

Learning Liberalism: Seattle Schools and the Changing Face of American Racial Politics, 1960-  
1980

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**Abstract**

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This dissertation compares and contrasts the two major anti-busing movements in Seattle, Washington, the first in the early 1970s and the second in the late 1970s. Opposition to busing was fierce and unrelenting, excepting physical violence, opponents tried every available tool at their disposal from a vitriolic School Board recall campaign to lawsuits questioning the legal standing of the policy to ballot initiatives. The politics of mandatory desegregation also revealed complex, cross-racial opposition to and insecurities about class, changing gender and family norms, and perceived and real threats to neighborhood cohesiveness. Seattle's stagnant, acerbic race relations coexisted with rapid shifts in liberal discourse. By 1978, when publicly addressing social issues such as education or low-income housing, conservatives and liberals gained political capital by appearing sensitive to race. I argue that busing was a formative policy, which influenced 1970s liberal ideologies and identities as much as it shaped conservatism in the period. Furthermore, Seattle's cross-party endorsement of the 1978 busing program demonstrates that American politics in the period were not clearly rightward bound. When seen

as politically expedient and economically beneficial, Republicans and Democrats alike publicly embraced racial liberalism.

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## Introduction

Seattle is a fantastic city.  
Because it's beautiful,  
it's diverse,  
colorful,  
all kinds of people.

All Kinds of People!

So we've got to figure out  
a school system that's best  
for a city with  
all kinds of people.

If you lived in an all-white suburb  
you wouldn't have to worry  
about this challenge.  
But then, you wouldn't have Seattle!<sup>1</sup>

Seattle Public Schools, Public Relations Material, undated

Greetings from sunny Seattle, where women are 'gals,' people are 'folks,' ... you can't sit Indian-style but you can sit 'crisscross applesauce,' when the sun comes out it's never called 'sun' but always 'sunshine,' boyfriends and girlfriend are 'partners,' ... and any request, reasonable or unreasonable, is met with 'no worries.'<sup>2</sup>

Maria Semple, Seattle Author, 2012

The Seattle School District's mid-1970s public relations poem that painted an idealized picture of race relations in the city and the rant by Bernadette, the main character in Maria Semple's best-selling 2012 satirical novel *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*, capture the essence of Seattle's contemporary national and international reputation for social and racial liberalism. Yet, as Semple mocks, Seattle's liberalism, expressed in the non-confrontational, politically correct dialogue of its residents is often more style than substance. The city's late twentieth and early twenty-first century progressive status correlates with the post-industrial rise of local giants

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<sup>1</sup> Seattle Public Schools, "Seattle," Undated marketing poem from 1976 or 1977, before the development of the Seattle Plan, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned, William Maynard Files, Box 2.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Semple, *Where'd you Go, Bernadette*, (New York: Back Bay Books, 2012), 122.

Microsoft, Starbucks, and Amazon.<sup>3</sup> This combination of new wealth and young liberals is fertile ground for what pundits have described as Seattle's "latte liberal" voting bloc. Despite Seattle's current reputation, in the 1970s, the city's veneer of liberal harmony was built on shaky ground, relying on a problematic myth of Northern and Pacific Northwest exceptionalism that does not withstand scrutiny.<sup>4</sup>

Seattle's racism was longstanding and severe and its opposition to busing was fierce and unrelenting. To overturn busing, excepting physical violence, opponents tried every available tool at their disposal from a vitriolic School Board recall campaign to lawsuits questioning the legal standing of the policy to ballot initiatives. The politics of mandatory desegregation also revealed complex, cross-racial opposition to and insecurities about class, changing gender and family norms, and perceived and real threats to neighborhood cohesiveness. Seattle's stagnant, acerbic race relations, as seen through the lens of the city's anti-busing campaigns, coexisted with rapid shifts in liberal discourse. By 1978, when publicly addressing social issues such as education or low-income housing, conservatives and liberals gained political capital by appearing sensitive to race. Seattle's liberal façade was born out of this contradiction between liberal language and racial upheaval. I argue that busing was a formative policy, which influenced 1970s liberal ideologies and identities as much as it shaped conservatism in the period.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Seattle's cross-party endorsement of the 1978 busing program

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<sup>3</sup>As "liberal" became a pejorative term in American politics in the late 1970s, liberals increasingly labeled themselves as "progressive." Unless referring to contemporary Seattle, I employ the "liberal" nomenclature because it was commonly used in the period.

<sup>4</sup>For works that disprove Northern exceptionalism see: Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); James Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

<sup>5</sup>To varying degrees, all of these works cite opposition to busing as an explanatory factor in the rise of conservatism. Matthew Dallek, *The Right Movement: Ronald Reagan's First Victory and the Decisive Turning Point*

demonstrates that American politics in the period were not clearly rightward bound.<sup>6</sup> When seen as politically expedient and economically beneficial, Republicans and Democrats alike publicly embraced racial liberalism.

The timing of Seattle's two busing movements that spanned most of the 1970s offers a new perspective upon the evolution of liberalism, racial discourse, and busing. Only through a close reading of conservative and liberal anti-busing rhetoric can this rapid shift towards racial liberalism be uncovered and in turn cross-party parallels be revealed. Furthermore, the liberalism of the President Carter era from 1976 to 1980 was different than that of the civil rights era or even of the early 1970s McGovern era. The evolution of the language used by busing supporters such as the Chamber of Commerce and the School Board and opponents such as Boeing machinists was indicative of a national shift in racial politics. Even busing opponents, who were often socially conservative, understood that by the late 1970s, the changes wrought by the 1960s civil rights movements were permanent and required, at least on the surface, a shift in how one spoke about race and race prejudice in public.

I examine these shifts in politics expressed through discourse by comparing and contrasting the two major anti-busing movements in Seattle's history, one in the early 1970s and the second in the late 1970s. While the vast majority of the busing historiography focuses exclusively on the early 1970s, by spreading my analysis across the 1970s this study provides a

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*in American Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2000); Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York, Da Capo Press, 2001); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920 -1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight*; Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound : Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); and Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Schulman et al, *Rightward Bound*.



new lens upon which to understand the opposition to desegregation.<sup>7</sup> In 1978, Seattle was one of the last major cities, except Milwaukee that also implemented busing the same year, to commence a citywide desegregation program. Seattle liberals, many of whom in 1977 had only recently become busing supporters, led the way.

#### SEATTLE'S HYBRIDIZED POLITICS: LIBERALS, CONSERVATIVES, AND PRAGMATISTS

Seattle's liberalism followed the contours of what scholars have described as the fluid and shifting conceptions of twentieth century American liberalism, which historian Robert Self describes as "plastic," shaping to fit the needs of its local actors.<sup>8</sup> With the malleability of American liberalism in mind and to capture this historical moment when Seattle liberals rallied around busing, I have developed the term "pragmatic liberal." Pragmatic liberalism emerged in the late 1970s to mollify conservative critics and was inclusive of a surprisingly wide spectrum of Seattle's polity including fiscally conservative business leaders, moderate School Board members, and liberal African-American activists, most of whom came to their support for desegregation on practical, rather than ideological grounds. When it served to further their own interests, pragmatic liberals, including Democrats and Republicans, publicly embraced the tenets of racial liberalism, which subscribed to "equal opportunity in social and political life" for people of all races and allowed for a modicum of state intervention in order to level the playing field.<sup>9</sup> However, these pragmatic liberals did not necessarily have a personal history of civil

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<sup>7</sup>Ronald Formisano, *Boston against Busing; Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Gerald H. Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Daniel Martinez Hosang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Lily Geismer, "Don't Blame Us: Grassroots Liberalism in Massachusetts, 1960-1990," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2010; Jonathan Bell and Timothy Stanley, eds., *Making Sense of American Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 30 & Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 14.

rights activism. Many of the pragmatic liberals, who would not have been convinced of the necessity of desegregating Seattle's Schools without the threat of a court order, opportunistically used busing to help craft a new image of Seattle. This new Seattle, known for its tolerance and racial liberalism would be economically, socially, environmentally, and culturally vibrant and sustainable.

I take a fresh perspective on the 1970s by showing that Seattle's pragmatic liberals did not make a sharp right turn away from the 1960s, rather, leaders embraced strategically chosen elements of the civil rights movement such as school desegregation.<sup>10</sup> Historian Bruce Schulman calls the decade a "watershed" moment in American history because the nation took a new rightward course politically, economically, culturally, and socially. In re-examining Schulman's claims, my dissertation analyzes the evolution and rise of this pragmatic, liberal, racial discourse and its transformative affect on Seattle politics, joining the small, but growing literature on liberal movements in the period.<sup>11</sup> Seattle's pragmatic liberals also provide a new understanding of liberalism in the 1970s because they demonstrate how appearing racially liberal had real political and economic benefits. Not all liberalism was losing steam in the late 1970s, one important component, racial liberalism was becoming incorporated into the political and economic mainstream.

The backlash against Seattle's, albeit incomplete, liberal turn coincided with what a recent rich body of scholarship has identified as a key decade in the rightward shift of American

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<sup>10</sup> Schulman, *The Seventies*, xii, xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Margaret O'Mara, "The Rise of the Atari Democrats and the Politics of the New Economy", Paper presented at the Princeton Political History Seminar, November 2013, 3-4 for the following scholarship on liberal activism: Tuck et al., "Reconsidering the 1970s" in the *Journal of Contemporary History* 43: 4 (October 2008); Bruce Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment: The McGovern Insurgency and the Identity Crisis of the Democratic Party* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007); Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Suleiman Osman, "The Decade of the Neighborhood" in Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound*; Geismer, "Don't Blame Us."

politics.<sup>12</sup> On the national political stage, beginning with Nixon's 1968 victory, McGovern's colossal failure in 1972, and which was cemented with Reagan's landslide in 1980, Democrats and their liberal ideals were increasingly under siege. Scholars such as Matthew Lassiter, Kevin Kruse, and Becky Nicolaides argue that when the Democratic Party welcomed feminists, blacks, and homosexuals with their rights-based agendas, socially conservative Democrats, particularly in the Sunbelt South, turned away from the New Deal Coalition in favor of the Republican Party. In an appeal to the "silent majority," weary of the unrest in the turbulent 1960s, Nixon famously promised that he and other Republicans would ensure "law and order" in riot-torn cities.<sup>13</sup> Seen through a gendered, neighborhood lens, my dissertation participates in this discussion by exploring the city's widespread white opposition to busing, showing how those ideals championed by Nixon fostered and reinforced a socially conservative ideology.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, my analysis of black anti-busing activism provides a new perspective on backlash and its relationship to the rightward shift in American politics. Backlash was not just a white conservative phenomenon, African Americans branded their own backlash against busing. In Seattle's racially isolated Central Area, home to the largest concentration of people of color, there was significant black opposition to and internal disagreement about busing in the *early* 1970s. Mirroring the national debates, some of Seattle's African-Americans rejected busing in favor of black-run schools, while others believed that a two-way busing program where black and white children, who were bused at equal rates and attended integrated schools was the most promising strategy to improve African American educational outcomes.<sup>15</sup> The editors of

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<sup>12</sup>Dallek, *The Right Movement*; Schulman, *The Seventies*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*; Kruse, *White Flight*; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*; Schulman et al., *Rightward Bound*; Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*.

<sup>13</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 6; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*; Kruse, *White Flight*.

<sup>14</sup>Scholars such as Lisa McGirr and Matthew Lassiter also address the role of gendered conservative activism in the period, however they do not foreground the discussion. McGirr, *Suburban Warriors* & Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*.

<sup>15</sup> For a similar debate in Milwaukee Wisconsin see: Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*.

*The Medium*, one of Seattle's black newspapers, argued in 1970: "no one has ever really cared for the idea of busing children from one neighborhood school to another."<sup>16</sup> A few years after Seattle's black backlash against busing had subsided, white business leaders who worked in the downtown core and who had previously been publicly neutral on busing, took a novel approach to the policy.

The pro-busing activism of Seattle's pragmatic liberals, particularly members of the Chamber of Commerce, provides another dimension to our understanding of 1970s conservatism. Businessmen in Seattle, who usually voted Republican and who were often conservative on economic and social issues, chose to back desegregation because it would make the city stand out on the national stage. By the late 1970s, busing was not a policy that members of Seattle's Chamber lashed out against; rather, it was an opportunity that they believed would ensure their own financial stability. Nevertheless, in 1977, when the Chamber chose to support busing, Seattle was under threat of litigation by local civil rights leaders including the NAACP and ACLU to desegregate the city's schools.<sup>17</sup> A highly publicized lawsuit would have hurt Seattle's national reputation and consequently the city's business climate. Thus, the Chamber, along with others in their pragmatic liberal coalition, faced stiff opposition from the city's anti-busers at the same time as they were under pressure from civil rights liberals to desegregate the city's schools.

Pragmatic liberalism, which sought to find a middle ground on busing, was a product of America's evolving liberalism. Twentieth century American liberalism was rooted in classical liberalism, by the late nineteenth century it privileged the rights of corporations, individual

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<sup>16</sup>Publisher, "Thoughts from the Publisher, "To Bus or Not to Bus? ," *The Medium*, November, 5, 1970, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Hanawalt & Robert L. Williams, "The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981," *Seattle Public Schools*, Seattle Public Schools Archives, Acc. 330.007, 33.

economic autonomy, and property rights.<sup>18</sup> However, by only a few decades into the next century liberalism was almost unrecognizable. Robert Self argues that liberalism included four broad components: New Deal liberalism and its commitment to the welfare state, “moderate market regulation” that aimed to ensure economic growth, racial liberalism, and finally, rights based individualism where government policies organized around individual people rather than groups, emphasizing the responsibility of the individual to the group.<sup>19</sup> For fear of both upsetting the Southern Democrats in the New Deal Coalition, because of latent Northern racism and an uncertainty about how these policies might affect the economy, American racial liberalism was often “tepid and slow-moving.”<sup>20</sup> However, at the municipal level, in the 1960s and 1970s, liberalism such as that endorsed by Seattle’s pragmatic liberals found new followers and gained strength from its flexibility that allowed it to adjust and bend to local political climates.

The actions of Seattle’s pragmatic liberals provide critical ballast to the argument that American big cities became major drivers and exemplars of socially liberal policy action during the 1970s. In 1977, Seattle was one of America’s leading liberal cities when the primarily white School District and a wide range of city and business leaders cooperated closely with African-American community leaders to implement the nation’s first full-scale busing program without a court order. Seattle leaders, who understood how to navigate the city’s intricate local politics, deftly integrated a wide array of stakeholder interests into the development of the busing plan. Seattle’s flexible liberalism resonates with what historian Guian McKee’s argues about the importance of localism and place in postwar American politics. McKee shows that activism on the local stage such as in Philadelphia led and ensured the survival of the wider liberal

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<sup>18</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 13-14.

<sup>20</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 6.

movement.<sup>21</sup> Yet, as Lily Geismer argues, in places like Newton, Massachusetts, which *Newsweek* deemed “the seedbed for liberal causes,” 1970s liberalism increasingly found its home in the suburbs, as did conservative activism in hotbeds such as Orange County.<sup>22</sup> My dissertation will contribute to the window that scholars such as Geismer and McKee have opened onto the myriad ways that liberalism, in the late 1960s and 1970s, was ascendant, despite the existence of a strengthening conservative backlash movement. I show how Seattle’s discourse of racial equality was evidence of a 1970s American liberalism that shaped municipal politics and school policies.

Seattle’s turn to liberal discourse extended beyond the struggles over desegregation. These efforts operated in tandem with other causes including the push for open housing, gay and native American rights, and the environmental movement. The city also worked hard to establish a reputation as an epicenter of environmentalism. As a consequence of what historian Coll Thrush describes as a period of “radical transformation” in the city’s national and international standing Seattle emerged as firmly “ecotopian” by 1976.<sup>23</sup> However, paralleling Seattle’s incomplete racial turn, the city’s status as an environmental leader masked the pollution of the region’s water and soils, which resulted in the near extinction of local salmon.<sup>24</sup> The gap between professed values and actual practices was also evident in the arena of gay rights. The Seattle City Council passed an employment non-discrimination act for sexual minorities in 1973 and in 1978 the city was one of the first in the nation to defeat an anti-gay rights measure when

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 4, 10. See also Margaret Pugh O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, chapter 4 about the University of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia for a discussion of how local liberals used racially progressive language to justify the expansion of a science based development, which pushed out local poor and people of color who had resided in West Philadelphia.

<sup>22</sup> Geismer, “Don’t Blame Us,” 2, 417. See also McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*.

<sup>23</sup> Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007) 187. See also Matthew Klinger, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Initiative 13 failed at the ballot box. While the initiative failed, the fight over I-13 revealed deep divides in the city over gay rights.<sup>25</sup>

These debates over desegregation, gay rights, and the environment operated under the shadow of Seattle's early 1970s economic malaise brought on by the 1970 Boeing Bust when this largely one-industry town was crippled.<sup>26</sup> In light of the city's as well as the nation's economic crisis, from savvy anti-busing leaders who downplayed their middle class origins to school district administrators who worked tirelessly to avoid the class conflicts that had erupted in Boston, Seattle's busing battles cannot be divorced from the issues of class.<sup>27</sup> While affluent business owners and attorneys led Seattle's anti-busing movements, its base consisted of middle class blue-collar workers who resided largely in the city's Northern neighborhoods and in West Seattle. These areas were geographically isolated from the Central Area and the Rainier Valley, home to the vast majority of Seattle's minorities. Blue-collar workers, most of whom lived far from the city's small black population, were almost universally opposed to District leaders' increasingly liberal busing policies that followed on the heels of 1960s union desegregation.<sup>28</sup> Yet, in Seattle the working class resistance to busing and integration was physically non-violent, unlike other Northern cities such as Boston and Western cities such as Los Angeles and Oakland.<sup>29</sup> Across Seattle, but particularly on the right, political activism was shaped by the physical and ideological space its adherents inhabited.

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<sup>25</sup> Gary Atkins, *Gay Seattle: Stories of Exile and Belonging* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 241.

<sup>26</sup> Klinge, *Emerald City*, 235.

<sup>27</sup> Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 1-3 & Formisano, *Boston against Busing*.

<sup>28</sup> Editorial Board, "Message to the School Board," *West Seattle Herald*, February 21, 1973, A4; "School Bussing," *West Seattle Herald*, November 5, 1970, A1 and "Anti-busing Organization outlines position," *West Seattle Herald*, November 19, 1970, A1.

<sup>29</sup> Self, *American Babylon*; Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*; Nicholaides, *My Blue Heaven*.

## LIBERAL SEATTLE AND THE DISCOURSES OF NEIGHBORHOOD, RACE, AND MOTHERHOOD

In an era that contemporaries dubbed the “decade of the neighborhood,” Seattle’s confluence of geography and race was reflected in a pattern of busing activism and busing backlash that manifested at the micro-level.<sup>30</sup> Natural boundaries such as lakes, canals, and rivers and the manmade legacy of racist housing policies divided and continue to divide Seattle, making it a city of distinct neighborhoods, each with its own political and economic identity. Scholars of busing have generally eschewed the neighborhood as a category of analysis in favor of the subdivision or parish, but as this study will show, examining the micro-level politics of the neighborhood provides a new dimension to our understanding of grassroots activism.<sup>31</sup> Historian Matthew Klinger’s notion of an “ethic of place” with regard to environmental politics is a useful framework for understanding how the politics of Seattle’s neighborhoods shaped desegregation and the discourse of race. Also helpful is the history of cities such as Oakland, California, where Robert Self examines the spatial dimensions of civil rights activism.<sup>32</sup> In Seattle, the isolated peninsula neighborhoods of West Seattle and Magnolia, which were home to many social conservatives, had “ethics of place” that were prominent and served to guide their anti-busing activism.

In the anti-busing strongholds of North Seattle and the peninsulas, neighborhood rhetoric was often accompanied by a discourse on the defense of “family values.” I show how white, black, and Asian anti-busing sentiment that came from across the political spectrum drew upon

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<sup>30</sup>Osman, “The Decade of the Neighborhood.”

<sup>31</sup>Lassiter, *The Silent Majority* and Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*.

<sup>32</sup>Klinger, *Emerald City*, 6 and Self, *American Babylon*. Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) focuses on neighborhood identity creation and serves to situate Seattle’s liberal neighborhood-based activity in a national framework. See also Margaret Pugh O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*.



related ideals that aimed to protect family life.<sup>33</sup> Scholars who traditionally examine busing exclusively along racial lines, have missed the rich and complex degree to which different groups drew upon similar rhetoric as a way of preserving their own social, economic, and political capital. The history of busing needs to be more closely examined in the context of what in the 1970s was seen as the “crisis of the American family.” Robert Self describes this struggle as a fight over family values that “propel[led] the tumultuous transition of American political culture” from the 1960s to the present.<sup>34</sup> Many Americans connected changes to school policy with concerns over changing “family values.”

To illuminate this issue, my dissertation analyzes the family and its interactions with busing by employing motherhood as a category of analysis. In doing so, I contribute to our understanding of how motherhood and family values became central tropes in both liberal and conservative politics in the period.<sup>35</sup> The role of mothers and mother-rhetoric in local rights struggles, an issue at the center of Annalise Orleck’s study of hotel worker activism, *Storming*

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<sup>33</sup> Formisano, *Boston against Busing*; Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race*; Gamm, *Urban Exodus*; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Hosang, *Racial Propositions*. To gain an African-American perspective on busing and school related politics see Jerald Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Jack Dougherty, *More than one Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Brett Gadsden, *Between North and South: Delaware, Desegregation, and the Myth of American Sectionalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). Helpful ethnographies include Lillian B. Rubin, *Busing and Backlash: White against White in a California School District* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the contestations of the American family after the 1960s, including a chapter about working motherhood see Robert Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 103-133; Matthew Lassiter, “Inventing Family Values” in Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound*.

<sup>35</sup> Alexis Jetter, Annelise Orleck, and Diana Taylor. *The Politics of Motherhood from Left to Right*. (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1997); Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Andrew Lewis “Emergency Mothers: Basement Schools and Preservation of Public Education in Charlottesville,” in *The Moderates Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia*, ed. Matthew D. Lassiter and Andrew B. Lewis, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 72-103; Michelle Nickerson, “Moral Mothers and Goldwater Girls” in Farber, David R., and Jeff Roche, eds., *The Conservative Sixties*. (New York: P. Lang, 2003); Orleck *Storming Caesar’s Palace*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar’s Palace: How Black Mothers Fought their own War on Poverty*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005).

*Caesar's Palace*, was central to the 1970s busing battles in Seattle.<sup>36</sup> Parents' views of busing and its intersection with the politics of mothers and gender reveal cross-cultural correlations. Mothers across Seattle's economic and ethnic continuums worried about their children spending two hours on a bus each day and wondered about the effects of busing on academic rigor and participation in extracurricular activities. Of the many influential histories of feminist movements in the post-war, few emphasize the politicization of motherhood, which is not surprising because second wave feminists were often reticent to place concerns relevant to mothers such as childcare and family leave policies at the forefront of their political agenda.<sup>37</sup> The history of rightward-leaning women in the 1970s is not as complete as the history of the left, but scholars of the right readily identify motherhood as a key rallying point for conservative women in the 1970s, a finding that parallels Seattle anti-busers' rhetoric, particularly in the early 1970s.<sup>38</sup>

From conceptions of motherhood to race to liberalism, my discussion of discursive practices is indebted to earlier works on the constructions of race and gender and to scholarship that addresses the social history of liberal activism.<sup>39</sup> I locate the discourse of race and gender in

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<sup>36</sup> Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace*.

<sup>37</sup> Alice Echols, *Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), Dorothy Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of the Women's Liberation Movement in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Knopf, 1979), Susan Hartmann, *The Other Feminists: Activists in the Liberal Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin, 2000), Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Robert Self, "The Price of Liberty: Anti-feminism and the Crisis of the Family" in *All in the Family* provides a helpful synthesis of the tensions between the "family" and feminism for social conservatives, 309-338. Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), Marjorie J. Spruill, "Gender and America's Right Turn", and Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of a Christian Free Enterprise*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*. Ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143-177. <sup>39</sup> For the later scholarship see: Jeanne Boydston, "Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis," *Gender and History* 20.3(Nov. 2008): 558-583 and Joan Scott, "Preface to the revised edition," *Gender*

Seattle's busing battles in the material realities of the lived experience, principally regarding questions of class and racial inequality.<sup>40</sup> Combining careful analysis of socio-economic patterns and political formation, I show how the language of race, gender, and family shaped both the politics of liberalism and the backlash against it.<sup>41</sup> Yet, I also follow the lead of political theorist Danielle S. Allen who argues discourse has positive qualities that can "generate trust that the polity needs in order to maintain basic relationships."<sup>42</sup> Seattle leaders believed that the optimistic liberal language of Seattle exceptionalism could encourage at least some of the city's residents to embrace an ideology of racial tolerance. In what follows, my dissertation interweaves Seattle's evolving discourse of race and motherhood with an analysis of the city's highly charged racial climate, showing how the language of racial liberalism and the reality of race relations were often at odds.

The organization of the dissertation reflects this tension between the city's highly charged race relations and the 1970s transformation of liberal discourse. The first chapter analyzes the historical context of postwar Seattle's economic, social, racial, and geographical tensions and constraints that served to set the stage for the debates over busing in the 1970s. Chapters 2 and 3 work in tandem to illuminate early 1970s attitudes about race and motherhood, exploring the Seattle School District's largely ineffectual and fumbling, initial attempt to implement a mandatory busing program. At this juncture, District leaders failed to include African American

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*and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Barbara Fields, "Whiteness, Racism, and Identity," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall 2001) 48-56. Joan W. Scott, review of Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (1988); Linda Gordon, "Response"; and Linda Gordon, *Review of Joan W. Scott, Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), and Joan W. Scott, "Response." *Signs* 15, 4 (Summer 1990): 848-60

<sup>40</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> For recent takes on how the language of freedom and choice was a code for whiteness see: Hosang, *Racial Propositions* and Jim Carl, *Freedom of Choice* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011). See also Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Danielle S. Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 158.

community leaders in the busing planning process and the Board appeared indecisive and weak because they did not present a unified, public face in support for desegregation. Chapter 2 examines the significant black opposition to busing, including mothers whose rhetoric often paralleled white anti-busing mothers and analyzes the Asian communities' mixed responses to busing. Chapter 3 analyzes white, socially conservative activism, paying particular attention to how conservatives justified their opposition to busing using the rhetoric of traditional motherhood. Together, these two chapters illuminate how in the late 1960s and early 1970s, despite fervent opposition from across the racial spectrum, school and city leaders were beginning to engage in the language of Seattle exceptionalism that aimed to make the city stand-out on the national stage for its racial tolerance. Yet, they lacked the political will to pursue their agenda. By the late 1970s, the subject of chapters 4 and 5, city leaders had embraced the discourse of racial liberalism and sought to win-over the reluctant Seattle population. Chapter 4 focuses on the pragmatic liberals who advocated for desegregation, demonstrating how they had learned from their mistakes in the early 1970s implementation of mandatory busing. Finally, chapter 5 explores the late 1970s opposition to busing, which included significant participation from PTA mothers, showing how opponents of busing had also, in a period of a few years, changed their propaganda to reflect shifting discursive norms. Overall, these chapters demonstrate that Seattle was a city in transition in the 1970s. In the course of a decade, Seattle's leaders became convinced that embracing pragmatic liberalism was politically expedient because it would satisfy the African American community, avoid federal intrusion into municipal affairs, and allow them to construct a reputation that placed the city and themselves at the forefront of liberalism in the late 1970s and beyond.

## **Chapter 1: Bridging Old and New Seattle: Peninsula Neighborhoods, Downtown Elite, and Civil Rights**

In the post-World War II economic boom, when Seattle was literally and figuratively on the move, business, community, and municipal leaders and ordinary citizens fought over how to articulate the city's new identity. This chapter argues that the racial and economic upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s were a battle between old Seattle – represented by working and middle class residents from isolated white neighborhoods who adhered to a pre-civil rights worldview – and new Seattle leaders who sought to remake the city's image, embracing the national and local political change that civil rights ushered in. With the Boeing Bust of the early 1970s, these tensions between old and new grew as the city and the nation experienced a long and painful recession. Through the lens of neighborhood activism, this chapter also uncovers parallel strands, with different antecedents, of black, Asian, and white civil rights backlash. Seattle's multi-racial backlash provides a fresh perspective on the role of backlash in American politics, demonstrating that it was not only rightward leaning whites who recoiled against facets of the civil rights movement, blacks and Asians participated as well.<sup>1</sup>

Neighborhood activism in geographically distinct areas such as West Seattle was the primary vehicle of protest through which old Seattle sought to stem the tide of change. This platform was a convenient tool for the city's anti-busing movement to wage their war on school desegregation. In an attempt to appear race-neutral, anti-busers used the city's strong neighborhood allegiances to justify their stance, declaring that busing would cause irreparable harm to their communities. Seattle's anti-busing discourse, embedded with "neighborhood"

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<sup>1</sup>Schulman, *The Seventies*; Dallek, *The Right Movement*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Becky Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*; Kruse, *White Flight*; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*; Schulman et. al, *Rightward Bound*; and Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*.

language, was a unique variant of racially coded white, Southern anti-busing discourse. Historians Matt Lassiter and Kevin Kruse argue that in order to rationalize their opposition to mandatory desegregation Southern whites stressed their middle class racial innocence, a technique that was not prominent in Seattle's discourse.<sup>2</sup> At the local level, my findings build upon Roger Sale's analysis of the tension between old and new in his 1976 ethnography, *Seattle Past to Present*.<sup>3</sup> Economically, old Seattle residents were often reliant upon Boeing and the shipyards for their blue-collar jobs that garnered middle class wages.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, those who aimed to reinvent new Seattle had many agendas from civil rights for blacks and other minorities to a comprehensive mass-transit system to ensuring the economic health of the downtown core. While Sale draws urban Seattle in relatively broad strokes, pitting all city neighborhoods against the growing suburbs, this chapter magnifies Seattle's neighborhoods to uncover the tensions and diversity within the city limits.

In Seattle's transition between the civil rights era and the post-civil rights era, this four-part chapter shows how the city's formidable geography isolated the city's economically and racially distinct neighborhoods from the downtown core and from each other. As Robert Self argues, space and our conceptualizations of space shape our "social imagination."<sup>5</sup> As we shall see in this chapter, from peninsulas separated by water to hilltop neighborhoods, in geographically divided Seattle, space takes on an added level of importance. Geographical boundaries create spaces that were and continue to be central to forming Seattle's distinct political microclimates. Part 1 details Seattle's economic history since World War II, including

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<sup>2</sup> Kruse, *White Flight* & Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Sale, *Seattle, Past to Present* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> Suburban Seattleites could also be included in the "old Seattle" categorization because while they lived in new neighborhoods and were often new to the region, their ideals were more in-line with the residents of the old Seattle neighborhoods such as West Seattle. However, suburban sentiment is not a focus of this chapter or the dissertation because unlike in other metropolitan areas such as Detroit, desegregation in Seattle did not cross city-lines.

<sup>5</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 18-19.

the factors that led to black migration to the city during and after the war and uncovers downtown businessmen's attempts to remake the city's economic climate. Part 2 paints a picture of the city, with maps, descriptions of discriminatory laws that physically divided the city by race, and illustrates a few of the most vibrant neighborhoods where civil rights backlash was articulated in questions over busing, integrated housing, and black political representation. These local racial conflicts operated under the shadow of groundbreaking court cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, which are the subject of part 3.<sup>6</sup> Section 3 provides a national narrative of the legal path to court-ordered busing and analyzes the discourse and judicial activity that would spell change for Seattle and its schools. Finally, part 4 describes liberal, civil rights activism in the city and the federal, locally managed programs such as Model Cities that liberal leaders used as vehicles to eliminate poverty in Seattle's growing African American community. I use the term "civil rights liberal" to describe individuals who had been firmly committed and active in civil rights since the 1950s or 1960s and were, with a few exceptions, personally committed to mandatory desegregation. In sum, this chapter reveals the geographic, racial, and economic tensions that expressed themselves in the conflict over Seattle's image, all of which were obstacles that the city's pragmatic liberals would have to overcome or mitigate in order to implement desegregation. The city's post-war history lays the groundwork for Seattle's two major busing initiatives and the battles that ensued in the early 1970s and late 1970s.

