

Chapter 5

“I’d Rather Go to School in the South”: How Boston’s School Desegregation Complicates the Civil Rights Paradigm¹

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They seem to think we’re animals or something. They just don’t want us to be able to get the kind of education they’ve already got.

—*Margie, a black student who desegregated South Boston High on September 12, 1974*

I’d rather go to school in the South.

—*Cynthia, another black student who desegregated South Boston High and had a brick thrown at her head*

From Mississippi to Massachusetts, unequal schooling was a crucial battleground of the black freedom struggles that followed WWII. Understood as one of the primary ways that a racial caste system was perpetuated in America, civil rights activists across the nation saw schools as the front line for racial justice. Analyzing school struggles outside of the South, then, is a critical site for exploring and expanding the civil rights narrative. Indeed, the nature of school segregation and the variety of tactics community members used to challenge it reveal the commonalities between the racial landscapes of Northern and Southern cities and the

struggles to change them across the United States. At the same time, the particular ways that Northern segregation operated and the tools whites used to defend it meant that Northern activists had to prove that segregation actually existed, was harmful, and was enacted deliberately by the state. Because Northern segregation was not usually defended as segregation, scholars have often marginalized these civil rights struggles for educational equality, casting white resistance more sympathetically as a movement against busing to protect neighborhood schools. Within this paradigm, it becomes nearly impossible to understand how a black teenager living in Boston in 1974 would wish to be going to school in the South. Moreover, the ways that Boston's desegregation was framed and is now historicized has contributed to a public sense (both conservative and liberal) that the costs of school desegregation, particularly in the urban North, were simply too high.

Attacking the ways the school system funneled black students into poorly funded, under-equipped, overcrowded schools, community members in Boston fought to equalize education in the city in the 1960s and 1970s.² After a decade and a half of sustained black activism around education, the black community, through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), filed a federal desegregation suit against the school system. In June 1974, Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity ordered Boston Public School system (BPS) to begin desegregation. As the school district unwillingly began a plan for school desegregation, Boston became the site of one of the latest, most publicized, and most violent battles for school desegregation in the nation's history, as many whites took to the streets and kept their children home. Television publicized white fear, hatred, and violent resistance against desegregation to the nation, shattering Boston's reputation as the "cradle of democracy." It decisively revealed that school desegregation was neither just an issue facing the South nor a strategy that had outlived its usefulness in breaking down racially inequitable public institutions. It also showed the power blacks and their white allies had gained through organizing to pressure the city to give black students the same access and resources it had long reserved for white students and to hire black teachers in every school in the city.

Boston's school desegregation has not garnered the kind of scholarly attention that many events of the civil rights movement have. In part, this stems from the fact that Boston's movement challenges many prevailing popular assumptions about postwar black freedom struggles: namely, that it did not take place in the South during the 1950s and 1960s. Such views too often focus on segregation as a Southern problem, desegregation as a Southern solution, and the civil rights movement as a Southern

movement. De jure segregation in the South is contrasted with de facto in the North, foregrounding the role of the state in perpetuating racial hierarchies in the South and downplaying them in the North. Thus, by implying that Northern segregation was not furthered by the political and legal structures of the state, African American protest movements in the urban North appear as ancillary to the "real" movement in the South, requiring different tactics and aimed at different targets. Southern politicians' willingness to embrace segregation publicly and Northern politicians' reluctance to embrace segregation rhetorically, while acting to preserve it in practice, has mistakenly been construed as proof that segregation was more robust and more protected in the South. This historical focus on the South makes Northern school segregation appear to be solely the function of private housing decisions made by individual white families and, thus, beyond the reach of political or judicial interventions, when in fact government policies, at both the federal and local level, clearly reinforced and extended residential and public school segregation in the urban North. Overlooking movements in the North, then, both naturalizes the racial order in these cities and makes it increasingly difficult to see the ways it could be and was changed.

Accounts that do take up Northern movements usually do so to trace how the movement moved from South to North, to show how tactics that worked in the South were less successful in the North, and to argue that blacks in the North had rejected integration by the mid-1960s in favor of nationalist strategies.³ Adam Fairclough encapsulates this thinking best when he writes that his survey of the black quest for equality in the twentieth-century, *Better Day Coming*, focuses on the South because "the South evolved particular forms of racial domination that set it apart from the rest of the nation, making it the main focus of black campaigns against discrimination and oppression."⁴ There is a certain tautology here; scholars focus their inquiry on the South and then because there is less scholarship on the North, justify studying the South because there is more to study. *Eyes on the Prize* provides probably the most interesting and nuanced epic account of postwar black freedom struggles to date, detailing a number of Northern movements, including Boston's desegregation, yet still reifies a South-to-North, heroism-to-backlash view of the movement. Much of the variety of efforts of Boston's black community during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were left out of the series.

According to this reasoning, then, as black communities radicalized in the 1960s, they came to see desegregation as irrelevant and too compromising to address the profound social and economic inequalities blacks faced. Contrary to these views, Boston's struggle was a Northern movement

for educational equity and school desegregation that succeeded through black organizing efforts to eliminate acute school segregation and expand racial equity in resources and hiring in the city for a time.⁵ Black Boston's struggle for educational justice culminated in a federal desegregation suit; while not all blacks in the city supported this, by and large the community saw desegregation as a last resort to secure equal resources for the majority of black children in the city.⁶

Accounts of Boston's desegregation have focused primarily on white resistance to desegregation, ignoring the 25 years of organizing prior to Judge Garrity's decision and the many whites who did not oppose it.⁷ While devoting ample space to white parents and their organized resistance, many authors brush over the well-coordinated, decades-long struggle that black parents went through to address racial inequalities in Boston's public schools.⁸ Thus, this essay seeks to accomplish two related goals. It begins to document the struggles blacks waged, led largely by women, from the early 1950s through Garrity's decision in 1974 to address educational injustice within the city and to press the city to protect and provide for their children during desegregation. In doing this, it challenges the prevailing views that dichotomize segregation as *de facto* in the North and *de jure* in the South and that portray white resistance in Boston as a working-class movement against "busing."

These struggles for educational justice in Boston complicate the prevalent dichotomy made between integrationist and Black Power strategies. Activists in Boston strategically worked within and outside the system in their struggles with the city, finding a common enemy in Boston's School Committee. Much more than black children sitting next to white children in school, the movement to end segregation sought a fundamental transformation of the economic, political, and social landscape of the city⁹—to ensure, as organizer Ruth Batson explained, that "there was no place where black people can't go."¹⁰ Freedom House founder Muriel Snowden elaborated.

Black children "were not going to have a chance unless there is this kind of equity. There's got to be educational equity and what it takes, there are two kinds of things. It takes something to bring them to the point where they start at the beginning line, unencumbered. Then, there are those who are at the point that need to be showed that they don't get tripped up or rabbit punched or something along the way."¹¹

Thus, self-determination, equity, and access to jobs—crucial ideological goals of black nationalist struggles in the 1960s and 1970s—were at the heart of the movement for desegregation in Boston. Desegregation was

not the only strategy pursued but one that activists kept returning to, even into the 1970s, as a way to open up educational opportunities for all black students in the city and jobs for black teachers in every school in the city.

