a meeting in Sterling Heights that repeated MAD’s charges and added others, including the claim that plans were underway to “take children from parents.” According to the homeowners’ association, “This will be called ‘in-service’ training.”

MAD’s support dwindled in the face of a modest busing plan that exempted the suburbs. In June 1976, MAD organized a three-mile protest walk that culminated in a rally at Heilmann Field. A mere 200 people participated in the protest and most speakers discussed apathy. Congressman Lucien Nedzi said that “apathy” made the prospect of an antibusing amendment unrealistic. In contrast, Roberts argued that the issue was not “apathy, it’s people moving out of Detroit. I suspect many people believe they can beat it by moving out.”

Though few attended MAD’s rallies, suburbanites were not apathetic about metropolitan busing or regional government. In the immediate post-Milliken period, the specter of regional government and fears of a renewed push for metropolitan integration dominated suburban politics. Though Detroit’s suburbanites had long erected barriers between their communities and Detroit, their push for suburban independence heightened during the lead-up to Milliken. As historian David Riddle argues, from 1971 to 1974 “the fear of busing withered everything it touched. Because cross-district busing was by definition a metropolitan regional program, a cloud of suspicion hung over other join city-suburban programs.” After the suburban victory in Milliken in the summer of 1974, suburban anti-metropolitanism retained its vigor.

---

50 Mailer, “The Moravian Village Neighborhood Association Invites You to Attend Our Special Meeting May 12th to Learn Why There is More to Forced Bussing Than Meets the Eye,” ca. Spring 1976, box: 1, folder: Anti-Bussing Material, ca. 1976, CAR. The Board’s “in-service training” referred to the training of teachers, typically in a program of human relations. No children were abducted as a result of this program.
As buses rolled in Detroit, suburbanites indicated their opposition to regional planning. Michigan House Bill 5527, introduced in July 1975 by Representative William Ryan, a Detroit Democrat, proposed mandatory membership in a regional planning agency covering seven counties. Though Southeastern Michigan had possessed a metropolitan planning agency since 1968, the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), it proceeded voluntarily. Many suburbs, fearing the possibility of metropolitan integration and the introduction of public housing, refused to join SEMCOG. H.B. 5527 would mandate membership in the planning agency.\textsuperscript{53} Ryan proposed H.B. 5527 to generate discussion on the need for regional government and he did not expect the measure to succeed. While H.B. 5527 generated much discussion, it received little support from suburbanites and their local governments.\textsuperscript{54} Facing extensive opposition among suburbanites and opposed by SEMCOG, which represented suburban communities that wished it to remain a voluntary association, Ryan’s Bill failed to proceed to a vote.

Suburbanites associated regional planning with metropolitan busing and they guarded against any possibility of Detroit’s busing expanding into the suburbs. Though SEMCOG’s purview did not include education, from its beginning, well before any proposals of metropolitan desegregation, SEMCOG’s suburban opponents associated it with potential metropolitan desegregation busing.\textsuperscript{55} For these reasons, suburban Warren had refused to join SEMCOG. In tandem with the looming threat of metropolitan school desegregation, Warren’s City Council went further in its opposition to regionalism, calling on the state in November 1972 to dissolve SEMCOG.\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Milliken} did not mitigate suburban fears of metropolitan integration. Macomb

County Commissioner Richard D. Sabaugh, the former Warren City Councilor who led that city’s fight against the Department of Housing and Urban Development over fears of integration, declared that H.B. 5527 proved “that the fears people have about regional governments are pretty much true.” Asserting that the NAACP was “hard at work planning new approaches to achieve cross-district busing,” Sabaugh argued that opposition to regional government was essential. “We must never let up,” Sabaugh said, “because, once we do, the buses will roll.” Warren antibusing leader Norma Barnes echoed Sabaugh, stating that “House Bill 5527 could very easily lead to back door busing like it has elsewhere.” Suburban newspapers, such as the Macomb Daily, linked anti-regionalism and antibusing. The Daily’s editor, Mitch Kehetian, greeted the beginning of busing in Detroit by stating his opposition to “this Stalinist-Hitlerian concept because Americans and other freedom-loving peoples across the globe have fought and died to rid themselves of dictatorial regimes.” Warning suburbanites that the NAACP remained dedicated to integrating all-white suburbs, the paper opposed regional government and attacked the academic rationale behind school integration, staking out a suburban secessionist position hostile to Detroit.

Suburban metropolitan fears, though hyperbolic, possessed some validity. Metropolitanism, though weakened by Milliken, remained a distant possibility. In 1975, an appeals court found that state legislation in Delaware locked black students into Wilmington’s

---

schools, an action meeting the *Milliken* standard for state-mandated segregation and resulting in cross-district busing. A recent court decision in Indianapolis indicated that regional government could produce metropolitan busing. The Indianapolis ruling found that the state could not form a regional government for Indianapolis without also establishing a busing program to integrate schools. The surest way for suburbanites to avoid integration, then, was for their communities to disavow any link to the city. In metropolitan Detroit’s present fragmented political and service structure exists the physical manifestation of suburban fears of metropolitan desegregation.

Unable to marshal suburban participation or defeat busing, MAD all but collapsed after a single semester of busing. In August 1976, citing her considerable workload as a member of the Detroit’s Region Seven School Board and having helped found the new National Association of Neighborhood Schools (NANS), Roberts submitted her resignation to MAD. Roberts expected MAD to end, but MAD attempted to soldier on absent Roberts and the members who left with her. It did not succeed. In 1977, what was left of MAD joined NANS. Unsuccessful in stopping busing, the urbanites of MAD fed longstanding suburban anti-metropolitanism, helping to entrench further a suburban ethos of spatial distinctiveness from the central city.

**Philadelphia**

---

61 Delaware’s 1968 Education Advancement Act, designed to consolidate local school districts, explicitly excluded Wilmington, the state’s only predominantly-black district. For more on the Wilmington case, see Brett Gadsden, *Between North and South: Delaware, Desegregation, and the Myth of American Sectionalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).


63 Minutes, Mothers Alert Detroit, subject: Carmen Roberts’ letter to MAD re: resignation, 23 August 1976, box 1, folder: General Meetings, Minutes, 1974-1977, SW.

64 Letter, Linda D. Bailey to Shirley Wohlfield, box: 1, folder: Correspondence, September 1976-May 1977, SW.

65 Letter, Shirley Wohlfield to Senator Robert Griffin, 14 February 1977, box: 1, folder: Correspondence, September 1976-May 1977, SW.
As buses rolled in Boston and Detroit, Philadelphia had yet to implement a desegregation plan. Following *Milliken*, the Philadelphia Board of Education continued advocating for metropolitan desegregation, as did local civil rights organizations such as the North Philadelphia NAACP and the Fellowship Commission. However, the absence of a conventional desegregation lawsuit in Philadelphia worked against both metropolitanism and mandatory desegregation. With the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC) leading the charge against school segregation, the case proceeded absent a black plaintiff. Unlike local civil rights organizations, the PHRC refused to consider metropolitan desegregation, precluding the emergence of a courtroom metropolitanist alliance.

Presiding over an appeal of the PHRC’s desegregation order, in October 1974 the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania ordered both the Board of Education and the PHRC to produce plans for desegregating Philadelphia’s public schools. Though the order specified intra-city desegregation, the Board of Education, in line with its previous efforts, advocated metropolitan desegregation. The Board argued that Philadelphia’s high percentage of minority students, 62 percent black and 6 percent “Spanish-surnamed,” made intra-city desegregation impossible. It proposed merging the School District of Philadelphia with adjacent school systems. The adjacent districts educated a 94 percent white student population within close proximity of Philadelphia’s black neighborhoods. By incorporating only neighboring systems, the proposal involved significantly fewer districts than did the metropolitan plan ordered initially.

---

in *Bradley v. Milliken*. While Detroit’s metropolitan plan envisioned white majorities, black and white students would be present in equal numbers in the Philadelphia Board’s proposed desegregation area.67 But in the post-*Milliken* era, and absent a plaintiff requesting metropolitan integration, the Board’s proposal was not a remote possibility.

In the face of the Board’s intransigence and extensive white opposition to intra-city desegregation, nineteen city groups – among them the Philadelphia Urban League, the Urban Coalition, the Fellowship Commission, the League of Women Voters of Philadelphia, and the NAACP – came together and condemned the Board of Education and other civic leaders for being either “silent and negative” on school desegregation or making “demagogic appeals” that could potentially encourage violence.”68 Though their collective statement did not indicate a preference for a specific plan of desegregation, some of the most important groups behind the statement favored metropolitan desegregation.