#### SEATTLE'S POSTWAR ECONOMIC RISE AND FALL

Since World War II, Seattle's economic fortunes have been tied to the Boeing Corporation. Wartime defense needs for airplanes and ships led to the meteoric rise of both Boeing and the Seattle ship building industry and these jobs brought new people to the Puget

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<sup>6</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483(1954).

Sound, including people of color. During the War, most of the migrants came from rural towns in the Pacific Northwest and the U.S. West and 21% hailed from Mississippi.<sup>7</sup> With these newcomers, the Seattle population grew from 368,302 in 1940 to 557,087 in 1960.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the African American population grew by 164% in the war years and 169% from 1945 to 1960, going from 3,789 persons in 1940 to 26,901 in 1960.<sup>9</sup> Boeing's growth persisted throughout most of the Cold War because the company continued to contract for the Defense Department and they diversified their operations to supply the commercial aircraft industry with planes such as the successful 707. Boeing's headquarters were located in South Seattle in the Duwamish River Valley, what is now known as Boeing Field, adjacent to West Seattle. By 1960, Boeing employed 13% of Seattle's labor force.<sup>10</sup> While many optimistically viewed Seattle's economic and population explosion fueled by Boeing, other Seattle residents such as downtown business leaders worried about the inherent risks of being a one-industry town.

In the 1950s, with the goal of remaking Seattle's image and bringing the city's economy into the "metropolitan big league status," municipal and business leaders proposed the 1962 World's Fair.<sup>11</sup> Organizers sought to lure national corporations to Seattle in order to mitigate Boeing's influence over Seattle's economy and to bolster the downtown core.<sup>12</sup> The Space Needle, which was built for the Fair, physically represented the theme, "living in the space age." While the Fair was successful in attracting a few branch offices of national companies and did bring more tourists, it did not succeed in its primary aim to significantly diversify Seattle's

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<sup>7</sup> Trevor Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics: The United Construction Workers Association and Title VII Law in the 1970s" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2011), 27.

<sup>8</sup> Findlay, *Magic Lands*, 218.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 187.

<sup>10</sup> Findlay, *Magic Lands*, 219.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 217 & 220.



economy.<sup>13</sup> Mid-century business leaders, attempting to remake Seattle's image through hosting the Fair, foreshadowed and paralleled the pragmatic businessmen in the Chamber of Commerce who advocated for desegregation in the 1970s. Non-court mandated busing was for Seattle's business leaders in the 1970s as the Space Needle was in the 1960s. In both instances, business leaders worked to shape their city's image because they believed that it would help to ensure the city's economic health and in turn, their own success.

The founders of Forward Thrust, a lobbying group that developed a series of city bond ballot initiatives, also reimagined Seattle and the whole metropolitan area. James Ellis, a wealthy downtown lawyer, established Forward Thrust in 1965.<sup>14</sup> Forward Thrust, like the Fair, was inspired by downtown business interests to ensure the longevity and health of the city, though this group's initiatives put a special emphasis upon Seattle's natural environment. They called on the city and suburbs to shift gears and turn away from their hitherto embrace of the freeway and the personal automobile and move instead in the direction of a sustainable, mass-transit connected city. Seven years before he founded Forward Thrust, in 1958, Ellis was also instrumental in developing Metro, the "federated municipal corporation," which sought to develop a "regional sewage and mass transit program, regulate zoning, and create parks." Because of strong opposition to mass transit and regionalized control, Metro became more or less a regional sewage management organization, while Forward Thrust aimed to prepare for the "Pugetopolis that was coming."<sup>15</sup> Ellis and his organization wanted to keep Seattle from becoming another Los Angeles.<sup>16</sup> From 1968 to 1970, the Forward Thrust committee put a series of transportation, neighborhood improvement, and stadium bonds in front of the voters. While

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>14</sup> Klinge, *Emerald City*, 213.

<sup>15</sup> Sale, *Seattle Past to Present*, 226.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

the stadium (which would become the Kingdome), parks, fire, and sewer bonds passed, all of the rapid transit bonds failed. Seattle and suburban voters did not want to pay the high cost of a transit system and suburban voters especially were wary of how transit would serve their interests.<sup>17</sup> In a last ditch effort, Ellis and his team put the transit bond before the voters in 1970. It failed again, by an even greater margin than before because voters were in the midst of a growing economic crisis. While Ellis and Forward Thrust were unable to create a new vision of Seattle that embraced mass transit, their efforts can be seen as a dry-run for how desegregation supporters, with their liberal Seattle rhetoric, would seek to remake Seattle's image. Seattle's growth and all hopes for a Forward Thrust victory came to a screeching halt in 1970 when President Nixon shuttered the Supersonic Transport program and the commercial airline industry lost steam.

The Boeing Bust was a disaster for Seattle. At its height in 1967, Boeing employed 100,800 workers, and in 1971, the company employed fewer than 40,000 Puget Sound residents.<sup>18</sup> The Boeing Bust resulted in the loss of both blue and white collar jobs and unemployment in the city hit 12% in 1971.<sup>19</sup> With the famous billboard "Will the last person leaving Seattle turn out the lights." Seattle was the national posterchild for the economic malaise that gripped the nation throughout the 1970s. Of all Seattle residents, African Americans were hardest hit. Seattle blacks did not equally benefit from the rise of Boeing and they were disproportionately hurt by the crash. Even in the postwar heyday, African Americans faced high unemployment because of racial discrimination in the workplace, particularly in segregated unions. As historian Trevor Griffey argues: "federal contractors and federally-certified unions practiced racial segregation ... by invoking 'skill' rather than race as a basis for making skilled

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 229.

<sup>18</sup> Kingle, *Emerald City*, 235.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

labor synonymous with whiteness.”<sup>20</sup> African Americans’ exclusion from unions contributed to the sharp black/white income gap. In 1950, median white male income was \$3,125 while black men earned only \$2,199. Unemployment figures mirrored these income discrepancies. These patterns persisted into the 1960s and ‘70s.<sup>21</sup> Advocates for busing believed that these sharp economic inequities could be ameliorated by desegregating the city’s schools. Better education was seen as key to improving the economic fortunes of children of color. However, economic segregation was not the only problem that Seattle’s pragmatic liberals would face in their quest to desegregate schools. The city was also geographically divided. Seattle’s geography of segregated neighborhoods, reinforced by the city’s abundant manmade and natural waterways such as the Duwamish River and the steep hills that rose from their banks, shaped and separated Seattle’s disparate neighborhoods.

#### GEOGRAPHY, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND RACE

Analyzing Seattle by neighborhood provides an important window into the cultural and class-based identities that shaped how residents responded to desegregation. The city’s geography is both distinctively beautiful and particularly influential in local politics. Seattle is located on the shores of the Puget Sound in northwest Washington State, almost due north of San Francisco and Portland. In the city that “sometimes seems more fluid than solid,” water covers 41% of the city limits.<sup>22</sup> The water shapes the city’s climate. The marine air from the Puget Sound moderates the temperature so it is rarely extremely hot or cold in this often-cloudy city. There are over 150 bridges from freeway high rises to drawbridges, which are points of entry

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<sup>20</sup> Griffey, “Black Power’s Labor Politics,” 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>22</sup> Klinge, *Emerald City*, 7 & “Geography and Time Zone,” *City of Seattle*, accessed on April 24, 2014, <http://www.seattle.gov/html/visitor/location.htm>.

into many of the city's disparate neighborhoods from West Seattle to Magnolia to Fremont.<sup>23</sup> In the 1970s and even today, the most salient geographical and racial line in Seattle is the north/south divide created by the manmade ship canal that was built to create a passage way for boats between the Puget Sound and Lake Washington. The large Lake Washington borders Seattle and the growing suburbs of Bellevue, Kirkland, Lake Forest Park and Renton. The following is a map of Seattle's neighborhoods from Northgate to the Rainier Valley in the south and the major bodies of water from the Puget Sound and Elliot Bay in the west to Lake Washington in the east. The contours of the land and water reinforced racial dividing lines and neighborhoods.

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<sup>23</sup> "Geography and Time Zone," *City of Seattle*.



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In the 1970s, Seattle was one of the whitest major cities in America. Because of restrictive racial covenants, Seattle's small population of people of color were limited to the city's central and southern neighborhoods including the Central Area and the Rainier Valley

<sup>24</sup> "Seattle City Clerk's Geographic Indexing Atlas," *City of Seattle*, Accessed on April 28, 2014, <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/nmaps/fullcity600.jpg>.

while whites resided largely in the northern and western outposts of the city. Thomas Sugrue demonstrates the parallels between Northern and Southern patterns of segregation. Like many Northern cities from Englewood, New Jersey, to Boston, Massachusetts to Twin Oaks, Pennsylvania, the Seattle Schools never implemented de jure segregation, yet the racial compositions of the city's schools reflected residential patterns of segregation.<sup>25</sup> De jure segregation was segregation established by law, rather than by custom. In 1957, Garfield High School, located in the Central Area, was the first Seattle high school to have over 50% minority enrollment and by 1962, 51% of the population was African American.<sup>26</sup> Elementary and middle school feeders to Garfield High School such as Meany, Madrona, and Mann were among the most segregated schools in the city.<sup>27</sup> Southeast Seattle schools located in the Rainier Valley including Rainier Beach, Cleveland, and Franklin High Schools in the 1960s and 70s also experienced rising minority enrollments including African American, Filipino-American, Japanese-American, and Chinese-American students, while other schools in Seattle remained largely white.<sup>28</sup> In 1965, Ballard High School in Northwest Seattle and Roosevelt High in North Seattle near the University of Washington were 99% and 98% white, respectively.<sup>29</sup>

Seattle was unique, even among Northern cities, because of its relatively small African American population and comparatively high Asian-American population. In 1970, 15% of Milwaukee's population and 22% of Boston's population was black, while at the same time only 37,159 or 7% of Seattle residents were black.<sup>30</sup> In the same census, 5.5% of Seattle's population

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<sup>25</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 297.

<sup>26</sup> School Board Meeting Notes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, January 27, 1971, 207c. & Hanawalt et al., "The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools," 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

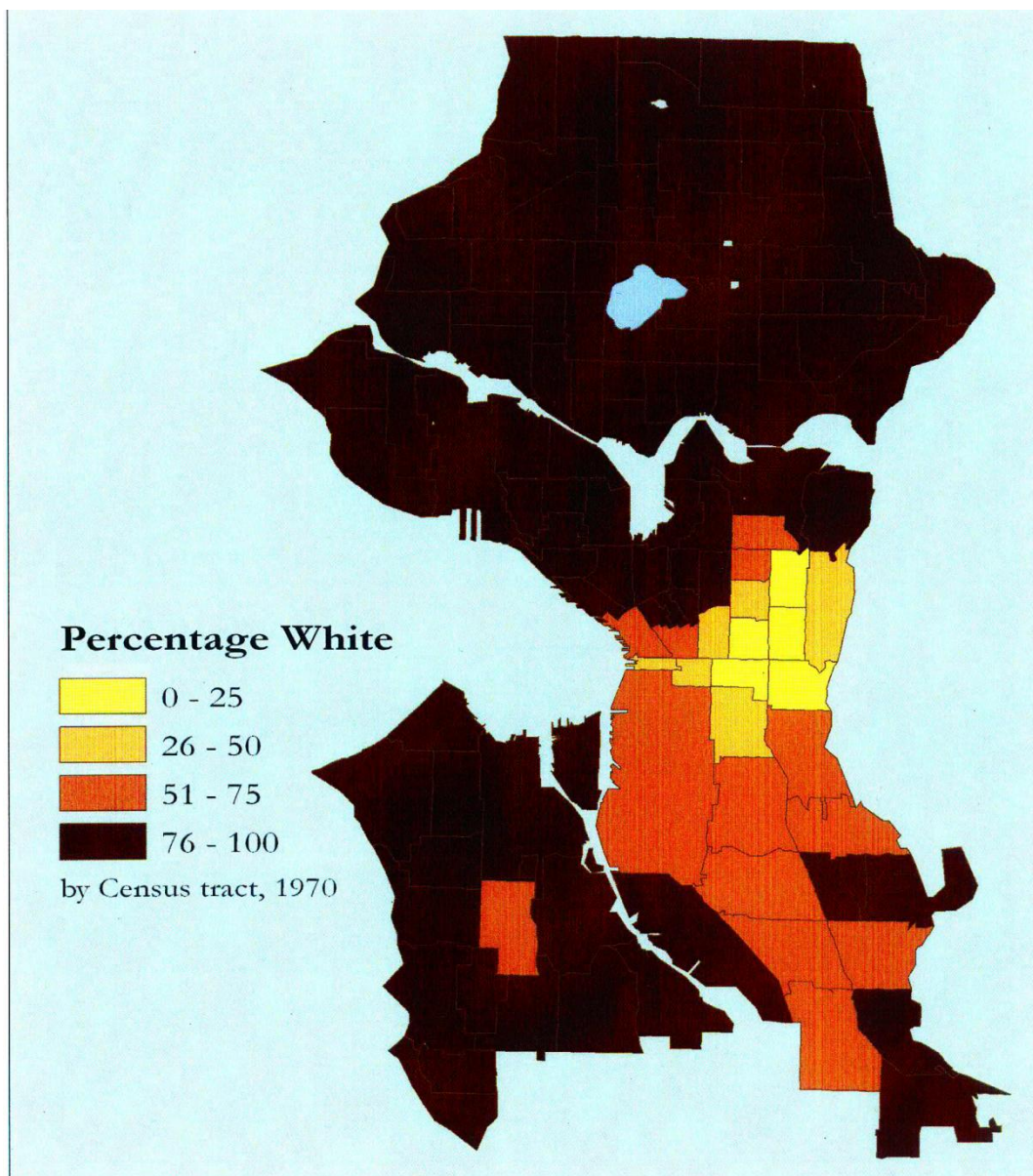
<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>30</sup> Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools*, 1; Steven J.L. Taylor, *Desegregation in Boston and Buffalo: The Influences of Local Leaders* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 153; and Dougherty, *More than one Struggle*, 131.

was “other,” which was primarily Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos, and a small number of Native Americans.<sup>31</sup> The following three maps of Seattle developed by Geographer Catherine Veninga for her dissertation, *Road Scholars: School Busing and the Politics of Integration in Seattle*, show the distribution of whites, African Americans, and “other” residents, respectively by neighborhood in 1970.

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<sup>31</sup> Catherine E. Veninga, *Road Scholars: School Busing and the Politics of Integration in Seattle*, Thesis (Ph. D.) University of Washington, 2005, 80.



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Figure 1, Catherine Veninga Census Analysis

<sup>32</sup>Veninga, *Road Scholars*, 82



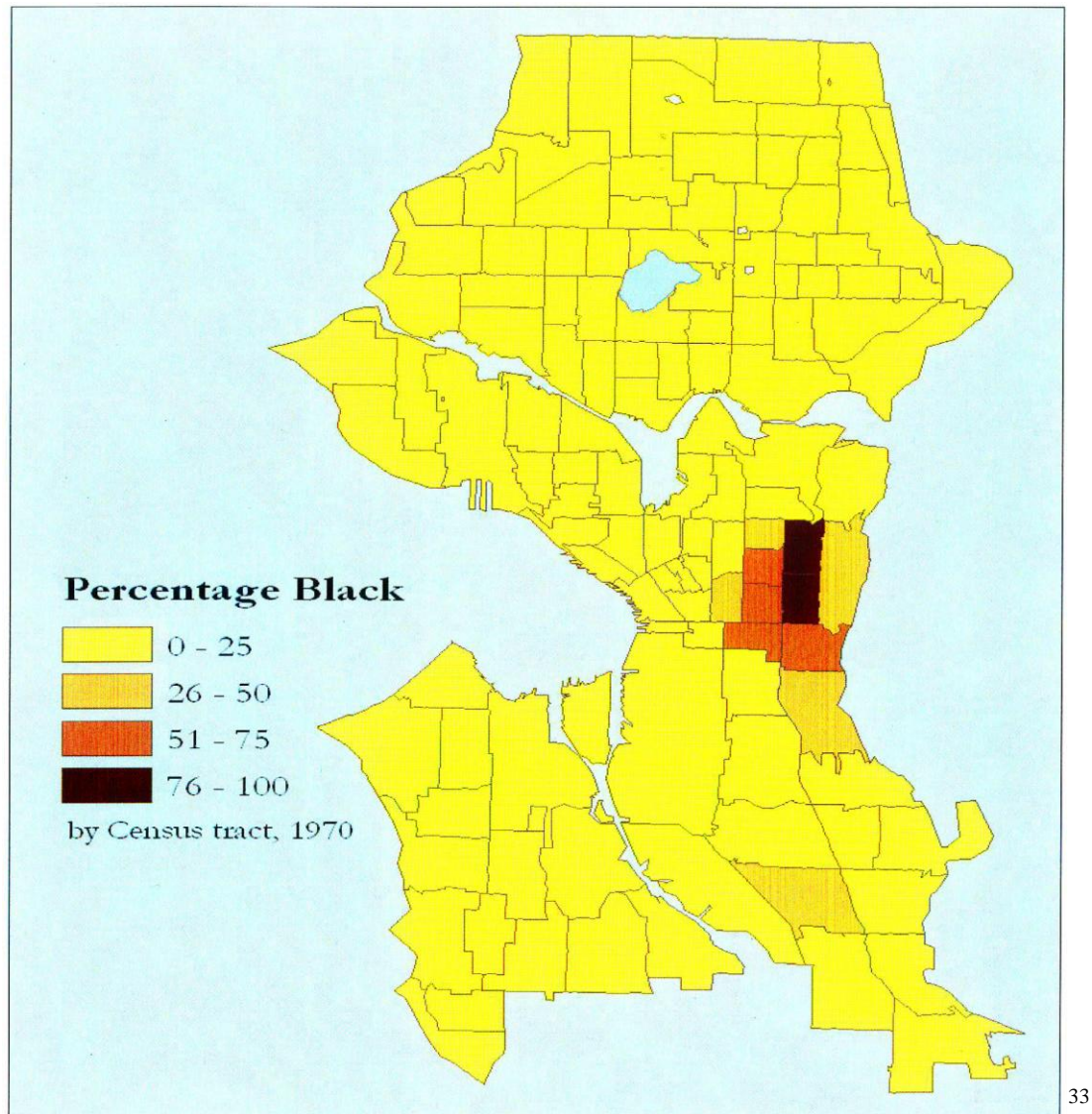
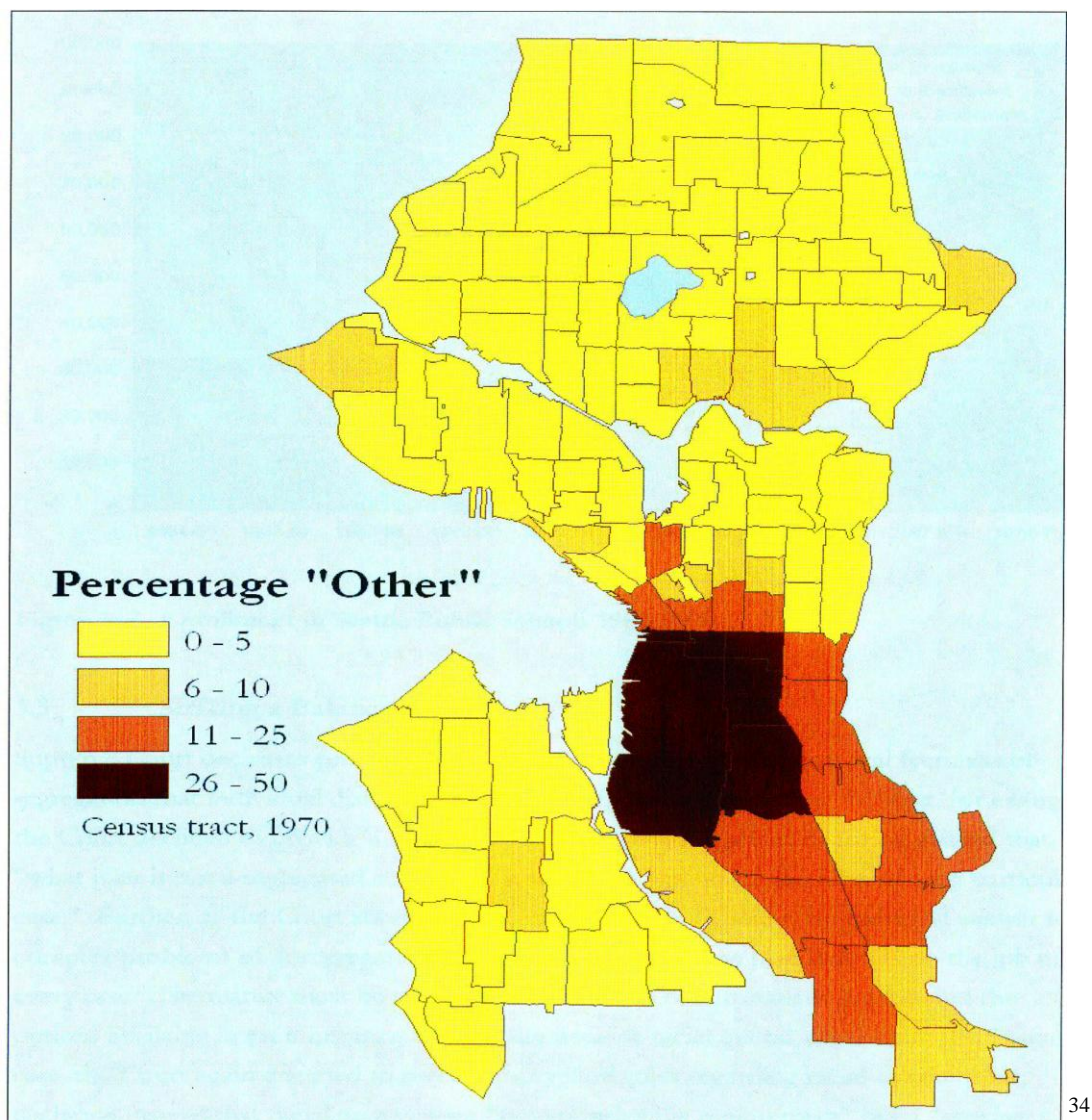


Figure 2, Catherine Veninga Census Analysis

<sup>33</sup>Veninga, *Road Scholars*, 83



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Figure 3, Catherine Veninga Census Analysis

<sup>34</sup>Veninga, *Road Scholars*, 84.

Figure 1 illuminates how neighborhoods north of the ship canal were predominately white, as were areas between downtown and the ship canal, such as Magnolia, Queen Anne, Capitol Hill, and Montlake, and all but one area in West Seattle (High Point, home to a low-income housing project). Figure 2 demonstrates that the city's African American population was concentrated in the Central Area, with a growing population who had recently moved south to the Rainier Valley. The Rainier Valley is southeast of downtown, between Beacon Hill and the wealthy neighborhoods on the west bank of Lake Washington such as Seward Park and Mt Baker. Figure 3 shows how by the 1960s Asians had largely left the Central Area for the Rainier Valley and Beacon Hill, which is south of downtown, on the western edge of the Rainier Valley. The Jewish population, not designated on these maps, by this point had moved primarily to the eastern suburbs of Mercer Island, Bellevue, and Redmond.<sup>35</sup> Middle class Asians followed suit in the 1970s, with Japanese and Chinese populations also moving to the suburbs on the eastern shores of Lake Washington in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>36</sup>

These divisions by race were not an historical accident. Seattle had a long history of segregation and discriminatory housing practices including restrictive racial covenants. Open housing in Seattle came two decades after the landmark 1948 Supreme Court Case, *Shelley v. Kraemer* in which the justices ruled that racial covenants were unenforceable in a court of law because they violated the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.<sup>37</sup> However, the Court did not outlaw the existence of racial covenants or the private enforcement of racial residential requirements. It was not until April 19, 1968, and the City Council's passage of Seattle's Open Housing Law that protections against discriminatory housing sales and rental practices were put

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<sup>35</sup> Molly Cone et al., *Family of Strangers: Building a Jewish Community in Washington State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 252.

<sup>36</sup> Arlene Oki, Interview by author, Bellevue, WA, 1 June 2012.

<sup>37</sup> *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 U.S. 1, (1948).

into law. The Council passed Seattle's Open Housing Law in order to ensure that the 1968 Federal Housing Act signed by President Johnson would immediately go into effect in Seattle.<sup>38</sup> If the Council had not passed the Open Housing Law, it would have been subject to a public referendum where its future would have been less secure.<sup>39</sup> Open housing was extremely controversial in Seattle. The Jewish Anti-Defamation League, the NAACP, and the Urban League were leaders of the movement that aimed to create a new, more open Seattle.<sup>40</sup> Virginia Westberg, the wife of the city's first Human Rights Commission Chair and open housing advocate Alfred J. Westberg, both Jewish, said that their "lives were threatened" because of their passionate support for non-discriminatory housing practices.<sup>41</sup> Despite the tensions in the city, Westberg argued that Seattle was in the national forefront regarding open-housing legislation and that their success in ensuring the policy's passage helped to encourage desegregation advocates to fight for two-way busing. However, the housing law could not transform the persistent social, cultural, and economic factors that reinforced residential segregation. After 1968, African Americans continued to reside primarily in the Central Area and the Rainier Valley and North Seattle remained largely white.<sup>42</sup> In contrast to the new vision of Seattle that open housing advocates such as the Westbergs fought for, the Seattle Police Department was openly racist, with officers violently wielding their power.

Not only did Seattle's people of color face legal obstacles, there were many informal patterns of discrimination, reinforced by racist police officers and residential segregation. Until the 1960s, north of the ship canal was a "sundown" zone, which meant that all blacks were

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<sup>38</sup> "Council Unites on Housing," *Seattle Times*, April 17, 1968, A1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 202.

<sup>41</sup> Virginia Westberg, Interview by author, June 2, 2012, Seattle, WA.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 9.

expected to be out of the area by nightfall.<sup>43</sup> If discovered after working hours, black men in particular, were often stopped by police, questioned, and sent out of the neighborhood.<sup>44</sup> Paralleling the future sites of significant anti-busing activism, the peninsula neighborhoods of West Seattle and Magnolia, and the prosperous Queen Anne neighborhood, adjacent to downtown were also sundown zones as were many suburbs throughout the Seattle metropolitan area.<sup>45</sup> After sundown zones were no longer enforced, the Seattle police persisted in their discriminatory practices, a problem that continues today.<sup>46</sup> Chief George Tielsch, originally from Garden Grove California, led the SPD from September 1970 to March 1974 when he resigned to be the chief of police in Santa Monica, California. Tielsch used racism to cement his power and to threaten those who sought to upset the status quo.<sup>47</sup> Warren Holtz, a realtor for Best Realty who was known for helping blacks and whites find homes in Seattle, recounted his September 1972 encounter with Chief Tielsch.

It was on a Saturday morning, early, about nine o'clock, and there were four of us sitting in the office here and the chief of police...pulled up in front of the office in his car and in the back seat he had an enormous German police dog. He came in and told us all, he said, "I want you to meet someone," so he went back out to the car, brought this beast in and introduced us to "George" and in all seriousness he said, "By the way, he just loves to bite niggers and hippies."<sup>48</sup>

Presumably, Holtz and his co-workers were the "hippies" who Tielsch was threatening. Tielsch's racism was not part of the public record, but it was well known among African Americans who

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<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of sundown laws that were formerly written into law in many cities around the nation see: James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: New Press, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> James Gregory, "Remember Seattle's Segregated History," *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, December 11, 2006, accessed on April 24, 2014, <http://www.seattlepi.com/local/opinion/article/Remember-Seattle-s-segregated-history-1222098.php>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> The Seattle PD continues to be under fire for their racist policies and practices. On March 31, 2011, the Justice Dept opened an investigation into Seattle's use of excessive force particularly against people of color. *United States Department of Justice*, Accessed on April 28, 2014, <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/seattlepd.php>.

<sup>47</sup> "New Chief from Ranks-Larkin," *Seattle Times*, February 27, 1974, A15. David Suffia, "Tielsch appointed Seattle Police Chief," *Seattle Times*, September 30, 1970, A1.

<sup>48</sup> Gerald B. Nelson, *Seattle: The Life and Times of an American City* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 165.

were victims of police brutality. On March 21, 1971, Leslie Allen, a 21 year old African American man was gunned down by police.<sup>49</sup> As the editors of *The Facts* described the event: “And—finally—we have a new tragedy of Seattle police finding it necessary to kill a black man who ran a traffic light...And later...later...they discovered the car he drove was stolen.”<sup>50</sup> African Americans rightly distrusted the SPD, which was led by the racist Chief Tielsch.<sup>51</sup> Residents of the largely African American Central Area were the most negatively affected by the SPD.

Seattle’s Central Area is a four square mile area located in the geographic center of the city and for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was home to the highest proportion of African Americans in the Puget Sound. The Central Area was formed by the merging of the working class and poor Yesler-Jackson neighborhood and the middle class East Madison neighborhood.<sup>52</sup> Before 1900, Seattle’s small African American population was spread throughout Seattle, but as the black population grew by almost 2000 between 1900 and 1910, whites began to enforce racial covenants.<sup>53</sup> African Americans were pushed into the Central Area as all other neighborhoods became closed to them. However, the area was not only home to African Americans, up until the 1950s and 60s the city’s small populations of Asians and Jews were also required to reside in this neighborhood.<sup>54</sup> In the 1960s and 70s, this neighborhood that was crafted out of entrenched, racist housing laws became a hotbed for both police brutality and on the other hand, homegrown activism, which aimed to create a new Seattle where blacks had equal political representation.

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<sup>49</sup>Kora Van, “Shooting Deaths of Black Youth in Central Area Questionable,” *The Medium*, March 31, 1971, A1.

<sup>50</sup> Fitzgerald Beaver, “Three Times Shot Down This Week,” *The Facts*, March 25, 1971, A1.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of additional police killings in Central Area: “Seattle Police Under Fire for Killing of Black Brothers,” *The Facts*, April 22, 1971, A1.

<sup>52</sup>Taylor, *The Forging of the Black Community*, 4. The Central Area was also known as the Central District. In the dissertation, I primarily use the Central Area terminology because that is what was used most commonly in the black presses in the 1970s. The 1970s recession and its effects on the Central Area are elaborated upon in Chapter 2.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, *The Forging of the Black Community*, 82.

<sup>54</sup> However, newly arrived Asians in the first half of the Century also resided in the International District, south of downtown.



From bombings to police shootings, Seattle's Central Area in the late 1960s and early 1970s was violent. The violence stemming from Central Area residents was evidence of Seattle's black backlash. From 1969 to 1970 there were over 60 bombings in the Central Area, though many did not detonate and few caused serious injury, generating great fear and suspicion in the neighborhood. The bombs hit seemingly random targets from supermarkets to a swimming pool to a fabric store.<sup>55</sup> The crimes were never officially solved, though members of the civil rights community believe that the Black Panthers were responsible for the bomb attacks.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Phyllis Lamphere, City Council President from 1967 to 1978 stated that the bombs were designed to "get rid of white representatives in black neighborhoods," indicative of black frustration over the slow pace of the rights revolution, which aimed to make government more representative of all Americans.<sup>57</sup> The patterns of attack resembled terrorist-like bombings in New York City that were eventually traced to the Black Power Movement.<sup>58</sup> Central Area residents were not just faced with physical danger in their own neighborhood, they were also victims of and sometimes participants in school-based violence on the other side of town.

North of the ship canal on October 18, 1971, there was a race riot at the predominantly white Lincoln High School, which enrolled 200 African American students from the Central Area.<sup>59</sup> Lincoln High in the Wallingford neighborhood had been selected to participate in a voluntary integration program. Willing African American students, who would typically have attended the Central Area's Garfield High School, were bused to Lincoln. The riot, which began in the school's cafeteria, involved over 100 students out of a total enrollment of 2000 who threw food, rocks, fists, and called each other names. Even the principal Richard West sustained a

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<sup>55</sup> "Central Area Residents want bomb probe," *The Facts*, April 30, 1970, A1.