Beginning in the early 1950s, before the *Brown* decision, a group of parents, led by political activist Ruth Batson, organized around the educational disparities within BPS. Born to politically active, Garvey-supporting West Indian parents, Batson grew up in the Roxbury section of Boston. Married at 19, Batson had three daughters and became very involved in their schools. In 1949, she joined the Parent's Federation, a predominantly white group that focused on the racial inequities and deteriorating quality of Boston's schools; Batson was politicized through her involvement in the Federation and the way the organization was decimated through red-baiting (like many Northern and Southern organizations fighting for racial change in this period). In 1950, she registered a complaint with the school department that black children (including her daughters) were receiving an inferior education.¹² In 1951, seeking systemic change, Batson became the first black person to run for school committee in five decades and lost.¹³ In 1956, she ran for Democratic Primary state committeewoman and was elected. She was also active in the NAACP in the 1950s, becoming the first woman president of the New England Regional NAACP in May 1958.

Batson's personal experience and political work laid the groundwork for the movement that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁴ After finding out that a white friend's son had science in school but her daughter did not, Batson went to talk to the principal. The principal assured her that her daughter would have science later that year. Sure enough, her daughter soon had a science project to do for school—the only one in class. When Batson went back down to school, the principal flatly denied that her daughter was receiving different work. Realizing a problem, Batson went to the NAACP, but they told her they did not have a committee to deal with the public schools. The next day, however, the NAACP called her back saying that they wanted to form a subcommittee to organize around the issue and asked her to chair it.

From the outset, this committee of parents focused on educational equity and the allocation of resources within the system. They saw firsthand that keeping black students in separate schools was a way for the School Committee to provide an inferior education to them.¹⁵ According to Batson, "We decided that where there were a large number of white students, that's where the care went. That's where the books went. That's where the money went."¹⁶ Their studies revealed that many black schools, including six of the nine black elementary schools, were overcrowded.¹⁷ Of the 13 schools with predominantly black populations, at least 4 had been

recommended to be closed because of health and safety reasons, and 8 were in need of repairs to meet present city standards.¹⁸ Per pupil spending averaged \$340 for white students but only \$240 for black students.¹⁹ The city spent 10 percent less on textbooks, 19 percent less on libraries and 27 percent less on health care for black students than it did for white students. The curriculum at many black schools was outdated and often blatantly racist, and black students were overwhelmingly tracked into manual and vocational classes (and trade high schools) rather than college preparatory ones. Teachers at predominantly black schools were less permanent and often less experienced than those assigned to white schools.

Parents knew that this was a deliberately racialized school system, evidenced by the policy that fed blacks into high school in ninth grade but whites in tenth—and often into different junior high schools before that. As parent activist Ellen Jackson explained, “[Y]ou could live on the same street and have a white neighbor, as I did, and you went to one junior high school and she went to another junior high school. So it was that dual pattern. . . . It was not de facto at all.”²⁰ Segregation was also a way to reserve the overwhelming majority of the jobs in the district for whites. The district engaged in racially differential hiring and promotion practices; thus, many schools had no black teachers (blacks made up only 0.5 percent of the city’s teachers), and there were no black principals in the system. As community activist Mel King, who would later run unsuccessfully for School Committee, observed, “The teachers were either Irish or Yankee. . . . I didn’t see my first black teacher until I was in the seventh grade.”²¹ The NAACP public school subcommittee began its work in the early 1950s and was heartened when the Supreme Court passed its landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, believing that this would mean significant change in BPS. In the late 1950s, as the national NAACP focused its efforts on the South, Batson and others struggled to press the issue of segregation in Boston’s public schools.

In the early 1960s, the Education Committee of the NAACP tried to get the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) to recognize segregation in Boston’s schools. MCAD refused, claiming that racial segregation was not a problem in the schools. While the existence of public commissions like MCAD seem to attest to a different racial climate in Massachusetts, their unwillingness to investigate institutions like BPS protected the school system’s discriminatory practices. Community activists took their case to the School Committee in June 1963. They packed the hearing to report their findings and urge the Committee to make changes. Another 800 desegregation supporters were turned away and congregated instead in front of City Hall. Batson spoke for the

NAACP. “We are here because the clamor from the community is too anxious to be ignored . . . the injustices present in our school system hurt our pride, rob us of our dignity and produce results which are injurious not only to our future, but to that of our city, our commonwealth, and our nation.”²² Organizers expected an ordinary meeting but were met with a lot of press and an intransigent School Committee. According to Batson, “We were insulted. We were told our kids were stupid and this was why they didn’t learn. We were completely rejected that night.”²³ The biggest issue was the committee’s refusal to acknowledge any form of de facto segregation or differential hiring within the schools—that is, they refused to acknowledge any role in maintaining unequal schooling in the city.²⁴

To continue the pressure on the School Committee, community leaders turned to direct action, holding school boycotts and sit-ins. The first school boycott occurred a week after the School Committee meeting. Nearly half of the black high school students, approximately 2500 students, participated in the Stay-Out-For-Freedom boycott and attended Freedom Schools.²⁵ Organizers celebrated the success, calling for more actions.²⁶ The NAACP was able to get a second one-hour meeting with the School Committee on August 15. This meeting, like the first, was filled with civil rights supporters, once again with many demonstrators out in the street. However, the School Committee ended the meeting after 15 minutes, cutting off Batson’s presentation, rather than discussing issues of segregation within the school system.

The NAACP during this period was chaired by long-time political activist Melnea Cass. Born on June 16, 1896, in Richmond, Virginia, she moved to Boston’s South End when she was five. In part through the influence of her politically active mother-in-law, Rosa Brown, Cass joined the NAACP, attending meetings with William Monroe Trotter, W. E. B. Du Bois, and A. Phillip Randolph. She was also a member, national vice president, and president of the Northeastern Region of the National Association of Colored Women and one of the charter members of Freedom House. After decades of political activism, Cass, known as the “First Lady of Roxbury,” explained the anger many felt around the city’s inaction, “It’s very frustrating; every time you turn around, you got to have a demonstration, you got to have a law. . . . Why have you got to do all these things, to make people understand that you’re entitled to these things?”²⁷ The NAACP under Cass’s leadership carried out numerous sit-ins and pickets against the School Committee to highlight the city’s recalcitrance. Many were arrested in these actions. “[W]e took it as a very serious thing, and a calamity happening to us as black people, trying to get something done, and couldn’t impress anybody.”²⁸

The NAACP even ran a float with a picture of John F. Kennedy and a banner that read, "From the Fight for Irish Freedom to the Fight for U.S. Equality. NAACP" in the 1964 St. Patrick's Day parade. Their float was pelted with rocks, cherry bombs, bricks, garbage, and food. Thomas Atkins, the executive secretary of the Boston NAACP chapter, compared the violence to "the viciousness of the type you might expect to see in New Orleans or in the back woods of Mississippi. But it happened in Boston and this is where it must be dealt with."²⁹

Martin Luther King, Jr., came twice to Boston on the invitation of the Massachusetts Southern Christian Leadership Conference to connect Southern struggles against segregation with those in Boston. He too got nowhere with Boston's School Committee, although his second visit in April of 1965 brought 25,000 people to rally on the Boston Commons. Thus, many of the tactics that characterized the Southern civil rights movement in the early to mid-1960s—sit-ins, boycotts, freedom schools, and civil disobedience—were part of the same arsenal that activists in Boston drew upon in the early to mid-1960s. In Boston, just as in many Southern cities, white politicians tried to discredit the NAACP as "outsiders" and claimed that the real problem was not segregation but the motivation of black children.³⁰ Unlike their Southern counterparts (whose opposition publicly embraced segregation), however, blacks in Boston struggled to get the issue of segregation recognized—to prove that distinct and harmful racial patterns within the city's schools even existed.