Both before and after *Milliken*, metropolitan solutions appealed to a number of the city’s civil rights advocates. The city’s most prominent black newspaper, the *Philadelphia Tribune*, trumpeted metropolitanism. The *Tribune* editorialized against the *Milliken* decision, stating that it was a retreat to the “separate but equal” mandate of *Plessy v. Ferguson* that “guaranteed that separatism, discrimination and hostility will be the dominant factors in education in metropolitan America for at least a generation to come.”69 During the Boston controversy, the paper lamented that *Milliken* “provided fuel for the anti-busing crowd in that it gave white urban residents the

argument, ‘Why should we have to integrate our schools when the rich people in the suburbs don’t have to?’” While refusing to condone white racism, it acknowledged that urban whites “nevertheless have a good point in criticizing liberals like Sen. Edward Kennedy and Sen. George McGovern who support busing at the same time they send their own children to elitist private schools.”70 The Tribune spoke of parallels between South Boston and white working-class areas like Philadelphia’s Kensington to suggest that Boston’s experiences provided lessons. The title of an editorial summarized the lessons the paper learned: “Busing Must Include Rich Areas; Otherwise It Just Will Not Work.” Those rich areas were mainly suburban.71

Groups such as the Fellowship Commission and the North Philadelphia NAACP called for metropolitan desegregation and weighed filing new litigation. In 1974, the North Philadelphia NAACP petitioned the PHRC for a metropolitan solution, arguing that the state “maximized racial segregation” by allowing separate school boards for Philadelphia and its suburbs. It combined its call for metropolitan desegregation with an accusation that the Board of Education was not committed to any form of desegregation, lamenting its failure to file a lawsuit or introduce legislation needed to bring about regionalization.72 It aimed to rectify this by filing its own lawsuit, requesting in 1975 that the national NAACP support a desegregation lawsuit in federal court.73 This suit was never filed. The national organization denied support because it felt that a court would not order desegregation while the PHRC’s legal proceedings were underway.74

74 Letter, Nathaniel R. Jones to Earl W. Trent, 11 February 1975, part: V, box: 2219, folder: 3, NAACP-LOC.
Before *Milliken*, the Fellowship Commission urged the Board to take all necessary legal steps to produce “the earliest possible establishment of a metropolitan school district.” Though doubting the Board’s commitment to desegregation, the Fellowship Commission considered working with the Board to produce a metropolitan plan. In March 1974, its president raised collaborating with the Board of Education and others “in a lawsuit requiring the Commonwealth to establish one or more metropolitan districts.” The Fellowship Commission proposed that the collaboration only proceed if the Board undertook “bona fide efforts” to accomplish intra-system integration simultaneously by busing for overcrowding, pairing schools, and constructing educational parks. The *Milliken* decision quickly put these plans on ice.

Despite the *Milliken* setback, the Fellowship Commission quickly reemerged as a metropolitan advocate. Richard Gilmore, the black Executive Vice President of Girard Bank, urged the Commission in 1976 to initiate legislation designed to redistrict the region’s schools. Gilmore, believing that integration required enlarging the number of white pupils in the city’s schools, suggested the creation of eight regional school districts of roughly 50,000 pupils involving Philadelphia and its suburbs. Though the Commission did not believe that the Pennsylvania Legislature would pass metropolitanist legislation, the proposal reinvigorated the Commission’s consideration of a metropolitan desegregation lawsuit. It hired academic Howard Harrison to produce a report on achieving metropolitan desegregation after *Milliken*.

---

75 Statement Presented to the Philadelphia Board of Education by the Fellowship Commission on Desegregation-Integration and Quality Education, 17 January 1974, box: 36, folder: 26, FC.
Harrison’s report explained how state action allowed metropolitan desegregation to proceed in nearby Wilmington, Delaware, but did not include any recommendations for Philadelphia.\(^7^8\)

By the time Harrison produced his report in 1977, two members of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had already brought together groups interested in metropolitan desegregation. Calling themselves the Metropolitan Council, this alliance reached out to the Fellowship Commission, having already garnered support from the ACLU, NAACP, Urban League, Episcopal Diocese, and the American Friends Service Committee.\(^7^9\) Though not reflected in the PHRC’s legal proceedings, metropolitan desegregation possessed a broad constituency in Philadelphia. But with the PHRC leading the way, non-tactical proponents of metropolitan desegregation were frozen out of the courtroom, the most important venue for metropolitanist planning.

**A Useful “Buffer”: The Role of the PHRC**

The considerable metropolitan planning and suggestions of alternate litigation indicated the lack of faith civil rights advocates had in the PHRC. This lack of faith was for good reason. Neither Milliken nor fears of another Boston alone dictated the limits of desegregation in Philadelphia. An unwitting PHRC served as antibusers’ most important ally. During the height of Boston’s busing controversy, the PHRC promoted an unpopular massive busing plan incapable of desegregating all of the city’s schools. The timing and scale of the busing proposal ensured that Boston’s experiences dominated Philadelphia’s desegregation planning, which in turn elevated concerns of white antibusers over those of integrationist civil rights advocates. While it remained

\(^7^8\) Howard Harrison, “Metropolitan School Desegregation: Discriminatory Intent,” 1977, box: 36, folder: 25, FC.

\(^7^9\) Council for Metropolitan Desegregation, Discussion Memorandum for Education Policy and Planning Committee, 2 December 1976, box: 37, folder: 22, FC.
steadfast in its refusal to consider metropolitan solutions, the PHRC’s very existence froze out alternative legal challenges, as organizations such as the NAACP were unwilling to proceed with a lawsuit while the PHRC was already in litigation. No one recognized the PHRC’s role in preventing desegregation better than Democratic Governor Milton J. Shapp, who in 1974, 1975, and 1976 vetoed legislation that rescinded the PHRC’s authority to compel desegregation. Shapp used his veto because he knew that failing to do so would provide evidence of *de jure* segregation and because the PHRC’s existence worked against extensive integration. In stopping an act of *de jure* segregation and maintaining the PHRC, Shapp’s veto precluded both intra-city busing and a winnable metropolitan desegregation case.

Ordered by the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania in 1974 to produce its own proposal for desegregation, the PHRC developed an extensive busing plan that underscored that intra-city remedies could not integrate all city schools. The PHRC proposed the maximum desegregation possible within the city while limiting a student’s travel time to forty-five minutes each way per day. With this limit, the plan exempted schools in heavily black West Philadelphia and the city’s white Northeast, but still provided a substantial increase in numerical integration. In 1974, the PHRC considered 216 of Philadelphia’s 253 schools segregated, meaning that these schools educated a student body whose black percentage varied more than 15 percent from the average of other schools in its grade range. In practice, this meant that in most cases a school was considered desegregated if it had a black enrollment between 44 and 82 percent.

---

80 Though looking only at the litigation itself and leaving aside issues of metropolitanism and politics more broadly, Steven L. Nelson and Alison C. Tyler similarly conclude that “state legislative involvement in desegregation,” i.e. the PHRC, “may not be the great progressive hope that we desire in terms of racial and educational equity.” See: Nelson and Tyler, “Examining *Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission v. School District of Philadelphia*,” 1058.

81 In practice, this meant that in most cases a school was considered desegregated if it had a black enrollment between 44 and 82 percent.
53,700 students.\textsuperscript{82} Despite knowing that the plan could not produce full desegregation, the PHRC did not reconsider its longstanding refusal to look at metropolitan solutions. Rather, it reconsidered its requirement that all schools be integrated. Unwilling to violate municipal sovereignty, the PHRC sacrificed its commitment to full integration.