<sup>56</sup> Carol Richman, Interview by author, 7 April 2012, Seattle, WA.

<sup>57</sup> Phyllis Lamphere, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, June 28, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> "Another Bomb Outrage," *Seattle Times*, January 14, 1970, A12.

<sup>59</sup> "Black-white confrontation at Lincoln High," *The Medium*, October 21, 1971, A1.

minor injury when he attempted to separate two belligerent students.<sup>60</sup> While none of the injuries were life-threatening, the riot sparked a strong reaction from the school's community as well as the Central Area.<sup>61</sup> Lincoln High School was relatively calm for the rest of the school year. However, as in cities around the country where high school race riots were becoming increasingly common, racial tensions simmered under the surface across both neighborhoods.<sup>62</sup> For Seattle African Americans, the violence from within and outside of the community created a sense of uncertainty. Thus it was not surprising that faced with the emergence of violence in the white schools that participated in voluntary integration, neighborhood residents would be divided over how best to address racial discrimination, particularly regarding the question of desegregated schools.<sup>63</sup> While the African American population in the early 1970s Central Area was subject to hostility in and outside of their neighborhood, the heavily Asian-American Beacon Hill neighborhood for the most part was physically non-violent. Many former residents of the Central Area and the International District, particularly Japanese, Philipinos, and Chinese who had relocated before the upheaval in the late 1960s and early 70s, moved to Beacon Hill.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the vibrant Beacon Hill neighborhood, which was bustling with Asian-owned businesses from car-repair shops to restaurants to small grocers, was in transition both economically and racially. Many affluent Japanese and Chinese were leaving the city for the eastern suburbs of Bellevue, Kirkland, and Renton as lower income residents were increasingly moving into the area.<sup>64</sup> The children who remained in the neighborhood primarily attended Cleveland High School, while a few enrolled in Franklin High, which was

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<sup>60</sup> "Blacks, Whites Fights at Lincoln High," *Seattle Times*, October 18, 1971, A1.

<sup>61</sup> Gus Angelos, "Causes of Unrest Listed," *Seattle Times*, October 20, 1971, A11. Gus or Constantine Angelos was the city's leading education reporter. While he was personally anti-busing, his reporting was praised by liberals and conservatives for its thorough and fair approach to the issues. Ann Siqueland, Interview by author.

<sup>62</sup> For example, also in October 1971, three high schools in Charlotte North Carolina broke out in riots over tensions about busing. See: Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 189.

<sup>63</sup> The debates in the black community over desegregation and busing are explored in full in chapter 2.

<sup>64</sup> Arlene Oki, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, June 1, 2012.



down the hill in the middle of the Rainier Valley. Cleveland High was home to the Cleveland Community Council, a powerful neighborhood group. As evidence of the rights revolution that was taking place in municipal politics throughout the country, in the spring of 1971, the Seattle School District established the citywide community council program to give parents a voice in the administration of their local schools, of which Cleveland was a part.<sup>65</sup> During their two years of officially endorsed existence, the councils galvanized neighborhood activism around the question of busing and other neighborhood concerns such as property values and community cohesion.<sup>66</sup>

The Cleveland School Council members used their public platform to suggest modifications to busing as well as to attempt to stem the tide of middle class flight from the neighborhood. The Council's activism was an example of Asian-led civil rights backlash that expressed itself through anxieties about class. Following white residential patterns, residents of the multi-ethnic Beacon Hill aimed to halt black migration into their schools and their neighborhood. In October 1971, the Cleveland Council appealed to the School Board to express their objection to the construction of several new low-cost housing units, which would primarily be home to poor African Americans.<sup>67</sup> Demonstrating their willingness to try all possible avenues in order to stop the project, they brought their concerns to the School Board, which did not normally address housing questions. In an October 1971 letter, the Council stated that construction of the new units would cause "further de-facto segregation" and that low income

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<sup>65</sup> *Seattle Times*, "Elections Set for School Advisory Councils", April 15, 1971. Throughout this dissertation I refer to these councils as either community councils, community school councils, or councils. At the time, these terms were used interchangeably.

<sup>66</sup> While the city-wide councils were officially established 1971, some of the neighborhood councils such as Franklin were established before 1971 at the behest of either the District or neighborhood activists. Though a formal system of council governance was not set into motion until the spring of 1971.

<sup>67</sup> Earl Mills, Letter to Mrs. Forrest Smith, October 15, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A2.37, Community Services, Box1, Cleveland Interim Council Folder.

housing units had disproportionately been located in South East Seattle.<sup>68</sup> The Cleveland Council felt that North Seattle had unfairly escaped most of the low-income housing. In addition to concerns about subsidized housing, the letter sought to standardize lot sizes and building requirements for single-family homes with the aim to retain “neighborhood integrity,” which was code for avoiding the further depreciation of property values on Beacon Hill.<sup>69</sup> Council members believed that stricter Seattle building codes would help maintain stable housing values on Beacon Hill, which in turn would keep middle class families in the neighborhood and in the local schools. Widening class divides and the racial politics of these changes were not just felt on Beacon Hill, the entire city was affected by these concerns. Especially hard hit was West Seattle, located west of Beacon Hill and on the other side of I-5. While only a few miles from Beacon Hill, the culture of the two neighborhoods diverged dramatically. Geography and race were the most important distinguishing factors between the two neighborhoods.

The almost all white, working class West Seattle, which was physically isolated because of its peninsula setting that bordered the Puget Sound and the Duwamish River, developed a strong and unique neighborhood identity that shaped its political activism. Residents accessed downtown by driving over the ailing, congested Spokane Street Bridge across the Duwamish. The eight-lane drawbridge, the neighborhood’s primary route to downtown, opened 3,449 times per year (an average of 9.5 openings per day). Not only were residents who regularly crossed the second largest traffic corridor in the state frustrated by the frequent bridge openings caused by heavy industrial ship traffic on the Duwamish River, they also had to contend with the active railroad crossings that were adjacent to the bridge.<sup>70</sup> In response, a majority of West Seattleites

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> “Legal Tangles Could Match Bridge Tie-Up, *Seattle Times*, June 12, 1978, A14

called for a high span freeway bridge to replace the drawbridge.<sup>71</sup> However, by 1978, residents felt that their requests were falling on deaf ears.

In the waning days of March 1978, after ten years of broken promises, prominent West Seattle leaders were infuriated by Mayor Charles Royer's latest plan to fix the bridge that was "not even a Chevrolet,... just a grease job and a new suspension."<sup>72</sup> Over coffee at the Junction Restaurant and later at a Lions Club meeting, neighborhood residents decided to take action and draft a proposal to secede from the city of Seattle. On March 29, 1978, Terry Finn of the *West Seattle Herald* dramatically posed the unthinkable: "Will the Duwamish become a moat? West Seattle floats petition to dump city."<sup>73</sup> In their secession petition, West Seattle advocates argued that seceding from Seattle and incorporating as a new city would give them access to Washington State resources for a new bridge for which they were currently ineligible.<sup>74</sup> West Seattle's peninsula location mirrored the geographical limitations of Boston's Southie neighborhood, which borders the Atlantic Ocean. Ronald Formisano argues that Southie was especially hostile to busing because of its physical isolation from the suburbs, which acted as "escape valves" for parents looking to avoid busing.<sup>75</sup> With the inconveniences and annoyances of waiting for bridges and trains whenever they tried to get to downtown and anywhere in North Seattle, it is not surprising that West Seattle residents felt both isolated and exasperated.

For years, municipal leaders failed to produce the funds and the political will to either build a new bridge or repair the existing structure, which made residents, who had witnessed significant road projects in North Seattle, give secession serious consideration.<sup>76</sup> On April 14,

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Terry Finn, "Bridge Hearing Draws Crowd," *West Seattle Herald*, April 12, 1978, A1.

<sup>73</sup> Terry Finn, "Will the Duwamish become a moat? West Seattle floats petition to dump city," *West Seattle Herald*, March 29, 1978, A1.

<sup>74</sup> "Dear City we want out... 'Secession Petition,'" A4.

<sup>75</sup> Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 7-8.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

1978, West Seattle leaders, sponsored by King County Councilman Bob Grieve and led by Richard Kennedy, the steering committee chairman of the secession effort, formerly presented their petition to the City Clerk's office. Kennedy stated that he knew "some people think we're trying to be cute." Yet, when asked if he believed the petition would "help West Seattle get a high level bridge, Kennedy responded: 'I do.'"<sup>77</sup> Kennedy, Grieve and the secession supporters were sincere about their campaign to place the question before the voters, though they faced an uphill battle to collect the required 26,000 signatures for inclusion on the November ballot.

On June 11, 1978, less than two months after the West Seattle secession movement formerly submitted their proposal, Kennedy's wish was granted in a most dramatic fashion when a *Kaiser Cement & Gypsum Corp.* freighter crashed into the bridge. The boat destroyed four of the eight lanes and left half of the bridge in its upright position. "One city official suggested – tongue in cheek – that the freighter had been commissioned by West Seattle secessionists."<sup>78</sup> With pressure mounting from the secessionists, the timing of the bridge collapse could not have been better. On the morning of the crash, Bob Royer, an assistant to the mayor, and port officials were scheduled to fly to Washington D.C. to plead for money for a new high span bridge.<sup>79</sup> The city's newfound commitment to build the bridge ended the secession movement because West Seattle residents achieved their primary aim. On August 4, 1978, President Carter signed a Transportation Department appropriations bill that allotted \$50 million to replace the Spokane Street Bridge.<sup>80</sup> Finally, 16 years after the bridge debates began, on July 14, 1984, all lanes of the new West Seattle Bridge opened.<sup>81</sup> West Seattle's bridge debacle and subsequent secession

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<sup>77</sup> Terry Finn, "Insurrection Officially Underway! Secession petition filed!," *West Seattle Herald*, April 19, 1978, A1.

<sup>78</sup> "Legal Tangles Could Match Bridge Tie-Up," *Seattle Times*, June 12, 1978, A14

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> "The evening news in Brief," *Seattle Times*, August 4, 1978, A2.

<sup>81</sup> "All lanes of West Seattle Bridge to be in use ahead of schedule," *Seattle Times*, May 9, 1984, A22.

threat was emblematic of how class and geographic isolation worked in tandem to make a unique political identity for neighborhood residents. Their distinctive political perspective would fuel both racism and anti-busing sentiment. West Seattle would become home to some of the most vehement opposition to busing in the city.

Former City Council President Phyllis Lamphere and West Seattle resident confirmed the neighborhood's isolated feel and racist residents.

It's almost like going to another town [when you drive into the neighborhood]... West Seattle, was lily white when we moved there. There wasn't a black to be seen. I remember when a Japanese woman bought a house on Admiral Way. They tried to force her out of the neighborhood.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, Lamphere described how residents of the neighborhood were far removed from the Central Area racial violence. "I can remember watching all of the drama on TV and in West Seattle, we saw nothing."<sup>83</sup> Elected in 1967, as part of the CHECC (Choose an Effective City Council) revolution whose founders aimed to change the composition of the Seattle city government to include more women, minorities, and youth, Lamphere and Sam Smith, the first African-American councilperson in Seattle, were pioneers. Officially, Seattle council representatives were non-partisan, though Lamphere and Smith clearly leaned Democratic.

With Lamphere's influential role in city politics, it might seem surprising that West Seattle residents would choose this moment to attempt to secede from the city. However, Lamphere was a "transplant" to West Seattle from North Seattle and according to her daughter, the elder Lamphere perceived their move to the neighborhood as "slumming it."<sup>84</sup> West Seattle was seen as separate from the rest of Seattle and as Lamphere's "slumming it" assessment reinforced, many believed that the neighborhood was undesirable. A comic in the *Seattle Times*

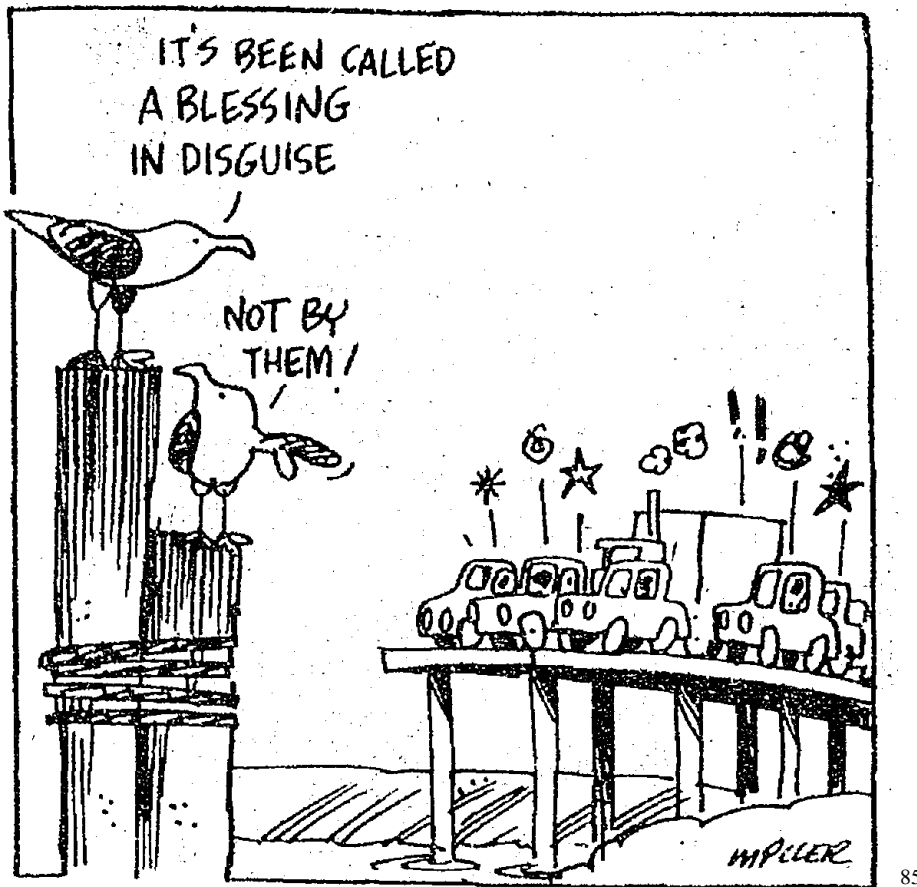
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<sup>82</sup> Phyllis Lamphere, Interview by author.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Barbara Lamphere, Interview by author, June 18, 2012, Seattle, WA.

after the bridge collapse further illuminates the divide between West Seattle and the rest of the city.



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As this comic mockingly suggested, it was not just West Seattle residents who wanted to sever ties with Seattle. The feelings were mutual, the city wished to be rid of the angry, working class neighborhood. This bridge conflict served to further the divide between old Seattle adherents such as working class whites who felt that their needs had been ignored and new Seattle champions such as Mayor Charles Royer who had seemingly downplayed their concerns. The bridge debacle also reinforced anti-busing sentiment among West Seattle residents who felt that the unpopular policy of mandatory desegregation, like the botched bridge affair, was further evidence of a city establishment that was not responsive to the will of the people. Despite her

<sup>85</sup> Comic, *Seattle Times*, June 14, 1978, A15.

local address and her leadership role, Phyllis Lamphere was an outsider to West Seattle and her views did not reflect those of many of her neighbors.

A supporter of new Seattle, Lamphere had success at the ballot box, which was reflective of the city's electoral policies and the growing divide within the Democratic Party. Seattle residents elected and continue to elect all city council members at-large, thus West Seattle constituents did not technically elect Lamphere to represent them.<sup>86</sup> Rather, all Seattle residents had a hand in her victory. Many of her working class neighbors, who were largely Boeing machinists or shipyard workers, whose families had lived in the neighborhood for generations did not readily identify with the middle class Lamphere, despite their shared zip code. Lamphere personified the growing, new liberal Seattle, while the West Seattle stalwarts were part of the old, working class order that was subject to layoffs and a Democratic Party that no longer mirrored their values. However, Lamphere stressed that in 1970s West Seattle working class residents were mostly Democratic. Lamphere called it a "division between the old style Democrats and [the] progressive Democrats."<sup>87</sup> From city government to schools, West Seattle's intra-Party tensions often expressed themselves in battles over race and busing that could be seen across the country from Richmond, California to Boston to Charlotte, North Carolina.<sup>88</sup> In 1977, West Seattle would become the center of the anti-busing movement. It was home to the Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee (CiVIC), the most influential and well-funded anti-busing group in the late 1970s. Yet, West Seattle was not the city's only peninsula neighborhood with a

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<sup>86</sup> Debates over the structure of the city council in Seattle continue today. In 2012, after three failed attempts in 1975, 1995, and 2003 to move to a representation by district model, there was a push to move to a representational structure of the Council. Bob Young, "Push is on for Seattle City Council Election by District," accessed on-line at [seattletimes.com](http://seattletimes.com), accessed on October 11, 2012. In a city with strong neighborhood identity, it is somewhat surprising that Seattle continues to cling to its citywide representational model.

<sup>87</sup> Phyllis Lamphere, Interview by author.

<sup>88</sup> Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*, 48-49; Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 7-8; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 175.

political pulse whose residents aimed to stop busing, geography also played an important role in other areas of the city.

North of West Seattle and across Elliot Bay, adjacent to downtown lies the picturesque Magnolia neighborhood. In the 1970s, the area was economically diverse. The north end of Magnolia, which many residents called the “Bluff” was a mixed residential neighborhood that was home to a small military base, many apartment buildings, and largely middle income single family homes. The south end of the neighborhood was largely upper income with many large homes on view lots. Like West Seattle, the primary access to the neighborhood was over a bridge, when coming from downtown. Joan Bureson, a third generation Magnolia resident described the neighborhood as a “small town” with one grocery store, a restaurant, bank, and a shoe store.<sup>89</sup> Bureson explained that there were “only one or two roads off of the bluff,” which contributed to Magnolia’s isolated feel.<sup>90</sup> However, as Erin Gosma, another long-time resident of Magnolia expressed, the neighborhood was not as insular as West Seattle.<sup>91</sup> Class played an important role in the perceptions of these two neighborhoods. Many of the more affluent residents of Magnolia worked in downtown businesses, while the working class West Seattleites who toiled in factories and shipyards did not have the same access to the city’s elites. Despite their economic differences, the neighborhoods were representative of old Seattle because they fought against change, unless it would directly benefit them such as the West Seattle Bridge. As we shall see in more detail in chapters 3 and 5, both areas were hotbeds of anti-busing activism, throughout the 1970s, indicating residents’ yearning for a pre-civil rights era Seattle. Seattle’s anti-busing activity from West Seattle to Magnolia occurred within the wider national debates about race and education and busing for desegregation, which came to the forefront in the 1950s.

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<sup>89</sup> Joan Bureson, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, 14 June 2012

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Erin Gosma, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, 12 June 2012.



## DISCOURSE AND THE LEGAL PATH TO BUSING

Busing for desegregation would never have occurred anywhere in the United States if it had not been for the rulings of the Earl Warren Supreme Court, from 1953 to 1969. The legal path to busing students in American cities began with *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>92</sup> In this landmark 1954 case, justices deemed “separate but equal” unconstitutional. However, it took almost two decades for desegregation by busing to become the legally mandated remedy for segregation. In the South, the major legal impetus for busing for desegregation came from the 1971 Supreme Court ruling in Charlotte, North Carolina, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Ed.*, which ruled that in order to implement the intent of *Brown v. Board of Education* and to eliminate “racially separate public schools” the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District was obligated to pursue concrete action. Busing was a legally acceptable method in which to remedy segregated schools.<sup>93</sup> Up until the 1973 *Keyes v. School District No. 1, Colorado* ruling Northern states had largely been exempt from legal mandates to desegregate their schools.<sup>94</sup> In *Keyes*, justices ruled that the distinction between de jure segregation, by law, and de facto segregation, by neighborhood, was immaterial. It was this ruling and the threat of a lawsuit that followed it, which would press leaders to develop Seattle’s 1978 city-wide desegregation plan.

Inherent in these legal battles over busing and segregation was a contested vocabulary. The terms, which I use throughout the dissertation, still evoke passion today. Ann Siqueland, an advocate for desegregation in the 1970s, took great offense to my verbal slippage, when I equated integration with desegregation.<sup>95</sup> Integration is the act of bringing different racial groups

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<sup>92</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483(1954).

<sup>93</sup> *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Ed.*, 402 US 1 (1971).

<sup>94</sup> *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, 413 U.S. 109 (1973).

<sup>95</sup> Ann Siqueland, Interview by author.

together into free association, while desegregation abolishes racially segregated schools.<sup>96</sup> For example, a white school could technically be “integrated” by including only a few African American students. While, a heavily African American school would only be “desegregated” if the student body did not exceed the maximum percentage of students of color allowed for a desegregated school. However, the definition of segregated and consequently, desegregated, were contested. Municipalities and civil rights advocates fought over what percentage of minority students constituted a segregated school. This distinction between integration and desegregation was so crucial to Siqueland because in *Brown* the court stressed the detrimental effects of segregation upon students of color. It was only through desegregation that segregation could be eliminated. Integration was not enough to solve racial inequality in schools. Terminology specific to busing was also complicated. Voluntary busing meant that students and their parents had the choice to participate in a busing program, while mandatory busing programs required all students to participate regardless of their will. Mandatory busing was almost always court ordered. However, both of Seattle’s busing plans in the early and late 1970s were mandatory (or had a mandatory component) yet they were not court ordered.

These words were in common parlance in the early 1970s when the legal climate surrounding desegregation in the North and the West shifted dramatically. The following is a chart of some of the most salient national and local desegregation cases and activism up to 1977.<sup>97</sup> As listed below and discussed in more detail in chapter 3, in 1971, Citizens Against Mandatory Busing (CAMB), Seattle’s early 1970s anti-busing group, successfully won an injunction against the School Board’s first mandatory busing plan. However, the ruling was overturned by the Washington State Supreme Court the following year.

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<sup>96</sup> David B Guralnik, *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 732.

<sup>97</sup> Important cases after 1977 are discussed in chapter 5 and in the conclusion.

## Chronology of Desegregation Cases, North, South and West<sup>98</sup>

Year	Case	Description
1954	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>	Overturms Plessy vs. Fergusson (“separate but equal”) as a violation of the 14th amendment's equal protection clause; Reasserts common school ideal ("education for all on equal terms")
1955	<i>Brown v. Board of Education II</i>	Addresses the issue of appropriate remedies for school segregation, returning such matters largely to local jurisdiction
1957		Little Rock Nine integrated Little Rock Central High under armed guard
1963		Black activists make first major push for desegregation in northern cities, including Seattle, Milwaukee, Boston; Seattle adopts “Voluntary Transfer Program” in response
1964		Civil Rights Act
1964		Black activists lead Milwaukee school boycott demanding desegregation and open Freedom Schools
1966		Black activists lead Seattle school boycott demanding desegregation and open Freedom Schools
1971	<i>Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg</i>	Supreme court upholds district court ruling; enforces metropolitan urban-suburban busing plan
1971	<i>Bradley v. Milliken</i>	Federal district court rules Detroit segregated <i>de jure</i>
1971	<i>Citizens Against Mandatory Busing v. Edward Palmason</i>	In Seattle’s King County Superior Court, Judge Wilkins orders a one year injunction against District’s middle school desegregation plan.
1972	<i>Citizens Against Mandatory Busing v. Edward Palmason</i>	State High Court unanimously reverses Wilkins ruling and lifts injunction in favor of School District. Opens the way for middle school busing plan to proceed in the 1972/1973 school year.
1972		Middle school desegregation implemented in Seattle
1973	<i>Keyes v. School District No. 1, Colorado</i>	First time Supreme Court orders desegregation in northern city
1974	<i>Milliken v. Bradley</i>	Supreme Court reverses Detroit metropolitan deseg. plan
1977		Busing-based desegregation plans adopted in Seattle and Milwaukee (plans do not include suburban districts)

<sup>98</sup> Chart Courtesy of Nancy Beadie, University of Washington. References: *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483(1954); *Brown v. Board of Education II*, 349 U.S. 294 (1955); Civil Rights Act, Public Law 88-352 (78 Stat. 241), 1964; *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Ed.*, 402 US 1 (1971); *Citizens Against Mandatory Bussing et al. v. Edward Palmason et al*, King County Superior Court No. 731666 (1971); *Bradley v. Milliken*, 338 F Supp. 582- District Court (1971); *Citizens Against Mandatory Bussing et al. v. Edward Palmason et al*, 495 P.2d 657, (Wash.,1972); *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, 413 U.S. 109 (1973); *Milliken v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717 (1974).

In Seattle and throughout the nation, the importance of these cases cannot be overstated. Despite the deep commitment of Seattle's long time civil rights' activists, which are the subject of the final section of this chapter, and the liberal rhetoric of the pragmatic liberals, the desegregation of Seattle's schools would never have occurred without the threat of legal action that was backed by a significant, national precedent. These legal mandates ultimately pushed many Seattle leaders, particularly pragmatic liberals, to become desegregation supporters. On the other hand, long-time Seattle civil rights liberals who had fiercely advocated for racial justice since the 1950s were personally committed to ensuring that legal changes at the national level were reflected in Seattle's local climate. Seattle's civil rights liberals were passionate about desegregation and change to the racial order because they firmly believed that their cause was just and right.

#### SEATTLE CIVIL RIGHTS LIBERALS

The loud cries of the civil rights movement were increasingly validated by the highest court of the land, while white Seattle stubbornly maintained its "wall of vast indifference" towards the city's small and isolated African American community.<sup>99</sup> White and black liberal civil rights activists in the 1960s worked tirelessly to break down that indifference and to make Seattle into a new city where people of all races could prosper. Housing and employment discrimination were the primary focus of the movement in this period.<sup>100</sup> School desegregation came second because advocates believed, incorrectly, that with open housing, schools would become integrated. Many of the 1960s liberal activists became enthusiastic backers of two-way school desegregation in the 1970s. The following section provides a history of Seattle's civil rights movements that both paralleled and preceded the fight for desegregated schools. However,

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<sup>99</sup> Nelson, *Seattle*, 246-47.

<sup>100</sup> Joan Singler et al., *Seattle in Black and White: The Congress of Racial Equality and the Fight for Equal Opportunity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011, 6-7.

while many of Seattle's 1970s desegregation supporters came from the ranks of the 1960s civil rights activists, they did not encompass the entirety of the pro-busing movement in the late 1970s. By 1977, Seattle liberal pragmatists such as School Board President Patt Sutton and Chamber of Commerce President Wallace Bunn, who had not been civil rights crusaders (and are subjects of later chapters), were crucial to the Seattle Plan success. The Seattle Plan was the 1977 proposal, implemented in 1978, to desegregate all Seattle schools, busing white and black children equally. While desegregation would not have been possible without the pragmatic liberals, Seattle's dedicated civil rights crusaders inspired and pushed the policy forward.

The Seattle chapter of Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) was one of the most organized and effective civil rights groups in the city. The group was founded in 1961 by members of the Unitarians for Social Justice and its first chairman was African American Ray Williams.<sup>101</sup> CORE was largely driven by white women such as Joan Singler one of the founding members of the group and Jean Durning, and African American women such as Bettylou Valentine, a national Board member of the NAACP. CORE began their activism with a focus on workplace discrimination with an emphasis on boycotts and picket lines. One of their most famous actions was the 1961 "Don't Shop Where You Can't Work!" campaign where activists handed out thousands of leaflets to Central Area residents with the intention to boycott Safeway grocery stores, which were notoriously racist in their hiring practices.<sup>102</sup> Their initial Safeway protest led CORE to negotiate with businesses around Seattle and these meetings led to real change in corporate hiring practices.

In 1963, CORE moved to address the problem of Seattle's segregated schools. They successfully fought for the implementation of the Seattle Schools' Voluntary Racial Transfer

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

(VRT) program, established in 1963 and most significantly, they helped organize a two day boycott of Seattle schools on March 31 and April 1, 1966.<sup>103</sup> The boycott and the freedom schools, which were part of a national movement that began in 1964 in Mississippi were designed to be teach-in-ins about civil rights and aimed to protest segregated schools. The schools, which were also sponsored by Central Area Civil Rights Committee (CACRC) and the NAACP, were hosted at local churches and the YMCA.<sup>104</sup> However, it was difficult to assess the effectiveness of the boycott because it was not until 1972 when the middle school desegregation plan was enacted, that the District took any concrete action to eliminate segregation.<sup>105</sup>

Regardless of the boycott's effect on the city, CORE made a lasting impression on Seattle with its broad-based civil rights activism from employment to schools to housing. However, in 2012 CORE member Jean Durning contemplated the difficulties of eliminating racial divides. Durning reflected on the fact that despite all of her public activism, her children continued to primarily choose white playmates.<sup>106</sup> Her personal experience with the difficulties of overcoming racial divides was reflected in CORE's 1967 membership shake-up. In 1967, in the drive for black empowerment, CORE voted to expell its white membership, which Durning and her fellow white members of CORE took with grace. After which, the energy of the group faded and CORE disbanded in 1968. The Central Area Civil Rights Committee (CACRC), who worked with CORE in the boycott and on many of its projects was another important local organization.

CACRC, which was founded in 1963 and continued its activism throughout the 1970s, was one of Washington State's most influential "umbrella organizations" of community

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 145 & Doris Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools Seattle, Washington, 1954-1968*, (University of Washington, Dissertation, 1979), 78.

<sup>104</sup> Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools*, 252.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>106</sup> Jean Durning, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, 28 June 2012.

organizations and black churches. Members also included participants in CORE, the NAACP, and the Urban League. African American, Reverend Mance Jackson was CACRC's first chair.<sup>107</sup> While they were most influential from 1963 to 1968, they played an active role in pushing for two-way desegregation from the late 1960s to 1978. Their consistent support for two-way desegregation sometimes brought them into conflict with the Central Area Schools Council, the subject of chapter 2, whose members advocated for community control and questioned the merits of desegregating predominately black schools. CACRC's influence became more diffuse in the mid to late 1960s because much of its leadership transitioned into professional positions in local branches of the federal War on Poverty. This change also shifted the tenor of protest in the Central Area because more effort became centered on administering social welfare programs instead of pushing for the eradication of segregation.<sup>108</sup> The Model Cities program gave Seattle's civil rights leaders a chance to affect change on their own terms.

In light of violent city riots across the country and the spectacular failures of urban renewal, President Johnson attempted to reinvigorate and expand upon the War on Poverty by implementing the Model Cities program. Model Cities was operational from 1967 until 1974 when President Nixon cancelled it. The goals of the program were to better coordinate federal, state, and local resources to fight poverty, develop innovative local solutions to problems, and to include local residents in the planning process.<sup>109</sup> In the application for the Model Cities grant, the City of Seattle claimed that "[w]e are several years behind Watts, Oakland, Hough and Harlem in the development of crisis; but we are catching up rapidly."<sup>110</sup> This strategic parallel between Seattle and Watts aimed to create a sense of urgency around the city's growing racial

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<sup>107</sup> Singler et al., *Seattle in Black and White*, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics," 62.

<sup>109</sup> Jeffrey Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 66.

<sup>110</sup> Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics," 66-67.

crisis. However, unlike the other cities in question, Seattle's African American population was much smaller. Consequently, a riot in the Central Area would have had a relatively small effect on the rest of Seattle, most of which was geographically and economically removed from the Central Area. It was not only the city's application that secured the Model Cities funding, the role of the powerful, long-term Washington State Senators Henry "Scoop" Jackson and Warren Magnuson were also central in securing the grants.

Regardless of the nepotism inherent in the grant-giving process, Seattle civil rights leaders took full and effective advantage of the Model Cities funding. The program galvanized neighborhoods, particularly the Central Area. Model Cities gave residents the power to define "locally relevant and successful projects at a time when the U.S. Government's reputation [among blacks and conservatives] was in question."<sup>111</sup> One of the Central Area's first anti-poverty programs, the Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP) was the primary administrator of Model Cities funding. CAMP, founded in 1964, with a grant from the Urban League was led by Walt Hundley, formerly of the non-profit Metropolitan Youth Development.<sup>112</sup> CAMP organized a wide array of programs from youth study centers to environmental cleanup programs such as the "Fall Drive on Rats" to housing redevelopment to job training that aimed to get children of color into union apprenticeship programs.<sup>113</sup> Model Cities also funded the Central Area Schools Council, which would be a crucial player in black opposition to busing.