A second boycott of schools was called for on February 26, 1964, coinciding with a nation-wide campaign organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to dramatize issues of segregation in the nation's schools.³¹ Drawing somewhere between 22 and 40 percent of all black students and nearly 20,000 people throughout the city, this successful boycott prompted action—at the state level, not with the School Committee.³² The day after the boycott, Governor Peabody convened a blue-ribbon committee to study discrimination in the schools. The committee's report found that Boston's schools were indeed racially imbalanced (racial imbalance being the more palatable Northern word for segregation) and that such imbalance was harmful to students. The lobbying efforts of the black community and its white allies (one minister, Reverend Vernon Carter, held a 118-day vigil on the steps of the School Committee building³³) led to the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act in August 1965.³⁴ Calling on "all school committees to adopt as education objectives the promotion of racial balance and the correction of existing racial imbalance," the act forbade the commonwealth from supporting any school that was more than 50 percent nonwhite (although the act considered majority or

all white schools racially balanced). However, a school committee denied funding through the act was given the opportunity to seek judicial review of their situation. Filing suit in 1967, Boston's School Committee challenged the act's legality in court, tried to get it overturned by the state legislature, and used the judicial review as a delaying tactic to avoid obeying the law for nearly a decade.

With legislation proving ineffective in moving the School Committee, parents decided to take matters into their hands and took the lead (rather than the civil rights organizations) to devise new strategies. They were particularly concerned with overcrowding in black schools. This group of parents began to think: "If we take our kids, and we go over to where these schools are, and ... inconvenience some of these people who didn't seem to quite understand and sympathize with our plight. Let them know what it meant to have an overcrowded classroom."³⁵ They found that there were "plenty of seats" in less crowded "white schools" and "plastered these signs all over," telling parents about the open seats elsewhere in the city. These parents, led by Ellen Jackson, formed the North Dorchester-Roxbury Parent Association, believing that the educational bureaucracy might respond better to a group explicitly made up of parents.³⁶ Black parents had been systematically excluded from parent organizations within the schools; thus, these parent organizations also made a public claim to advocate for their children as "parents," just as whites in the city did.

Born in Boston on October 29, 1935, Ellen Jackson had grown up in Roxbury, attended Girl's Latin, and had been active as a teenager in the NAACP Youth Council.³⁷ Like Batson, Jackson had a history of political activism and five kids in BPS. She joined the Northern Student Movement (NSM) over concerns about their education, becoming the parent coordinator of the NSM from 1962 to 1964.³⁸ Her work in the NSM, advocating for students and parents, led her to found the Parent Association. She explained, "It was because of these many affronts and confrontations with an unheeding school committee and school board that we decided other action was necessary."³⁹ But the group's attempts to get change from within the school bureaucracy were largely thwarted. The School Committee had initially proposed a double session day for the overcrowded schools in Roxbury. Pressure from parents led the committee to scrap the plan, but it offered no other solutions to remedy overcrowded black schools.

Boston had started an open enrollment policy in 1961 that allowed students to attend any school as long as there were open seats. But the School Committee forbade the use of school funds to bus children to the 7,000 open seats throughout the city.⁴⁰ While it was designed to make it possible for black students to attend white schools, numerous barriers erected

within the system made it extremely difficult for black families to take advantage of open enrollment. Thus, open enrollment served largely as an administrative shield against charges of racial privilege within the system—and in many ways functioned like “freedom of choice” plans did in the South.

Since the city refused to make it possible for black students to fill those open seats, the Parent Association decided that they would do it themselves. The vast majority of these mothers had been active before in Headstart, school strikes, and tutorial programs like the NSM⁴¹ and thus had experience doing grassroots organizing. They did research to figure out where the open seats were and on the first day of school arranged buses and cars to “open” these schools to black children. According to Jackson, on that first day, a reporter asked her what their initiative was called. She explained, “‘Casting our children out to reap,’ you know, the benefits, so that they could come home and sow the oats at home. In a sense we were giving them a chance to go out and gain whatever they can, and come back to benefit their community. And I said, ‘That’s sort of an exodus because we don’t mean to stay out there. We’re coming back, we’re coming home.’”⁴²

And so it became Operation Exodus. The Parent Association was able to pay for it only through continuous fund-raising from individuals in the community, the NAACP, and a number of labor unions—and, over the next years, bused black children to vacant seats in many white schools in the city. Open enrollment policy did not ensure welcome for Exodus students. At some of the schools, black students were locked out, segregated into separate classes, or relegated to the back of the classroom. Yet, James Teele, who evaluated the program’s effectiveness, found that students in Exodus did make substantial improvement in reading, and most Exodus parents were happy with their children’s educational progress over time.⁴³ The Parent Association believed that if they began busing black students to these open seats, they would shame the school district into complying with the state law and taking over the operation and funding of the buses. They were wrong. The school district never did, despite publicly endorsing the program as part of its attempts to look compliant and racially balanced. Operation Exodus bused 250 students in 1965, 450 in 1966, 600 in 1967, and then decreased to 500 in 1968 (in part because of the formation of another busing program, METCO [Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity]).

METCO took a different tactic from Operation Exodus, bringing black students from the city to predominantly white suburbs for school.⁴⁴ Ruth Batson became director of METCO while continuing to fight for desegregation within the city. Like Operation Exodus, founders of METCO thought the program would force the city to deal with racial equity issues

within the city limits while demonstrating the ways that the city and its suburbs were intricately connected. As Batson explained, “When Metco started ... I thought ‘We’ll take the kids out and embarrass them [the Boston School Committee]. Then we’ll throw the rascals out and bring the kids home.’ Nobody expected it to go on and on.”⁴⁵ By the mid-1970s, with help from the U.S. Office for Education and the Carnegie Corporation, METCO was busing nearly 2,500 students to 38 suburbs.⁴⁶ While this was a great expansion from the original 220, it still only affected a small minority of black students (some of the most academically advanced, although organizers consciously picked students with a range of family income and academic ability) and was never an option available to most black children.⁴⁷ Batson resented the ways METCO was criticized for taking the “cream of the crop.” “Were 220 students all of the cream?”⁴⁸

Parents also created independent black schools—Highland Park Free School, Roxbury Community School, and the New School—to ensure quality education for their children.⁴⁹ These derived partly from the Freedom Schools operated during the boycotts, as parents saw the need to set up more permanent separate institutions because the School Committee remained unbending. Rallying around the firing of white teacher Jonathan Kozol, the parent organization, Concerned Gibson Parents, helped form the New School, in 1966, along with the Roxbury Community School. These schools drew middle-class blacks and whites from across Boston and modeled what a quality interracial education could look like. The Highland Park Free School, formed in 1968, drew only black children and had a decidedly more nationalistic focus.⁵⁰ But, as with METCO and Operation Exodus, these schools could only serve a small number of Boston’s black children. The enrollment in the three schools in 1969 totaled 520 students,⁵¹ which did not provide the system-wide solution many in the community desired.