The PHRC’s busing plan produced immediate opposition. The Philadelphia Board of Education, echoing Judge DeMascio in Detroit, argued that by producing a situation in which 125 schools educated a student body between 70 and 83 percent black, a significant percentage of schools remained “racially identifiably black.”\textsuperscript{83} Philadelphia’s Home and School Council concurred, predicting white flight and arguing that “Changing schools from 75\% white to 75\% black will result in 100\% black schools.”\textsuperscript{84} The plan’s inclusion of mandatory busing – a first for Philadelphia – prompted a group of white parents to petition for intervention in the case. Organized as the Citizens Committee for Neighborhood Schools, their successful petition drew on Boston’s experiences, claiming that busing “would create such a sense of outrage… as to be potentially provocative of violence, injurious to public and private property, and dangerous to the health, safety and welfare of the school children as well as the general citizenry of the City of Philadelphia.”\textsuperscript{85}

The opposition to busing led to annual legislative attempts to eliminate the PHRC’s power to compel desegregation. In tandem with Phase I of Boston’s busing, Pennsylvania state legislators voted overwhelmingly in favor of legislation preventing the PHRC from assigning

\textsuperscript{82} Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, Desegregation Plan for the Assignment of Pupils, Philadelphia Public Schools, 7 July 1975, box: 36, folder: 27, FC.
\textsuperscript{84} Testimony of Nancy Westfield at the Fact Finding Court Hearings, 12 August 1975, box: 1, folder: 17, Home and School Council Records, Urban Archives, Temple University (hereafter: “HSC”).
students to any school other than the one nearest their homes and requiring it to withdraw its legal complaint. By November 1974 the antibusing measure passed both the House and the Senate. 86 The NAACP warned that if Governor Milton Shapp did not veto the measure, it would file a federal suit. Shapp vetoed the bill. 87

The PHRC’s busing plan compelled similar antibusing legislation in 1975 and 1976, which Shapp again vetoed. In 1975, Shapp emphasized what he called the “flexibility” of the PHRC, a euphemism for its ineffectiveness. 88 Shapp described the PHRC as a “buffer” that kept “the question out of the federal courts” and prevented “the kind of situation that developed in Boston.” 89 Shapp argued that overturning his veto “would leave the supporters of integration no alternative but to appeal directly to the federal courts… thereby opening the door for federal courts in Pennsylvania to do what they did in Boston.” 90 The New York Times recognized the PHRC’s usefulness in preventing a federal desegregation case. It claimed erroneously that the PHRC was “created by Gov. Milton J. Shapp as a buffer between local schools and Federal courts” and was “admittedly designed to lessen chances for court-ordered busing in Pennsylvania cities.” 91 Though the 1955 Pennsylvania Human Relations Act created the PHRC sixteen years before Shapp became governor, the Times’s error captured how Shapp used the Commission.

Though Shapp argued that the PHRC prevented massive busing, his appeals had little effect on the votes of metropolitan Philadelphia’s state representatives. In July 1975, all four of Philadelphia’s Republican state representatives voted in favor of overriding Shapp’s veto, while

the city’s twenty-eight Democrats voted sixteen in favor of the override and twelve against. Suburban Chester County and Delaware County representatives indicated a unanimous bipartisan consensus in favor of overriding the veto. Of all of Philadelphia’s adjacent suburban counties, only Montgomery County, represented exclusively by Republicans, counted a single vote upholding the veto. Its eleven other representatives voted to override. Only with votes from beyond metropolitan Philadelphia did Shapp’s veto survive. The suburban support for overriding Shapp’s veto paralleled the increasing opposition of Massachusetts suburban legislators to the Racial Imbalance Act that emerged in tandem with looming busing and proposals for metropolitan desegregation in Boston.

In attempting to override Shapp’s veto, antibusing representatives failed to recognize the advantages they gained from the PHRC. The PHRC’s challenge marginalized metropolitanism, ensuring that Philadelphia’s suburbanites did not face as strong a metropolitan challenge as their suburban counterparts in Greater Detroit and Boston. As a result, though few welcomed endeavors linking their communities with the city, Philadelphia’s suburbanites did not reaffirm their suburban secessionist politics with as much vigor as did Detroit’s. Suburban secessionist politics were strongest in areas such as Detroit and Boston where metropolitan desegregation seemed imminent, was nearly realized, or was fought for in the legislature. With a conventional desegregation lawsuit unfiled, intra-city desegregation litigation underway, no programs of voluntary metropolitan integration, and no legislation demanding either metropolitan integration or consolidation, suburban Philadelphia’s autonomy was comparatively secure. As a result, Philadelphia’s suburbs did not witness the flourishing of antibusing groups seen elsewhere.

---

92 “The Vote on Bussing,” Philadelphia Bulletin, 23 July 1975. Of Chester’s five representatives, its lone Democrat joined its four Republicans to vote in favor of overriding Shapp’s veto. With ten representatives split evenly between Democrats and Republicans, all Delaware County representatives opposed Shapp’s veto.
Suburban anti-integrationism focused largely on opposing the PHRC’s desegregation plan and reversing Shapp’s veto. Ironically, in attempting to override Shapp’s veto, suburbanites unwittingly threatened suburban autonomy. *Milliken* did not rule out metropolitan solutions entirely. Instead, it required evidence that state action sought explicitly to segregate, a standard that plaintiffs in nearby Wilmington, Delaware had been able to achieve post-*Milliken*. Overriding Shapp’s veto could provide evidence of the state’s segregative intent while removing the PHRC from the desegregation fight and leaving the metropolitan option open. Such an outcome would have been disastrous for antibusing suburbanites.

For antibusing urbanites, the PHRC never raised issues of *de jure* segregation, defining Philadelphia’s segregation by default as a regrettable, though not unconstitutional, *de facto* “racial imbalance,” making mandatory busing unlikely for urban children. Where busing was needed to remedy *de jure* segregation, it was not required for addressing *de facto* segregation. The 1964 Civil Rights Act drew a sharp distinction between the North’s ostensibly *de facto* “racial imbalance” and the South’s *de jure* segregation and this distinction affected the permissible remedies. According to the Act, “‘desegregation’ shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial imbalance.” Empowered to eliminate *de facto* segregation, the PHRC never needed to demonstrate that intentional state actions produced Philadelphia’s “racial imbalance.” Though this seems indicative of an activist mandate, school boards could appeal the PHRC’s orders before the state’s Commonwealth Court. Absent evidence of *de jure* segregation, which the PHRC was not compelled to prove, the Court could
discard the solutions required for remedying *de jure* segregation such as mandatory busing. This the Commonwealth Court did when it ruled against the PHRC’s busing plan in February 1976.\(^93\)

Though the PHRC first ordered the Board of Education to produce an integration plan in 1968, the Commonwealth Court’s 1976 ruling still did not impose a plan. Instead, the Court returned planning for desegregation back to the Board of Education, subject to certain guidelines. It ordered the Board to submit a plan and timetable for the mitigation of “racial imbalance” in its schools and mandated that no child be on a bus for more than forty-five minutes each way. While ostensibly open to busing, the ruling cautioned against extensive mandatory integration. The Court seized on the inability of the PHRC’s busing plan to integrate all Philadelphia schools. In demonstrating this inability, the Court argued the plan “performed a service beyond the call of its responsibility” and it suggested that the PHRC review future plans “in practical, not doctrinaire, fashion.”\(^94\) Not only were metropolitan remedies impossible with the PHRC’s involvement, busing was increasingly untenable.

The Board of Education recognized the leeway the decision granted it. Though it went through the motions of convening a twenty-six-member Desegregation Task Force, composed of parents and civil rights leaders, the Board intended that its desegregation plan not involve mandatory busing. Superintendent Michael Marcase, an appointee of Mayor Frank Rizzo, told the Task Force that the Board favored voluntary busing and magnet schools “before the extreme measures that might be proposed.”\(^95\) The Board’s opposition to busing manifested itself in its proposed two-part desegregation plan. Under the plan, the first phase of desegregation would be

---


\(^94\) Ibid.

entirely voluntary. If, after a number of years, the voluntary plan failed, Phase II would include mandatory busing.

Member of the Desegregation Task Force and longstanding civil rights crusader Helen Oakes saw the Board’s proposal as a continued dodging of integration. Rather than be associated with the plan, Oakes resigned from the Task Force on June 1, 1976. In her widely disseminated resignation letter, Oakes stated that it was “very clear to me that the School District of Philadelphia does not intend to submit a plan to the Commonwealth Court that will in fact desegregate the schools.” Any voluntary plan, Oakes argued, “cannot succeed.” One week later, the League of Women Voters of Philadelphia concurred, questioning “whether a plan that is totally voluntary in its initial phase truly addresses the problem of segregated schools.” Likewise, the Urban League opposed the plan because “the right to a quality education is not a voluntary issue,” but it indicated support for the inclusion of busing in Phase II. The voluntary plan, however, received significant support from antibusers, who, the Urban League noted, “would not let or even encourage their children to participate in any of the stated programs.”