One of the founding members of CAMP and their grant writer, Carol Richman, was also active in school integration campaigns, yet she was opposed to *mandatory* busing. In 1960, Richman and her husband, a University of Washington professor, and their two children moved

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<sup>111</sup>Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*, 67.

<sup>112</sup>Richman, Interview by author.

<sup>113</sup>Richman, Interview by author; Jeffrey Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*, 72; Trevor Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics," 67. For an extensive discussion of Model Cities in Seattle see Sanders, 65-98.



to the heavily African section of the Madrona neighborhood.<sup>114</sup> Their children attended Madrona Elementary, which was 87% African American at the time, while the PTA participation was about 90% white.<sup>115</sup> As an advocate for civil rights, her choice of residence and schooling demonstrated her deep commitment to the cause. Yet, as one of the few white residents in the heavily black Madrona she felt that she was already doing her part for integration and desegregation, and therefore objected to busing her children. Richman was, however, supportive of voluntary desegregation because she believed that it was less disruptive and gave families who chose not to live in an integrated neighborhood the opportunity to expose their children to a more diverse population. Nevertheless, her objections to busing were not only personal, she believed in neighborhood schools. Richman argued that mandatory desegregation broke up neighborhood cohesiveness and community and drove down participation in the PTA.<sup>116</sup>

Richman was one of the rare liberals who had been active in the Seattle civil rights scene since the 1960s who opposed the 1978 Seattle Plan, yet she was passionate about the Plan's main goal to improve academic outcomes for African Americans. Richman's emphasis on the importance of neighborhood allegiances demonstrates how not all opponents of busing were racists. Liberals such as Richman firmly believed that community cohesiveness was an important value that schools should not only preserve, but foster. As we shall see in the following chapter, her commitment to the neighborhood school concept resonated with many of the African Americans she worked with at CAMP and the Central Area Schools Coalition. In her retirement, Richman joined forces with Coalition for Quality Integrated Education (CQIE), a group that in the 1970s passionately pushed for mandatory busing.

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<sup>114</sup>Richman, Interview by author.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

From downtown businessmen who advocated for public transportation to passionate mothers fighting for racial justice in the Central Area, Seattle in the 1960s was in a period of great flux and turmoil. Seattle's turbulent 1960s brought racial, economic, and environmental changes that mirrored national upheavals from Boston to Milwaukee to Richmond, CA. In the 1970s, the new Seattle adherents as well as liberal city leaders throughout the country, realized that 1960s political activism had permanently altered national and local landscapes and that these transformations had to be politically and discursively addressed. As to be expected in this racially divided city, change did not come easy for Seattle. Residents used their neighborhood megaphones such as the School District sanctioned community councils to fiercely protest any alterations to the racial and economic status quo. Imbedded in their neighborhood allegiances and neighborhood talk was coded racial language that sought to cover their racial prejudice. Thus, anti-busers could justify their stance by using race neutral language that stressed the affect of busing on the integrity of their communities. From neighborhoods to economics, pragmatic liberal leaders in this period would attempt to bridge this wide gap between old and new Seattle.

However, it was not only working class whites who fought these transitions that were so vividly embodied in the battles over desegregation, a significant portion of Seattle's African American population rejected mandatory busing. Civil rights backlash reverberated throughout the city from the Central Area to Beacon Hill to West Seattle. Chapter 2 charts the complicated relationship between African Americans and mandatory busing. It describes how Seattle's African Americans, many of whom felt disillusioned by the slow pace of change for which the civil rights movement fought, increasingly questioned the value of integration and worried about the transformations that busing would bring to their community and their schools. Furthermore,

the chapter discusses both Asian backlash against and support for busing, showing the parallels and differences between black, Asian, and white activism.

## Chapter 2: “This strangle hold over our future:” Black Resistance to Busing in Seattle

I don’t want my two children going way out to those white schools...<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. John Hannah, Central Area Mother, 1970

The issue of Mandatory Bussing is an emotional one for some people. Objections are not limited to only the White community or to any one area. Many people believe that ‘anti-bussing’ is simply a code for anti-Black. However, it is impossible to achieve desegregation without some bussing. Mandatory Middle School Desegregation caused much dissension in the Central Area. Most dissension centered around the quality of desegregation and percentages, not bussing...<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Richard Hunter, Central Region Administrator, 1973

In the fall of 1970, Mrs. Hannah’s fear of sending her children “way out to those white schools” was in sharp contrast to Richard Hunter’s meditated response that sought to minimize the public outcry over the middle school desegregation plan. In 1973, Hunter, an African American school district official who participated in the implementation of the 1972 mandatory plan, recognized that there had been “dissension” in his community over desegregation and refuted the notion that anti-busing necessarily implied anti-black. However, he did not explain the extent to which the Central Area had been torn apart by the debates over the 1972 middle school desegregation plan.<sup>3</sup> For some in the African American community, particularly committed integrationists, it was a philosophical shift to acknowledge that many black Seattle

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<sup>1</sup> Kora Vann, “Central Area Parents say No to Busing,” *The Medium*, October 15, 1970, 4. This chapter relies heavily on Seattle’s black presses. *The Medium* and *The Facts* were two of Seattle’s most popular African American newspapers and more politically in the center than the Black Panthers’ *Afro-American Journal*, which was more radical in its messaging. *The Medium* provided more details of the desegregation and integration debates than *The Facts*.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Richard Hunter, “Opinion: School Board Recall, Levy Share Ballot,” *The Medium*, January 11, 1973, 7.

<sup>3</sup> For a similar discussion of the internal debates within the black community, see: Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 6. He describes the busing debates in Milwaukee’s 1960’s black community and demonstrates how blacks became increasingly disillusioned with integration as a solution to racial disparity in schools. However, he argues that the shift was more complicated than the standard narrative of the transition from integrationists to separatists. See also: Brett Gadsden, *Between North and South* for discussions of black debates over how best to address Jim Crow racism in Delaware.

residents in the early 1970s such as Hannah objected to busing because they were anxious about sending their children to unknown or possibly unsafe neighborhoods where they might be faced with racial discrimination.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Hunter downplayed these rifts within the Central Area by arguing that black parents were not troubled as much by busing as they were by the specific details of the plan such as the racial distribution of the bused children. In the first half of the decade, contrary to Hunter's assertion that African American parents were largely supportive of busing, many blacks had more than just procedural concerns with the middle school desegregation program, including fears about the safety of busing, the quality of integrated education, and objections to School District management.

In order to understand the early 1970s conflicts within Seattle's black population over integration and desegregation, this chapter examines the citizen-run Central Area Schools Council (CASC) and the controversial 1972 middle school busing plan that would bus African American children north of the ship canal and North Seattle children to the Central Area. CASC was a largely African American, working and middle class group whose members consisted primarily of parents whose children attended public schools in the Central Area. Resonating with the findings of recent scholarship, such as Jack Dougherty's *More than One Struggle* and Brett Gadsden's *Between North and South*, CASC's advocacy, which took a middle path between integration and black power, calls into question the civil rights abandonment narrative.<sup>5</sup> This older narrative argues that African Americans, who were disillusioned by the slow pace of

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<sup>4</sup>While it is impossible to pinpoint an exact number of African Americans who rejected mandatory busing in the early 1970s, Carol Richman suggests that the numbers were substantial, in the 30% to 40% range. Richman, Interview by author.

<sup>5</sup>For works that reinforce the abandonment narrative see: Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies*, 58 and Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: New York, 1805-1973* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 251-398. For newer works, which question this narrative, finding diversity in black responses to civil rights see: Stephen Tuck, "We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left Off: The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43 (2008), 637-541; Dougherty, *More and One Struggle*; Gadsden, *Between North and South*.

change and white liberal racism, abandoned the civil rights movement after the death of Martin Luther King Junior. I argue that in no way did CASC abandon civil rights, instead – in their hybridized backlash that sought to shape busing to better fit the needs of African American children – they attempted to find a new road towards black equality that at times powerfully resonated with white and Asian pro-neighborhood rhetoric.

CASC was a divisive organization whose ideas and membership diverged and converged with the city's more radical black power movement. Black Panthers and other black power advocates in Seattle and throughout the U.S. largely rejected busing because they believed that African American children would experience crippling racism in predominantly white schools and they argued that black children would receive a more culturally appropriate education in Central Area Schools. CASC, on the other hand, attempted to walk a fine line where they accepted some of the tenets of the black power movement such as community control, but at the same time did not completely reject the District endorsed desegregation plans.

To uncover the history of CASC and the tensions within the African American community over busing, for which the civil rights movement had advocated, the narrative begins in the mid-1960s, a few years before CASC's founding. Following the historical context, the chapter is divided into four major parts: first, the growth of CASC in 1971, second, the 1972 decline of CASC, third, Asian and white responses to CASC, and fourth, black and white parallels in parental responses to busing. In addition, the chapter addresses School District mishandling of several personnel and policy decisions, which exacerbated these fractures within the black community and further contributed to rising disillusionment with integration and desegregation. Weak leadership led many black, white, and Asian parents in this period to lose confidence in the Seattle School District administration.

By placing black, white, and Asian parents alongside one-another, my work seeks to break down historiographical norms, which have until recently looked at resistance to busing along racial lines, not across these divisions.<sup>6</sup> Black, white, and Asian parental objections to busing often mirrored one-another with their anti-bureaucratic, pro-family rhetoric that often employed the language of choice to justify their position. Parental concerns about safety (or perceived safety) and the racial prejudices imbedded in many of these fears also crossed racial lines. For example, Japanese-American mothers worried that in desegregated schools their daughters might date or worse, be raped by African American boys.<sup>7</sup> Reflecting critical assessments that were more prosaic, all parents understood that the logistics of parenting school-aged children would be made more complicated because of busing. The tensions over desegregation demonstrate how changes to the neighborhood school model affected more than racial relations and educational opportunities. It also influenced family life and community cohesiveness. From family to fears about the quality of education, the impetus behind these passionate multi-faceted and cross-racial objections to busing was a limited middle school busing plan that only affected a tiny fraction of the 75,414 students enrolled in the Seattle Public Schools in 1972.<sup>8</sup>

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The middle school plan, which was the source of so much controversy throughout Seattle's white, black, and Asian communities was approved on January 27, 1971. It aimed to bus approximately 1,000 black and white middle school students between two Central area

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<sup>6</sup>Jim Carl's, *Freedom of Choice* examines anti-busing across the racial spectrum. For works that focus primarily on the activism of a single racial group that also address anti-busing, see: Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*; Formisano, *Boston against Busing*; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*; Dallek, *The Right Movement*; Nicholaides, *My Blue Heaven*; Kruse, *White Flight*; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; and Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin Alive*.

<sup>7</sup> Arlene Oki, Interview by author.

<sup>8</sup> Hanawalt et. al, *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public schools*, 68.

schools and three North Seattle schools in the Roosevelt and Wallingford neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup> The plan was technically “voluntary” with a mandatory back-up. Initially, students would be asked to volunteer for the program, after which, randomly assigned students were required to fill the remaining quota. In the first year, there were 701 voluntary transfers and 272 mandatory transfers (including 185 whites and 87 blacks). Thus out of a total of 16,304 middle school students in the District only 272 or less than 2% of the students were mandatorily bused.<sup>10</sup> While the middle school plan was eventually enacted after two years of delays, the District failed in its attempt to use the limited busing program as a springboard to desegregate all Seattle Schools. In order to understand the context in which the middle school plan was enacted and the lead-up to the District’s decision to develop the policy it is helpful to shift the narrative back to the early 1960s when administrators first began addressing racial disparity in the city’s schools.

In line with school districts in the North and the South, the Seattle School District’s leadership emphasized voluntary integration and community involvement in their 1960s desegregation efforts. After *Brown* in 1954, but before *Keyes v. School District no. 1* in 1973, the first time the Supreme Court required desegregation in a Northern state that set a legal precedent for mandatory plans, many northern school districts developed voluntary, instead of extremely unpopular mandatory busing plans.<sup>11</sup> Between 1954 and 1973, school administrators commonly wrote plans in which black children would be bused, while white children were allowed to continue to enroll in their local schools. In 1963, to appease the growing cries from civil rights groups such as CORE and the Central Area Civil Rights Committee (CACRC), who bemoaned the poor state of segregated Central Area schools, the Board appointed the multi-racial Citizens

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<sup>9</sup> School Board Meeting Notes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, January 27, 1971, 207c.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483(1954) and *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, 413 U.S.109 (1973).



Advisory Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity.<sup>12</sup> The committee quickly produced a report about how economic and social factors and race prejudice led to the geographic concentration of blacks in Seattle.<sup>13</sup> The move to establish the committee was praised by the editors of *The Facts*, a popular African American newspaper based in the Central Area, who hoped that the group's suggested policies would help to alleviate the high black dropout rate and subsequent unemployment.<sup>14</sup> The District's first major policy move that sought to address racial inequities was the implementation of the 1963-1964 Voluntary Racial Transfer Program (VRT), which allowed children throughout the city to transfer to schools outside of their neighborhood. In 1967, suburban schools in Bellevue and Mercer Island were also included.<sup>15</sup> The black community, including the CACRC, Urban League, Seattle NAACP, CAMP, CORE, and the Black ministerial Alliance who had pushed for the policy, lauded VRT as step in the right direction to reducing segregation and addressing the needs of African American children. Nevertheless, by 1968 all of these African American-led community groups ceased to support the program because, due to white resistance to the program, the vast majority of transfer students were black.<sup>16</sup> African Americans felt that an unequal burden was being placed on black children who chose to participate in the program.

By establishing the Advisory Committee and developing the voluntary transfer program, for the first time the School Board publicly acknowledged that the geographic concentration of minorities in Seattle was a reflection of race prejudice and the racial balance of school populations throughout the city mirrored this injustice. Despite their acknowledgement of de-facto segregation and its affects upon education, the Board avoided publicly endorsing open

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<sup>12</sup> Carol Richman, Interview by author.

<sup>13</sup> Hanawalt et. al, *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public schools*, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools Seattle*, 1979, 78.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Hanawalt et. al., "The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981," 13.

housing, because as Jack Greaves, an Urban League administrator pointed out in a memo to the School Board, such a position would “cause controversy.”<sup>17</sup> In light of the violence that housing activists such as Virginia and Alfred Westberg faced, “controversy” was an understatement, many Seattle residents viciously resisted open housing. Thus, it is not surprising that the Board, all of whom were privately supportive of busing, chose to publicly sidestep the issue and instead embrace the less heated, voluntary transfer program.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the voluntary transfer program, in 1965 District established a controversial plan to bus African American children out of the Central Area because of overcrowding at Horace Mann Elementary School. This unpopular policy in addition to the dissatisfaction with VRT contributed to the growing opposition to busing in Seattle’s black community. The 1965 arrangement bused 160 African American students from Horace Mann to several widely dispersed, white dominated North End Schools.<sup>19</sup> The District closed Horace Mann in 1968, which led to a more extensive busing program for the remaining students. Into the 1970s, black parents expressed resentment over the handling of transportation, which required their children to rise at 4:30 AM in order to catch early morning buses, and some parents objected to what they perceived as hostile environments for their children in these predominately-white schools.<sup>20</sup> Parents believed that there were racist teachers who did not take the education of black youth seriously and that the other students excluded them from social interactions.<sup>21</sup> In later, more widespread Seattle school desegregation programs, many black lobbying groups such as CASC would seek to avoid these pitfalls of racism and unequal burdens placed on only a limited number of children, concentrated in a single neighborhood.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>18</sup> Virginia Westberg, Interview by author.

<sup>19</sup> Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools Seattle*, 234-235.

<sup>20</sup> “Thoughts from the Publisher: To Bus or not to Bus,” *The Medium*, November 5, 1970, A1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Seattle's early 1970s tensions over busing cannot be divorced from the decade's poor economic climate, which hit the African American community especially hard. Activists in Seattle's African American community on both sides of the desegregation debate sought to attain economic stability and equality for all blacks. Nationally, the 1970s were marred with stagflation, a new economic malaise that signified a combination of inflation, slow growth, and high unemployment. However, even before the recession, African Americans in the Central Area and throughout the city were concerned about high poverty rates and the lack of upward mobility in Seattle's black community. Locally, the Boeing Bust punctuated the 1970s recession and blacks, who were often the first to be fired, were more likely to struggle to find new employment. In 1971, the official unemployment rate for the Central Area was 28%, however, that rate failed to take in consideration those residents who did not qualify for unemployment benefits, which pushed the actual figure to 35-50%.<sup>22</sup> Surveys taken a year later in March 1972 found that 50% of the workforce in the Central Area was unemployed.<sup>23</sup> This economic malaise contributed to rising tensions in the Central Area over busing and integration.

Seattle's heavily segregated housing, discriminatory hiring practices, and the poor economic climate led to black outrage and calls for black empowerment. In 1968, the year of the passage of the open housing legislation, Aaron Dixon, Larry Gossett, and Carl Miller founded Seattle's Black Panthers. Despite the Panthers' relatively small membership rolls, they had an

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<sup>22</sup> "Unemployment reach all time high." *The Medium*, December 30, 1971, A4. The unemployment rate for the city as a whole was 11.4%, which was double the national unemployment rate of 5.7% and about equal to the national unemployment figures for blacks, 10.5%. Kora Vann, "Unemployment in CA Compared to Entire City," *The Medium*, March 16, 1972, A1. The Kerner Commission is the U.S. Federal Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> Kora Vann, "Unemployment in CA Compared to Entire City," *The Medium*, March 16, 1972, A1. The Kerner Commission is the U.S. Federal Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York, 1968). According to government social scientists in the Kerner Commission's U.S. Federal Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, on average the unemployment rate of urban blacks was two and a half times greater than that of urban whites. Thus, according to the Kerner calculations, Seattle city blacks were even worse off in regards to employment, relatively speaking, than their counterparts in other urban areas throughout the United States. The Kerner Commission is the U.S. Federal Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York, 1968).

outsized affect on the black power movement in Seattle because of their inflammatory methods and bold critiques of the District and CASC.<sup>24</sup> By the 1970s, the Panthers would become the most vehement black opposition to desegregation, inspiring and guiding the city's black anti-busing movement.<sup>25</sup> With their activism, the Black Panthers divided Seattle's black community and helped to foster increased anti-busing sentiment among African American.<sup>26</sup> To further their black-empowerment message and to provide a public forum for their critiques of integration and school desegregation, the Panthers published the *Afro-American Journal*, a Central Area paper between 1967 and 1972.<sup>27</sup>

The Black Panthers used the *Afro-American Journal* as a platform to blast the politics of integration. In a July 29, 1970, comic, an older black man tells an African American boy dressed in Muslim garb that black separatism is the poison that will kill him.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, in the final frame it is integration disguised as a vaccine that slays the boy. Here we see how the Panthers viewed black children as victims of integration. The vaccine could also be an agent of white

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<sup>24</sup> Kora Vann, "Panthers oppose CASC Desegregation Plan," *The Medium*, January 6, 1972, A1 and Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 220-221.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 221.

<sup>26</sup> While Quintard Taylor in *The Forging of a Black Community* describes Black Panther activism, his work does not emphasize the role that the group played in furthering anti-busing sentiment.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 221.

<sup>28</sup> *Afro-American Journal*, comic, July 29, 1970, 4.

power administered by a willing black collaborator.



The *Afro-American Journal*'s comics served to reinforce the divisions between integrationists and the black power movement. These local Seattle tensions also echoed national debates. A few years later, in Gary, Indiana, at the newly established National Black Political Assembly 1972 conference, Black Panthers argued that African Americans should concentrate their efforts on improving inner-city schools, making them more sensitive to the needs of their black students. While integrationists, on the other hand, stressed that community control could roll back years of black progress, calling it 'segregation by choice.'<sup>29</sup> Seattle was not alone in its growing tensions over integration.

Because of the influence of the national and local black power movement and disillusionment with early school integration programs, in 1969 black parents and anti-poverty black community activists increasingly moved away from advocating for integration as the solution to improve black student outcomes and address racial and economic disparity.<sup>30</sup> Thus, a

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<sup>29</sup> Black News Services, "Blacks Fail to resolve School Crises," *The Medium*, May 18, 1972, A3 and Paul H Wyche, JR, "NAACP, Black Officials Leave Assembly," *The Medium*, May 18, 1972, A1, The Assembly's tepid endorsement of busing angered Roy Wilkins, the NAACP Executive Director, so much that he chose to abandon the group.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 215.

community control model that emphasized local management of schools with a more limited desegregation component, gained in popularity. In 1969, the NAACP national leadership expressed their support for community control because they saw it as a way for blacks to gain a voice in the local administration of schools.<sup>31</sup> Community control was a mutable concept that supporters used to conform to local conditions. While there was no set playbook for how communities should exert more control over schools, there was an over-arching belief that black youth would be better served in an environment that was more black-centric or Afro-centric, rather than a generic, one-size fits all education. Afro-centric curriculum had its roots in the early and mid-1960s Freedom Schools movements when African American and some white children around the country from Milwaukee to Boston to Seattle, learned to take pride in black history and culture. These lessons, which were designed to be a “positive program” that was pro-black instead of anti-white, taught children about black struggles against racism and slavery, emphasizing black literature and freedom struggles.<sup>32</sup>

Also in 1969, the Seattle School Board established representation by neighborhood, which allowed for the election of a black school board member, setting the stage for greater African American influence in school district policy decisions such as desegregation. Unlike, many large American cities, until 1969, Seattle did not elect its School Board members by district. The same was true for the City Council, as we saw in West Seattle when City Council President Phyllis Lamphere received a lukewarm reception in her own neighborhood. In 1969, African-American freshman Democratic Representative and Central Area long-time resident, George Fleming pushed for a new system of representation, one that would elect five Board members by district and the remaining two from the city at-large. Fleming sought to ensure that

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<sup>31</sup> Brett Gadsden, *Between North and South*, 180-181.

<sup>32</sup> Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 111-112.

the School Board would have at least one black member, which would give official voice, in the School Administration, to the people of the Central Area. Fleming's plan was successfully adopted in the State House, but experienced considerable resistance from the Senate and local education leaders. Philip Swain, the chairman of the School Board argued that neighborhood elected Board members would create a ward system of five 'mini-fiefdoms' rather than a Board that was concerned with broader educational concerns of import to all school children in the city.<sup>33</sup> Fleming's popularity as a successful University of Washington football player and his charismatic leadership style helped to push through a compromise between the Senate and the House. In the compromise bill, legislators designed an electoral safeguard by developing neighborhood primaries. The top two vote getters from the primaries faced a run-off in the general election.<sup>34</sup> All city residents could then vote on every open position in the general election, regardless of the neighborhood.<sup>35</sup> While the electoral structure of the Board changed, the job requirements, pay, and tenure remained unchanged. Board membership continued to be an unpaid four-year position.

This legislative victory paved the way for Al Cowles's appointment as the first African American on the Seattle School Board in May 1969.<sup>36</sup> From September 1968 to February 1969, Cowles spent a few months in Washington D.C. as the first black press secretary for a member of Congress, working for Republican Senator Charles E Goodell of New York who was appointed

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<sup>33</sup> "By Districts in Primary: Accord Reached on Voting for School Boards" *Seattle Times*, March 12, 1969, A15.

<sup>34</sup> Perhaps the district representational model for the School Board helped to make education and schools more neighborhood-driven than other local issues such as low income housing development or the funding of local parks or recreational areas. Today, in 2014, the School Board has moved to a full district representative model with seven districts and no at-large members.

<sup>35</sup> "By Districts in Primary: Accord Reached on Voting for School Boards" *Seattle Times*, March 12, 1969, A15.

<sup>36</sup> Cowles resigned in 1973 in order to move to Washington D.C. for a position at the American Arbitration Association, Al Cowles Leaves after Maximum Contributions, *The Medium*, March 22, 1973, A1.

to replace the assassinated Robert F. Kennedy.<sup>37</sup> However, in February 1969, Governor Dan Evans convinced Cowles, Evans's only African American cabinet member, to return to his post as executive secretary of the State Board Against Discrimination by promising him a promotion to the directorship of the nascent Washington State Commission on Human Rights. Cowles assumed the new post in the fall of 1971. While Cowles was appointed to the Board in the spring of 1969, he successfully ran for reelection in November of the same year.<sup>38</sup>

The push to replace at-large representation was part of a wider movement that gained traction throughout the United States. Fleming's successful implementation of the new school board representation model was relatively smooth in contrast to Charlotte's 1970-71 failed attempt to implement a similar system.<sup>39</sup> In Charlotte, North Carolina, however, the move was more complicated because it called for a merging of the county government of Mecklenburg with the city government of Charlotte, in addition to the development of geographic voting areas.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the plan's intent was similar to Fleming's legislation in that it aimed to provide redistribution of political power so that under-represented groups would gain a voice in government.<sup>41</sup> However, unlike in Washington State, activists placed Charlotte's proposition on the ballot where residents defeated it by a two to one margin. Only in Charlotte's black precincts was it victorious.<sup>42</sup> In Milwaukee, Wisconsin similar pushes for district representation in the early 1970s also failed.<sup>43</sup> Seattle was part of a wider national pattern of activism that sought more local control over administrative processes in education that were largely dominated by whites.

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<sup>37</sup>Don Hannula, "Cowles is expected to return to return to Anti-Discrimination Job," *Seattle Times*, February 6, 1969, A1.

<sup>38</sup> "Schools: Money Issues in Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane Rejected," *Seattle Times*, November 5, 1969, A4.

<sup>39</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 180-183.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 182.

<sup>43</sup> Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 144.



Not only did 1969 bring about legislative change that opened up a pathway for the first African American School Board member, it was also the year that CASC was formally recognized by the Seattle School Board. CASC's endorsement by the Board provided for increased community input into education policy decisions for Central Area residents.<sup>44</sup> In August 1968, when it was founded, CASC was informally known as the Ad Hoc Committee for Central Area Education, which included Central Area PTAs, University of Washington Student Union, Urban League, Model Cities, and the NAACP, among other groups.<sup>45</sup> The fluid and loosely organized Ad Hoc Committee aimed to be a powerful voice for Central Area concerns about the quality of local schools. District administrators, who were concerned about the legitimacy of the group, worried that the Ad Hoc Committee was not truly representative of the Central Area.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in March 1969, District officials decided to formalize their role, rename the group and develop local elections in order to assure that all Central Area residents would be represented by the committee.<sup>47</sup> However, CASC always had an advisory role in the Seattle Schools, rather than real authority over District matters.<sup>48</sup> While a District-sanctioned group, they received their funding from the federal Model Cities program. Nevertheless, in the early 1970s, CASC would become the black community's most powerful voice regarding questions of school staffing, curriculum, and desegregation. When George Fleming lobbied to pass his district representation proposal, he cited the then nascent CASC as a potential beneficiary of the new policy because he believed that African American children would experience significant gains in

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<sup>44</sup> Richard C. Hunter, "Opinion, Central Area School Council," *The Medium*, Nov 16, 1972, A1 & Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools*, 452.

<sup>45</sup> Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools*, 449.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>47</sup> Seattle's push for community schools, led by CASC, was similar to the North Division neighborhood in Milwaukee, WI, where parents in 1970 demanded increased representation at the school board and called for black history in the curriculum. In North Division as in the Central Area, many activists became increasingly convinced that community control, as advocated CASC for, would best solve the black education crisis. Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 142.

<sup>48</sup> Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools*, 452.

the classroom if CASC and the new Board member worked in tandem to improve schools and boost achievement.

CASC was a volunteer citizen elected body, which represented the Garfield High School attendance area, with five at-large members and eleven members who had children enrolled in one of the eleven elementary schools in the Central Area. The first representatives were elected on March 29, 1969, however voter turnout for the local election was low.<sup>49</sup> Initially, Bill Hilliard, an African American father of two from the Montlake neighborhood, led CASC.<sup>50</sup> He was a student at the University of Washington and directed the Office of Special Student Programs.<sup>51</sup> Along with the establishment of CASC, came the appointment of Dr. Roland Patterson to the newly created post of Central Area Administrator. He was responsible for overseeing the Garfield attendance area. Patterson, a former teacher, was Seattle's first African American secondary school principal, leading Meany Junior High from 1968 until his promotion the following year. As Central Area Administrator, Patterson worked with CASC to find local solutions to improve outcomes for African American children in their community.

In the continuum of the national desegregation debates among black politicians, scholars, and activists, CASC took the middle ground because they advocated for both desegregation and community control in schools. Earlier scholars have stressed a strict dichotomy between Seattle black pro-busing integrationists on one end of the spectrum, and the separatist black power movement on the other end.<sup>52</sup> Diane Ravitch's analysis of New York's late 1960s and early '70s Ocean Hill-Brownsville school crisis, parallels this earlier scholarship on Seattle. She argues that

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<sup>49</sup> Constantine Angelos, "Central Council, Seeking Black Support, Organizes," *Seattle Times*, April 8, 1969, A6.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> "Central Area School Council Election," *Seattle Times*, March 23, 1969, A47.

<sup>52</sup> See Piero's *Desegregating the Public Schools Seattle, Washington*, which examines education and desegregation in Seattle and provides extensive detail about early tensions within black separatists and integrationists over busing in the years prior to the middle school plan. For a wider discussion of black internal debates about integration, desegregation and separatism see: Gadsden: *Between North and South*.

because of white racism in the School Board, New York black integrationists made a sharp turn towards community control.<sup>53</sup> However, my analysis finds that CASC's leaders took another, less clearly delineated path. Supporting my analysis of CASC's blended ideology, recent scholarship suggests that studies of African American freedom struggles should avoid strict dichotomies such as integration versus community control and black power versus civil rights liberalism.<sup>54</sup> CASC's pragmatism allowed leaders to employ several ideologies to shape its activism.<sup>55</sup> This flexible philosophy was developed partly in response to the critiques by long-standing Seattle pro-integrationists who included among many the CACRC, the Urban League, and the local branch of the NAACP. These groups pressed the District to desegregate the city's schools. CASC, whose members often raised the ire of the integrationists because of their unwillingness to fully endorse the middle school plan, spoke for black parents who were uncomfortable with sending their children across the ship canal to school and who were frustrated by the School Board's middle school plan. The desegregation plan, with its emphasis on integration, effectively disregarded the increasingly popular trend, which CASC supported, towards predominately black, community-run schools, which subscribed to Afro-centric curriculum and activities.<sup>56</sup> Resonating with CASC's reticence towards desegregation, in 1969, Charleston, South Carolina blacks had also become skeptical of the policy's effectiveness in their community.<sup>57</sup>

In its early days, CASC garnered support across a wide spectrum of the black community from the black power advocates to more moderate establishment blacks such as church leaders

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<sup>53</sup> Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 251-398.

<sup>54</sup> Gadsden, *Between North and South*, 6 & Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 104-107.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Brett Gadsden found a similar pattern of activism in Delaware.

<sup>56</sup> Publisher, "Bussing not the real problem – Racial Balance in Communities Needed," *The Medium*, August 19, 1971, A1; Kora Vann, "Central Area Parents say No to Busing," *The Medium*, October 15, 1970, 4; Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 216.

<sup>57</sup> R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles for Education Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926-1972* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 2006) 169.

and integrationists. In the *Afro-American Journal* in July 1970, Cliff Hopper Sr., a Black Panther, wrote about CASC's original aims.

While it is clear to us that white society does not want to be cut loose from the control over the facilities to educate Black children, we are bound to break this strangle hold over our future and indeed our survival. In bringing the Central Area School Council into existence, the Black Community sought to break this racist grip.”<sup>58</sup>

Supporters of black power saw CASC as a way to wrest control away from the virtually all-white school district administration and place it in the hands of the black community who they believed were better able to educate black youth. Seattle was not alone in this phenomenon. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, African Americans from Charleston to New York City who were disillusioned with white dominated schools that had “failed to teach black children” and began to advocate for more black control over education. In the case of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, blacks took over the school board and their decision to fire a white tenured teacher would cause a firestorm of controversy.<sup>59</sup> Seattle's black power movement aimed to keep as many black children in neighborhood schools as possible. However, their initial support for CASC was short-lived because they believed that it had capitulated to the white majority.