These educational struggles in Boston complicate the prevalent dichotomy made between reformist and nationalist strategies. Because this struggle was led largely by women, many of whom were mothers, these interconnections have been difficult to see because nationalism has often been cast as the ideological purview of men. While many women came into this activism to improve their children’s education, the ideologies that drove their work focused broadly on justice and self-determination for the black community as a whole. They were taking matters into their own hands—whether it was to organize and pay for a bus or to set up an alternative school. And they moved between strategies in an attempt to address the systemic issues of educational inequality. As Ruth Batson declared in 1965, “We intend to fight with every means at our disposal to ensure the future of our

children.”⁵² These acts of self-determination or separation were not at odds with advocating for desegregation. They would do both. Jackson elaborated,

I don't think I fit any of the labels ... but I do know that I believe, if you know, the history of our project in the sixties, was not to integrate the kids into the Boston public schools. We were really about the business of upgrading the quality of education our kids were getting and we didn't give a damn where it took place. One thing we knew, it was not taking place in Roxbury. ... At that point, the majority of the resources, the real, tangible resources, that we felt made at least a crack, or afforded an opportunity for a dent in the future ... was not going to be found in Roxbury.⁵³

Activists in Boston strategically used a range of tactics in their struggles with the School Committee. *The Bay State Banner*, an independent black newspaper founded in 1965 to provide an independent voice for issues important to the black community, made educational issues and the varying ideologies and approaches in the fight with the School Committee a key topic in its coverage.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, growing frustration among black students led to the creation of the Black Student Federation, the Black Students Alliance, and the Black Student Union. In January and February of 1971, the Black Student Union organized a citywide boycott to protest racial segregation. Demonstrations and strikes erupted at many city high schools as black students asserted their right to wear dashikis and learn the history of black peoples. They had five demands: Recruit black teachers, recruit black guidance counselors, commission an independent study of racial patterns in the city's schools, end harassment of black students, and grant amnesty to all striking students. Their demands reveal how intertwined integrationist and nationalist strategies were. These students fought for the right to wear dashikis and also pressed for a study of racial patterns within the school system and the hiring of more black teachers (clearly aware of the difficulty the community had been having in establishing these concerns with the School Committee). Many of their demands were similar to those that the NAACP had presented to the School Committee in 1963. The Black Educators' Alliance, the organization of black teachers, endorsed the student strikes. Black teachers had also organized a one-day sick-out in 1969, protesting the disproportionately small numbers of black staff in Boston's schools.⁵⁴ These “militant” tactics and “nationalist” movements still focused on issues of segregation within BPS.

Ultimately, seeing little other recourse, parents, through the NAACP, sued the School Committee in federal court. According to Cass, who was

still active with the NAACP though no longer the president, “We couldn't get the desegregation any other way. ... It was just a suit, brought to open it up and let the court know that we still want it done.”⁵⁵ When the Racial Imbalance Act passed in 1965, there were 46 imbalanced schools (schools that were more than 50 percent nonwhite) in Boston; by 1970, there were 63.⁵⁶ The School Committee's blatant disregard of the law—as well as of the quality of education offered to black students—had left the organization with little option other than a federal lawsuit.⁵⁷ In 1973, for example, the School Committee willingly gave up \$65 million in state and federal funds rather than desegregate the schools.⁵⁸

On June 21, 1974, Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity ordered the Boston School Committee to begin desegregation. The movement had created the climate for this decision. As Tahi Mottl argues in her study of Boston, “The Garrity decision was an end product of ‘public opinion’ created over a decade of conflict.”⁵⁹ Garrity's meticulous legal findings⁶⁰ cited overcrowding and underutilization in Boston's schools, the use of districting to preserve segregation, the creation of a dual system of secondary education, the use of less qualified and lower paid teachers to predominantly black schools, and the restricting of black teachers largely to black schools⁶¹ as *intentional* segregation and cause for legal action.⁶² In short, as blacks had argued for decades, this legal decision unequivocally dismantled the idea that racial patterns within Boston's schools had just happened; rather, the segregated nature of Boston's schools had been supported and exacerbated by the political, administrative, and legal structures within the city. Rejecting the School Committee's argument that school segregation resulted from neighborhood segregation and not from their actions,⁶³ Garrity held that the School Committee had engaged in deliberate segregation and thus it must be eradicated.⁶⁴ The plan, beginning the following September, called for 23 of the 65 unbalanced schools to be corrected through busing and for the feeder system, which fed black students into high school in ninth grade and white students in tenth grade, to be eliminated. Despite the popular belief that the judge was forcing his own ideas on the city, Garrity did not come up with Phase 1 of the plan, to be implemented in September, but relied on one that had come out of the litigation around the Racial Imbalance Act in the Massachusetts courts.⁶⁵

The multifaceted social movement that led to this decision is hardly to be found in most accounts of Boston's struggles. Indeed, this struggle was led largely by women such as Ruth Batson, Ellen Jackson, Betty Johnson, Melnea Cass, and Muriel Snowden but most accounts quote men in the few places they acknowledge the black community.⁶⁶ The head of the NAACP during Boston's desegregation was former city council member and long-time

activist Thomas Atkins. In most of the media coverage of the time, he is the only black person quoted and just sporadically, treated more as a representative of the black community than someone determining the action. The erasure of women, and of black community efforts, more generally, depicts blacks in Boston as recipients of the court's largesse rather than the organizing force that made the court take up the issue in the first place. That this was a grassroots struggle organized largely by local women—with the most charismatic leader being a woman—does not fit with prevalent conceptions of what the black freedom struggle looked like. Even as scholars have begun to foreground the organizing and leadership roles of Southern women activists like Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Septima Clark, Diane Nash, and Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, these women still exist alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, Robert Moses, Julian Bond, and Ralph Abernathy. And thus, lacking these prominent male figures, Boston's movement has a hard time fitting within prevailing movement paradigms.

Accounts of desegregation spend little time on the activities of the black community during this period. Freedom House, referred to as the "Black Pentagon" during desegregation, was central to these efforts.⁶⁷ Troubled by the conditions of the neighborhood, Muriel and Otto Snowden began Freedom House in 1950 as a neighborhood improvement association, composed predominantly of middle-class blacks. They started a job preparation workshop for high school students and worked to press for better city services and police protection for Roxbury. Securing its own building in 1952, Freedom House sought to add a community voice on issues of urban renewal and pressure the city to invest in the needs of Roxbury residents.⁶⁸ Through this work, Freedom House evolved into a meeting house and community center.⁶⁹ In late 1973, the Freedom House Institute on Schools and Education was formed to work with parents and students to oversee the desegregation process.⁷⁰ Ellen Jackson became the director of this new project—and helped coordinate efforts within the black community to prepare for desegregation. According to Jackson, "The mood in the black community was one of confusion, concern, and fear because the elected officials during that summer of 1974... were very often making statements that this would not happen."⁷¹ Batson, who at that time was working at Boston University as Director of Consultation and Education,⁷² developed a program that would train people to work with the kids going to these schools. Funded through the federal government, this program taught individuals from various local groups what to do on the buses, how to deal with white harassment, and how to work with the kids after school.

Freedom House set up a hotline that operated "almost twenty four hours a day," according to Jackson, for parents to call about desegregation.