The voluntary plan’s main attraction was that it did not mandate busing. Cognizant of white antibusing sentiment and having received the Task Force’s approval of a plan that included a voluntary phase, the Board lopped off the plan’s involuntary second phase cavalierly prior to its submission. According to the Board’s Augustus Baxter, “The Board reviewed it and said that it was going to take time to work on the proposal. However, other things got in the way. So after about three to six weeks, the Board decided to cut off the

96 Letter, Helen Oakes to Augustus Baxter, 1 June 1976, box: 14, folder: Task Force – Misc., HO.
involuntary process and to improve the voluntary with some programmatic pieces and put the
cover on it. We submitted that.”

The plan relied on magnet schools and an open enrollment student transfer policy that permitted students to leave their neighborhood school if their choice aided desegregation. This July 1976 submission marked the first time that the Board responded to the PHRC without requesting metropolitan desegregation.

Despite the PHRC’s objections, the Commonwealth Court approved the Board’s plan on July 1, 1977. The Court stated that it was “not prepared to order the public schools of Philadelphia to pair specific schools or bus specific students until those charged with the responsibility of administering the schools have had a reasonable opportunity to implement a plan which they feel will accomplish desegregation with a minimum of disruption and a maximum of educational value.” The Court’s warning against “disruption” testifies to the role of Boston’s busing controversy which combined with the PHRC’s mandate to work against mandatory integration. Seizing on the absence of a charge of de jure segregation, the Court ruled that because “the School District of Philadelphia is not segregated within the prohibitions of the decisions of the Federal Courts… plans fashioned by federal authorities to cure the ills created by deliberate segregation are not appropriate here.” Absent both a metropolitan focus and a charge of de jure segregation, the desegregation battle hinged on preventing another Boston.

Though the Court professed that voluntary decisions produced Philadelphia’s “racial imbalance,” it maintained that integration could be accomplished through similarly voluntary means. This decision defied the Supreme Court’s 1968 decision in Green v. County School District of Orange County.

---

Board of New Kent County, which declared “freedom of choice” plans unconstitutional. Green, however, applied to remedying de jure segregation. The PHRC, refusing to consider metropolitan desegregation, simultaneously sidestepped the issue of de jure segregation. The Court’s ruling, specifying three years for the Board to prove the capabilities of its voluntary plan, left the PHRC’s legal proceedings open, postponing desegregation and preventing the filing of a conventional desegregation case by civil rights groups.

Initially, the voluntary plan increased integration marginally. Using the Board’s preferred definition, one the PHRC opposed, a “desegregated school” contained a white student population between 25 and 75 percent of a school’s total enrollment. Forty-seven of Philadelphia’s 294 schools met this criteria prior to the voluntary plan, with 40,200 of Philadelphia’s 258,000 public school pupils attending integrated schools in 1976. By November 1979, desegregation prevailed in sixty-eight of 287 total schools, with 51,700 students out of a total enrollment of 232,000 in desegregated schools. The voluntary transfer of 8,500 students, 85 percent of whom were black, accounted for most of this integration.102 With few white students choosing to aid integration efforts, the plan entailed little desegregation in predominantly black schools. In the fall of 1977, 113 schools educated a student body over 90 percent black. By the fall of 1980, after the Board closed seven of the schools included in the 1977 total, 111 schools were over 90 percent black. The Board did achieve a modest 3 percentage-point reduction in the number of black pupils attending such schools, however. Where 69 percent of black students attended schools more than 90 percent black in 1977, 66 percent did so in 1980.103

---

Though two-thirds of Philadelphia’s black students attended schools over 90 percent black in 1980, the Commonwealth Court did not agree with the PHRC that the Board needed to implement mandatory desegregation. In 1982, the Court reasoned that “complete desegregation of the district’s schools… may not be feasible without the necessity of transporting students over distances and for periods of time which would endanger their wellbeing.” Though it acknowledged much work remained, the Court concluded that voluntary desegregation “effected the desegregation of some of the district’s schools” and predicted further gains should the Board maintain its commitment. The decision concluded by suggesting, but not requiring, that the Board give “serious consideration” to pairing a number of black and white elementary schools and reassigning pupils from schools slated to close in a way that would promote desegregation.104

The Board authored a proposal pairing twenty-two schools but, like Phase II of its 1976 desegregation plan, it never saw the light of day. The Board’s new black superintendent, Constance E. Clayton, a widely-respected educational reformer, advocated for the pairing proposal if only to avoid mandatory measures in the future. Clayton did not mention educational considerations and she was cool towards the proposal.105 Faced with the opposition of many Philadelphians, the Board neglected to include the pairing of schools in its subsequent plan.

As did her predecessors, Clayton suggested that integration and educational improvement worked at cross-purposes. Planning the Board’s 1983 desegregation proposal, Clayton stated that the effort to desegregate took needed attention and resources from educational improvement. In place of new measures, the Board proposed simply to continue its voluntary plan. Clayton

104 Ibid.
105 Memo, Constance E. Clayton to Members of the Board of Education, 3 December 1982, box: 14, folder: Desegregation – Pairings, Misc., HO.
assured parents that the plan would not entail mandatory busing, and she justified its absence by pointing to the experiences of cities such as Boston, where busing was “resource-consuming and disruptive of the educational process.” A Board of Education survey also helped determine Clayton’s response. The survey asked 1,000 respondents to rank fifteen aspects of schooling in their importance. Both white and black parents rated “safety” first and “desegregation” last, suggesting that the Board could not count on much support for mandatory integration. Clayton understood that intra-city measures could not desegregate a majority-black district and she believed that the majority of white parents would never allow their children to integrate, pointing to the presence of majority-black schools in white neighborhoods.

Though the PHRC unanimously rejected the Board’s proposal on October 10, 1983, two weeks later it reversed course and approved the plan. The PHRC rejected the plan initially because it relied entirely on voluntary measures, would not affect schools over 90 percent black, neglected to pair schools, and posited that it was “necessary to choose between improving the quality of education and desegregation.” These elements remained when the PHRC and the Board signed a “Memorandum of Understanding” that approved the voluntary plan. The PHRC voted seven to three in favor of the agreement because it won a concession allowing for further court consideration of the matter in June 1987 should the Board not make significant progress toward integration. Political opposition spurred the PHRC’s reversal as well, as it found itself again under attack in the State Capitol and feared for its survival. After voting in favor of the agreement, the PHRC voted unanimously to oppose the newly filed House Bill 1511, which

would prohibit any state agency, including the PHRC, from requiring a school district to reassign pupils for desegregation.\textsuperscript{110} An example of the state’s segregative intent, if passed H.B. 1511, like the 1974 antibusing bill that fell short of an override of Shapp’s veto, would likely have done more for Philadelphia’s desegregation by provoking a federal suit than did the PHRC. Instead, the Memorandum of Understanding prolonged the desegregation case and maintained the leading role of the PHRC, precluding alternative desegregation lawsuits and the consideration of metropolitan desegregation.

The seemingly interminable case next returned to court in the 1990s, where the Commonwealth Court again declined a PHRC request for mandatory busing and the Board of Education returned to its metropolitan arguments. Echoing assertions first made in 1968, a Board lawyer stated in 1994 that “Our position is that if we don’t involve the suburban school districts, we will never be able to bring about desegregation in Philadelphia.”\textsuperscript{111} Ruling against the PHRC, the Court concurred with Superintendent Clayton’s 1983 contention that efforts to improve education and provide integration worked against each other, and the case shifted its focus to reducing the racial disparities in academic achievement.\textsuperscript{112}

The case finally came to a conclusion in 2009 when the PHRC, the Board of Education, and ASPIRA, an intervening Latino activist group that joined the case in the 1990s, entered into a consent agreement. The agreement required the Board to implement a five-year plan entitled “Imagine 2014” that promised to increase student achievement, close the racial achievement gap, and ensure the “equitable allocation of all District resources.” The agreement reflected the impossibility of desegregating Philadelphia’s schools on an intra-city basis and the fatigue of


over forty years of litigating. All parties admitted candidly their “desire to avoid continued litigation… and expense.” Unmentioned was that Philadelphia’s schools had grown more segregated. In 2009, as the case finally came to a close, Philadelphia’s public schools educated a predominantly poor student population that was 87 percent minority. For a city with a slim plurality of white residents in a metropolitan region home to a white-majority population, this was not integration.