The Panthers quickly became disillusioned with CASC and Dr. Patterson because they felt that both were too willing to forgo black-community solutions in favor of desegregation policies supported by white bureaucrats. Cliff Hopper Sr., a Black Panther, wrote about his dissatisfaction with Patterson's stance on desegregation. “One thing is certain, white society has neither the ability, understanding or moral character to educate black youth and Patterson's reliance on this nothingness can only perpetuate the undoing of the Black people.” Hopper suggested that Patterson was a figurehead who could do nothing to help improve black children's education. Later in the same column, Hopper wrote “that the honeymoon for the Central Area

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<sup>58</sup> Cliff Hopper Sr., “Education” column, *Afro-American Journal*, July 29, 1970, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*, 4.

School Council and Patterson and his cohorts is over. Our Children have been messed over by this racist school system that programs a not too subtle ‘great white racism.’”<sup>60</sup> Because of the insidious nature of the white racism, the only solution for Hopper and others like him in the black power movement was to exit the system.<sup>61</sup> Desegregation of any kind was entirely incompatible with their view. These tensions within Seattle’s black community between CASC and the Black Panthers over the role of integration and desegregation would continue to grow in the next two years.

#### 1971: RISING BLACK ANGER AND INTERNAL TENSIONS

In 1971, Seattle’s racial tensions exploded. It was a year marked with one racial conflict after another, which served to make the city increasingly inhospitable to the changes that would be brought on by the middle school busing plan. The first major incident occurred in February 1971 when CASC, black parents, and community members rejected the controversial reassignment of Dr. Patterson. Patterson was reassigned in the wake of the District’s goal to establish a new middle school district that would combine the northern Roosevelt and Lincoln educational regions with the Central Area-Garfield educational complex, formerly Patterson’s domain. One administrator would manage the affected middle schools in the North End and in the Central Area. The reorganization set the stage for the new middle school desegregation program that was slated to begin in the fall of 1971. Officials relegated Patterson to the position of District Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services while appointing Warren H Burton, the African American head of the inter-cultural relations division of the Washington

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> The tensions within Seattle’s black community over CASC and Patterson’s role echoed the internal debates between blacks in 1970 Oakland, CA. When Marcus Foster, an African American was hired to turn the school district around and improve outcomes for African American students he faced opposition from the Black Caucus who was “used to attacking the system from the outside.” See: John P Spencer, *In the Crossfire: Marcus Foster and The Troubled History of American School Reform* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). For a discussion of New York tensions between community control adherents and white liberals who tried to undermine the authority of the black school board see Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*.

State Department of Education to manage the new middle school district. The School Board reassigned Patterson and hired Burton because they were bowing to pressure from the white majority in North Seattle who rejected Patterson because he was seen as unsympathetic to the needs of white children. Whites viewed Patterson as threatening because he was a strong advocate for “black-centric” education such as African-American history. Burton quickly resigned in the wake of the controversy over Patterson.<sup>62</sup> CASC’s mobilization against the reassignment cemented their early appeal, positioning them as the most influential African American-led group in the early 1970s desegregation debates.<sup>63</sup>

Even before the District’s official announcement, rumors of Patterson’s impending reassignment and the leadership’s poor handling of the shift served to heighten community tensions, allowing CASC to mobilize the Central Area. The debate over Patterson’s appointment persisted for two weeks in February before the District made an official announcement. The District’s prolonged inaction created the appearance of a leadership vacuum. Furthermore, the fortnight of uncertainty gave CASC time to organize in favor of Patterson and in turn allowed the largely white leaders in the Roosevelt neighborhood to rally against Patterson in order to demand a more “acceptable” leader.<sup>64</sup> During this period of confusion, Superintendent Bottomly’s decision to attend a meeting in Key West during the uproar was also problematic. Bottomly made the announcement of Patterson’s reassignment by-proxy because he was out-of-state and unavailable, which was evidence of his weakness and insincerity. After the announcement of Patterson’s reassignment, local newspapers widely reported that Bottomly was in Florida and unable to comment on the decision, a notable detail in the middle of Seattle’s rainy season. The

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<sup>62</sup> Gus Angelos, “Burton declines job: Council encourages Continuance of School Boycott,” *Seattle Times*, February 27, 1971, A4.

<sup>63</sup> Gus Angelos, “Desegregation Director Named,” *Seattle Times*, February 25, 1971, A1.

<sup>64</sup> Gus Angelos, “Central Area Boycott: Desegregation plan threatened,” *Seattle Times*, February 28, 1971, E1.

ill-timing of the trip to Florida served to make Bottomly appear more like a privileged out-of-touch bureaucrat than an able school administrator who was capable of navigating Seattle's complicated racial landscape. CASC capitalized on the District's failings.

On February 26, 1971, in response to the anger over Patterson's reassignment, CASC ordered a boycott of all Central Area schools. The successful embargo was widely seen as an endorsement of CASC's agenda, which called for more black control and leadership in Central Area schools.<sup>65</sup> CASC sought to avoid placing the possible financial burden of a strike on the neighborhood teachers, who might have to take an unpaid day off in order to participate. Consequently, leaders asked Central Area parents to refrain from sending their children to school. On the first day of the boycott, attendance at Garfield High School was 194 out of 1090 enrolled students. Attendance patterns were similar throughout the neighborhood schools, where about 2/3 of children stayed home. At Meany-Madrona Middle School even the staff, for the most part, did not come to school. While the boycott was officially voluntary, there were reports that teachers and administrators asked students to return home and that bus drivers did not allow some children on the busses. It is difficult to assess the truth of these allegations, though black and mainstream presses reported the rumors.<sup>66</sup> However, regardless of the validity of the reports, the stories suggest that CASC was an influential force in the neighborhood, a group with the power to mobilize parents to take the kind of political action reflected in school attendance patterns. In addition to the parents, students, and some teachers who actively participated in CASC's boycott, many other Seattleites also expressed their frustration with the District's handling of the crisis.

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<sup>65</sup> Kora Vann, "Central Area Residents Assures Council of Their Willingness to Boycott," *The Medium*, March 4, 1971, A1.

<sup>66</sup> Gus Angelos, "Central Area Boycott: Desegregation plan threatened" *Seattle Times*, February 28, 1971, E1 & Kora Vann, "Central Area Residents Assures Council of Their Willingness to Boycott."

The wider political fall-out from the debacle over the middle school administrator was fierce and served to jeopardize the success of the entire desegregation plan. The well-respected *Seattle Times* Education Editor, Gus Angelos blasted the District for its botched handling of the crisis, arguing that poor leadership was to blame. “A quick, firm decision on an administrator, even on an interim basis, might have prevented the subsequent polarization.”<sup>67</sup> In *The Medium*, a local black paper, Don Phelps an African American commentator and regular contributor on King5 news, the local Seattle NBC affiliate, wrote about the affair. “To the general public and certainly the Central Area, the administrative switches looked as though the school district was using one black administrator as a tool to sack another.” Phelps went on to criticize the School District for failing to listen to the advice of establishment blacks who “have proven that they are always willing to give the system another chance.”<sup>68</sup> The District’s poor handling of the affair, Phelps continued, led to an upsurge of anti-District sentiment even among those Central Area parents who previously had relatively little allegiance towards Dr. Patterson. Warren Burton, the administrator who turned down the position spoke about the controversy and his decision to withdraw his acceptance of the job offer. “I do not wish to become part of the local educational scene in a negative manner even in an interim or alternative role. Such a climate would reduce severely my professional effectiveness.”<sup>69</sup> Burton echoed the concerns of the newspaper columnists. The controversy was so severe that it would impede the implementation of the District’s desegregation plan. While Many Seattleites were sympathetic to CASC’s stance on the District’s handling of the Patterson affair, their questioning of mandatory desegregation,

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<sup>67</sup> Gus Angelos, “Central Area Boycott: Desegregation plan threatened.”

<sup>68</sup> Don Phelps, “Commentary “Black Seattle... The Central Area” *The Medium*, March 11, 1971,A2.

<sup>69</sup> Gus Angelos, “Burton declines job: Council encourages Continuance of School Boycott,” *Seattle Times*, February 27, 1971, A4.



integration, and support for community control were more divisive, in and outside of the black community.

As the controversy over Patterson was brewing, CASC was also in the middle of its own elections that would signify a shift in the organization's leadership towards a more black empowerment focus that would continue to question the merits of integration and desegregation. The election of Larry Gossett on March 27, a founder of the University of Washington's Black Student Union as well as a Black Panther originator, was significant because it helped to move the organization towards a more radical position.<sup>70</sup> Gossett, appointed vice-president of the group, campaigned for his CASC post on an anti-middle school desegregation platform. He objected to busing over 1000 children out of the Central Area, which the middle school plan required.<sup>71</sup> While Gossett's leadership role served to heighten the group's anti- integration and desegregation message, his appointment did not spell the elimination of these policies from CASC's agenda. Publicly, CASC's leadership did not entirely reject desegregation or integration. They aimed to develop a more balanced approach to desegregation that retained black community control in schools while ensuring an equitable busing program that placed an equal burden on black and white children.

With Gossett as its primary spokesperson, CASC pointed to many possible desegregation pitfalls. Gossett questioned the District's definition of what constituted a segregated school, objecting to what he perceived of as arbitrary numerical quotas, rejecting the "premise that a school with 21% black children is segregated and undesirable while a school with 80% white children is integrated and desirable."<sup>72</sup> Gossett noted that because of an academic definition of

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<sup>70</sup> Constantine Angelos, "Bottomly selects man to direct four middle schools," *Seattle Times*, March 17, 1971, G8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Citizens' School Advisory Councils responded to the report in the School Board Meeting on Jul 14, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 68, July 14, 1971, 14.

segregation, the middle school plan would unnecessarily disperse African American children around the city. The plan did not take into consideration the progress that Central Area Schools had already been making under the new school community-centric policies, nor did it consider the cultural value of keeping a sense of community for black children at predominately black schools. The editorial Board at the *Argus* newspaper, wrote about the affect of busing on the dispersal of children of color in Seattle.

...Central Area spokesmen do not want black children thinly scattered like pepper in predominately white schools. They seek to preserve a sense of heritage, as do most Asian-Americans and American Indians. It must be the whites' middle class arrogance, which would swim all children down the 'mainstream' current, at the expense of the diversity we should be cherishing.<sup>73</sup>

With their mention of the 'mainstream current' the editors of the *Argus* newspaper in Seattle acknowledged that well-meaning integrationists might not have fully understood the possible cultural losses associated with a mandatory desegregation program, which CASC sought to emphasize in its questioning of busing.

While CASC showed reservations about desegregation, they did not rule it out, nor did they entertain the idea of collaborating with Citizens Against Mandatory Busing (CAMB), Seattle's virulent early 1970s anti-busing group. On the other hand, Seattle's black power advocates who rejected the District's desegregation policies, contemplated working with white anti-busers in order to stop desegregation. An editorial in the *Afro-American Journal*, explored the idea of collaborating with CAMB: "We of the *Afro-American Journal* are prepared to join with any group who does not want bussing."<sup>74</sup> Despite the *Afro-American Journal* editors' strong statement, there is no evidence to suggest that the Black Panthers or the black power movement actually worked with CAMB in their fight against desegregation. In 1971, Seattle's black

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<sup>73</sup> "Some Thoughts on Education, *Argus*, July 30, 1971, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Editorial, *Afro-American Journal*, February 11, 1971, 2.

community had become increasingly polarized over how to respond to white opposition to busing. The controversies over allying with CAMB paralleled with debates at the Gary, Indiana National Black Political Assembly where potential alliances between Southern white segregationists and black militants who opposed busing troubled leaders such as the NAACP's Roy Wilkins.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, the group's willingness to entertain the idea of working with CAMB was in sharp contrast to other black Seattle organizations such as CASC and *The Medium* newspaper, both of which rejected even any alliance with CAMB.<sup>76</sup>

While Seattle's black power movement had originally supported CASC's efforts, their differing stance on working with CAMB was only one element of the deepening divisions between the two factions. The Panthers labeled integration as "cheap talk" with the enemy and administrators like Patterson were "negroes" instead of black because they were tools of the white cause. However, the *Afro-American Journal's* most significant critique of integration and desegregation was about the school system's role in cultivating leaders. Black power promoters believed that white teachers in mixed raced classrooms would not teach African Americans how to lead their own people. "Whiteman never set up an educational system that could teach a Blackman how to lead another Blackman."<sup>77</sup> With the absence of black leaders, who could only be groomed in black schools, the Panthers believed that African Americans would have an uphill struggle in their battle to achieve racial equality. With African American leaders trained in black-dominated schools, the community would have a better chance of long-term prosperity. Newly minted black government and community representatives, who could speak out for their

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<sup>75</sup> "NAACP, Black Officials Leave Assembly," *The Medium*, May 18, 1972, A1.

<sup>76</sup> Editorial Board, "CAMB Ad Insults C A," *The Medium*, May 4, 1972, A1. In this editorial, the newspaper revealed that they had turned down an advertisement submitted by CAMB to advocate for the recall of the five Board Members. The paper acknowledged that there had been some dissension in the black community over busing, but stated strongly that the advertisement was an especially powerful insult to the black community because Al Cowles, the first black Board member, was subjected to the recall.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

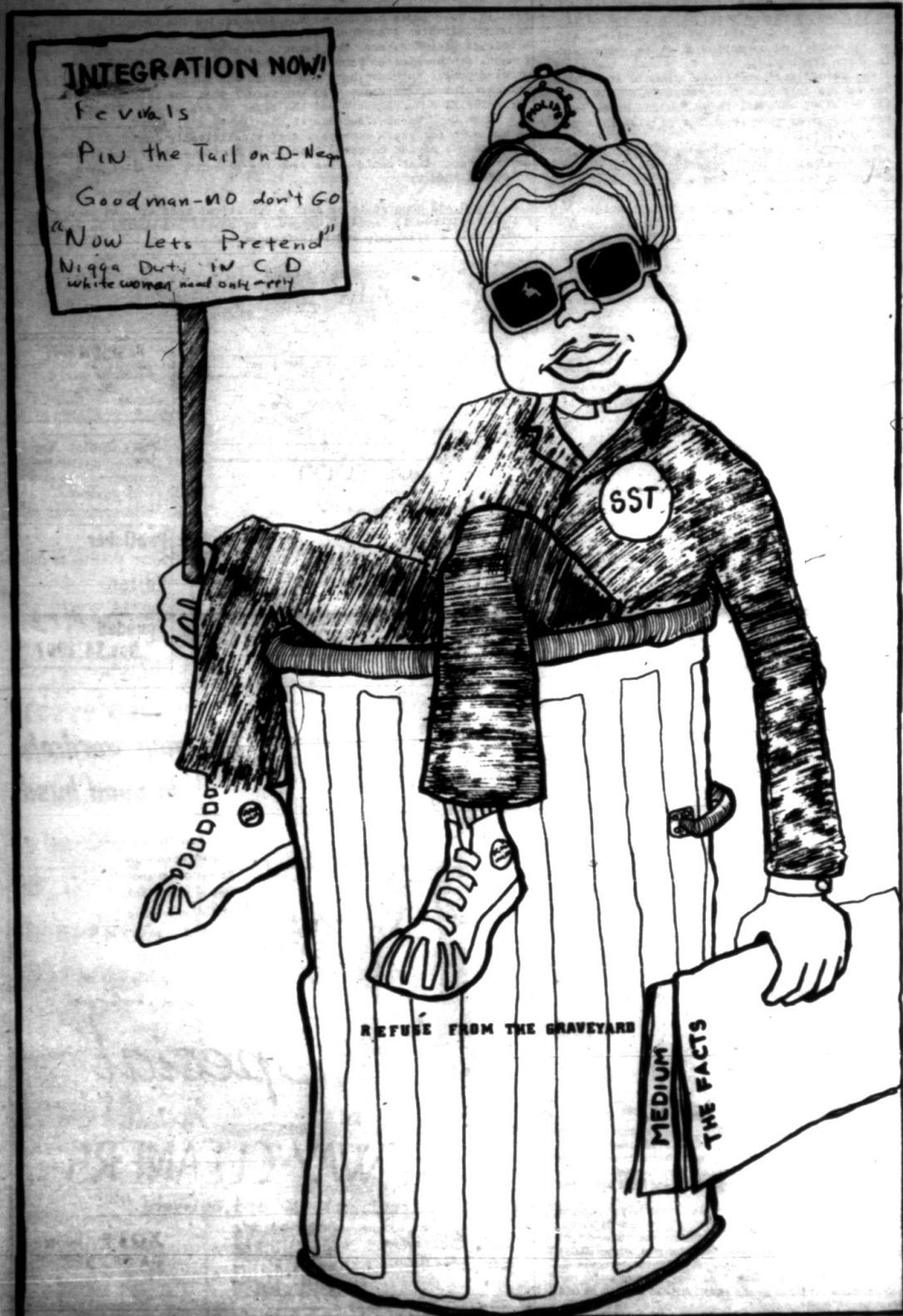
neighborhood concerns, would better serve African American interests than even the most liberal of whites.

These tensions within the black community could also be seen in the *Afro-American Journal's* illustrations, where comics criticized integrationists and included pointed references to other more moderate black presses such as *The Medium* and *The Facts*. In a comic that appeared in May 13, 1971, a white woman, who is most likely a member of the largely white Citizens for Quality Integrated Education, sits in a Central Area garbage can with copies of *The Medium* and *The Facts* in her hands and a baseball cap with the inscription "polite" emblazoned on the front.<sup>78</sup> With her call for "Integration Now" and the "white women need only apply" caveat on her poster, she is depicted as an irrelevant imposter in the black community. In addition, she has an SST sticker on her chest, which evokes Nixon's 1970 decision to the end the Supersonic Transport federal program that had precipitated Seattle's Boeing Bust. This reference reminded readers of Seattle's sluggish economic climate, which was magnified in the Central Area.

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<sup>78</sup> Comic, *Afro-American Journal*, May 13, 1971, 5.

# kore-duga



The open hostility to what many blacks perceived of as white-led integration policies contributed to black resistance to busing. Parental input at CASC's community meetings provided further evidence of the Central Area's growing tensions over the middle school plan and integration more broadly.

CASC's community assemblies that informed parents about upcoming educational policy changes and provided a platform for Central Area parents to express their grievances about the District's handling of desegregation, articulated a growing anti-busing sentiment in the black community. Parental resentments included dissatisfaction with Seattle's earlier limited voluntary and involuntary busing programs, fears about the safety of black children in largely white schools, and resentment over the fact that school leaders had not given black attempts at reform enough time to show their effectiveness. In light of the 1971 race riot in the Lincoln High School cafeteria, an African American parent at a CASC meeting expressed her apprehensions about desegregated schools more broadly and the voluntary program that had already been implemented at Lincoln, specifically.<sup>79</sup> "We should show some pride, we shouldn't allow our kids to be sent where they're not wanted. The white kids aren't coming in."<sup>80</sup> This quotation from the fall of 1971 demonstrates the perception that it was the African American students, who had voluntarily transferred to Lincoln, who were paying the price of desegregation. On the other hand, very few white children bused to the Central Area for high school. This discrepancy led some parents to call for a cessation of busing. With active parental participation, CASC's meetings served as a mobilizing force, particularly when the community felt that one of its own was subject to racial discrimination. Yet, by the winter of 1972, the group began to lose popularity because of their strident opposition to the Seattle School District's middle school plan.

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<sup>79</sup>Tensions between blacks and whites had inflamed at West Seattle High School, see Brenda Woods, "Racial Imbalance and confrontations at W.S. High School, *The Medium*, October, 26, 1972, 14.

<sup>80</sup> Oct 20, 1971, *Seattle Times*, "Central Area Council Official Going to Lincoln," A1 & A9.

In 1972, CASC leaders now lacking a focus for mobilization such as Patterson's firing and who were less interested in providing a sounding board for all black parents, came into greater conflict with both the Black Panthers and integrationists.

#### 1972 – CASC LOSES STATURE

The clash between CASC and the black power movement extended into the winter of 1972, when the middle school desegregation plan was in its advanced planning stages. This was also the turning point in CASC's popularity. When the after-glow from the spring 1971 boycott had faded, CASC began to lose momentum. As their message seemed spent, their critics in the black power movement gained in stature. In January 1972, when CASC presented its official middle school desegregation plan to integrate the Franklin, Cleveland, Garfield, and Lincoln into one administrative unit, it drew fire from the Black Panthers. The Panthers objected to the merging of the three minority dominated schools with Lincoln, a white-dominated school, because they feared that the youth of the Central Area would be drained from the neighborhood due to perceived better opportunities at Lincoln. The Panthers also objected to integrating Franklin, a multi-racial school in the Rainier Valley, because it was seen as fully integrated with significant populations of whites, blacks, and Asians already enrolled.<sup>81</sup> A Panther spokesperson called the plan a "cop-out" and generated a petition, which objected to the CASC plan. Two-thousand community members signed their petition in opposition to CASC.<sup>82</sup> While the mainstream black press argued that the CASC plan had "support from all phases of the community including students, teachers, parents, and administrators," the Panthers' success in garnering 2000 signatures speaks to the dissension on the Central Area.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, proponents

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<sup>81</sup> Kora Vann, "Panthers oppose CASC Desegregation Plan," *The Medium*, January 6, 1972, A1.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Larry Williams, "Community Supports CASC Plan," *The Medium*, March 2, 1972, A1.

of integration presented no clear evidence to back up the claim that the majority of the black community was supportive of CASC's desegregation plan.

CASC's insistence on advocating for community control over the middle school plan drew increasing criticism from both conservatives and liberals, which contributed to its loss in stature. By the spring of 1972, CASC came under fire not only from the black power movement, but also from the Seattle chapter of the NAACP and the pro-integration, CACRC. These groups attacked CASC for their campaign against the Board's middle school desegregation plan.

"CACRC suspects that the selfish concerns of power, status and jobs override the real concern for black students. CACRC believes this intimates the higher purpose of their [CASC] opposing the school board."<sup>84</sup> CACRC also dismissed CASC's emphasis upon "community control," calling it a cover for their political agenda, which sought to consolidate its own power and influence, while the welfare of black children was a secondary aim. CASC did not take CACRC's criticisms lightly. They fought back with a press release that defended their commitment to the education of black youth.<sup>85</sup> The conflict was never resolved, but served to widen the rifts within the black community over busing.

By the summer of 1972, CASC had lost significant stature in the community for a variety of reasons, which included their insistence on advocating for community control as well as financial troubles. Despite the rapidly approaching implementation of the middle school desegregation plan, which would go into effect in September of 1972, and the objections from moderate and radical blacks, liberal whites, Chinese, and Japanese Americans (the subjects of the following section), CASC continued to object to elements of the program that they felt would

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<sup>84</sup> C. Sarto, "Desegregation Plan Triggers Controversy," *The Medium*, May 11, 1972, A1.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



result in a loss of community control.<sup>86</sup> In July of the same year, CASC was subjected to outside threats to their livelihood when the Model Cities Program, their major benefactor, conducted an audit. When inspectors found that they had budgeted \$35,200, but could only account for \$16,511 in expenditures, CASC lost its funding and was required to relocate.<sup>87</sup> While Model Cities eventually reinstated CASC's funding because they found the errors to be clerical in nature, the negative press contributed to CASC's decline in power in the black community. CASC was not only criticized from within the black community for their steadfast commitment to community control, Seattleites around the city objected to their ideology and their position of relative power within the District. CASC's influence and controversial stances on desegregation reverberated in Seattle's white and multi-ethnic communities.

#### MULTI-ETHNIC COMMUNITY COUNCILS RESPOND TO BUSING AND CASC

The white and multi-ethnic Asian community responded to busing and CASC's seemingly powerful role as community organizer and School District liaison with suspicion and trepidation. In response to CASC's power, citizens in neighborhoods from around Seattle called for their own community councils that would be equal in stature to the Central Area's powerful CASC.<sup>88</sup> West Seattle council members who rejected integration and the Beacon Hill Cleveland council that fought against low-income housing, as we saw earlier, wanted to ensure that their neighborhoods and local perspectives on school and neighborhood issues would be represented at the District. In April 1971, one month after the Patterson school boycotts, the city-wide school council program that would include whites, Asians, and African Americans was established by the School Board. While these belatedly established councils would never be as influential as CASC, during their two years of officially endorsed existence, they galvanized neighborhood

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<sup>86</sup> *The Medium*, "Council take fight against bussing plan to Olympia," June 30, 1972, A1.

<sup>87</sup> *The Medium*, "CASC Loses Funds, Forced to Move," July 6, 1972, A1.

<sup>88</sup> *Seattle Times*, "Elections Set for School Advisory Councils," April 15, 1971.

activism around the question of busing.<sup>89</sup> For example, in the fall of 1971, the Roosevelt Council in North Seattle helped to spur white parental anger about the appointment of the new African American principal, Robert Gary, to Eckstein Middle School.

In October of 1971, the Roosevelt Community Council justified their opposition to Principal Robert Gary's assignment as a procedural one, arguing that the District had not consulted them during the hiring process.<sup>90</sup> Racial animosities were rife. At a Council meeting, one unnamed white citizen spoke up. "How can a black principal understand the problems of a white, middle class neighborhood?"<sup>91</sup> This resident's racism was reflective of the Roosevelt Council's prejudices, which made not only busing unpalatable, but also a black authority figure unacceptable. While the Council did not succeed in ousting Gary, they were not content to fully accept his authority. For example, in November of 1971, in response to Gary's statement that teachers who were not equipped or willing to adjust to the new middle school model of education may be reassigned to another school, the Roosevelt Council sent a letter to Robert Gary expressing their support for the entire Eckstein faculty.<sup>92</sup> The Roosevelt Council feared that Gary would replace some of the seasoned white teachers with younger, more ethnically diverse faculty members, and they were uneasy with the fact that as principal of Eckstein, Gary, a black man, had the power to make personnel decisions, which would affect white teachers. However, in Washington State, home to one of the most powerful teachers' unions in the nation, the Washington Education Association, did not have any real concerns for their livelihoods. The Roosevelt Council's actions against Gary, although ultimately unsuccessful, served to heighten

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<sup>89</sup> While the city-wide councils were officially established 1971, some of the neighborhood councils such as Franklin were established before 1971 at the behest of either the District or neighborhood activists. Though a formal system of council governance was not set into motion until the spring of 1971.

<sup>90</sup> Constantine Angelos, "New Eckstein Principal's Goal is to Provide Leadership," October 10, 1971, *Seattle Times*, A14 & *The Medium*, "North End Council Opposes Appointment of Black Principal, October 7, 1971, A1.

<sup>91</sup> *The Medium*, "North End Council Opposes Appointment of Black Principal, October 7, 1971, A1.

<sup>92</sup> Gus Angelos, "Roosevelt Message: Eckstein Teachers Lauded," November 14, 1971, *Seattle Times*, A10.

racial tensions particularly in light of the upcoming busing policy, which was to directly affect Eckstein Middle School students.

Whites and multi-ethnic Asians, who were successful in their bid to establish school councils, were dissatisfied with what they perceived of as their secondary status. In light of what they saw as CASC's special status with the School District, in 1972 the other eleven advisory councils formally requested additional rights for their councils that would mirror those that CASC enjoyed.<sup>93</sup> The councils objected to CASC's direct relationship with the School Board, while they were assigned to lower level administrators. Nevertheless, it was not only the bureaucratic structure of the agreements that caused consternation, even the naming conventions of the councils proved controversial. Advisory councils in Ballard, located in largely white Northwest Seattle, and the Roosevelt neighborhood engaged in a battle of words over how their groups were labeled. The discourse of 'advisory,' which was included in the name of all of the councils except for CASC proved unpopular and led the Ballard and Roosevelt Councils to send letters of protest to the District demanding that the "advisory" qualifier be dropped from their name. It is notable, that the groups placed such an emphasis on a potential shift in discourse.<sup>94</sup> These groups believed that a change in name was a crucial component in affecting the nature of their relationship with the District. Throughout the two-year tenure of the advisory councils, groups outside of the Central Area continued to complain about their lack of influence in District matters, which served to increase racial tensions in Seattle, particularly in regards to schooling and desegregation. Many whites in the early 1970s objected to both busing and CASC's status in

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<sup>93</sup> Letter from Neal J Schulman, to Dr. Robert A. Tidwell, President of School Board, January 2, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archive, District Council 1971-72, Acc. A.A.2.38, Community Services, Box 4, Folder #6.

<sup>94</sup> Letter from George Burmeister to Beverly Smith, November 1, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, District Council 1971-72, Acc. A.A.2.38, Community Services, Box 4, Folder #6.

the District hierarchy. The constant jockeying for power made them feel increasingly embattled and hostile towards blacks and what they perceived of as their black agenda.

However, the councils were not just concerned about CASC's clout which threatened the racial status quo. They were also uneasy about their emphasis upon the needs of black children over those of white children, which had the potential to disrupt the racial power structure even further. Whites deemed 'black' policies and platforms, which emphasized black empowerment and a curriculum that highlighted black achievements in history and science, irrelevant or possibly harmful to white children.<sup>95</sup> The Queen Anne Advisory Council, based in a wealthy, largely white neighborhood, described their "outright disagreement with, the educational emphasis in the Central Area." This was code for assumptions that suggested that Central Area children were not taught the 'basics' of United States history (presidential politics, structures of government, and wars) but rather were taught by those who emphasized upon black historical figures and activism.<sup>96</sup> A concern that CAMB expressed as well.

The more liberal leaning white, African-American, and Asian-American community councils also questioned CASC's community control agenda. The members of Franklin's Council were supportive of desegregation efforts and internal school district memos suggest that they were the most "liberal" and cooperative of the school Councils in the SE region.<sup>97</sup> In the Franklin neighborhood community council, leaders wondered if the Central Area's emphasis

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<sup>95</sup> See Kent Kammerer's Letter to Robert Tidwell, January 11, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc.A.A2.38, Community Services, Box 4, Folder 6, District Council 1971-72 for a request by a broad range of white and Chinese-American and Japanese-American Seattleites to take part in desegregation planning. See Queen Anne Area Citizens' School Advisory Council "Desegregation Proposal" Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A3.36, Community Services, Box 2, Queen Anne Folder for a more openly critical stance on how Central Area policies might be harmful to white students.

<sup>96</sup> Queen Anne Area Citizens' School Advisory Council "Desegregation Proposal" Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A3.36, Community Services, Box 2, Queen Anne Folder, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Kermit Franks, Internal Memorandum to Charles Hough, September 28, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A.2.40, Community Services, Box 6, Folder 7, Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Involvement.

upon community control was the most effective way to educate children.<sup>98</sup> The Franklin neighborhood, which is located in the Rainier Valley, was in transition. In the 1950s, the area was almost 100% white, but by 1970s the population of Franklin High School reflected the neighborhood's changing demographics. In the 1970/71 school year, 47% of students were black and 27% were Asian, which, included Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos.<sup>99</sup>

In January 1970, members of the Franklin Council debated the merits of school decentralization. Peter Palmer, the white chairman of Franklin Council, explained why the School Board found it necessary to address demands for community control. "The School Board feels the ground swell of parents who want more to say in their children's education."<sup>100</sup> Palmer's reference to the "ground swell of parents" suggests that there were wide calls for decentralization by black parents who felt that their community's needs were not being met by the impersonal citywide School District administration. In response to Palmer, Roberta Barr, an African American TV moderator, Seattle Public Schools coordinator for community liaison services, and public supporter of integration, questioned the value of decentralization and community control. "The assumption that decentralization is some kind of panacea is wrong. The notion that by decentralization it will suddenly energize groups is false."<sup>101</sup> Another member, Mr. Elliot, race unknown, emphasized academics in his analysis. "There's a vast difference between decentralization to smooth out dissatisfaction with administration; but how does decentralization improve academic quality?"<sup>102</sup> In addition to concerns about academic quality and the effectiveness of decentralization, the Franklin Council believed that it might further

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<sup>98</sup> Franklin High School Citizens Advisory Council, meeting minutes, January 20, 1970, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A1978, Box 1, Franklin Community Council Folder.

<sup>99</sup> Frank Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools, 1954-1981*, 64.