They received hundreds of calls before school began. Along with the Roxbury Multi-Service Center and the Lena Park Community Development Corporation, they formed a coalition to protect white children being bused into black schools and to support black children going into white schools. Part of their role at Freedom House was to get young people to talk about their anger and to channel their anger away from violence. After school began and violence broke out in the city, parents decided that they could not rely on the city to protect their children and would have to protect them themselves. They formed groups to accompany the buses. Freedom House also protected black students legally: According to Batson, "We would let the parents know that there were people on their side whatever their kid did."⁷³ Without the support network they established, a support network that had hardly been recognized, the desegregation of BPS would have been even more rocky.

While white violence received much of the media attention, pro-desegregation meetings, rallies, and marches turned out significant support but little mainstream media coverage. Decrying the violence infecting the city, black Communist activist Angela Davis spoke at a packed workshop in October: "The question is not that of busing but a developing trend of racism. There must be social equality for all Americans."⁷⁴ The presence of Angela Davis at a pro-desegregation event shows the ways that Boston's desegregation was supported by a broad spectrum of the black community as a necessary step for profound social change. Freedom House also organized an "assembly for justice" in early October, bringing together a coalition of black community groups. On November 30, 1974, Coretta Scott King led a march of 2,500 people, and two weeks later, 12,000 people marched in support of desegregation. The NAACP continued to press the racial issues behind the resistance to desegregation. On May 17, 1975 nearly 40,000 marched to show their public—and organized—support for desegregation. Ellen Jackson explained the need to counter the prevailing view of the city's desegregation, "We wanted to show Boston that there are a number of people who have fought for busing, some for over 20 years. We hoped to express the concerns of many people who have not seen themselves, only seeing the anti-busing demonstrations in the media." Jackson's comment reveals the ways that black organizers struggled to keep the issue of racial justice in the public view and how media attention to white resistance shaped the ways that desegregation would subsequently be understood. Christine Rossell's study of the *Boston Globe* has shown that the media's focus on anti-desegregation whites and desegregation-related conflicts led the public to have an overinflated sense of the costs and problems with desegregation and thus were more likely to oppose it.⁷⁵

Most work on Boston has focused on the white resistance movement that developed in the wake of Garrity's decision. After the court order, Louise Day Hicks, who had left the School Committee for a seat on the city council, began organizing various factions of white parents in hopes of derailing desegregation. She and a group of parents founded a group called Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR), which called on white parents to refuse to let their children go to school and held numerous rallies from July to September to demonstrate their resistance to desegregation. These rallies drew the support of the School Committee, many teachers and police officers, and most of the Boston City Council. The boycott, demonstrations, and verbal and physical harassment of pro-desegregation black and white Bostonians continued when school began. The start of school provoked some of the most angry and violent demonstrations against desegregation in the nation's history. Buses were stoned, children attacked, and mobs of whites demonstrated their opposition across the city.

Yet, in contrast to most scholarship on Southern freedom struggles and some research on other Northern cities which also analyze in detail white resistance, most books on Boston's desegregation have been more sympathetic to the actions and perspectives of those whites who resisted "busing."⁷⁶ Ronald Formisano characterizes the genre best when he describes the aim of his book, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s*: "I have tried to portray organized anti-busing with understanding, and from what is a perspective hitherto unexplored. ... [This book] is not essentially about blacks but about whites."⁷⁷ Hardly unexplored, this perspective is shared by most authors who also focus on "understanding" white resistance. Their attempts to excuse white Boston's overtly racialized notions about busing, community, and entitlement—as Ronald Formisano writes, "thousands of decent, moderate whites across the city cannot be said to have been racists"⁷⁸—reflect the problematic assumption that racism did not pervade the Northern consciousness as it did the South's. By de-emphasizing the centrality of race in favor of working-class political alienation in the development of ROAR, these authors obscure the ways race and class were inseparable and how "the wages of whiteness" motivated the actions of anti-desegregation whites.⁷⁹ They focus on community control, the preservation of neighborhood schools, the loss of political power in the city, and resistance to outsiders of working-class South Bostonians as the impetus behind this resistance to desegregation—eliding white ethnic working-class alienation with political powerlessness with opposition to desegregation. Thus, this literature naturalizes, rather than investigates, why racism becomes the chosen response for many politically alienated working-class whites.

Long-held stereotypes of black people were at the heart of ROAR's movement. According to one white father, "The question is, Am I going to send my young daughter, who is budding into the flower of womanhood, into Roxbury on a bus?"⁸⁰ The black students desegregating South Boston High were met by a mob of whites throwing rocks, bottles, eggs, and rotten tomatoes and yelling "Niggers Go Home."⁸¹ One student, Phyllis Ellison, who attended school that day, explained, "And there were people on the corners holding bananas like we were apes, monkeys. 'Monkeys get out, get them out of our neighborhood. We don't want you in our schools.'"⁸² One white mother, Connie Maffei, who chose to send her children to school, explained the violent reaction, "There's a general depressed feeling here that we don't count anymore. Everyone has a feeling it's a black city. Nothing is going our way. Even our husbands are coming home from work saying that every promotion goes to a black, Spanish-speaking or woman."⁸³

Most writers on Boston portray white resistance as a working-class phenomenon. Yet, while working-class South Boston received the bulk of media attention, the middle-class neighborhoods known as the High Wards—Hyde Park, Roslindale, and West Roxbury—also experienced significant racial violence. The first race riot at school happened not at South Boston High but at Hyde Park High School on September 19, 1974. In October, black students were chased out of a Roslindale restaurant by a crowd of whites, and two men were arrested for carrying Molotov cocktails outside of Hyde Park High School.⁸⁴ With the media focus on South Boston portraying resistance to desegregation as a working-class movement as opposed to one that found support in working-class and middle-class neighborhoods in the city, many whites in South Boston reacted angrily against institutions like the *Boston Globe*. They resented the ways their actions were singled out when resistance was happening throughout the city. The Boston Teacher's Union and the Police Patrolmen's Association committed money to appeal Garrity's decision and adamantly opposed desegregation. Open in their opposition to desegregation, City Council members Louise Day Hicks, Dapper O'Neill, Christopher Ianella, and Patrick McDonough each displayed the letters R-O-A-R in their window to spell the acronym of the anti-desegregation organization and let ROAR use their chambers to meet.⁸⁵ ROAR leader Louise Day Hicks was often pictured as working class, even though she herself was an attorney and former teacher, and her father was also an attorney.⁸⁶ Thus, to portray white resistance as a working-class movement ignores its middle-class base and minimizes the benefits whites across the city accrued from segregation. Making it a story of the working class takes attention away from the systemic basis and acceptance of racial privilege across the city: The racism becomes parochial rather than

ingrained (and thus not a central battleground of the civil rights struggle like Selma or Birmingham).