Conclusion

Though mandatory busing occurred only in Detroit, both Detroit and Philadelphia witnessed increasing segregation in their public schools as they grappled with integration on an intra-city basis. While diverse sources had long warned that intra-city desegregation alone would lead to resegregation, their warnings went unheeded first by the Supreme Court and subsequently by the courts and human relations commissions operating in the post-Milliken era.

With families able to move beyond Eight Mile Road or enroll their children in private schools to avoid integration, Detroit saw a massive reduction in the number of its white public school students. Detroit’s public schools had 194,000 white pupils in 1970, but white students numbered only 80,000 in 1980 and 35,000 in 1990. Philadelphia’s public schools, which educated 61 percent African American students, 34 percent white students, and 4 percent “Spanish-surnamed” in 1973, were 53 percent African American, 19 percent Hispanic, and 14 percent white in 2013-2014. Both cities’ schools experienced significant middle-class flight and

---

declining enrollments. Between 1976 and 2013, Philadelphia’s enrollment declined from 258,000 students to 137,674.¹¹⁶ Subject to mandatory busing, Detroit’s enrollment declined from 293,822 in 1970 to 169,363 in 1990. Following Michigan’s approval of charter schools in 1993, enrollment plummeted, falling to a mere 47,959 in 2014-15.¹¹⁷

The students remaining in the public schools of the central cities are overwhelmingly minority, impoverished, and lagging in academic achievement compared to their suburban counterparts. In the 1990s, African Americans made up less than 1 percent of the enrollment in the wealthy Detroit suburbs of Rochester Hills, Livonia, Farmington Hills, and the Grosse Pointes, and in middle-class suburbs such as Dearborn and Warren. Students attending these suburban schools significantly outperformed Detroit’s pupils. While in 1999 only 58 percent of Detroit’s fourth-graders had satisfactory exam scores in math and 45 percent in reading, 94 percent of Rochester Hills’s students scored satisfactory in math and 82 percent in reading.¹¹⁸ In the 2011-12 school year, only 41 percent of Philadelphia students in grades three through eight had satisfactory scores in reading. In adjacent Lower Merion, 90 percent of students achieved such scores. In both the Detroit and Philadelphia metropolitan areas, achievement gaps between urban and suburban students have expanded over time, suggesting that the current efforts of urban school boards to close racial student achievement gaps within systems miss the larger inequalities between regions. Poverty undoubtedly contributes to this regional achievement gulf. During the 2014-2015 school year, 84 percent of students in Detroit were eligible for free or

¹¹⁸ Irons, Jim Crow’s Children, 246-247.
reduced-price lunches on account of poverty. In Philadelphia, a virtually identical 84.9 percent of students were classified as economically disadvantaged.119

Neither Detroit’s mandatory busing nor Philadelphia’s voluntary desegregation proved capable of integrating a majority-black school system within a majority-white metropolis. Nor, as Boston’s experiences indicated, could intra-city desegregation guarantee the integration of even predominantly white school systems.120 Self-defeating from the outset, intra-city desegregation plans for predominantly black systems entailed accepting that segregation could not be eradicated entirely. Absent a metropolitan solution, urban desegregation constituted a no-win situation that condemned public schoolchildren to an inferior education relative to that offered in the suburbs or in private schools. As the white flight accompanying mandatory intra-city desegregation made clear, desegregation limited to the central city alone exacerbated metropolitan spatial inequality and cemented the suburban secessionist worldview. When MAD’s Carmen Roberts spoke of a governmental plot to provide metropolitan integration after *Milliken*, she vastly overestimated the American resolve to provide improved education to the nation’s urban public school children.

Conclusion

Beginning in the early 1960s, a diverse array of urbanites, ranging from civil rights activists to white segregationists, made urban school segregation a metropolitan issue. Their metropolitan arguments inaugurated a metropolitan moment capable of addressing inequality, reshaping metropolitan areas, and productively addressing the arguments of white urbanites who lamented being forced to integrate while white suburbanites escaped responsibility.

Civil rights activists served as the initial voice challenging educational inequality and placing school segregation in its metropolitan context, making the metropolitan moment possible. In 1963, such activists in Boston sought allies among liberal suburbanites after meeting hostility from the city’s discriminatory School Committee and succeeded in launching an urban-suburban civil rights alliance. This metropolitan alliance produced an urban-to-suburban busing program, the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc. (METCO), which rested on voluntary suburban participation and provided financial incentives to participating suburban communities. It also led to the Racial Imbalance Act, a piece of integrationist legislation that required school authorities to integrate schools with more than 50 percent “nonwhite” pupils or else face a loss of state aid. Though it made desegregation mandatory for Boston only, the civil rights alliance indicated an awareness that segregation affected the metropolis as a whole and brought the suburbs into the conversation.

Metropolitanism increasingly characterized the desegregation battles in Philadelphia and Detroit as well. In Philadelphia, civil rights groups such as the Urban League and the Fellowship Commission sought a radical reformation of urban schools. Proposing several educational parks, a campus-style collection of multiple schools covering the same grade-span, the groups sought to attract students from beyond the boundaries of neighborhood and municipality for the purposes
of integration. Though they fell short in their bid to convert Philadelphia’s system of
neighborhood schools into one of parks, the Urban League and the Fellowship Commission
served as Philadelphia’s first major source of metropolitan educational reform and as a harbinger
of the metropolitan focus of its subsequent desegregation battles. Detroit arrived last to
conceiving of school segregation as a metropolitan issue, in part because its integrationist Board
of Education took longest to run afoul of civil rights groups. In the late 1960s, civil rights voices
within the Board of Education urged metropolitan desegregation, but the Board failed to take
action. Its most significant contribution to integration was a modest intra-city desegregation plan
unveiled on April 7, 1970, that aroused white opposition and led the city’s outraged white voters
to organize the Citizens’ Committee for Better Education (CCBE) to recall the Board’s
integrationists from office. But as the metropolitan moment progressed, such white opponents of
integration often shifted tactics to trumpet metropolitan desegregation, albeit for strikingly
different reasons than did civil rights activists.

In reaction to civil rights demands, urban whites in all three cities otherwise apt to favor
segregation called for metropolitan school desegregation. Never possessing a moral commitment
to civil rights, these tactical metropolitanists had two main goals. They aimed primarily to
preserve the segregated status quo. Most overtly in Boston and Philadelphia, they sought to
weaken suburban legislative support for integration, reasoning that suburbanites would oppose
measures that required suburban children to integrate. Only secondarily did tactical
metropolitanists seek to ensure that if desegregation proceeded, it would affect the metropolis
equally and ensure white majorities in all area schools. In Detroit and Boston, in the context of
civil rights litigation that seemed destined for success, this second aim grew to encompass a
productive solution to school segregation, one recognizing that intra-city remedies alone would
exacerbate white flight and lead to increased segregation. Not the one-dimensional antagonists
suggested by scholarship on the desegregation busing battles, tactical metropolitanists traversed the boundary between integrationist and segregationist as it suited them, all in the aim of preserving white school majorities.

Remembered most for its busing controversy, Boston also witnessed the first articulation of tactical metropolitanism a decade before the arrival of desegregation busing. In response to Boston’s metropolitan civil rights alliance, the Boston School Committee’s Joseph Lee proposed in 1964 that the suburbs aid Boston’s integration. Lee intended to erode suburban support for the Racial Imbalance Act through satire, titling his subsequent proposal “A Plan to End the Monopoly of Un-light-colored Pupils in Many Boston Schools.” This plan called for busing a majority of Boston’s minority pupils to the suburbs and did not entail any integrationist actions on the part of the School Committee. Lee served as a prototype for the School Committee’s response to subsequent civil rights challenges, calling for metropolitan desegregation while fighting against integration within Boston. Throughout Boston’s protracted desegregation controversy, tactical metropolitanists dominated the School Committee, repeatedly forwarding proposals demanding mandatory suburban involvement in desegregating Boston’s schools with the aim of defeating the Racial Imbalance Act. Though successful in diminishing the Act’s suburban support, this proved a pyrrhic victory. Given the Committee’s openly segregationist actions, the NAACP’s eventual desegregation lawsuit, *Morgan v. Hennigan*, was certain to result in a finding of *de jure* segregation. Only such litigation made tactical metropolitanists resort to their secondary aim of ensuring metropolitan desegregation rather than intra-city busing alone.