<sup>100</sup> Franklin High School Citizens Advisory Council, meeting minutes, January 20, 1970.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

divide the city along racial and economic lines. Jean Hanawalt, the caucasian wife of Central Area's Garfield High School principal, Frank Hanawalt, spoke poignantly about the dangers of these divisions. "My major concern is that we don't divide ourselves into socioeconomic stratification. I feel if we build walls between socioeconomic areas it would be the 'kiss of death' in Seattle; it would ruin any sense of unity."<sup>103</sup> Franklin leaders worried that increased community control might not effectively serve the city of Seattle, its students and communities. Because of these concerns with decentralization, the majority of the Franklin Council continued to support the District's middle school desegregation plan.<sup>104</sup>

Kent Kammerer, the Chairman of the Lincoln Area Council in North Seattle and a teacher at Lincoln High echoed Franklin Council's intricate opposition to community control and decentralization in a 1972 letter to the President of the Seattle School Board.<sup>105</sup> Kammerer's letter demonstrates his group's willingness to support desegregation along with a carefully worded critique of localism.

It is with much interest that we follow the newspaper accounts of the Central Area School Council's desegregation plan. A significant question now arises. We presume that the Board's stated goal is an integrated society where each region [of the city], race and culture can function together. However, to its logical conclusion, regionalism can only foster greater divisions in our society. We are deeply concerned that the expansion of regional influence can only lead to separatism rather than integration.

In both the Franklin and the Lincoln Associations, the opposition to CASC and the idea of extensive community control was not just papered-over racism. It reflected a genuine debate about how best to improve the quality of education while ensuring equity for all children. They also questioned CASC's agenda.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Constantine Angelos, "School Board Split on Desegregation, 4-3," *Seattle Times*, March 23, 1972, E6.

<sup>105</sup> Kent Kammerer, Letter to Robert Tidwell, January 11, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc.A.A2.38, Community Services, Box 4, Folder 6, District Council 1971-72.

While Franklin and Lincoln Councils' discussions diverged from CASC's perspective on community control, Cleveland's council in the multi-ethnic Beacon Hill was similar to CASC's viewpoint. In Seattle's Beacon Hill neighborhood, however, the arguments about community control leaned more in favor of CASC's position. Representing a neighborhood heavily populated by recent immigrants, the Cleveland Community Council was reticent about supporting desegregation in their community. They had a reputation for liberalism and were generally perceived of as a desegregation backer. They sought to ensure that recent immigrants received English language instruction and that African American and Asian students were provided a "multi-ethnic education" that was culturally sensitive and celebratory.<sup>106</sup> (In District memos such as the one quoted above that addressed the political leanings of Cleveland Council, school officials routinely used the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative' to describe the leaders of the Councils. 'Liberals' were generally Democrats who supported desegregation and were concerned about questions of racial equity. Conservatives were a broad range of individuals from the most extreme John Birch Society members in West Seattle to more moderate Republicans who were wary of desegregation.)

Outside of the International District, Beacon Hill was home to the highest population of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino residents in the city. Cleveland High School was truly multi-ethnic with about 55% white, 25% Asian and about 20% African American and Native American students.<sup>107</sup> The views expressed by Cleveland's Council were similar to debates in Boston's multi-ethnic communities.<sup>108</sup> Many of Cleveland Council's discussions about desegregation

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<sup>106</sup> Kermit Franks, Internal Memorandum to Charles Hough, September 28, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A.2.40, Community Services, Box 6, Folder 7, Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Involvement.

<sup>107</sup> Frank Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools*, 64. As Asians moved out of the International District, where they often lived upon arrival in Seattle, they bought homes in and around Beacon Hill.

<sup>108</sup> See Adam Nelson, *The Elusive Ideal: Equal Educational Opportunity and the Federal Role in Boston's Public Schools, 1950-1985* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005) for a discussion of the tensions between federal ELL policies and desegregation.

centered on how English Language Learners would receive adequate instruction if they were bused to schools around the city that did not have language services or a multi-ethnic curriculum.<sup>109</sup> In light of these concerns, the Council wrote a letter to the School Board, declaring that desegregation would be unnecessary and disruptive in their already diverse neighborhood schools.

...the Cleveland area is currently the most integrated section of the city and that further desegregation of this area at this time would only serve to upset the present balance... Cleveland area schools have unique problems in that they contain multi-ethnic populations separated by language problems, socio-economic problems, and acceptance as individuals by some segments of the total population.

Many in this community felt mandatory desegregation might cause more harm than good for newly arrived immigrants who were struggling to find their place in their adopted homeland. However, despite the Cleveland Council's targeted reticence towards mandatory desegregation in their neighborhood, they were generally supportive of the policy's wider goals and avoided any overt connections to CASC.

Chinese Americans in San Francisco objected to busing on similar grounds, arguing that desegregated schools did not allow for bi-lingual programs and a culturally specific education that was possible in neighborhood schools.<sup>110</sup> To many families, including those who were supportive of integrated schools, busing children away from their neighborhoods was unwelcome because of the intangible and tangible losses associated with the dispersal of the community's children. This potential loss from desegregation was especially unwelcome in communities such as Beacon Hill where there was a strong ethnic identity. However, unlike in San Francisco's

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<sup>109</sup> Cleveland Citizens Council, "Recommendations from CQIE Final Report," December 14, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A2.37, Community Services, Box 1, Cleveland Interim Council Folder, 2 & Don Kazama Letter to the School Board, July 14, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, School Board Meeting Minutes, Record 68, 18. Kazama's statement to the Board was supported by the Japanese-America Citizen League, and the Asian Coalition for Equality.

<sup>110</sup> Brilliant, *The Color of America has Changed*, 243.



Chinatown, in Seattle there was no Asian majority. Because of Seattle's truly multi-ethnic population, some parents feared that the city's Asian minority and ELL students would not be truly well served in either a community control model or a desegregated school district. Asians of any national origin would never have majority or even significant minority influence over the city's school policies and programs. As parents across Seattle's multi-ethnic population from Beacon Hill to the Rainier Valley to Wallingford debated the wider implications of desegregation and decentralization, CASC's leaders realized that in order to have any level of influence over their community and to retain stature in the wider Seattle community, they would need to tone down their anti-District and community control rhetoric.

In 1973, CASC took a more measured approach to desegregation and began working to craft a more unified black front around desegregation and integration. They were also responding to the virulent 1973 recall election and anti-busing campaign motivated by white parents in Citizens Against Mandatory Busing (CAMB), which is the subject of the following chapter. CASC's leaders were aware that the perpetuation of black in-fighting over desegregation was an unpopular distraction from the more important battles against CAMB's anti-black agenda. CASC faced a difficult dilemma. On the one hand, they were battling white racists, while on the other hand they were fighting the Black Panthers who felt CASC was capitulating to the white majority. Nevertheless, CASC was most successful when it had a well-defined target, such as the School District's hiring and firing practices, against which it could mobilize. Once the debates about desegregation became more complicated, particularly regarding the middle school desegregation plan, which was attractive to many African American families who saw it as an opportunity to improve their children's education, CASC's leadership was less convincing and less successful. Perhaps CASC's most lasting legacy was their meetings, which provided a forum

for parents to express some of their more personal concerns about busing, many of which crossed racial lines.

#### BLACK AND WHITE PARALLELS

In Seattle's busing battles, black and white parents, usually stemming from oppositional antecedents, engaged with the freedom of choice dialogue in ways that were surprisingly alike. Both white and black families had a common enemy in the school district because they felt that administrators were insensitive to their personal needs. For these parents, busing was inconvenient and uncomfortable because the school and the neighborhood at the end of the bus ride were unfamiliar. The lines blurred between whites and blacks when African American parents wondered about how busing would impinge upon their freedom to send their children to the school of their choice. At a CASC meeting in June 1972, a few months before the middle school busses were set to roll across the Ship Canal, parents explained that integration should be a choice. Mrs. Isaac Wilson a black mother of three junior high school children spoke at the meeting.

I have nothing against integration if that is what you want. I mean if parents want to mix their black kids up with the whites – that's their business – but it should be a voluntary thing...Schools should not be closed to anyone who wants to enter them, but forceful attendance is as bad as not being allowed to go.<sup>111</sup>

Another black mother, Mrs. Beatrice Byrd spoke in agreement. "Taking our children out of their schools and mandatorily bussing them to other schools like a herd of cattle and saying we are desegregating them, is this freedom?"<sup>112</sup> Taken out of context, one might easily misconstrue Byrd and Wilson's statements as commentary from a white anti-busing rally. *The Medium* weighed in on the topic, arguing that freedom of choice "may be in jeopardy and mandatory

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<sup>111</sup> "Parents Object to transfer: CASC Asks parents to reject Bussing Assignments," *The Medium*, June 15, 1972, A1.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

busing inevitable” if schools in the Central Area were not able to meet the needs of their students.<sup>113</sup> From a localistic lens, African Americans linked neighborhood school attendance with choice and freedom, as had the white anti-busers. By doing so, blacks and whites conflated personal identity and freedom with neighborhood identity and integrity. In other words, they argued, with faulty logic, that the only way to ensure their personal freedom was to maintain the neighborhood school concept.

However, from a civil rights perspective, attending a neighborhood school represented an important right for blacks because in Southern states, Districts had frequently bused African American children past their “neighborhood school” to segregated black schools.<sup>114</sup> The neighborhood schools concept formed the foundation upon which white anti-busers from Seattle to Boston to Atlanta based much of their activism. Their position was that children should attend the school geographically closest to their home, which provided a race-neutral cover for their ideology. Not surprisingly, blacks and whites did not have the same relationship to neighborhood schools, because whites had almost always been guaranteed that their closest school would be open to them. While for blacks, especially in the South, the local school was not a surety. Nevertheless, in Seattle, blacks had never been turned away from their neighborhood schools. It was through residential segregation that these divides had been reinforced.

Parallels between black and white views of desegregation also became increasingly apparent to contemporaneous parents, who came together in the early 1970s to discuss desegregation. After a meeting with CASC, the Queen Anne Area Advisory Council leader Ben Schloredt commented: “they [Central Area parents] have the same concerns that we do for our

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<sup>113</sup> Publisher, “Thoughts from the Publisher, “To Bus or Not to Bus?,” *The Medium*, November, 5, 1970, 1.

<sup>114</sup> Michael Fuquay, “Civil Rights and the Private School Movement in Mississippi, 1964-1971,” *History of Education Quarterly* 42:2 (Summer, 2002): 161-63.

children, and [worry] about what is going to happen at the end of the bus ride.”<sup>115</sup> Yet, these comments could also be as self-serving because they could have been intended to justify their anti-busing stance in the race-neutral language of safety. From their closed door meeting in the summer of 1971, came a greater understanding between the two groups. Because of this gathering, Queen Anne parents could better see how black parents’ concerns paralleled theirs in areas such as safety and in questions about the quality of the education in their children’s new schools.<sup>116</sup> However, while they had concerns that seemed similar on the surface, the origins of these fears were quite different. Whites imagined that there might be physical risks for their children in largely black schools, while blacks had concrete evidence of open racial hostility in north Seattle schools. In 1971, the editors of *The Medium*, described the split between white and black communities and fears about the safety of blacks in “white neighborhoods.” According to *The Medium* “...no Black person in his right mind wants to move his family into an unprotected white neighborhood, even if we do live in a supposedly ‘opened society.’”<sup>117</sup> In the context of Seattle’s hostile racial climate from racist police officers who killed black youth to Sundown zones, it is not surprising that many blacks retained lingering doubts about the wisdom of desegregation.

In addition to worries about safety and freedom, although with differing origins, parents opposed mandatory busing because of the inconveniences inherent in the new policy and out of anxiety over the question of how their children would socially integrate into their new environments. Desegregation, civil rights leaders’ proposed solution to racial injustice in schools,

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<sup>115</sup> Queen Anne Area Citizens Advisory Council, Meeting Minutes, August 5, 1971, *Seattle Public Schools Archive*, Acc. A.A2.36, Box 2, Community Services Folder.

<sup>116</sup> Queen Anne's desegregation proposal provides evidence of the similarities between black and white parents’ attitudes towards busing. Queen Anne Area Citizens Advisory Council, Desegregation Proposal, undated, *Seattle Public Schools Archive*, Acc. A.A2.36, Box 2, Community Services Folder.

<sup>117</sup> Publisher, “Bussing not the real problem – Racial Balance in Communities Needed,” *The Medium*, August 19, 1971, A1.

did not fully meet the needs of those they were aiming to serve because it often made the everyday lives of African American families more complicated. For practical reasons alone, many families lamented the loss of the neighborhood school. Convenience, community unity, and easier access to before and after-school childcare, which was usually provided by neighbors and family members, for working parents were important across the color line. Parents of all groups and classes also worried about how their children would fit-in and become both academically and socially successful in their new schools. Mrs. McIntyre, an African American parent of an 8<sup>th</sup> grader spoke about her son who struggled socially in school. She explained that her son was “unusually shy and has a difficult time making friends. It has taken him nearly two years to fit into Meany’s environment and become comfortable enough ... that he could overcome his fear and begin to speak out in class and learn.”<sup>118</sup> McIntyre worried that as one of a handful of African American children who would be bused, it might be difficult for her socially awkward son to be successful academically if he was required to adjust to a new school in an unfamiliar neighborhood. His new North Seattle middle school would be physically and culturally distinct from his Central Area neighborhood school.

## CONCLUSION

In the Central Area, from the Black Panthers’ anti-integration activism to CASC’s unwillingness to support the middle school plan, black critiques of civil rights and busing were a hybridized form of backlash that both paralleled white and Asian activism and sought to forge a new and better path towards black equality. African Americans in the Central Area as well as Asians on Beacon Hill debated the merits of desegregation and integration, but when attempting to fit these national prescriptions to local conditions, they often found these policies fell short.

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<sup>118</sup> *The Medium*, “Parents Object to transfer: CASC Asks parents to reject Bussing Assignments,” June 15, 1972, A1.

For example, blacks were hesitant to send their children to largely white schools where racist teachers did not encourage them to enroll in the most challenging and enriching courses and programs.<sup>119</sup> While in many ways this activism railed against the failures of the civil rights to eradicate bigotry and improve living and educational conditions for minorities, this movement was complicated by CASC's attempts to find a middle path between the integrationists and the Panthers. Black backlash in Seattle did not constitute an abandonment of civil rights. Instead, as characterized by the internal divides in the African American community, it was a movement that called for a critical engagement with busing and civil rights. Leaders constantly searched for creative new ways to improve black lives. Furthermore, cross-racial pro-family and neighborhood rhetoric, seen in community council meetings around the city and in parental commentary at CASC gatherings, coupled with weak District leadership made busing increasingly unpopular. The District appeared incompetent in both its reassignment of Dr. Patterson and in its slow and unsteady implementation of the middle school desegregation plan. All of these factors contributed to growing disillusionment with busing in the Central Area in this period.

Analyzing the depth of the early 1970s multi-faceted divisions in Seattle's black community around the question of desegregation is crucial because this in-fighting was in sharp contrast to what would occur only a few years later in 1978 when the majority of the black community coalesced around and advocated for a much more adeptly managed, developed, and marketed Seattle Plan. This shift in Seattle's African American population on busing will also provide further evidence refuting the abandonment theory of black activism. While in 1972, weak District leadership contributed to black in-fighting by merely played lip service to Central

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<sup>119</sup>Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 173, *The Medium*, "Parents Object to transfer: CASC Asks parents to reject Bussing Assignments," June 15, 1972, A1.

Area needs and concerns, in 1978 the District would work as a collaborator with African American leaders to ensure that the Seattle Plan incorporated key components of the black agenda.

However, before analyzing school desegregation policies in 1978, chapter 3 turns to North Seattle, exploring white anti-busing backlash in the early 1970s. Citizens Against Mandatory Busing (CAMB) based in North Seattle led a potent, thinly veiled racist campaign to stop the middle school desegregation plan. While there were elements of the white opposition, such as their anti-school district administration, pro-neighborhood, choice rhetoric that paralleled black activism, many of CAMB's followers subscribed to a socially conservative worldview, which dictated their anti-busing activism. Their conservative backlash had its home in the North Seattle neighborhoods of Wallingford and Roosevelt and in the peninsula neighborhood of West Seattle, geographically and politically distant from the Central Area and Beacon Hill.

### **Chapter 3: Citizens Against Mandatory Busing Reject the Extremists: “John Birch Society, Ku Klux Klan, and Women’s Lib”**

Citizens Against Mandatory Busing(CAMB), a highly litigious, white, working and middle class organization, led the powerful and vitriolic campaign against the early 1970s middle school busing plan. This chapter argues that in the North Seattle neighborhoods of Wallingford and Roosevelt, CAMB used their activism to reinforce white dominance in the racial hierarchy and as a tool to push their socially conservative agenda. Arthur Piehler, the group’s attorney and chairman of CAMB’s legal and legislative committee declared that they were a “moderate” organization that excluded extremists such as members of the “John Birch Society, Ku Klux Klan, and [the] Women’s Lib” movement.<sup>1</sup> By seeking to differentiate himself from what he perceived of as the extreme right (the KKK), and the extreme left (women’s liberation), Piehler articulated his own and CAMB’s collective socially conservative worldview. While Piehler did not want to be perceived of as a white supremacist, he embraced anti-feminism that sought to retain traditional gender norms. CAMB’s literature and members’ statements frequently connected busing to concerns about family values and social control, addressing a wide range of issues from preschool to sex-education.

CAMB’s family politics embedded with their busing activism, deliberately reinforced conservative gender hierarchies. I argue that in order to understand anti-busing activism, the analytical prism of gender and motherhood must be fore-grounded. In the 1970s, schooling was one of the primary vehicles for mothers, who were generally the principal caregivers of children, to engage with the public sphere. Social conservatives such as members of CAMB believed that there was an intimate connection between the mother and her children’s education because

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<sup>1</sup> Don Duncan, “Mandatory School busing: the ‘anti’ side of the coin,” *Seattle Times*, December 13, 1970, F14.



schools were an extension of the mother's purview. Inspired by Robert Self's groundbreaking argument about how divergent conceptions of the family have shaped American politics since the 1960s, my analysis brings his model of "breadwinner conservatism" to bear on CAMB's ideology and on busing opposition more generally.<sup>2</sup> "Breadwinner conservatives" believed that it was crucial to define and protect the idealized family from "moral threats," including busing, gay rights, and women's liberation.<sup>3</sup> Busing threatened the private sphere of the family because children bused to unfamiliar territory would be far away from both their mothers who stayed at home and the neighborhoods that these socially conservative parents had deemed appropriate places in which to raise their children. Therefore busing infringed not only upon their rights as parents, but also as homeowners.

While homeowner revolts in the 1960s and 1970s are a familiar story from New York City to Atlanta to Detroit's suburbs, my connection between the property rights discourse and the language of conservative family politics sheds new light on our understanding of anti-busing activism.<sup>4</sup> The busing literature does not commonly stress the relationship between gender, family politics, and the opposition to busing, a gap that this chapter seeks to fill.<sup>5</sup> However, in works such as Matthew Lassiter's *The Silent Majority* and Lisa McGirr's *Suburban Warriors* that examine the rise of American conservatism more broadly, gender is cited as an explanatory factor, though it is not the focus of their arguments. Furthermore, in a reexamination of some of the findings in monographs such as Ronald Formisano's *Boston Against Busing*, which downplay racism as a motivator for the movement, I uncover that racism was a key, though not

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<sup>2</sup> Self, *All in the Family*.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>4</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 466-467.

<sup>5</sup> For one of the only works that makes a clear connection between gender and busing see: Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*. Other works on busing include: Formisano, *Boston against Busing*; Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race*; Gamm, *Urban Exodus*; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Hosang, *Racial Propositions*.

the sole, instigator of Seattle's anti-busing activism.<sup>6</sup> By exploring race, gender, and busing this chapter also contributes to the small, but growing historiography of conservative gender ideology in the 1970s, including works such as Donald Critchlow's analysis of Phyllis Schlafly's anti-feminism and Bethany Moreton's study of Walmart's gendered business practices.<sup>7</sup>

CAMB's anti-busing activism was based at the neighborhood level and from 1971 to 1973 they employed the community council system to reinforce their ideologies and neighborhood rhetoric. School districts around the country in the 1960s who aimed to appease black school activists, endorsed the establishment of community councils such as Seattle's CASC, formed in 1969.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the Seattle District sponsored councils were unique because they represented all neighborhoods in the city, not only the dispossessed communities of color who had been clamoring for community control. In most U.S. cities whites were left to organize on their own, without official sanction from their respective school districts. The short-lived community council system created a forum for neighborhoods, particularly Roosevelt, Magnolia, and West Seattle to express their highly localized opposition to busing. As Robert Self argues, "space organizes political scale," the councils found a new space in which to push for political change that revolved around the neighborhood. These groups had at least the intermittent attention of the School District.

Community councils, as powerful agitators for change, stirred up anti-busing anger particularly in their support for CAMB's 1973 failed recall campaign against four of the seven Seattle School Board members. This recall would serve to shake the resolve of Seattle's pragmatic liberals who had not yet solidly coalesced around busing. CAMB and the councils

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<sup>6</sup> Formisano, *Boston against Busing*.

<sup>7</sup> For discussions of conservative female activism that emphasized socially conservative values see: Critchlow *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*; Spruill, "Gender and America's Right Turn," and Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*.

<sup>8</sup> Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*, 4.

effectively delayed the implementation of the middle school plan. With its organized assaults on desegregation, CAMB challenged the Board's authority through several prolonged court battles. The upheaval caused by their litigation, though not necessarily the outcomes of these cases, was central to the failure of the early 1970s busing program to meet its broader goals to desegregate the entire Seattle School District. CAMB successfully stopped the expansion of the desegregation program and ultimately caused the downfall of the School Board. This was possible because the liberals who supported busing were not as strong or unified in the early 1970s as they would become a few years later.

This thematic chapter is divided into four sections that explain CAMB's ideology and how they shaped their opposition to the 1972 middle school plan to mirror their conservative world views. The first part provides historical context of 1960s and early 1970s school policies, which were implemented before the middle school busing plan, and elaborates upon the national legal background on busing. This section charts neighborhood politics and its relationship to early 1970s white opposition to busing. The second section describes CAMB's socially conservative agenda and gender politics. The third part describes CAMB's media campaign and racial ideologies. The fourth section explores the group's legal battles against the School Board. CAMB's early 1970s open racism, social conservatism, acerbic tactics and the District's floundering response, sharply diverged from 1978 when CiVIC employed measured discourse to oppose the highly organized and publicly united desegregation effort. Furthermore, with mixed results, the District made several policy changes in the 1960s that affected the reception of the school busing program. A few of these policies such as the conversion to middle schools caused a furious uproar among Seattle whites. Before the middle school controversies began, a radical

Urban League proposal that District leaders did not give serious consideration, set off loud and strident anti-busing anger, precipitating CAMB's founding.

#### SCHOOL POLICES, LITIGATION AND NEIGHBORHOODS

In 1964, civil rights liberals at the Urban League publicly proposed a controversial busing plan to District leadership. The League's triad plan to bus all Seattle schoolchildren, facilitating racial as well as economic integration, drew fireworks.<sup>9</sup> District and city leaders rejected the plan as outrageous and unacceptable to the white population.<sup>10</sup> The editors of the *Seattle Times* objected to the plan because it was "compulsory, clumsy, and costly," while the *Argus* saw little merit in "throwing together children from different races and backgrounds."<sup>11</sup> The League Plan resulted in an unprecedented 3,497 letters of opposition written by the public to the School Board.<sup>12</sup> In one particularly salient example, an unnamed Seattle citizen criticized the economic as well as racial policies inherent in the Triad Plan.

The city, in fact, encourages, a division between economic classes through low income housing laws, under which people in areas such as High Point [a housing project in West Seattle that was home to many people of color] are forced by law to move if they happen to become industrious enough to earn a little too much money. Economic segregation exists. It is a fact of life in a competitive economy. It is the incentive necessary for the human psyche to achieve and excel.<sup>13</sup>

The depth of the opposition to mandatory busing in Seattle appeared in both this father's comments about the inherent divisions in society as well as in the thousands of letters from Seattle residents who were distressed by the proposal. As we shall see in the following chapter, with this seemingly universal distaste for the policy, it is both remarkable and evidence of the strength and savvy of the pragmatic liberals that they would successfully resurrect and

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<sup>9</sup> Hanawalt et al., "The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981," 15.

<sup>10</sup> Pieroth, "Desegregating the Public Schools, 203.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>12</sup> Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools Seattle, Washington 1954-1968*, 207.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 207-208.

repackage, discarding the economic integration objectives, the triad plan fourteen years later in 1978. While civil rights liberals such as Urban League leaders were unable to successfully implement their plan in the 1960s, the School District was responsive to other demands of the black community such as the shift to middle schools.

In 1967, because of calls from black and white civil rights leaders, particularly members of CAMP such as Carol Richman, to place more control over schools in the hands of local communities, the School Board established the Southeast Education Center (SEEC). The main goal of the predominantly African American SEEC was to improve the education of black youth through community empowered and inspired solutions. SEEC suggested significant changes to the organization and structure of Central Area Schools. In 1969, the Board approved the controversial “Educational Plan for the Central District” or as it was more informally called, the 4-4-4 Plan, which aimed to improve the quality of education, facilitate racial integration in the neighborhood, and eliminate junior high schools in favor of middle schools.<sup>14</sup> The 4-4-4 plan restructured schools so that grades one through four were in smaller elementary units, middle schools with grades five through eight were housed at Meany and Madrona Middle Schools, and Garfield high school expanded to include grades nine through twelve.<sup>15</sup>

With the elimination of junior high schools in favor of middle schools, the Seattle School District was not alone in its endorsement of the model. School leaders were conforming to a national movement that began in 1962 and had roots in the Cold War conflict.<sup>16</sup> Administrators across the United States instituted the middle school model for three major reasons. It made the management of desegregation programs more efficient because segregated junior highs could be converted to desegregated middle schools and high schools with an added 9<sup>th</sup> grade could more

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<sup>14</sup> Hanawalt et al., “The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981.”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>16</sup> Paul S. George, “Renewing the Middle School,” *Middle School Journal* 41(2009): 4.

easily be desegregated. Second, middle schools freed up space in overcrowded elementary schools as sixth and sometimes fifth grade students attended the new schools. Finally, the school structure shift was a hastily established reaction to the controversies following the publication of the 1966 Coleman Report, which emphasized the declining educational outcomes of American schoolchildren.<sup>17</sup> In the Cold War, there were particular concerns about ensuring American students' competitiveness in the sciences.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as Mary Dudziak argues in *Cold War Civil Rights*, busing was a tool that American leaders hoped would distinguish themselves on the world stage vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Five years before the establishment of middle schools, the 1957 controversy in Little Rock Arkansas over the integration of Central High School had caused great uproar in America and abroad. President Dwight Eisenhower reflected upon the crisis. "Overseas, the mouthpieces of Soviet propaganda in Russia and Europe were blaring out that 'anti-negro violence' in Little Rock was being committed 'with the clear connivance of the United States government.'"<sup>19</sup> The benefits of using middle schools as a tool to desegregate more smoothly and subsequently improve America's reputation abroad were obvious to U.S. leaders and these policies increasingly trickled down to the local level. However, in Seattle, where opponents labeled middle schools as an untested experiment, anti-busers had little interest in how middle schools and desegregation might affect America's image abroad, though they willingly deployed Cold War rhetoric when it served to reinforce their own ideology.

Anti-busers worried about how new school policies such as middle schools might exert too much social control over Seattle schoolchildren.<sup>20</sup> CAMB, along with parents across the city

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<sup>17</sup> James S. Coleman of Johns Hopkins University, who was the principal author of a report, 'Equality of Educational Opportunity', U.S. Dept of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1966.

<sup>18</sup> George, "Renewing the Middle School," 4-5.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 119.

<sup>20</sup> Untitled, CAMB literature, Seattle Public Schools Archive, A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB.

coalesced in anger over the shift from the junior high school structure to the middle school model. In the north end schools, children in the sixth through eighth grade would attend middle schools and in the central area, fifth through eighth graders would attend middle schools. Junior high schools, which had formerly housed seventh through ninth graders, would be converted to these new middle schools. Don Duncan, a *Seattle Times* columnist summarized the anti-busing movement's stance regarding these changes. He wrote of the "fear that 'busing is only a smokescreen for radical long-range school revamping,' the opening wedge in a full-fledged 4-4-4 school system and giant educational complexes that will spell the end of neighborhood schools."<sup>21</sup> Duncan's reference to "giant educational complexes" appealed to conservative Cold War propaganda that suggested that American education would become increasingly socialistic while government grabbed control over the education of American youth. CAMB members and other white middle class Seattle parents worried that middle schools and busing would ultimately transform public schooling into a system that seemed more Soviet than American.

In addition to Cold War fears, the opposition to middle schools was both a justification for CAMB's anti-busing agenda and a cover for white supremacy. The policy was unpopular because the middle school model was first implemented in the Central Area where it served to better facilitate desegregation. General perceptions were that if the District implemented middle schools, Seattle schools were conforming to a "black" model of education. Mrs. Sam Hammack Jr., a parent, spoke up about the middle school model, which was also known as the "continuous-progress program."

[It] was 'instigated to get the Negroes up to the white level... Can this ever be achieved by a complete minority? All this continuous-progress concept has done is to take away any incentive from all school children. There is no competition, and if you are in life there always is some kind of competition.'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Don Duncan, "Mandatory School busing: the 'anti' side of the coin," *Seattle Times*, December 13, 1970, F14

<sup>22</sup> Don Duncan, "Mandatory School busing: the 'anti' side of the coin," *Seattle Times*, December 13, 1970, F14

While Hammack wanted her audience to believe that she was opposed to middle schools because the new schools would remove incentives for students, her true intention was to suggest that African Americans, “a complete minority” were inferior to whites. Thus, Hammack and others like her believed that the middle school model, developed by blacks, could never meet the needs of whites. In her social Darwinist view, whites should not be required to bus to black schools because they would be educated with less able, black classmates. Many of CAMB’s followers such as Hammack who claimed to be “more opposed to the middle school concept than to busing,” echoed her racist anti-middle school rhetoric.<sup>23</sup> The School Board, although bombarded with anti-middle school anger, did not cave to the pressure from CAMB to abandon the model.

The most important driver of District desegregation proposals in the early 1970s was the national legal climate. In the District’s “Plan for Integration” produced in November 1970, administrators described court rulings in Los Angeles and Pasadena regarding de facto segregation. District courts in these California cities ruled that School Boards were legally bound to develop a remedy for de facto segregation, which was segregation that occurred because of housing patterns.<sup>24</sup> The District’s 1970 report also pointed to an upcoming Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*.<sup>25</sup> In 1971, the highest court in the land set a legal precedent in the South with the *Swann* ruling. The Court did not set a standard for Northern schools that practiced de facto segregation, until 1973 with the *Keyes v. School District no. 1* ruling about Denver, Colorado.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless in 1971, before there was a Supreme Court ruling directly applicable to Seattle, Edward Palmason, Seattle School Board

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Seattle Public Schools, “Plan for Integration,” November 12, 1970, Seattle Public Schools Archive, A1978-12 Box1, Middle School Administration, 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Ed.*, 402 US 1. Desegregation advocates believed that the only way to achieve parity and to improve the performance of students of color was to make schools racially balanced through busing.

<sup>26</sup> *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, 413, U.S. 189, 1973.



President, presciently defended the District's decision to implement a busing plan. "It is unfair for persons 'to pour their wrath on school boards because nation-wide the school boards are becoming the agents of the courts.'" <sup>27</sup> Palmason's language suggested that because of the actions of the court, busing was a force that could not be stopped and he correctly intuited that Northern schools were the next in line to be desegregated by court order. Yet, as a vocal desegregation supporter and civil rights liberal, he also had a political stake in advocating for the inevitability of busing. Ultimately, his controversial stance would lead to his electoral defeat. In 1971, CAMB's offshoot group, People for Responsive Officials, fought a bitter campaign against Palmason, successfully unseating him in favor of Delwin Chafe, the Ballard anti-buser. <sup>28</sup> Despite the ballot box victories of anti-busers such as Chafe, with *Keyes* and the earlier *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, pressure mounted for all districts in the North and the South to make real attempts to desegregate their schools. Moreover, the *Keyes v. School District no. 1* ruling would serve to legally reinforce the Seattle School District's middle school plan.