While opposition to school desegregation was framed as opposition to busing, this issue was largely a smoke screen. The term anti-busing (or forced busing) used by the media and politicians at the time—and picked up wholesale by scholars—is a disingenuous description of the opponents of integration. As civil rights activist Julian Bond pointed out at a rally in Boston in 1974, “It’s not the bus, it’s us.”⁸⁷ By 1972, there were few neighborhood schools in Boston. Indeed, by the 1960s, school buses were linked to quality education across the North, and certain kinds of cross-neighborhood mixing were understood as a way to ensure quality education.⁸⁸ Thirty thousand Boston students were being bused to school, including 50 percent of all middle schoolers and 85 percent of all high schoolers.⁸⁹ In fact, thousands of white students who were not ensconced in all-white neighborhoods were bused past black schools to all white schools—traveling farther in order to maintain these segregated schools.⁹⁰ Thus, part of the reason that the desegregation remedy included two-way busing was because busing was already so prevalent in the city. Garrity also argued in his decision that it was the actions of the School Committee—“[t]he harvest of these years of obstruction and of maintenance of segregated schools”—that made busing essential for desegregation.⁹¹ Tellingly, the bulk of the racial harassment and violence of the “anti-busing” movement focused on the high schools, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of high school students were bused before Garrity’s decision. Garrity also directly rejected the School Committee’s rhetoric of preserving neighborhood schools. The judge cited extensive busing, open enrollment, magnet schools, citywide schools, and widespread high school feeder programs (all of which were already going on in BPS) as “antithetical” to a neighborhood school system.

To frame resistance as a class-based ethnic movement against busing and for neighborhood schools, then, is to ignore the widespread existence of busing in Boston before desegregation. However, the language of “neighborhood control” and “forced busing” provided a socially acceptable rhetoric to harness many whites’ virulent opposition to integration at the time.⁹² Evidenced in the election and presidency of Richard Nixon, this covert racial language was proving successful in turning back the progress of the civil rights movement, producing racial results without actually speaking about race. And the labels “anti-busing” and “neighborhood control” have been picked up in problematic ways in the historiography, serving to distinguish Northern resistance to desegregation from Southern.⁹³ Glossing over the linkages between Northern and Southern opposition deracializes Boston’s resistance. Sounding arbitrary and antidemocratic, the phrase “forced busing” turns the

issue away from racial equity to pity for the small schoolchildren being forced by a judge to ride hours on a bus. “Neighborhood schools,” conversely, brings to mind a close-knit, small-town (if imaginary) America that diverts attention away from who gets to be part of the neighborhood in the first place.

At the same time, most accounts of Boston do not fully investigate whites in the city who did not oppose integration. Many schools, in fact, desegregated peacefully, yet few of these white supporters find their way into books. The ROAR boycott failed in most schools, with 66 percent of students showing up for school. Eithu Greenwood Elementary School, which had been nearly all white, opened its doors to five buses of black children from Mattapan and Dorchester. The principal, Paul Donovan, boarded each bus with a cheery, “Hi you all look handsome and beautiful today.”⁹⁴ The Jeremiah Burke High School, a formerly black high school, was also desegregated peacefully and with little incident in 1974.⁹⁵ Staff and students found it to be an resounding success.⁹⁶

South Boston mother Tracy Amalfitano sent her two boys to school, despite the anger it caused within her South Boston community. “The community basically was talking about kids not being safe going into the minority communities, but because I went in and out every day myself, I knew that they were safe there. ... [M]y concern was that they were safe when they got off, when my older son got off the bus in his own community.” Amalfitano’s efforts were unsupported by local politicians: “Political leaders were meeting quite routinely with those that boycotted. But for those of us around the city that decided to support the desegregation order, it was very much a lonely place for a long time.”⁹⁷

Some whites from South Boston were willing to meet informally with blacks to form an ad hoc biracial council since community opposition had prevented constituting a formal one. One who did was James O’Sullivan, a former opponent of desegregation who found some of the first demonstrations horrifying. “It made me ashamed to be from South Boston, ashamed to be a Catholic.”⁹⁸ He chose to serve on the Roxbury-South Boston Parents’ Biracial Council and faced hate mail and violence from whites as well. ROAR was extremely effective at canvassing neighborhoods, targeting whites who went along with integration.⁹⁹ Many white pro-busing mothers would talk and meet in secret, afraid of what their families and friends would do if they found out. One mother explained, “ROAR doesn’t represent all white people.”¹⁰⁰ While she did not tell her husband about her meetings, she was committed to continuing them. “The Black students face quite a bit of abuse but they have as much right to go to school here as my kids do. ... I can feel what the Black parents are going through now, and I know we have the same concern for our children.”¹⁰¹ Ignoring the views

of whites who went along with desegregation naturalizes the racialized notions of ethnicity, entitlement, and neighborhood of the whites who resisted integration. Leaving out white supporters and the reasons that they did go along with desegregation homogenizes white working-class identity and goes far in making it "understandable" that many whites violently opposed integration. Ultimately, then, the history of Boston's desegregation becomes the story of the violence of those who resisted it.

Despite the extensive organizing that led up to Judge Garrity's decision, most authors frame this complex social movement 25 years in the making as the result of a benevolent white judge instead of an organized black community. This was a fight for educational justice—not busing—and desegregation was one of many strategies employed by community activists in their attempts to secure it. By ignoring that it was black people's actions that prompted change within Boston's public schools, many writers downplay the profound racial inequalities in the city's schools and extreme prejudice in the city at large that fueled the push for integration in the first place. The limited treatment of Boston's educational struggles not only constricts our historical memory but also impoverishes our understanding of the present.¹⁰² As Batson herself explained, this has facilitated the backsliding in educational gains in recent years and prevented a continued push for desegregation and real educational equity.¹⁰³ "We've gone right back to the 1960s. ... The whole issue of racism has been set aside. This is why all of the setbacks are happening because people are not exercising their right to be indignant."¹⁰⁴ A more thorough examination of Boston's history reveals the inadequacy of terming Northern segregation *de facto*. Such a characterization does not adequately foreground the institutional and legal sanction that segregation had in the North, and in Boston, in particular.

Blamed for the violence of those who resisted it, Northern school desegregation and Boston's, in particular, has come to be seen as foolhardy, disruptive, and ultimately unnecessary. In contrast, Southern desegregation is viewed as an important and long-overdue movement that is, if anything, made more righteous by the violent backlash against it. Southern activists are remembered for their long and courageous histories in the fight against racial injustice. Boston's black activists, on the other hand, are criticized for their ineffectiveness—for their mistaken and naive desire to get next to white people—or simply ignored.¹⁰⁵ White resisters, conversely, capture the historical record, seen as working-class ethnics denied political power in the city who struggled to preserve their neighborhoods. The fight for school integration in Boston was, ultimately, a fight for racial equity in Boston's public schools; to remember it as a fight against busing is to capitulate to the terms set by anti-desegregationists themselves.