---

1 Joseph Lee, “A Plan to End the Monopoly of Un-light-colored Pupils in Many Boston Schools,” box: 1, folder: 2, Frank J. Miranda Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Northeastern University.
Before the court, metropolitan arguments constituted a potential remedy to segregation and could not be used to defeat integration.

Metropolitanism earned a similarly wide constituency in Philadelphia, encompassing both integrationist civil rights advocates and the representatives of a reactionary white backlash. Though he balked at the construction of educational parks, Board of Education President Richardson Dilworth advocated for metropolitan integration in the context of a desegregation mandate from the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission (PHRC). Not a tactical metropolitanist, Dilworth embraced metropolitanism for classical reformist reasons of governmental efficiency and because he knew that it was impossible to desegregate a majority-black school system through intra-city measures alone. Though possessing a mixed civil rights record, Dilworth along with his Superintendent of Schools Mark Shedd showed a willingness to talk with black student protesters. This approach to black protest contributed to Philadelphia’s white backlash election of Frank Rizzo as mayor. But given broad powers to remake the city’s Board of Education by Philadelphia’s Home Rule Charter, Rizzo installed Board members who continued in the same metropolitanist vein as their predecessors, opposing mandatory integration unless it be of the metropolitan variety.

From Detroit’s white reactionary politics emerged the most audacious challenge to metropolitan educational inequality. Detroit’s CCBE, first formed to fight against the Board’s April 7 integration plan, became the first party in the Bradley v. Milliken school desegregation case to urge a metropolitan remedy. Recognizing the weight of evidence indicating *de jure* segregation, the CCBE advocated for metropolitan desegregation with the aim of maintaining white majorities in area schools. Though born of impure motives, the CCBE’s metropolitan remedy was embraced by the NAACP and appeared to succeed when federal Judge Stephen Roth
ordered a plan of desegregation involving Detroit and fifty-three autonomous suburban school districts in 1972.

These metropolitanist challenges indicated that residence became a force capable of uniting disparate groups against inequalities in court and that calls for metropolitan reform did not emanate solely from elites. In all three cities, the metropolitanism of civil rights activists and reactionary white urbanites held important city-building consequences. Their efforts ultimately would not have dismantled the deep-rooted residential segregation that shaped the metropolitan landscape on which they operated and that – as tactical metropolitanists continually pointed out – drove larger metropolitan patterns of school segregation. Yet metropolitan desegregation promised at least to mitigate the white flight that exacerbated residential segregation in the cities. More importantly, if successful, metropolitanism would mean that many urban children need not be condemned to a segregated education in underfunded public schools. But in its ultimate failure, metropolitanism exacerbated suburban opposition to desegregation and led suburbanites to defend suburban autonomy and guard against endeavors linking their communities and their schools to a racially-distinct central city. Detroit’s suburbs, fearing metropolitan integration, united in opposition to a mandatory regional planning initiative, while Boston’s suburbs dismantled the Racial Imbalance Act, stalled METCO’s expansion, and defeated legislation that sought to mandate suburban participation in desegregation. Philadelphia’s suburbs present something of a counter-example, one that confirms the importance of the courthouse to fostering effective metropolitanist challenges to suburban autonomy. These suburbs were protected from a courtroom consideration of metropolitan desegregation by the PHRC’s refusal to entertain metropolitan remedies and so remained relatively secure in their autonomy. Nonetheless, while not witnessing a similar level of antibusing and anti-metropolitan organizing, few suburbanites
welcomed linking their schools with Philadelphia’s, and a bipartisan majority of suburban legislators sought to curb the PHRC’s power to compel school integration.

Metropolitanism worked best in the courtroom and failed to translate to electoral politics. Outside of the courtroom, white urbanites and suburbanites had much in common. Neither tactical metropolitanists nor suburban anti-integrationists possessed a moral commitment to civil rights. Both preferred white-majority schools and were ensconced in, and helped to propel, the nation’s bipartisan rightward shift. Only the divergent tactics suggested by municipal boundaries separated them. When CCBE lawyer Alex Ritchie told an audience of suburbanites that they “wouldn’t be in opposition” to metropolitanism if they “lived on the other side of Eight Mile Road,” Detroit’s northern boundary, he was entirely correct.2

When the Supreme Court ruled against Detroit’s metropolitan remedy in *Milliken v. Bradley* in 1974, it robbed metropolitanism of its productive potentials. Urban metropolitanist collaboration had only been possible in the courtroom. The *Milliken* decision pitted erstwhile courtroom allies against one another and pushed metropolitanist proposals from the judicial to the legislative realm. There, they stood little chance of success in suburban-dominated state legislatures whose representatives and electorate had been primed by such proposals to reject links with the central city. Even when shorn of its tactical aims, metropolitanism succumbed to the logic of tactical metropolitanism. When Boston’s proposed Daly-Sullivan Bill of 1975 sought to mandate that wealthier suburbs set aside up to 10 percent of their school seats for urban schoolchildren, it did not intend to dodge the city’s court-ordered responsibility to desegregate. Instead, Daly-Sullivan provided a productive response to valid concerns over suburban

exemption from mandatory desegregation while committing the city to integrating its schools. But suburbanites rejected Daly-Sullivan in a fashion long predicted by tactical metropolitanists.

Of the three cities, Boston was first to implement large-scale school desegregation, and its protracted busing controversy, marked by extensive white flight and sporadic violence, affected intra-city remedies in Detroit and Philadelphia. In Detroit, the court seized on Boston’s experiences to order a level of busing lower than that requested by either plaintiff or defendant. Philadelphia did not attempt mandatory busing because of Boston’s influence and the structural weakness of the PHRC. Empowered by the state to combat *de facto* segregation, the PHRC did not need to demonstrate *de jure* segregation to order a school district to integrate. Affected districts, however, could appeal PHRC rulings to the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania. Absent evidence of *de jure* segregation, the Commonwealth Court discarded the more aggressive solutions required to address it with the aim of preventing a replication of Boston’s busing controversy and ordered instead the adoption of a toothless plan of voluntary desegregation.

Following *Milliken*, school desegregation efforts entailed a no-win situation that in fact exacerbated segregation. Regardless of technique, intra-city remedies failed to integrate schools. Neither mandatory intra-city busing, as in Boston and Detroit, nor voluntary intra-city plans of desegregation, as in Philadelphia, successfully desegregated schools. By 1980, tactical metropolitanists’ dire predictions of intra-city desegregation prompting white flight and thereby entailing impoverished and resegregated urban schools had come true. In the 1980-81 school year, majority-white Boston’s public schools educated only 23,681 white students and 30,900 black pupils, a level that would mark the entire system as “racially imbalanced” according to Massachusetts’s 1965 Racial Imbalance Act. Philadelphia’s 66,416 white students totaled a number less than half that of the city’s 140,336 black students. Detroit was more divided still, with a scant 25,919 white students and 181,300 black students. Over the following five years,
white students continued to flee the public schools of the cities. By the 1985-86 school year, Philadelphia’s white students numbered 27 percent fewer than in 1980, while Detroit and Boston, both subject to mandatory busing, witnessed larger declines of 32 percent and 37 percent respectively. These levels far outstripped the modest decrease in black pupils. Over the same period, black flight led to the loss of 14 percent of Boston’s black pupils. Philadelphia’s black student population declined by 11 percent while Detroit lost 7 percent.\(^3\)

The decidedly middle-class flight of both white and black students robbed inner-city schools of the socioeconomic diversity needed to raise pupil performance overall. Students remaining in the public schools of the three cities were overwhelmingly minority and impoverished. Ninety-three percent of Boston’s public school students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches due to inadequate family incomes in 1985.\(^4\) This stark poverty remains characteristic of segregated inner-city school systems. In the 2014-15 year, Philadelphia classified 84.9 percent of its public school students as economically disadvantaged, while a similar 84 percent of Detroit students received free or reduced-price lunches on account of poverty.\(^5\)

By making integration for urbanites only and allowing extensive middle-class flight to the suburbs, intra-city desegregation entrenched inequality ever deeper into the metropolitan environment. As the metropolitan moment indicates, this was not a preordained outcome. The exacerbation of metropolitan inequality required defeating widespread challenges to the supremacy of suburban autonomy.