In light of these and other rulings, the Board publicly indicated that it would take full responsibility for desegregating the Seattle Schools *before* the court mandated it. While they expressed themselves in proactive, optimistic rhetoric, the Board, nevertheless, was influenced by the mounting pressure to desegregate. Board members declared, "integrated education will provide better racial understanding among all children and that the responsibility for providing integrated education rests finally with the Board itself." <sup>29</sup> While the Board waxed poetic about racial understanding, out of the public eye, they worked tirelessly to address the concerns of the

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<sup>27</sup> Gus Angelos, "Seattle School Board: Analysis of the Palmason vs. Chafe School Board Race," *Seattle Times*, October 24, 1971, B10.

<sup>28</sup> Gus Angelos, "Recall Backers to put up candidates," *Seattle Times*, February 7, 73, A19 and Gus Angelos, "Bussing Big Issue in Defeat of Palmason after 13 years," *Seattle Times*, November 3, 1971, A4.

<sup>29</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, January 27, 1971, 207c.

Washington State Board of Education and the Washington State Board Against Discrimination.<sup>30</sup>

In an April 18, 1969 memo from the Supervisor of Intercultural Education at the Office of the State Superintendent to Seattle Superintendant Forbes Bottomly, the State pressed Seattle's school leaders to take real action on segregation. William H. Burton declared that the Seattle School District "is not progressing satisfactorily to eliminate or to significantly reduce de facto segregation and to provide equal educational opportunity for all of its students."<sup>31</sup> Underneath the State pressure was a fear of lawsuits and an anxiety about recent racial unrest. Burton and his teams worried that incidents such as the Lincoln High School riot and the bombs in the Central Area might increase and escalate if "previously ignored groups within our society" were not given a "voice" in local educational matters.<sup>32</sup> The middle school desegregation plan was seen as a way to give "voice" to the Central Area. In 1970, Superintendent Bottomly and the Board members were forced to act quickly in order to avoid censure from the State, which was demanding immediate action.

While the State pressured the Seattle School Board, school leaders often received political support for their positions, though stakeholder endorsements were often muted. In 1970, Mayor Wes Uhlman sent George Fahey from his Joint Committee on Education to a School Board Meeting to show support for the 1970 middle school plan.<sup>33</sup> In 1970, the middle school desegregation plan did not contain a mandatory component and Uhlman's participation in busing was indirect, through an emissary, unlike his later pro-busing activity. The Board also received

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<sup>30</sup> Edward Palmason Board President, Letter to Louis Bruno, Superintendent of Public Instruction, July 2, 1970, in *Planning Toward Integration*, eds. *Seattle Public Schools*, September, 1970.

<sup>31</sup> William H. Burton, Memo to Forbes Bottomly, April 18, 1969, in *Planning Toward Integration*, eds. *Seattle Public Schools*, September, 1970.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, November 11, 1970, 161.

support from the multi-racial Church Council of Greater Seattle, a group that consistently fought for desegregation in the 1960s and throughout the 1970s.<sup>34</sup>

While pressure from the Washington State government that sought to avoid a federal mandate in Seattle pushed the early 1970s Seattle Board to act, there was also an element of racial idealism and Seattle exceptionalism in the School Board rhetoric. Alfred Cowles, the School Board's only black member, spoke about desegregation at an October 1970, School Board meeting.

We are really talking about the state of our community and the city, the state, and possibly the nation. We are determining now whether this city, or any urban city with a multi-racial population can exist in a harmonious, healthy, tranquil atmosphere. We are talking about our future as a people. We do not really have the choice of whether we are going to live together. The choice has been made, and we must find a way to co-exist in this nation with due respect for individual differences and differences of opinion.<sup>35</sup>

Cowles's idealistic language about a city's population that was "harmonious, healthy, and tranquil" foreshadowed the discourse used in the later push for the district-wide busing program in 1978. Leaders such as Mayor Royer, Uhlman's successor, would point to Seattle as a city at the forefront of multi-racial relations. Cowles turned the legal mandate of desegregation, "we do not really have the choice" into a positive opportunity for Seattleites to demonstrate their respect for "individual differences and differences of opinion." Inherent in Cowles's statement was a sense of Seattle exceptionalism, the city had a special opportunity to address the problem of inequality. A few months prior, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Louis Bruno also stressed Seattle's special status.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>35</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, October 14, 1970, 117.

Seattle is one of the few northern and western cities that still has a rapidly diminishing chance to overcome its present school segregation as well as to avoid the racial, educational, social, political, and economic tragedies so prevalent in other cities.<sup>36</sup>

Bruno's more measured view of Seattle's exceptionalism, coupled with Cowles's idealism demonstrates how the District and State leadership had a vested interest in making the city stand out on a national stage.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, in the case of the District, there was a considerable disconnect between their liberal rhetoric and their actual commitment to the cause.

Despite strong legal backing for their policies and the public idealism expressed by Cowles and Palmason, the School Board struggled to implement the full middle school plan. The attention on middle schools was one component of a three-part proposal to desegregate the entire Seattle School District. The primary aim of the first part was to desegregate the highly segregated Meany-Madrona Middle School, while securing a non-white population in the 15-40% range for all schools in the program.<sup>38</sup> Board members also agreed that the first stage of the middle school plan should include both a District-wide multi-ethnic curriculum and increased hiring of multi-ethnic teachers and central office staff.<sup>39</sup> The second part of the middle school plan was to desegregate all of the schools in the affected middle school clusters, with the final stage being desegregation of the entire district by 1973. However, the District failed to implement a multi-ethnic curriculum. It also failed to desegregate the entire District and made no significant attempts to hire more minorities. In fact, in 1975 the Department of Health, Education and Welfare informed the District that it was "in violation of the Emergency School Aid Act's

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<sup>36</sup> Louis Bruno, Letter to Edward Palmason, April 7, 1970, in *Planning Toward Integration*, eds. *Seattle Public Schools*, September, 1970.

<sup>37</sup> Besides the earlier business backed New South boosterism seen in Atlanta and Charlotte, NC in the late 1950s and early 1960s, I have been unable to find parallels to Seattle District leaders' early 1970s adherence to idealistic, liberal language.

<sup>38</sup> School Board Meeting Notes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, November 11, 1970, 155.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, January 27, 1971, 207d.

civil rights assurances” for disproportionately assigning minority staff to high minority schools.<sup>40</sup> In order to avoid losing federal aid, the District made a concerted effort in the second half of the decade to spread the hiring of minorities across all schools.<sup>41</sup> As seen through the incomplete and unsteady implementation of the middle school plan, the Board was often half-hearted in its attempts to address racial injustice. One of the obstacles the Board faced when attempting to desegregate the Seattle School District was the very real problem of white flight, an exodus that anti-busers used to bolster their position.

In a highly charged August 1971 letter to the Seattle School Board, the West Seattle Community Council demonstrated their community’s rejection of busing, citing white flight as one of their many justifications for their position. The following passage depicts the School District as a monstrous beast.

As the dragon moves around in concentric circles from a computerized point of reference gobbling up children for mandatory bussing, and as children are moved out of the circle by their parents to escape the dragon, does the dragon make the circle bigger?<sup>42</sup>

The metaphor of the District as a dragon was a way of describing them as a powerful, mechanized, inhuman force, which threatened families and children. With this dramatically worded question, the council highlighted an issue that was on the minds of more than just extreme anti-busers, white flight. This was a serious concern in a school district that had experienced significant loss of white student population over the course of more than a decade. While minority enrollment increased by 20% from 1964 to 1970, white enrollment declined by 10%.<sup>43</sup> White flight to the suburbs, increased white enrollment in private schools, declining birth

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<sup>40</sup> Carlyn Elizabeth Orians, *School Desegregation and Residential Segregation: The Seattle Metropolitan Experience*, Thesis (MA), University of Washington, 1989, 71.

<sup>41</sup> School Board Meeting Notes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, January 27, 1971, 207c.

<sup>42</sup> Kay Trepanier and West Seattle Council, Letter to Mrs. Forrest Smith, August 30, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A2.40, Community Services, Box 3, Folder 1.

<sup>43</sup> Nand Hart-Nibbrig, “School Desegregation Politics: Seattle, Washington” *Washington Public Policy Notes*, 1.

rates, and minority in-migration help to explain these demographic changes. Seattle was not the only city wrestling with this phenomenon. White flight, often a reaction to mandatory desegregation caused many American cities and consequently inner city schools to become increasingly segregated.<sup>44</sup> While Seattle experienced white flight, the movement of people did not dramatically change the racial makeup of many of Seattle's primarily white neighborhoods, including West Seattle, Magnolia, and Roosevelt, where the loudest anti-busing activity originated.

The North Seattle neighborhoods of Wallingford and Roosevelt, home to the majority white schools included in the middle school plan and CAMB's headquarters were the epicenter of the early 1970s anti-busing movement. Roosevelt was a middle and upper middle class, predominantly white neighborhood directly north of the University District. Wallingford, with its many small bungalows, which borders the north end of Lake Union was slightly more working class than Roosevelt, though also almost entirely white. Both areas, which housed University professors and staff who worked at the neighboring University of Washington, had a reputation for being relatively liberal as compared to other parts of the city. The School District had carefully chosen these two neighborhoods to be included in the middle school plan because they believed that Roosevelt and Wallingford would offer less resistance to the plan than would be experienced in other sections of the city.<sup>45</sup>

District administrators had hoped that racial prejudice and a commitment to the neighborhood schools concept would be mild in Roosevelt and Wallingford. In addition to CAMB, the actions of Roosevelt's Community Council dashed these hopes. The Roosevelt Council's public objection to the 1971 hiring of a black principal, Robert Gary, at Eckstein

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<sup>44</sup> Kruse, *White Flight*, Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Gamm, *Urban Exodus*; and Schulman, *The Seventies*, 56-57.

<sup>45</sup> School Board Meeting Notes, August 20, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, 151.

Middle School, set the stage for their objections to mandatory desegregation. Neighborhood activists sought to avoid the racial mixing of students and administrators. Inherent in their objections to busing was also a broader criticism of the liberal rights revolution that was occurring locally and nationally. For example, in a budget report prepared for the District, the council suggested that not only should the District eliminate funding for both voluntary and mandatory busing and for human relations departments, but that it should also reduce special education funding, alternative programs, and counseling.<sup>46</sup> These programs were seen as “extras” which, particularly in the case of counseling, might encroach upon the family’s sphere of influence.

The racially motivated neighborhood schools concept and the objection to liberalized programs such as alternative education was especially well received on the West Seattle peninsula. There, across Elliot Bay, Seattle’s unique status as a city of neighborhoods with strong, influential, and distinctive political presences was most visible. Most CAMB members such as John Towey, the group’s first chairman, resided in North Seattle, however, the group’s second and most long-standing chairman, Henry Zebroski, hailed from West Seattle.<sup>47</sup> In the working class area, the racially coded language of the neighborhood was particularly salient. While leaders such as Zebroski did not display open racism and adhered to the race-neutral dialogue of neighborhood schools, followers such as George Michael, a sheet metal worker from West Seattle publicly stated that racism was central to his opposition to busing.

“Sure I’m a racist. If you say you are a racist everybody starts to apologize for you and say ‘You don’t really mean that.’ I don’t apologize. They made me this way.”... “the blacks are organizing and dedicating themselves to taking away my rights.” Michael

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<sup>46</sup> North Region Budget and Finance Committee, “Suggested Guidelines for the 1972-1973 Seattle School District Budget,” Seattle Public Schools Archive, A1978-12 Box1, Middle School Administration, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Zebroski ran the group from June 1971 to September 1972. “Towey Quits as Head of Busing Foes, *Seattle Times*, June 30, 1971, A16 & “Issue Can’t make ballot says official,” *Seattle Times*, September 7, 1972, A5.

firmly believes blacks want lowered standards in the schools and in the union to which he belongs, and he adds, “You shouldn’t tear down any man’s house to better yourself.”<sup>48</sup>

Michael feared that increased rights for African Americans would diminish his own socio-economic status. In a clear parallel to the tensions between City Council President Phyllis Lamphere and her working class neighbors, many of whom were victims of the Boeing Bust, Michael’s racism was interwoven with his class anxieties. Michael’s viewpoints were similar to experiences in Richmond, CA, and Boston where working class anti-busers rebelled against liberal elites who failed to take into consideration their worldview.<sup>49</sup> West Seattle’s geographic separation from the rest of Seattle, deep class divisions, and the unemployment epidemic that hit many working class Seattleites in the cold in the early 1970s served to reinforce racial prejudices, further alienating many residents from the liberal middle class elites at the School Board and city government.

Reflecting the neighborhood’s isolation and political leanings, the *West Seattle Herald* displayed strong anti-busing sentiment, paralleling the West Seattle Community Council’s activism. The *Herald* consistently published articles about CAMB sponsored activities, which included front-page notices about upcoming CAMB meetings and editorials against mandatory busing.<sup>50</sup> The newspaper went so far as to develop a reader poll designed to understand West Seattle views on busing.<sup>51</sup> The vast majority of *Herald* readers rejected busing of any kind, including voluntary busing.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Don Duncan, “Mandatory School busing: the ‘anti’ side of the coin,” *Seattle Times*, December 13, 1970, F14.

<sup>49</sup> Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*, 13 and Formisano, *Boston Against Busing*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Editorial Board, “Message to the School Board,” *West Seattle Herald*, February 21, 1973, A4; “School Bussing,” *West Seattle Herald*, November 5, 1970, A1 and “Anti-busing Organization outlines position,” *West Seattle Herald*, November 19, 1970, A1.

<sup>51</sup> “Umbrage over Bussing,” *The West Seattle Herald*, October 29, 1970, A20.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



Furthermore, the West Seattle Community Council was also openly racist. An internal School District memo in 1973 blasted the West Seattle Council for sidestepping the requirements to elect a racially balanced council. The Council filled a designated “Asian” spot with a white male, declaring that “no Asian in West Seattle wished to be considered a minority.”<sup>53</sup> Kay Trepanier, the elected leader of the West Seattle Schools Council, was a socially conservative culture warrior who ran unsuccessfully for a Republican seat in the State Legislature in 1972.<sup>54</sup> With Trepanier in the lead, School District officials designated her group as the most conservative and strongly anti-busing school council south of the ship canal.<sup>55</sup> In November 1972, the West Seattle Council submitted a ‘unanimous’ statement about the city’s political climate. Their position paper was openly racist, declaring that “our community doesn’t believe in the importance of racial balance...” and that the community “will not accept liberalized, unproved attempts to educate children.”<sup>56</sup> In the early 1970s, Trepanier and the council were not shy about asserting their anti-integration perspective, language that would be publicly unacceptable only a few years later. While not all West Seattle residents were anti-busers, the majority firmly rejected desegregation.<sup>57</sup>

These objections from working class citizens such as Michael, middle class residents such as the editors of the Herald, and West Seattle Council members led by Trepanier were not surprising considering the peninsula’s isolation and restrictive housing covenants. The area was

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<sup>53</sup> Kermit Franks, Internal memo to Charles Hough, February 2, 1973, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A2.40, Community Services, Box 6, Folder 1, Sealth 1971-73.

<sup>54</sup> Kermit Franks, Internal memo to Charles Hough, September 28, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A.20.40, Community Services, Box 6, Folder 7, Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Involvement, 2. and for examples of Kay Trepanier’s approach see: “The Child Belongs to the Family, Not the State”, *West Seattle Herald*, March 9, 1972 Kay Trepanier, Letter to the Editor, *West Seattle Herald*, October 25, 1972; Kay Trepanier, Letter to the Editor, *West Seattle Herald*, December 20, 1972.

<sup>55</sup> Kermit Franks, Internal memo to Charles Hough, September 28, 1972, 2.

<sup>56</sup> West Seattle Statement on Political Climate for Bond Issue Passage in West Seattle Area, November 29, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archives, Acc. A.A2.37, Community Services, Box 3, Folder 2, West Seattle CSAS Minutes Agenda 1971-73.

<sup>57</sup> Ron Tracy, Letter to the Editor, *West Seattle Herald*, January 24, 1973.

also home to two subdivisions with restrictive racial covenants: one on Alki on the Northwestern point of the peninsula and the other in High Point, located in the central part of the neighborhood.<sup>58</sup> While West Seattle attitudes towards voluntary busing evolved somewhat as the decade progressed, the majority of neighborhood residents adamantly rejected mandatory busing throughout the 1970s. CiVIC, the most powerful anti-busing group in the late 1970s was founded in West Seattle. From white flight to strong neighborhood allegiances, the District faced many obstacles to desegregating the Seattle Schools. Resistance to the District's program was catalyzed by CAMB and their relentless campaign to end all mandatory busing.

#### CAMB'S SOCIALLY CONSERVATIVE AGENDA AND GENDER POLITICS

White parent volunteers who did not want their children bused to the predominately-black Central District led CAMB, the most vocal and organized opponent of the middle school busing plan. The group was a successor to Save Our Neighborhood Schools (SOS), formed in opposition to the District's 1963 *voluntary* racial transfer plan.<sup>59</sup> CAMB described itself as "David" "fighting against the goliath that is the school district," who appeared to have unlimited financial resources to wage the busing battle.<sup>60</sup> CAMB leaders emphasized their grassroots credentials. In new member registration forms and in public statements, leaders stressed that their petitions had garnered over 30,000 signatures from ordinary Seattle citizens.<sup>61</sup>

The group's highlighting of its grassroots foundation resonated with other conservative activism in Orange County and Richmond, California. In 1969, Richmond working and middle class parents who had previously been politically ambivalent effectively united against their District's mandatory desegregation plan. This grassroots movement defeated all five liberal

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<sup>58</sup> See Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Projects, Accessed on March 10, 2014, <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/covenants.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 215.

<sup>60</sup> CAMB Fact Sheet, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A2010-03, Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB.

<sup>61</sup> Form EM 2-6566, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc, A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB.

School Board members who had supported the plan and replaced them with conservatives who rejected all integration. Working class Richmond residents rejected the plan in part because in comparison to upper and middle class whites, it placed a disproportionate burden on working class white children to bus.<sup>62</sup> While in the late 1960s and early 1970s in suburban Orange County busing was not a direct threat because there were no plans to integrate the almost entirely white district, conservative middle class activists acted aggressively on other social issues related to schooling. In 1969, Orange County parents took to the streets to overturn a “prominent and innovative sex education program.”<sup>63</sup> Like their early 1970s conservative Californian counterparts, CAMB’s grassroots activism was comprehensive and wide ranging. They litigated, published advertisements, wrote newsletters, penned letters to the editor, conducted community meetings, signed petitions, and initiated phone trees.

Despite relatively limited funds, CAMB was able to pursue anti-busing litigation through drawing on the help of attorneys who resided in the neighborhood and actively orchestrating the group’s public discourse. These neighborhood lawyers, such as John Muckelstone from North Seattle, often worked pro-bono on their anti-busing cases.<sup>64</sup> As the legal mouthpieces of the organization, Muckelstone and other attorneys were the most careful of all of CAMB’s leadership and membership to present a racially neutral discourse. Demonstrating a “rational” argument for anti-busing, Muckelstone declared, “more bussing has got to be stopped and better education started.” His statement aimed to show that his group objected to busing because of concerns about how the policy would affect the quality of education, rather than race.<sup>65</sup> While Muckelstone sought to appear race-neutral, many CAMB members and leaders diverged from

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<sup>62</sup> Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*, 204

<sup>63</sup> See McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 227-228.

<sup>64</sup> CAMB Fact Sheet, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB.

<sup>65</sup> Constantine Angelos, “CAMB leaders ask halt to busing plans,” *Seattle Times*, March 17, 1972, A7.

this stance. Members such as Mrs. Flournoy, a mother of seven, openly used racial slurs. In justifying her opposition to the middle school plan, she explained that children were scared of attending school with African Americans who lived in the Central Area. According to Flournoy, her daughter's classmates teased: "Be good or you'll be sent to the nigger district."<sup>66</sup> Because of the incendiary nature of Flournoy's open racism and that of many similar to her, the leaders of CAMB were forced to tread carefully as they publicly disavowed racism, while retaining the loyalty of their broad following.

The ideology, discourse, and background of John W. Towey Jr., a Boy Scout troop leader, owner of a private "integrated" swimming club in North Seattle and the first chairman of CAMB was typical of many of the organization's leaders.<sup>67</sup> Towey, a father of five from North Seattle fought against forced busing, declaring that, "any individual or group decreeing otherwise is violating our civil liberties and our freedom of choice."<sup>68</sup> While Towey who "just couldn't remain silent" about busing, attempted to present a rational, race-neutral anti-busing posture in his references to "freedom of choice," he also projected a less measured socially conservative ethos. Fearful of "sociologists" who might change the structure of schooling altogether, he advocated for the traditional neighborhood school.

'This affects my children. It is the beginning of a long-range plan I can't buy. I don't want to keep quiet and then, 10 years from now, hear that my children will be bussed on Monday and brought home on Friday. The neighborhood, family-oriented school is an important way of life for all of us.'<sup>69</sup>

Towey's extremist, though not racist, rhetoric suggested that busing and other school policies would keep children from their families for a week at a time. As the first leader of the group, he set the tone for the organization. Towey and many in CAMB sought to eliminate not just busing,

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<sup>66</sup> Don Duncan, "Mandatory School busing: the 'anti' side of the coin," *Seattle Times*, December 13, 1970, F14.

<sup>67</sup> "School busing foes name chief," *Seattle Times*, October 26, 1970, A17.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen H. Dunphy, "Busing Plan Draws Strong Opposition," *Seattle Times*, October 29, 1970, F3

<sup>69</sup> Don Duncan, "Mandatory School busing: the 'anti' side of the coin," *Seattle Times*, December 13, 1970, F14

but any policies that they perceived might change the social order. Nevertheless, as an alternative to busing, Towey touted neighborhood integration as the key to solving Seattle's deep racial inequities.<sup>70</sup> While residential integration was endorsed by CAMB's leaders and some of its members, the idea would not have been popular with many of their followers.

Central to CAMB's anti-busing crusade, was their socially conservative ethos and pushback against the changes that the rights revolution had wrought. Ultimately, the group sought to wrest control of their children's education from the hands of the School District, which they felt was overstepping its bounds. Similarly, a conservative activist in Anaheim, California expressed dissatisfaction with what he saw as dramatic shifts in the American "way of life," including changes to public education. "Customs, traditions and mores have often been considered obsolete, old fashioned, and hence, discarded or minimized by a powerful faction of sincere but misguided Americans who have attempted to indoctrinate the American public."<sup>71</sup> Echoing that of the Anaheim conservative, CAMB's opposition to a spectrum of social issues complicates our understanding of the opposition to busing. These stated ideals suggest that racism, though central, was not the only driving force behind CAMB's rebellion against the School Board. CAMB sought to recreate a "traditional" America. White male dominance, a Christian worldview, strict gender roles, strong public schools, and a racially segregated society were all clearly held values. Prominence of the nuclear family and religious exclusion were also important components of CAMB's ideology. However, CAMB's logic created an artificial distinction between adherence to a "traditional" America and resistance to racial integration. The former is a way of denying the latter because the "American way of life" is and was rooted in racial inequality. Nevertheless, despite race as an overarching factor in CAMB's activism, there

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 69.

were other elements of their activism such as anti-feminism that in the eyes of CAMB activists were separate from the prism of race. CAMB's conservative ideology was part of wider national movement that pushed the nation's political axis to the right.<sup>72</sup>

CAMB's glorification of the traditional family unit reinforced their "breadwinner conservatism," which aimed to shield the American family from busing, arguing that it was an instrument of social control, which would weaken families.<sup>73</sup> CAMB called the School District's plan to bus their children "revolutionary" because they believed that it would fundamentally alter the family and school structure to which they were accustomed.<sup>74</sup> Judy Wallace, the CAMB chairperson of the Ingraham neighborhood explained how the group had broadened their agenda when they realized that the School Board's plan involved more than just achieving racial balance. She and others in her group were fearful that "the entire philosophy of education" was changing, worrying that busing would spell less parental influence over their children. Such a shift was troubling for anti-busing activists like Wallace who sought to ensure the primacy of the family. Consequently, Wallace urged fellow parents to learn more about what was happening in their children's schools, suggesting that the District might have ominous plans for their innocent offspring.<sup>75</sup> "The child belongs to the family, not the state" was a persistent theme in CAMB literature and in letters written by anti-busers across the city.<sup>76</sup> Through this language, busing was seen as an assault on the family and the family's purview, the raising of children. By making it necessary to spend more time on the bus and in school, CAMB parents asserted, schools, with

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>73</sup> Self, *All in the Family*.

<sup>74</sup> Judy Wallace, "CAMB Petitions Available" *Northgate Journal*, May 17, 1972 and CAMB Fact Sheet, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB.

<sup>75</sup> Judy Wallace, "CAMB Petitions Available" *Northgate Journal*, May 17, 1972.

<sup>76</sup> CAMB Fact Sheet, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB –and newspaper editorials such as Kay Trepanier's "The Child Belongs to the Family, Not the State," *West Seattle Herald*, March 9, 1972, 5 and Maxine Vog's letter about the loss of parental influence in busing, "Integration isn't the real purpose," *West Seattle Herald*, April 6, 1972, 4 and Alice Sierson, "Reader supports Recall," *West Seattle Herald*, January 17, 1973, 4

their misguided value structures, would have too much influence over their children. As in Towey's purposeful exaggeration that schools that would keep children under their care from Monday to Friday, parents would become secondary to the increasingly powerful school structure.

In CAMB's focus on threats to the family, as with their critiques of the middle school model, they employed conservative Cold War and extremist language where members likened busing to tactics used in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. CAMB's literature often referred to mandatory busing plan as the "master plan," which suggested the nefarious nature of the policy that aimed to change the social order as Hitler had attempted in Germany.<sup>77</sup> By using this language and imagery of World War II, CAMB sought to generate fear. While CAMB's anti-busing literature was often extreme in its tone, politicians in the early 1970s found more subtle ways to refer to the themes of social control and parental influence. Democratic State Representative Dave Ceccarelli representing the 34<sup>th</sup> District, which included West Seattle and Vashon Island, spoke out about busing in a more moderate tone. He noted that families of bused children might have a harder time reaching their children in the case of an emergency, he also cited a "family disruption cost," and argued that children would be more likely to take drugs having become unmoored from the influence of their parents. Presumably, the long bus rides would give students the opportunity to experiment with illegal drugs. Ceccarelli's view echoed CAMB's social control argument. Though masked by judicious language, there was a clear statement that children would be more successful and less likely to engage in deviant behavior if they spent more time with their parents.<sup>78</sup> An important component of their social control agenda

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<sup>77</sup> Marie Lunt, "Editorial," *CAMB Newsletter*, April 1971, 1, Seattle Public Schools Archives, Acc. 2010-03, Box 6, Folder 6.

<sup>78</sup> "Ceccarelli Gives Views on Problems of Bussing," *West Seattle Herald*, October 29, 1970, 1.

and corresponding scare tactics were legal arguments that emphasized busing's dangerous emotional effects on students.

A key part of CAMB's argument in its 1972 lawsuit, which attempted to gain an injunction against the middle school busing plan, was its emphasis upon the psychological dangers of busing. Resistance to busing based on the negative social effects of the policy tended to illuminate class differences among opponents of busing because it was primarily, though not exclusively, families with greater means who focused their arguments on the psychology of desegregation. Experts on both sides testified about this issue.<sup>79</sup> One CAMB psychiatrist explained:

It is my opinion that out of the number who will be bussed, there will be ten percent who are mentally ill or potentially mentally ill. That [with] the loss of the neighborhood schools, the loss of the security of knowing that mother or father will be there near them, that mother or father can visit them, being introduced into a new school, and to a new peer group, that this ten percent is a high risk group to become mentally ill or social actor-outers.<sup>80</sup>

The psychiatrist suggested that children could become "social actor-outers" because of busing. His testimony helped to create an atmosphere of fear. The rhetoric fostered a building hysteria about the potential social and emotional distress that busing would cause to "vulnerable" children. The concern about the psychological effects of busing also echoed black mothers' anti-busing discourse, which we saw in the previous chapter.<sup>81</sup> This emphasis upon how busing affected children's mental states attempted to evoke the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in which Supreme Court justices pointed to the psychological damage that black students

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<sup>79</sup> Supreme Court of the State of Washington, No. 42106 *Citizens Against Mandatory Busing et al. v. Edward P. Palmason et al.* filed April 6, 1972, University of Washington Special Collections, Palmer Smith Files, Acc. 4512.002 Box 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

<sup>81</sup> Kora Vann, "Central Area Residents Assures Council of Their Willingness to Boycott," *The Medium*, March 4, 1971, A1.



were subjected to while attending segregated schools.<sup>82</sup> However, while they attempted to parallel *Brown*, the arguments made by CAMB's psychologists were actually the opposite of the case made by *Brown* psychologists. In *Brown*, the witnesses for the prosecution argued that segregation was psychologically damaging because children internalized the negative views of whites who wanted to keep them out, while CAMB psychologists argued that being included in black schools could cause white children harm.

While, to varying degrees, white and black families in the early 1970s pointed to worries about how busing would affect their children, whites such as members of CAMB, who were more likely to have family units that included a stay-at-home mother, stressed the psychological effects of busing more forcefully than the practical considerations of busing children far from home. The sheer inconvenience of busing, which was such a problem for working class families in the Central Area, was not as strongly felt in communities such as North Seattle that had more mothers who stayed at home. Social conservatives, who sought to preserve an idealized and sheltered childhood for their children, also objected to the development of sex education curriculum in schools. Sex education, like busing, might corrupt the minds of their "innocent" children.

Inherent in the objection to sex education was an underlying fear about the danger of racial mixing, particularly inter-racial dating that might occur in integrated school settings. Many members of CAMB felt that sex education should not be included in school curriculums. In the CAMB newsletter, sex education was an important cause for concern:

SEX EDUCATION is another thing that disturbs parents: By sex education they do not mean biology or anything truly scientific, but that which is AIMED AT CHANGING

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<sup>82</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 United States Supreme Court 1, 1954.

THE MORAL AND BEHAVIORAL CODES that the parents have tried to impart to the child.<sup>83</sup>

CAMB supporters insinuated that schools would teach their children a more permissive attitude towards pre-marital sex. In the 1960s and 70s, during the dawn of changing sexual mores in American society, sex education was a lightening rod throughout the United States, particularly among social conservatives.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, in a desegregated school system pre-marital sex would be even more dangerous because of the increased chance for inter-racial mixing. By implementing busing at the middle school level, when students were just entering adolescence, CAMB parents felt that their tween and teen children would be especially vulnerable.

Throughout the U.S., the opposition to inter-racial dating and the fears about inter-racial marriage have a long and sordid history. This is vividly illustrated in the decades-long battle to overturn miscegenation laws. In 1967, the Supreme Court declared all miscegenation laws unconstitutional in *Loving v. Virginia*.<sup>85</sup> While Washington had not had a miscegenation law on the books since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, significant opposition to “mixed” marriages in Seattle held strong in the 1970s.<sup>86</sup> A few years after *Loving*, CAMB’s early 1970s objections to sex ed was a part of the wider national movement led by the John Birch Society’s MOTOREDE (Movement to Restore Decency). Their position was that sex education encouraged premarital sex and inter-racial relationships, condoned homosexuality, and most importantly was a government intrusion into the “private family sphere.”<sup>87</sup> In Seattle, sex education proved highly controversial. In West

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<sup>83</sup> Marie Lunt, “Editorial,” *CAMB Newsletter*, April 1971, 2, Seattle Public Schools Archives, Acc. 2010-03, Box 6, Folder 6, caps in the original.

<sup>84</sup> McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 227.

<sup>85</sup> *Loving v. Virginia* 388 U.S. 1 (1967).

<sup>86</sup> Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 81.

<sup>87</sup> Self, *All in the Family*, 199-200.