Notes

1. An earlier and different version of this paper was published in the fall 2001 issue of *Radical History Review* (issue 81): 61–93. I would like to thank Adina Back, Matthew Countryman, Paisley Currah, Scott Dexter, Robin Kelley, Earl Lewis, Alejandra Marchevsky, Karen Miller, Komozi Woodard, my students at Brooklyn College, my three University of Michigan UROP research assistants: Jacqueline Woods, Nikkela Byrd, and Robyn Stanton, and my family for their insights, contributions and support of this work.
2. While this paper focuses on school desegregation campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s, black Bostonians have a long history of activism around schools. Blacks petitioned for their own school in 1781, and in 1806 the city agreed to help fund an existing school in the African Meetinghouse. This was rebuilt in 1835 to become the Abiel Smith School. Having trouble sustaining the Smith School, blacks turned to pressuring the city to allow blacks into white schools. In 1855, the legislature passed a bill disallowing racial and religious distinctions for enrolling students in public schools. Emmett Buell, *School Desegregation and Defended Neighborhoods* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1982), 59–60.
3. Some examples include Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming* (New York: Viking, 2001), William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Philip Klinkner, *The Unsteady March* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), and the *Eyes on the Prize* documentary television series I and II (Blackside Productions, aired on PBS).
4. Fairclough, xi.
5. According to traditional accounts, part of the successes of the Southern movement came from inducing the support, however tentative, of the federal government. See, for example, Weisbrot's *Freedom Bound*. Given Gerald Ford's public disagreement with Judge Garrity's order for integration, blacks in Boston were up against the intransigence not only of local forces but also of the highest executive in the nation.
6. Despite sustained organizing throughout the 1960s, Boston's desegregation did not happen until 1974–76, a full 20 years after the Supreme Court had overturned segregated schools in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.
7. Most works portray whites as victims of liberal (suburban) good intention, and these authors see their job as contextualizing white resistance to busing as a class-based ethnic struggle. Such works include Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), Alan Lupo's *Liberty's Chosen Home* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), George Metcalf's *From Little Rock to Boston* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), Ronald Formisano's *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), and Michael Ross and William Berg's "I Respectfully Disagree with the Judge's Order": *The Boston School Desegregation Controversy* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America,

- 1981), which portray blacks largely as passive actors in the drama. Even Steven Taylor's recent book, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influence of Local Leaders* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), which claims to examine the role of local leaders focuses decisively on white resistance.
8. A clear example is James Patterson's recent study of the effects of *Brown v. Board of Education*: "Starting in 1973, the struggle consumed the city for many years, generally (as in Little Rock in 1957 and in many other places) pitting working-class whites against wealthier white people—'limousine liberals' to their foes—and some blacks." James Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 173.
 9. As historian Craig Wilder has written about New York, "Segregation was the initial stride of domination. The Central Brooklyn ghetto allowed white people to hoard social benefits while people of color became the primary consumers of social ills. Its residents underwrote the life chances of those outside its borders." Craig Wilder, *A Covenant with Color* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 216.
 10. Ruth Batson, telephone interview by author, 1991.
 11. Ruth Hill, ed., *The Black Women Oral History Project* from The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America (Westport, Conn.: Mechler, 1991), 117.
 12. Brian Sheehan, *The Boston School Integration Dispute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 71–72.
 13. Jon Hillson, *The Battle of Boston* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), 65. Tahi Mottl, "Social Conflict and Social Movements: An Exploratory Study of the Black Community of Boston Attempting to Change the Boston Public Schools" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1976), 174.
 14. In much of the scholarship on Boston, because the lifelong organizing and leadership efforts of black activists are not explored, their actions seem to come out of nowhere.
 15. Such widespread segregation was a relatively new phenomenon in Boston. The city's black population had hovered around 3 percent of the city's population until WWII. It was not until after the war that blacks began moving to the city in large numbers. By 1960, blacks made up nearly 10 percent of Boston's population and, by 1970, formed 16.3 percent of the population, an increase from 1940 to 1970 of 354 percent. Thus, while discriminatory treatment had plagued blacks in the city for centuries, it was during the period of 1940–1970 that the Boston School Committee expanded and solidified its system of grossly unequal schools for blacks and whites.
 16. Henry Hampton, *Voices of Freedom* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 588–589.
 17. One school with a capacity of 690 students had enrolled 1,043, while another with a 300 student limit had 634 students enrolled. "Racism and Busing in Boston: An Editorial Statement" *Radical America* 8.6 (November–December 1974): 11.
 18. Ruth Batson, "Statement to the Boston School Committee" in *Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 598.
 19. Along with these reports, Jonathan Kozol's award-winning *Death at an Early Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967) amply documented the poor conditions, administrative neglect, and substandard learning environment of black public schools. Kozol shared his classroom, which was actually the auditorium, with another teacher and fourth grade class.
 20. Hill, 235.
 21. Lupo, 142–143.
 22. Batson, "Statement," 597–598.
 23. Hampton, 589.
 24. Batson concluded, "[W]e found out that this was an issue that was going to give their political careers stability for a long time to come" (Hampton, 589).
 25. Ross and Berg, 49.
 26. Civil rights leader Noel Day explained, "It is most important that we educate our children in how to participate in a democracy where you must dissent at times" (Sheehan, 65).
 27. Hill, 350.
 28. Ibid.
 29. Lupo, 146–147.
 30. This was a popular political message among white voters. Louise Day Hicks was decisively reelected in November 1963 to the School Committee with turnout higher than the previous mayor's election. "The people of Boston have given their answer to the de facto segregation question," she stated (Buell, 64–65).
 31. Boston's activists saw their actions as part of the larger freedom struggle unfolding across the nation and wanted their fight to be seen as part of this national civil rights movement. It is interesting how these national campaigns take a back seat in the historiography.
 32. Ross and Berg, 49; Sheehan, 70.
 33. Carter explained his motivations for beginning a vigil that he vowed to continue until the law had been passed. "I was determined to complete what so many people were working and hoping for. I felt it was now my responsibility since so many were burnt out. ... I walked 21 hours a day and slept 3 hours a day (4 A.M. to 7 A.M.) I succumbed on the 54th day and was taken to St. Elizabeth Hospital for 10 days, then returned to my Vigil to complete the task before me 'Because It is Right.'" Ruth Batson, *A Chronology of the Educational Movement in Boston*, unpublished manuscript in Ruth Batson's papers, 2001-M194, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute (hereafter referred to as *Chronology*), 204.
 34. During 1964, five racial imbalance bills were introduced to the Massachusetts legislature by black representatives from Boston to remedy the situation but were not taken seriously. It was not until a white senator, Beryl Cohen, introduced the sixth bill that racial imbalance became a legislative matter. Cohen had drafted the bill with advice from the NAACP and the Congress of Racial Equality.