---


These metropolitanist challenges had significant long-term political consequences for the metropolitan areas and the nation as a whole. While metropolitanists and anti-metropolitanists began cultivating connections with their counterparts elsewhere, suburban Detroit’s antibusing rocketed to the national stage, emerging as a significant political issue in the 1972 elections. Suburban antibusing and anti-metropolitanism fed the rising bipartisan political defense of regional spatial privileges averse to engaging with the legacies of structural discrimination beyond individualist remedies that historians such as Matthew Lassiter and Lily Geismer have found.6 These metropolitan school desegregation battles demonstrate that urbanites’ metropolitanism – whether tactical or authentic – was formative in prompting the bipartisan defense of what Lassiter has called “racial privilege, class exclusion, and homeowner property rights.”7 But even though residence proved the most salient fissure between white urbanites and suburbanites, metropolitanism’s political effects should not be understood purely in terms of consensus. Metropolitanism not only accelerated the rise of a bipartisan suburban secessionist politics that helped reorient both major political parties toward the interests of suburbanites, by splitting the Democrats’ multi-racial constituency, it drove increasing numbers of white voters – both suburbanites and the urbanites whose tactical metropolitanism failed to move beyond the courtroom – toward the Republican fold.

*****

In ruling against Detroit’s metropolitan desegregation plan and setting a national precedent, the Supreme Court’s Milliken decision assured the success of the forces of municipal fragmentation and educational inequality. In the years following the metropolitan moment, these forces have

---


7 Lassiter, “Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide,” 762.
only grown in strength, rendering ever more distant the goals of integrationist civil rights activists and the productive potential within tactical metropolitanism. Along with the lingering effects of the desegregation busing battles, the rise of charter schools, a continued judicial retreat from integration, and the efforts of communities to secede from urban school districts have accelerated the balkanization of metropolitan education and worked against educational equality. The present state of American public education is an inverse of the potential inherent in the metropolitan moment.

A boon for school choice and program options, charter schools have not had an entirely negative impact on urban education. Charter advocates point with reason to improved educational choices for low-income and minority students, noting that charters allow a blossoming of alternative language and cultural programs long thought to be incompatible with wide-ranging busing. Students attending Somali educational programs or receiving instruction in the Hmong language take advantage of programs only possible with a separate student body of the type likely to be dispersed through busing and whose needs were often overlooked in desegregation plans.8 Boston’s Phase I busing plan, for example, made no mention of the future of bilingual education in the city’s schools, to the consternation of Latino and Asian parents.9 And elsewhere, politicians such as California Governor Ronald Reagan found it possible to pit bilingual education against desegregation busing in an attempt to court minority voters and delegitimize integration, reasoning, not incorrectly, that permanent minority status could imperil specialized programs set up for students of particular linguistic and cultural groups.10

8 Natalie Gross, “The Benefit of Racial Isolation: The charter schools praised by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos are notoriously segregated. In some cases, that’s a benefit,” The Atlantic, 8 February 2017.
Charter schools’ diversity of educational options have not been accompanied by a rise in integration. Though some charter schools have been founded specifically to increase diversity, charters are much more likely than public schools to house an entirely minority student population. A 2017 Associated Press study of national enrollment data found that charter schools are significantly overrepresented among schools experiencing extreme racial isolation. As of the 2014-15 school year, 1,000 of America’s 6,747 charter schools educated a student body of at least 99 percent minority pupils. The 17 percent of charters that educated such a student body outnumbered the 4 percent of public schools that did so. In cities, the rate of segregation is even higher, with 25 percent of charters enrolling a 99 percent or above minority student population compared to 10 percent of public schools. This segregation continues to grow as more parents enroll their children in charters. That voluntary school selection produces segregated enrollments was long known by civil rights advocates and the U.S. Supreme Court. Campaigning against the Philadelphia Board of Education’s 1976 plan for voluntary integration, civil rights crusader Helen Oakes argued that any voluntary plan could not meaningfully desegregate the city’s schools. In opposing the plan, Oakes drew on the Supreme Court’s 1968 Green v. County School Board of New Kent County decision that outlawed a voluntary “freedom of choice” desegregation plan due to its ineffectiveness. At best, charter schools offer another voluntary plan. At their worst, charters offer increased segregation and the further balkanization of the

---

11 Iris C. Rotenberg, “Charter schools and the risk of increased segregation: charter schools, on average, don’t have an academic advantage over traditional public schools, but they do have a significant risk of leading to more segregation,” Phi Delta Kappan 95, no. 5 (Feb 2014), 27.
15 Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, 391 U.S. 430 (1968).
metropolitan educational apparatus that has long impeded educational equality through municipal autonomy and overlapping systems of private and parochial schools.

A continued judicial retreat from school desegregation has accompanied the rise of charter schools. Beginning with *Milliken*, the judicial commitment to school integration entered a period of decline. After Boston’s busing experiences, courts proved hesitant to order massive busing schemes in Detroit and Philadelphia, choosing instead a level of busing below that requested by both plaintiff and defendant in Detroit and seizing on the absence of a conventional charge of *de jure* segregation in Philadelphia to employ voluntary remedies. Taking Boston as a warning of the perils of ordering extensive busing, post-*Milliken* courts avoided Boston’s most important lesson – that desegregation needed to affect the metropolis equally to be effective.

In 2007, the judicial retreat from desegregation transitioned into an attack on school districts embracing voluntary integration. In *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, a combined case concerning schools in Seattle and Jefferson County, Kentucky, the Supreme Court prohibited using students’ race or ethnicity when assigning students to schools. Rather than using race to segregate, both districts voluntarily employed racial classifications in an effort to achieve integrated enrollments. While the court’s split decision held that integration could be valuable, it opposed using racial classifications to mitigate racial separation. It found that both school systems “failed to provide the necessary support for the proposition that there is no other way than individual racial classifications to avoid racial isolation in their school districts.” In effect, the court imperiled integration by banning the automatic use of racial classifications to redress racial inequality.

---

The PICS decision was a triumph of the logic underlying suburban secession and the nation’s bipartisan suburban ethos of middle-class racial innocence. Echoing suburban secessionists, Chief Justice John Roberts implied white racial innocence when he charged integrationists with being the lone party making racial classifications. Before the court, Roberts declared that “[t]he way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.”18 In Roberts’s formulation, there was no hint of the individual segregationist activity or of structural racism such as redlining that helped shape patterns of metropolitan development. Rather, racial discrimination apparently sprang de novo from the aims of integrationists in an otherwise post-racial America.

As the metropolitan moment revealed, claims of colorblindness long coexisted with clear moments of overt racism. Michigan U.S. Senator Robert Griffin’s presentation of antibusing activity as colorblind required whitewashing racism. When Griffin penned a statement that positioned antibusing sentiment as colorblind in September 1971, he did so just days prior to Judge Stephen Roth finding Detroit’s schools de jure segregated. At this point, the National Action Group (NAG) from nearby Pontiac dominated metropolitan Detroit’s antibusing efforts. NAG claimed to be colorblind, but it cultivated links with Southern white supremacists, its members chanted racial slurs at black students traveling to school, and it held a demonstration at a bus yard recently bombed by the Ku Klux Klan that was attended by at least two of the bombing’s perpetrators. In all three metropolises, suburban antibusers employed both colorblind and overtly racist appeals to guard against metropolitan links with the schools of a racially distinct central city. Taking colorblind rhetoric at face value – whether that of working-class

urbanites, middle-class suburbanites, or the Supreme Court – obfuscates longstanding histories of discrimination that continue to shape America’s metropolises and its politics today.

Since the metropolitan moment, suburban secession has entered a more literal phase with communities crafting new school districts that perpetuate discrimination. Between 1986 and 2017, forty-six school districts seceded to produce a student population both wealthier and whiter than the districts they left behind. Since 2000, seventy-one communities have attempted to secede from their school districts. These secessionist efforts continue. In 2017, federal Judge Madeline Haikala ruled that the suburban city of Gardendale, Alabama could secede from the Jefferson County school district, a district subject to a desegregation order since 1971 that had nevertheless witnessed multiple communities secede. Though Gardendale positioned its secessionist push as a colorblind effort to reassert “local control” of education, Haikala found that the predominantly white city sought to break away from the majority-black Jefferson County district for racial reasons. However, Haikala still allowed secession to proceed on the basis of local control and because she feared that black students would receive the blame if she blocked Gardendale’s efforts. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit overturned this finding in February 2018 because of secession’s racial motivations, and Gardendale appears to have abandoned its efforts. But similar secessionist moves are likely to continue and experience success in light of a Supreme Court primed to consider racial classifications invalid and the widespread acceptance of suburban class exclusion.

---


transcend artificial district boundaries for reasons of equality, America has since witnessed the erection of additional boundaries for discriminatory purposes. Uniting the present with the past is the understanding that school district boundary lines shape the contours of educational inequality.

The importance of the metropolitan moment’s defeat can be found in the persistent educational atomization and municipal fragmentation of the present day, as well as in the bipartisan political defense of regional spatial privileges that refuses to engage with the legacies of structural discrimination beyond individualist remedies. Today, metropolitanism is most notable for its absence. While dozens of communities have seceded from their school districts, no metropolitan coalitions devoted to metropolitan desegregation exist. Though persistent segregation is widely acknowledged, no new ideas have arisen to combat it. Discussions of persistent school segregation witness no radical integrationist proposals akin to the construction of massive educational parks or calls for mandatory metropolitan desegregation. Though many historians paint metropolitanism as a desirable remedy for school segregation, it is a remedy as yet without a constituency that cuts against the grain of increased municipal fragmentation and educational balkanization.²¹

When Milliken largely shunted metropolitanism to suburban-dominated legislatures, it placed metropolitanism’s fate in the hands of voters long primed by urbanites’ proposals – tactical or otherwise – to reject entanglements with the central city. The history of the metropolitan moment indicates that metropolitan reformers today face an uphill battle and can realistically expect little legislative success for initiatives that link the schools of the region or

threaten suburban patterns of racial and class exclusion. Nor, as recent court cases suggest, can civil rights advocates expect success by challenging persistent school segregation in the judicial realm. This legal retreat from integration is most harmful, for it was in the courts that civil rights activists brought forth the most meaningful challenges to American educational inequality. It was because they predicted the success of civil rights litigation that Detroit’s ostensibly segregationist urbanites articulated a robust metropolitanism ultimately capable of addressing structural educational inequalities that persist into the present. Only a predicted finding of de jure segregation prodded Boston’s tactical metropolitanists to shift from their primary aim of weakening integrationist legislation to offer a potentially productive solution to metropolitan segregation. And as Philadelphia’s civil rights reformers understood while being frozen out of the courtroom by the PHRC’s leadership of the desegregation fight, metropolitanism would only have a chance in the context of a court challenge to de jure segregation.

Within this pessimistic reading of metropolitan politics remains some room for cautious optimism of a decidedly non-idealistic variety. Tactical metropolitanism reminds us that even within reactionary politics exist potential seeds of reform and that important reformers need not be morally unblemished. American historians have long been comfortable with the inherent limitations of past actors, capable of discussing the racism and fondness for colonization of an Abraham Lincoln alongside his advocacy of equal rights and emancipation. Tactical metropolitanists were not Lincoln. Their advocacy for metropolitanism did not entail a moral commitment to civil rights. In this, they were more akin to a David Wilmot, whose Wilmot Proviso proposed banning slavery from any territory gained in the Mexican-American War. Wilmot’s Free-Soiler antislavery was not motivated by a “squeamish sensitiveness… nor morbid sympathy for the slave,” but by a desire to “preserve for free white labor a fair country… where the sons of toil, of my own race and own color, can live without the disgrace which association
with negro slavery brings upon free labor.”\textsuperscript{22} Like tactical calls for metropolitan desegregation, Wilmot’s opposition to slavery’s expansion emanated from a racist wish to maintain white racial privileges, not from moral considerations. Regardless of motivation, in exacerbating sectional conflict and contributing to national political realignment, Wilmot functioned as an important voice of reform. Over a century later, during America’s second great attempt for civil rights, tactical metropolitanists followed their racist desire to preserve white racial majorities to its logical conclusion, demanding that integration involve everyone, not just a select few. In both cases, self-interest proved radical.

Until Americans have a deeper understanding of the consequences of privileging suburban autonomy over civil rights and see that individuals of all stripes and motivations could collaborate in producing lasting solutions to structural inequality, the problems of America’s deeply unequal metropolises will remain intractable. Regardless of motivation, metropolitanists authored proposals capable of providing significant redress to educational inequality and encouraging lasting integration by mitigating white flight. Reformers and civil rights advocates should revisit these largely forgotten metropolitan proposals. Though frequently born of ignoble intentions and not a panacea ridding the metropolitan educational apparatus of racism – nor metropolitan areas of housing segregation – such initiatives nonetheless were capable of both advancing educational equality and appealing to white urbanites typically hostile to civil rights initiatives. In light of suburban patterns of racial and class exclusivity, segregated and impoverished urban schools, and ongoing efforts to secede from the school districts of the nation’s cities, it is clear that equity requires breaching municipal boundary lines.

Bibliography

Archival and Manuscript Collections

Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
  Citizens for a United Detroit Records
  Civil Rights Congress of Michigan Records
  Detroit Commission on Community Relations (DCCR)/Human Rights Department Records
  Detroit Public Schools Community Relations Division Collection
  Fair Housing Center Records
  Fair Housing Campaign in Birmingham, Michigan Records
  Grosse Pointe Civil Rights Organizations Records
  Jerome P. Cavanagh Papers
  NAACP Detroit Branch Records

Archives and Special Collections, Healey Library, University of Massachusetts-Boston, Boston, MA
  W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. Papers on the Boston Schools Desegregation Case

Archives and Special Collections, Snell Library, Northeastern University, Boston, MA
  Frank J. Miranda Papers
  Freedom House, Inc. Records
  The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc. Records
  Phyllis M. Ryan Papers

Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
  Bradley v. Milliken Case Files
  Carmen A. Roberts Papers
  Democratic Party of Michigan Records
  Detroit Urban League Records
  Don Binkowski Papers
  James G. O’Hara Papers
  John T. Kelsey Papers
  League of Women Voters of Dearborn-Dearborn Heights Records
  Shirley Wohlfield Papers
  William G. Milliken Papers

John J. Burns Library, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA
  Citywide Coordinating Council Records

City of Boston Archives and Records Center, Boston, MA
  Louise Day Hicks Papers
  School Committee Secretary Desegregation Files

City of Philadelphia Department of Records, Philadelphia, PA
Commission on Human Relations Records  
Philadelphia Housing Authority Records

Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA  
Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia and Suburban Fair Housing Records  
Margaret H. Collins Papers

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, MI  
Bobbie Greene Kilberg Files

Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
League of Women Voters of Philadelphia Records  
Richardson Dilworth Papers

Library of Congress, Washington, DC  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records

Moakley Archive and Institute, Suffolk University, Boston, MA  
Congressman John Joseph Moakley Papers

Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
Ruth Batson Papers

Special Collections Research Center, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA  
Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia Records  
East Mount Airy Neighbors Records  
Fair Housing Council of Delaware Valley Records  
Fellowship Commission Records  
Floyd Logan Collection  
Helen Oakes Collection  
Home and School Council Archives  
Housing Association of Delaware Valley Records  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Philadelphia Branch Records  
Urban League of Philadelphia Records  
West Philadelphia Schools Committee Records

Wolfgram Memorial Library Digital Collections, Widener University, Chester, PA  
George Raymond Papers

Newspapers and Periodicals

Albany Times Union  
Allston-Brighton Citizen Item  
Associated Press  
Atlanta Journal  
Atlantic
Published Primary Sources


Wolff, Max. “The Educational Park.” *Equity & Excellence in Education* 5, No. 2 (April 1967): 11-17


**Secondary Sources**


Rotenberg, Iris. C. “Charter schools and the risk of increased segregation: charter schools, on average, don’t have an academic advantage over traditional public schools, but they do have a significant risk of leading to more segregation.” *Phi Delta Kappan* 95, no. 5 (Feb. 2014): 26-30.


Appendices

A.1 Map of Detroit’s metropolitan remedy ordered in *Bradley v. Milliken*

A.2 Map of Greater Boston School Districts and METCO participation, ca. September 1986

Participating METCO districts are colored white, with the numbers referring to the number of participating METCO students educated in each community.

Source: Bill Cunningham, “The trip to college may start on a bus to the suburbs,” *Patriot Ledger*, 28 February 1987.