35. Hill, 58.
36. According to Tahi Mottl, black parents' organizations emerged as movement bases and organizers in 1964. These include Boardman Parents, Concerned Gibson Parents, Roxbury-North Dorchester Parents Council, Parent Participation Project of the Alternative Schools, and the Change Committee.
37. The militant tactics of the Youth Council (particularly their use of civil disobedience and ties to suspected Communists) angered the national NAACP, and they lost their charter.
38. The NSM was formed in part because black parents were often denied access to home and school associations within BPS.
39. Teele, *Evaluating School Busing: Case Study of Operation Exodus* (New York: Praeger, 1973).
40. U.S. Commission, xiv; Taylor, 43-44.
41. Teele, 8.
42. Hill, 179.
43. Teele, 8, 23.
44. Black activists have been criticized in works like Lupo's *Liberty's Chosen Home* for focusing their efforts solely within the city, another example of how scholars have ignored the larger movement around Boston's desegregation.
45. Nicholas Paleologos, "Wrong Plan and Wrong Place," *The Boston Globe*, July 15, 1988.
46. By 1969, the state legislature took over the funding for METCO, and by 1972, the state was spending \$2 million on METCO (Formisano, 38).
47. Buell, 85.
48. Batson, *Chronology*, Addendum 265a, 5.
49. For more in-depth treatment on the free schools, see Jonathan Kozol's *Free Schools* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).
50. Mottl, 413-416.
51. Mottl, 491.
52. Hampton, 588.
53. Hill, 234-235.
54. Mottl, 387.
55. Hill, 352. Batson was still the chair of the Education Committee of the NAACP.
56. Mottl, 507.
57. Metcalf, 69; Formisano, 54. The number of racially imbalanced schools in BPS had increased since the act had passed from 46 to 67 percent (Lupo, 149).
58. *Time* (September 23, 1974): 29.
59. Mottl, 575-576.
60. The decision withstood numerous appeals all the way to the Supreme Court and was given a bar association award the next year. Robert Dentler and Marvin Scott, *Schools on Trial: An Inside Account of the Boston Desegregation Case* (Cambridge: ABT Books, 1981), 4.
61. In 81 of Boston's 201 schools, no black teachers had ever been assigned, and an additional 35 had only one black teacher (Metcalf, 201).
62. Despite this careful attention, Garrity was unwilling to look at the role Boston's suburbs played in the educational inequities and segregation black students faced—and would not consider a metro-wide solution.
63. As the Boston Bar Association noted, Garrity "concluded that the School Committee's actions over the past 10 years with respect to segregation in the schools may have helped to create the segregated residential patterns which the School Committee now sought to use in an attempt to justify the segregation found to exist in the schools. Even beyond that, Judge Garrity found that the School Committee 'with awareness of the racial segregation of Boston's neighborhoods, had deliberately incorporated that segregation in the school system.'" John Adkins, James R. McHugh, and Katherine Seay, *Desegregation: The Boston Orders and Their Origin* (Boston Bar Association Committee on Desegregation, August 1975), 22.
64. The Supreme Court had already weighed in on the matter of intentional segregation. For example, in a 1973 Colorado case, they ruled that there did not need to be a state law requiring separate schools for segregation to be intentional and thus a violation of the Equal Protection Clause.
65. As the Boston Bar Association noted, "The Plan which Judge Garrity ordered the School Committee to use as a temporary plan on June 21, 1974, thus was a plan wholly created by Massachusetts state agencies, a plan which the School Committee had been ordered a role in creating, and a plan which the Committee not only had been aware of for some time but also had been under orders to comply with for some time" (Adkins, McHugh, and Seay, 24).
66. Anthony Lukas, George Metcalf, Alan Lupo, Ronald Formisano, and Michael Ross and Alan Berg portray blacks as passive actors and all but deny the existence of black women in the fight.
67. Muriel Snowden had attended Radcliffe College and the New York School of Social Work but the Snowdens moved back to Boston in 1945 where Otto's family had lived for 70 years. The Snowdens chose to send their daughter Gail to a parochial school, St. Mary's. Muriel Snowden explained, "[W]hen we took our child out of the Boston public schools, we did not take ourselves out of the Boston public schools system despite that" (Hill, 62-63).
68. *Ibid.*, 6. Some community members were critical of Freedom House's middle-class leadership and elite focus.
69. Muriel Snowden explained, "Freedom House in a sense represents the efforts of middle class black people to their own. And when I say their own, I mean all black people" (Hill, 68).
70. Hillson, 63.
71. Hampton, 599.
72. Batson was associate professor of psychiatry at Boston University from 1970 to 1986.
73. Batson interview, 1991.
74. *Bay State Banner*, October 10, 1974, 1.
75. Taylor, 85.

76. One of the best analyses of grassroots white resistance movements is Tom Sugrue's *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
77. Formisano xiii, 4. Indeed this push to "understand" Northern whites' violent reactions diverges sharply with scholarship on the Southern freedom movements. Scholars such as Charles Payne, John Dittmar, Diane McWhorter, Howell Raines, Fred Powledge, and Aldon Morris, while looking carefully at white resistance, never seek the sympathetic understanding that some scholars of Boston have.
78. Formisano, xi.
79. It is interesting how whites in Boston are never called segregationists, while whites in Southern cities who attacked desegregation are. See also David Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1991) for a more extended exposition of how white working-class identity has long rested on ideas of racial superiority and the ways these ideas provide a psychic wage for working-class whites whose class position might make them natural allies with black workers. Michael MacDonald's memoir of growing up in South Boston makes a similar point, "We all were on food stamps but most of the jokes around town were about black people on welfare. The same thing with living in the projects and eating wellie cheese—those were black things." Michael MacDonald, *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie* (New York: Ballantine, 1999), 71.
80. *TIME* (September 23, 1974): 29.
81. "Boston: Echoes of Little Rock," *Newsweek* (September 23, 1974): 48.
82. Hampton, 600–601.
83. Benjamin Taylor, "Kids ... the Real Heroes," *Boston Globe*, September 13, 1974.
84. Steven Taylor, 136–137.
85. *Ibid.*, 78.
86. As Michael MacDonald writes, "People said she was from Southie but she didn't look like she'd been through much. Her father was a judge and she lived in a big beachfront house in City Point, but she was okay with us. 'She's the only one sticking up for us,' someone said" (MacDonald, 75).
87. Hillson, 89.
88. As the U.S. Civil Rights Commission observed in 1972, the school bus has been a "friendly figure in the North" for 50 years.
89. Dentler and Scott, 16, 28.
90. Schools were not located in the center of the district but "near the edges of irregular districts" (Taylor, 49).
91. Adkins, McHugh, and Seay, 28.
92. Many scholars focus on this idea of neighborhood schools and opposition to busing without grappling with why before desegregation whites in the city had been comfortable with busing and certain forms of neighborhood mixing.
93. It is worthy of further study how the lexicon used to describe Northern civil rights struggles and Northern racism differs from that describing Southern ones.
94. John Kifner, "Violence Mars Busing in Boston," *New York Times*, September 13, 1974.

95. Students who spoke before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights gave positive reports on the first year at the Burke. One young black woman explained, "As the year progressed, we talked and we got to understanding, and we found, like, a common ground" (Formisano, 205).
96. In his graduation address, the Burke valedictorian explained, "What struck me the most was that the school was practically new to most of the student body. ... But everyone opened his friendship to one another. ... And now, not only can we say that we are proud of the Jeremiah Burke High School, but we can also say that the high school is proud of us" (U.S. Commission, 82).
97. Hampton, 606.
98. Hillson, 106.
99. Indeed, Amalfitano's windows were broken, her car smashed, and her sister's beauty salon destroyed as a result of her public support for desegregation (Taylor, 140).
100. Hillson, 109–110.
101. *Ibid.*
102. Indeed, I would argue that the ways that Boston's desegregation has been historicized has led not only to negative ideas about, and an abandonment of, desegregation but of a commitment to quality public education in the city in general (outside of the academic magnet schools).
103. Garrity's plan temporarily alleviated some of the worst segregation in BPS (Buell, 157). Building renovations, greater minority parent involvement in schools, and better and more merit-based teacher recruitment were improvements that resulted from desegregation. The case also succeeded in introducing bilingual education in BPS on a widespread level. Finally, there were definite gains in black school performance initially following desegregation (Dentler and Scott, 218). Louise Day Hicks lost her seat on the City Council in 1977, and John O'Bryant became the first black person elected to the school committee in the twentieth century.
104. Batson interview, 1991.
105. As Ruth Batson explained, "Even now when I talk to a lot of people, they say we were wrong in pushing for desegregation. But there was a very practical reason to do it in those days. We knew that there was more money being spent in certain schools, white schools—not all of them, but in certain white schools—than there was being spent in black schools. So therefore, our theory was move our kids into those schools where they're putting all of the resources so that they can get a better education" (Hampton, 590).