Seattle, sex education warriors on both sides of the issue battled on the pages of the *West Seattle Herald*.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to sex education, CAMB and its supporters who were wary of the changes that feminism had wrought, also dramatically labeled preschool and early childhood education as evidence of the School District's nefarious drive to break up the traditional family structure and radically change the social order. Families in the CAMB community who were able to support themselves on the salary of a single male breadwinner questioned the concept of preschool because they believed that young children should be under the exclusive influence of their mothers for as long as possible. Parents like Marie Lunt recoiled at the implications of the Coleman Report, which argued that programs such as Head Start, where young children would spend long days away from their families, could help to alleviate poverty.<sup>89</sup> Coleman and his staff also observed that the vast majority of American children were not receiving equality of educational opportunity because they were attending segregated schools. CAMB members, who sought to retain the status quo, found this conclusion especially abhorrent.<sup>90</sup> Like-minded parents in the West Seattle neighborhood also worried that their children would be "snatched away from them at an early age" if the Seattle School District's discussions about incorporating early childhood education into the curriculum came to fruition.<sup>91</sup>

Inherent in the anti-preschool, anti sex-ed, and anti-racial mixing stances of CAMB members was a view of privacy that differed radically from their liberal counterparts. As Self

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<sup>88</sup> Examples of article about sex education in West Seattle schools includes: Beth Gilligan and Joan Roush, "Whither Sex Education – Home or School?," *West Seattle Herald*, May 7, 1970, 1; Lorraine Dolan, "Responsible Sex' Means Different Things," *West Seattle Herald*, June 11, 1970, 6; and Patrick Vaughan, "First Hand Info on Sex Education" *West Seattle Herald*, June 18, 1970, 4.

<sup>89</sup> James S. Coleman of Johns Hopkins University, who was the principal author of a report, 'Equality of Educational Opportunity', U.S. Dept of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1966.

<sup>90</sup> E. V. Johanningmeier, "Equality of Educational Opportunity," *American Educational History Journal* 35 (2008): 373.

<sup>91</sup> Betty Zenier, "Parent has best chance to influence child," *West Seattle Herald*, November 29, 1972. 6.

argues, “privacy protected the rights of parents to shape the moral content of family life. Privacy was the barrier that stood between Christian families and the secular world.” While, on the other hand, feminists and the liberal movement sought more freedom for all people to order their private lives in any way they saw fit.<sup>92</sup> These contrasting views of privacy and family would reappear throughout the busing debates in Seattle and in cities around the country.

Also in the early 1970s, in Richmond, California white working class anti-busing mothers objected to preschool, arguing that children belonged at home with their mothers as long as possible.<sup>93</sup> One Richmond mother, who in 1969 voted to recall Richmond School Board members who had proposed a mandatory busing program, described her objections to preschool. “We know our children are going to have to grow up, but we’re not going to push them out of the door because we’re too lazy to take care of them like those people up on the hills.”<sup>94</sup> “Those people up on the hills” were middle class liberals who supported the School Board desegregation plan. Sociologist Lillian Rubin analyzes this mother’s response and its effect upon the busing debates. “Ironically, then, the notion that ‘woman’s place is in the home,’ may have unintended social consequences,” which make busing more problematic for citizens who subscribed to strict gender norms.<sup>95</sup> Busing not only disrupted the racial hierarchy, anti-busers worried that it could undermine traditional gender roles. Tensions over the mother’s role in raising her children participated in the national debates over the rise of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Anti-feminists led by Phyllis Schlafly argued that the women’s liberation movement put motherhood and spousal relationships under such serious threat that feminists might choose to abandon

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<sup>92</sup> Self, *All in the Family*, 331.

<sup>93</sup> Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*, 63-64.

<sup>94</sup> Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*, 64.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

motherhood.<sup>96</sup> Busing, anti-feminists believed, exacerbated this threat because it further marginalized the mother's role.

Locally, these debates played out on the pages of the *West Seattle Herald*. In the fall of 1972 anxiety about the changing roles of women expressed itself in debates over how busing would affect the mother's role in raising young children. Fred Ogden, an anti-busing advocate, wrote a letter, which was published in the editorial pages. In this letter, a fictive girl, "Marcia" to her grandmother about how busing had torn her family apart, making her feel unloved at home and unsafe at school.<sup>97</sup> Ogden wrote about the decision to bus Marcia. "Momma an Daddy didn want to get rid of me at furst, but a mean acting man came and talked to them and said if they didn send me away they would go to jale [sic]."<sup>98</sup> Ogden's letter argued that busing made children feel abandoned by their parents because they had allowed their unwilling children to bus. According to Ogden, parents who let their children bus had buckled under state pressure. The state had taken away the parents' freedom to choose an appropriate school for their children. In the postscript Ogden stumped for Kay Trepanier, the anti-busing candidate for state legislature and West Seattle Community Council president, and described the dangers of preschool. "The mean acting man wants to take my baby brother away an send him to a State school. He is too yung! He needs my momma."<sup>99</sup> Echoing Marie Lundt's concerns, he depicted pre-school as threatening to the mother-child bond. The publishing of Ogden's letter set off a firestorm of controversy in the West Seattle community. Many readers were outraged by both Ogden's folksy tone and the blatant political endorsement masquerading as a "letter to the editor." However, the

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<sup>96</sup> Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 246-48 & Self, *All in the Family*, 119.

<sup>97</sup> Fred Ogden, "Child's view of busing imagined" *West Seattle Herald*, September 6, 1972, 6.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

paper also received letters of support for Ogden's position.<sup>100</sup> The following week, the newspaper published a rebuttal of sorts: a photocopy of a handwritten note supposedly by a child who happily chose to participate in the voluntary busing program.<sup>101</sup>

Social conservatives naturalized the role of the mother, suggesting that the mother-run PTA could single-handedly eliminate racial tensions. The Lawton Park PTA in the north end of Magnolia boasted about their successes in integrating racial and economic diversity at their school. The northern section of Magnolia, was a mixed residential neighborhood that was home to a small military base, many apartment buildings, and largely middle income single family homes. At a November 11, 1970, School Board Meeting, Margaret Coughlin, the chair of the Lawton PTA spoke about how her organization was instrumental in ensuring the integration of minority children and families and because of this "natural" integration Lawton Park should be exempt from the District mandated integration program.<sup>102</sup>

We sincerely believe that the PTA's can best handle the problem of finding housing to accomplish integration on a personal family to family basis. The PTA is the one group directly concerned with homes, families, and schools. They can help to make new neighbors welcome in a natural, uncomplicated manner, by drawing parents into committee work and enrolling children in activities such as scouting. The strength of the PTA will break trails of public support... To keep the whole approach to integration as simple as possible, however, the family touch of the PTA should provide the smoothest introduction.<sup>103</sup>

To Coughlin and others like her, the PTA could solve racial inequality at the micro-level. If PTAs were given the right to manage cross-racial, family-to-family interactions, there would be racial harmony. Mothers of the PTA could solve this crisis through leading integrated Scout Troops and making casseroles for their new black neighbors. In this worldview, women who had

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<sup>100</sup>Primo Baccetti, "Busing not racial problem, writer says," *West Seattle Herald*, October 4, 1972, 6.

<sup>101</sup> Toni Kay Miller, "letter to the editor," *West Seattle Herald*, September 13, 1972, 9 and Karen Seamens, "Bussing not the issue," *West Seattle Herald*, Letters to the editor, September 13, 1972, 9.

<sup>102</sup> Margaret Coughlin, Statement to the School Board, November 11, 1970, Seattle School Board Meeting Minutes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 67, 164-165.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

the time to be active in their communities and schools were crucial to ensuring racial harmony, making the bureaucrats in the Seattle School District central office irrelevant and unnecessary to the cause. Coughlin's "simple" and "uncomplicated" approach to race relations echoed sentiments held in the pre-civil rights era and deliberately obscured the complexity of the racial crisis in 1970s.

Resonating with CAMB's official messaging, Coughlin purposefully avoided all mention of structural racism and the fiery nature of the racial conflict that was brewing in her very own city, suggesting that an unofficial, gendered solution to racism was preferable. Isolating herself completely from the Central Area, she acted as if she had no knowledge of the fact that only a few miles away, blacks were becoming radicalized by the Black Power movement. Furthermore, Coughlin completely disregarded the School District's primary agenda, which was to *desegregate* schools that had exceptionally high populations of children of color. Desegregating to ensure educational opportunity for children of all races was not equivalent to Coughlin's advocacy for a PTA facilitated integration program for majority white schools. Desegregation was much more complicated than the goal to improve race relations, on which Coughlin focused her argument. With their socially conservative rhetoric, members of CAMB such as Coughlin were able to link busing to concerns about the health of the family. From Magnolia to North to West Seattle, CAMB aimed to spread their socially conservative, anti-busing message throughout Seattle. CAMB advertised throughout the city to both push their agenda and raise money.

## CAMB'S MEDIA CAMPAIGN & RACIAL IDEOLOGIES

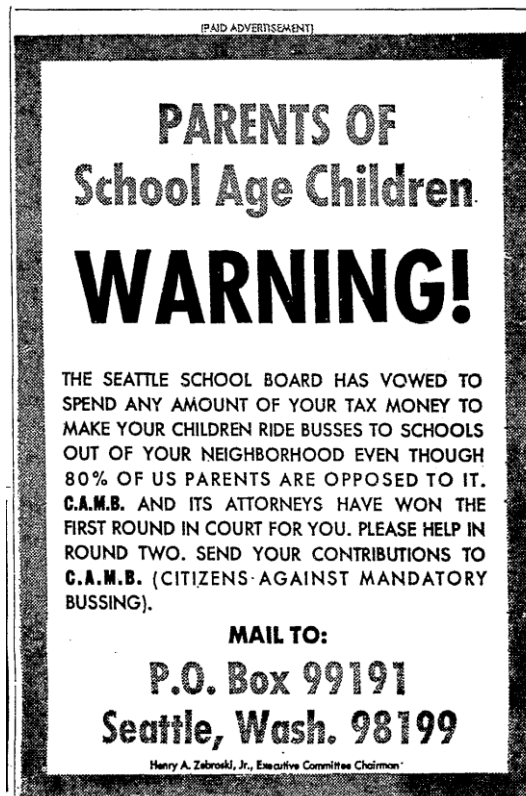
CAMB's advertising campaign, resonating with anti-busing campaigns throughout the nation, employed fear-mongering language in order to gain the attention of Seattle parents.<sup>104</sup> For example, in this 1971 advertisement which appeared on the front page of the *Seattle Times* and other local community newspapers, busing appeared ominous because “warning” appeared in bold, all capital letters.<sup>105</sup> The language used in the advertisement is also telling because of its emphasis upon the high costs of busing. The group emphasized its vehement opposition to using taxpayer dollars to implement desegregation. CAMB suggested that the School Board was fiscally irresponsible because it “vowed to spend any amount of your tax money.” While the advertisement aimed to make parents fearful, it also attempted to cultivate a neighborly tone through references to “us parents” and first and second rounds of litigation as if CAMB

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<sup>104</sup> See for example, Richmond, CA anti-busers who made parents fearful that their children would be bused all over the city, as had occurred in neighboring Berkeley. Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*, 113.

<sup>105</sup> C.A.M.B. advertisement, *Seattle Times*, August 22, 1971, A1; August 27, 1971, D1 and September 3, 1971, C1.





was a sports team getting ready for the big game. (As we shall see in the following section, in the end CAMB lost their legal battle to stop busing through an injunction). The advertisement argued that the 80% of Seattle parents who rejected busing should support CAMB's effort by writing checks because unlike the well-endowed School District, the grassroots organization was in need of financial support.

CAMB relied heavily upon advertisements, such as this one, as a weapon against busing in all of their early 1970s campaigns. The group, emboldened by stories about black resistance to busing, attempted to advertise in the black newspaper, *The Medium*.<sup>106</sup> *The Medium* rejected the advertisement with an indignant front-page editorial. However, the group's eagerness to appear in all kinds of local newspapers suggests that it aimed to reach a wide audience with its anti-busing message. Not only did CAMB employ advertisements in their battle against the School Board, they created extensive policy papers that attempted to justify their anti-busing agenda. Concerns about possible curricular changes under busing were crucial to their argument.

In 1971, CAMB's Quadrant Four Plan, which the group's leaders wrote as an alternative to the Board's middle school plan, demonstrated that the group feared an "African American"

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<sup>106</sup> Editorial Board, "CAMB Ad Insults C A," *The Medium*, May 4, 1972, A1.

influence upon school curriculums as a threat to the existing white racial hierarchy.<sup>107</sup> Many whites, such as members of CAMB, found this Afro-centric focus on black pride troubling because it threatened to disrupt the racial status quo. If white students were exposed to a black-centric curriculum, they might question the standard American historical narrative of heroic white male leaders from the founding fathers to explorers like Lewis and Clark.

To address their fears about curriculum changes, CAMB focused on high school academics, which were not actually pertinent to the middle school debate. When they wrote about the importance of a “stimulating” high school curriculum, CAMB officials were responding to reports in the local media about the lax educational structure and substandard teaching at Garfield High School in the Central Area.<sup>108</sup> Garfield had a reputation for allowing high school students to enroll in basket weaving instead of math and African American History instead of Social Studies. Nonetheless, members of CAMB who did not want to appear racist de-emphasized their objections to African American History, presenting their more generalized view that busing to far away schools was a threat to the quality of their children’s education and the consistency of the curriculum. CAMB’s literature stated, “a child transferring from Chicago is often as well off as a child transferring between two Seattle schools.”<sup>109</sup> With this statement, CAMB incorrectly suggested that busing would allow high schools to develop their own curriculums, which would be radically different from school to school. Because of these manufactured threats, CAMB advocated for a uniform curriculum across all Seattle Schools.<sup>110</sup>

Furthermore, at the elementary school level, CAMB’s literature advocated for a return to a

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<sup>107</sup> Quadrant 4 Plan, CAMB, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB. As with other CAMB initiatives, the group gained support for their Quadrant Four Plan in the West Seattle neighborhood where they held informational meetings about the Plan.

<sup>108</sup> Gus Angelos, “Temporary’ Report on Garfield Teacher was final one,” *Seattle Times*, May 12, 1970, C15; Gus Angelos, “Hope, ...and progress...problems: Garfield High School,” *Seattle Times*, January 17, 1971, E1; Carol Richman, Interview by author.

<sup>109</sup> “Fact Sheet” Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB, 4.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

traditional curriculum, which emphasized the three R's in the early school years.<sup>111</sup> CAMB's opposition to shifts in the curriculum echoed the critiques of conservative activists in Orange County, who although not under threat of busing, protested the end of the "status quo in every area" of schooling from curriculum to textbooks.<sup>112</sup> However, underneath this seemingly race neutral position regarding curriculums was a fear that these curricular changes would result in their own loss of political power and influence.

While CAMB fought for a District sponsored standard school curriculum, members who were suspicious of excessive central control over schools, simultaneously called for a strong neighborhood schools concept. As whites called for neighborhood schools that would allow for maximum parental influence over schooling and preserve the racial status quo, blacks advocated for community control. In analyzing the 1968 New York's Brownville school strikes, Jerald Podair argues that the black parallel to the white rhetoric of neighborhood schools was community control.<sup>113</sup> While both conservative white groups and black activists pushed for control over the schools in their own neighborhood, they each were highly suspicious of what the other group might achieve given that power. To whites, community control was abhorrent because it gave too much power to African Americans and for blacks the idea of neighborhood schools was equally repugnant because it would serve to perpetuate white racism. In order to assert their rights to manage their neighborhood schools, CAMB called for the establishment of four "Quadrant Councils" consisting of local parents, teachers, and students who CAMB declared would have "control of the school system."<sup>114</sup> In CAMB's Quadrant system, the District would mandate the curriculum, but citizens would manage schools at the neighborhood level.

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<sup>111</sup> "CAMB Fact Sheet," Seattle Public Schools Archive, 3-5.

<sup>112</sup> McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 69.

<sup>113</sup> Podair, *The Strike that Changed New York*, 21.

<sup>114</sup> Quadrant Four Plan, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A2010-03 Box 6, Folder 6/CAMB.

CAMB's concurrent calls for greater District oversight over the curriculum and more citizen involvement at the school level were philosophically incongruent. This contradiction within CAMB's literature over community control brings to light their desire to give more power to middle class whites, while simultaneously eliminating the rights of local African Americans who sought to make school curriculums more Afro-centric. According to CAMB, parental influence over neighborhood schools was desirable for whites, but when African Americans tried to exert analogous control over their schools, whites recoiled. While the impetuses behind white neighborhood schools and black calls for community control were radically different, the two philosophies produced the same effect: segregated schools. Not only did CAMB want to maintain the racial status quo in schools, members consistently skirted the issue of their own personal responsibility for their role in perpetuating residential segregation in the deeply divided city.

In racially segregated Seattle anti-busers who could almost entirely avoid even casual contact with blacks, claimed their racial innocence. CAMB's perpetuation of their racial innocence paralleled the messages of anti-busing movements around the country, from Detroit's working class suburbs where white auto workers benefited from racist union policies to Charlotte, North Carolina middle class residents of affluent suburbs claimed to be members of the meritocracy, advancing because of their merit instead of their race.<sup>115</sup> Especially in Seattle, a city with a much higher percentage of whites than Detroit or Charlotte, opting out of interacting with people of color, was a viable option for many of these anti-busers. For example a few years after CAMB folded, in 1977, Larry Penberthy one of the leaders of CAMB wrote to School Board Member Cheryl Bleakney. "The spirit of CAMB is still alive, even though not audible, for the simple reason that none of [us] has any guilt feeling about having caused any segregation

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 1-5; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 142-143.

ourselves.”<sup>116</sup> White middle class Seattle residents, such as Penberthy who had indirectly or directly benefited from occupational segregation, silent white privilege, and segregated housing patterns, refused to accept any responsibility for the injustices in the city’s racial hierarchy.<sup>117</sup> Activists such as John Towey the first leader of CAMB who advertised his “integrated” swimming pool, understood that their anti-busing messages would be much more likely to be well received if they stressed their personal racial innocence.

While CAMB’s official documents and public statements such as Towey’s made nods to liberal rhetoric, they usually included caveats, which negated their half-hearted attempts to appear racially sensitive or innocent. The following is the first section of CAMB’s, undated, “Platform,” which intended to be a mission statement.

C.A.M.B., recognizes the desirability of a totally integrated school system which is comprised of many races, classes, and ethnic groups and is completely void of segregation-but C.A.M.B. is also cognizant of the facts:

1. That in Seattle an “open housing” law exists and no resident is restricted to or directed to live in any particular area.
2. That in Seattle all schools are open to any resident...<sup>118</sup>

CAMB’s “facts” argued that whites’ actions had nothing to do with de facto segregation in Seattle. Since Seattle had an open-housing law (only since 1968), the statement implies, blacks chose to live in segregated neighborhoods and thus whites should not have been asked to bus their children to fix a problem that was not of their making. This rhetoric bolstered their manufactured image of racial blamelessness. CAMB pushed these racial ideologies in their unified and ruthless legal battles against the School Board policies and its members.

## CAMB AND THE COURT

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<sup>116</sup> Letter from Larry Penberthy to Cheryl Bleakney, January 18, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, unaccessioned, Bill Maynard Desk Files, Box 2.

<sup>117</sup> Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive*, 5.

<sup>118</sup> Citizens Against Mandatory Busing, “Statement of Purpose and Platform,” Seattle Public Schools Archives, Acc. 2010-03, Box 6, Folder 6.

CAMB's primary weapon against the School Board and its busing policies was the court. The group's lawsuits, which aimed to overturn busing, particularly the middle school plan, caused much upheaval at the District and in the city as a whole. CAMB experienced a short-lived victory when King County Superior Court Judge Wilkins ruled on August 10, 1971 in favor of the plaintiffs in *CAMB et al. v. Edward Palmason et al.*<sup>119</sup> (This was the first round of litigation mentioned in the August 1971 CAMB advertisement.) Palmason, the School Board President who failed to be reelected in the fall of the same year, was listed as the primary defendant in this case that sought to halt the implementation of the middle school busing plan. Judge Wilkins ordered a one year injunction against the busing plan, which had been set to go into effect less than one month after the ruling, calling the District's decision-making processes "arbitrary and capricious." He argued that leaders did not take in consideration the community's desire to retain neighborhood schools when establishing the plan, nor did they hold sufficient public meetings before the establishment of the plan.<sup>120</sup> The Wilkins victory buoyed CAMB and served to increase the tensions between the group and the School Board.

On August 20, 1971, in a special session of the School Board, members of CAMB and other anti-busing activists twisted the discourse of civil rights to make it appear that their group was the victim of discrimination. Their manipulation of the language of civil rights participated in the contested rhetoric of freedom that both liberals and conservatives were using in the period to justify their opposition to or support for busing, school vouchers, and housing.<sup>121</sup> Neal Shulman, chairman of the Roosevelt Community Council, attorney, and CAMB member led the charge.

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<sup>119</sup> Citizens Against Mandatory Bussing et al. v. Edward Palmason et al, King County Superior Court No. 731666.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Jim Carl, *The Freedom of Choice*, 7-8.

Your attorney, Mr. Hall, has accused Judge William J. Wilkins of actions akin to Governor Wallace. I submit that it is your actions through a blatant and defiant attempt to evade a lawful court order that smacks of southern injustice. To Judge Wilkins' words, arbitrary and capricious, I would add the words, devious and underhanded.<sup>122</sup>

Shulman lambasted the Seattle School Board for continuing to pursue desegregation while the District was under court order to delay the implementation of the busing.<sup>123</sup> By comparing the Seattle Board to Alabama Governor George Wallace, who attempted to block the 1962 integration of white elementary schools in Huntsville, Shulman attempted to make Seattle anti-busers appear to be the casualties of nefarious school district administrators. This comparison touched a nerve with the School Board Chairman, Forest Smith.

I remind you [Shulman] that this is not a circus... I do not ordinarily engage in debate, but I am going to respond as one member of the board. Mr. Shulman, could I have your attention?... I take high exception to your coming before this board and trying to give the impression to this community that this board has any intention of flying in the face of what Judge Wilkins has said and I think we have made it absolutely clear in our decision and will continue to do it in our action today, that our number one responsibility is to the children and to abide by the laws of the state and the court in the state...<sup>124</sup>

Smith defended the School Board's decision to continue to pursue a discussion of busing policies, while guaranteeing that they would not implement any desegregation plans until granted the legal right to do so. The fiery interchange between Schulman and Smith was unusual for the normally staid School Board meetings where Board members generally refrained from remarking upon public commentary.

As expected, the Wilkins ruling sent ripples of anger through the city's African American population. Reporter Priscilla Hailey sounded off about CAMB in an August 12, 1971 news analysis.

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<sup>122</sup> School Board meeting Minutes, August 20, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, 148.

<sup>123</sup> Citizens Against Mandatory Bussing et al. v. Edward Palmason et al, King County Superior Court No. 731666.

<sup>124</sup> School Board meeting Minutes, August 20, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, 148-49.

For Judge Wilkins to say that CAMB was not trying to prevent racial integration but ‘rather hasty implementation of such a program’ is an insult to blacks. We must remember we’re not playing games – we are dealing with the minds and future of our children. Reports have shown integration has worked for the so-called ‘racist South’ while the so-called ‘liberal North’ is trying to use every way possible to avoid integration.<sup>125</sup>

In her piece, Hailey questioned Northern exceptionalism, asserting that Seattle was no less racist than the South and stressed that integration was crucial for the future of “our children.” She also disputed CAMB’s sincerity, who had suggested that they protested the ‘hastiness’ of the implementation of the middle school busing program, not integration. Similarly, Seattle’s Urban League spoke out against the Wilkins decision in an August 19 letter to the editor.

For too many years, Blacks and other non-whites have been required to shoulder the full responsibility of ending racial isolation. It has been predominately Black schools that have been closed, it has been predominantly Black children who have been voluntarily or involuntarily bussed to schools other than their neighborhood schools.<sup>126</sup>

The Urban League sought integration of all children, black, white, and other non-whites, with the aim of making busing equitable across all racial groups, a key component of the middle school desegregation plan. Not only did the Wilkins ruling anger blacks and cause tension at the School Board, the controversial decision would have a lasting influence upon Board Members’ resolve to desegregate the city’s schools, making them insecure about their own power.

CAMB’s victory in the Wilkins decision made officials fear that they might lose control over the desegregation process. In an August 18, 1971 meeting, David Wagoner a Board member expressed anxiety about how desegregation litigation would diminish his and the entire Board’s sphere of influence.

This [the loss in Superior Court] raises a fundamental issue as to who will make the basic policy decisions about public education. What are the powers of this Board, and what are

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<sup>125</sup> Priscilla Hailey, “Judge Wilkins’ Anti-integration decision brings cry of racism from community,” *The Medium*, August 12, 1971, A6.

<sup>126</sup> Seattle Urban League, “Seattle Urban League Dissatisfied in Judge Wilkins’ Decision,” *The Medium*, August 19, 1971, A2.



the powers of other school boards? There is an unfortunate trend nationally, he said, toward the erosion of the powers of the school board from the President on down. Judge Wilkins' decision not only is ambiguous as to what the Board's powers are; it represents an erosion of these powers. The scattering of the ultimate decision-making responsibility on basic policy questions in education can only create educational chaos and stagnation.<sup>127</sup>

Wagoner's suggestion that "educational chaos and stagnation" would occur if the courts wrested control away from districts was similar to the inflated and doomsday language that anti-busing groups used to justify their anti-busing stance. Wagoner's fears about the "erosion of the powers of the school board" demonstrate that he sought to avoid losing District control over local education. He wanted to manage the desegregation process in order to keep costs under control and because he believed that the District could better "sell" a local desegregation plan to the Seattle public than a plan that had been mandated by a federal officer of the court who had little personal knowledge of the city.<sup>128</sup>

Not only did the Wilkins ruling make District leaders anxious they might lose control over the desegregation process, it made some Board members publicly waver in their resolve to desegregate Seattle's middle schools, a mistake that the 1977/78 School Board would not make when it faced stiff opposition to the Seattle Plan. On March 22, 1972, less than six months before the Middle School Desegregation Plan was slated to go into effect, the Board voted 4-3 to delay the implementation of the plan.<sup>129</sup> The Board members in the majority: Beverly Smith (the Board's swing voter), Delwin Chafe (the conservative who replaced Palmason), Richard Alexander, and Alfred Cowles (the Board's only black member) cited lack of resolution on the State's case as justification for their vote. Furthermore, Alfred Cowles argued that the District had not fully considered the black community's concerns during the planning stages of the

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<sup>127</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 68, August 18, 1971, 35.

<sup>128</sup> Gus Angelos, "Seattle School Board: Analysis of the Palmason vs. Chafe School Board Race," *Seattle Times*, October 24, 1971, B10.

<sup>129</sup> Gus Angelos, "Seattle School Board Split on Desegregation, 4-3," *Seattle Times*, March 23, 1972, A1.

busing proposal.<sup>130</sup> The Board eventually reversed itself when the State Supreme Court ruled unanimously on April 6, 1972 in the District's favor, deciding to implement a more moderate busing plan that commenced in September 1972.<sup>131</sup> (This appeal was the second round of litigation mentioned in CAMB's advertisement from August 1971.) The Court ruled that the District's actions were legal because neighborhood schools were not a right guaranteed by the United States Constitution and school boards had the legislative authority to make policy decisions. Furthermore, since the Seattle School Board had the power to grant the right to attend neighborhood schools, they had the authority to remove that right. On this question, the State Court acted in accordance with the Supreme Court's decision in the 1971 *Swann v. Mecklenburg* case, in which the District was required to implement a busing plan to rectify segregation. This plan would break up neighborhood schools because children would attend schools around the city, instead of near their home.<sup>132</sup> Finally, the Court ruled that districts were not required to hold community hearings before the adoption of any plan.<sup>133</sup> Despite the legal victory, Seattle School District leaders appeared weak and indecisive with their on-again, off-again plans for desegregation.

With the defeat of the injunction against busing in Washington State Supreme Court, CAMB lost the immediate battle over the implementation of the busing plan. However, the group did not abandon legal means to stop busing. CAMB had a two-pronged legal strategy. In November 1970, when the District made its official pronouncement of their intentions to proceed with plans to desegregate Meany-Madrona School, CAMB responded that they would pursue a

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> *Citizens Against Mandatory Bussing et al. v. Edward Palmason et al.*, 495 P.2d 657(Wash., 1972); School Board Meeting Minutes: Summary State Supreme Court Ruling, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 68, April 12, 1972, 277.

<sup>132</sup> *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bd. of Ed.*, 402 US 1 (1971) & Gus Angelos, "State High Court Ok's School Recall Petitions," *Seattle Times*, January 6, 1972, A1.

<sup>133</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes: Summary State Supreme Court Ruling, Seattle Public Schools Archive.

recall of the board members. CAMB's recall strategy reflected the success of recall efforts in cities across the country such as Pasco, WA, Detroit, and Indianapolis. Only in Pasadena, CA had the school board leadership survived a recall election.<sup>134</sup> CAMB first filed a petition in January 1971 with the King County Court, ordering a citywide recall election of the School Board members who had voted for the implementation of the middle school plan. On February 2, 1971, King County Prosecuting Attorney Christopher Bayley ruled against CAMB, arguing that the Board's acts did not suffice to malfeasance or misfeasance and that a recall would be unconstitutional.<sup>135</sup>

Despite the ruling, CAMB was not easily deterred from its plan to put the recall before the people of Seattle. CAMB appealed Bayley's ruling to the State Supreme Court. Almost a year later, on January 6, 1972, the State Court ruled in favor of CAMB on the grounds that two of their seven charges could justify the recall of the Board.<sup>136</sup> The five failed charges commented on the particulars of the mandatory busing program.<sup>137</sup> The two charges, which the Court deemed acceptable, were that the Board knowingly hired an incompetent superintendent and that the Board deliberately caused segregation in Meany-Madrona School. CAMB's lawyers accurately recorded that Meany-Madrona Middle School had become more segregated when it opened in September 1970. The school combined the attendance areas of two largely black middle schools, Washington and Meany. However, the attorneys purposely overlooked the well-known fact that District leaders had publicly declared their intention to desegregate Meany-Madrona in short order.<sup>138</sup> The Court did not rule on the merits of the accusations, but rather on the basis that the

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<sup>134</sup> Gus Angelos, "Cowles Favors Meeting in Dissatisfied Areas," *Seattle Times*, February 7, 1973, A19.

<sup>135</sup> King County Court Proceedings, Smith, Palmer Files, Special Collections, University of Washington, 4512-002, box 1, no folder.

<sup>136</sup> Gus Angelos, "State High Court Ok's School Recall Petitions," *Seattle Times*, January 6, 1972, A1

<sup>137</sup> Gus Angelos, "Recall of School Board Sought Here," *Seattle Times*, January 19, 1971, A1.

<sup>138</sup> Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools*, 18.

remaining two charges were legally acceptable questions to be posed to voters. CAMB's recall included Alfred Cowles, Beverly Smith, David Wagoner (Board president), and Phillip Swain, and exempted three of the members. Delwin Chafe was newly elected and as an anti-buser he would not have voted for the plan under any circumstances, Richard Alexander avoided the recall because he was newly re-elected, and Robert Tidwell had already resigned so he was outside of CAMB's grasp.<sup>139</sup>

CAMB justified its controversial recall drive by arguing that the campaign was reflective of their moral duty to the tens of thousands of Seattle parents who opposed busing. CAMB publicly emphasized that the group would be "shirking" their obligation if they did not deploy "legal weapons" at their disposal in order to stop the mandatory plan.<sup>140</sup> CAMB's language suggested that the group had no choice but to push for the recall. In addition to CAMB's conviction that they had a moral imperative to stop busing, the organization pointed to concerns about the success of school levies as a justification for their anti-busing stance. They argued that if busing passed, school levies would be more likely to fail because voters would no longer have confidence in the Board to make sound policy decisions.<sup>141</sup> Indeed, CAMB's concern about the fate of school levies proved accurate. However, it is more difficult to assess why the levy initially failed and whether it was it because of busing or a general distaste for higher taxes. In 1972, when CAMB was gathering signatures to place the recall of board members who supported desegregation on the ballot, a statewide measure in California sought to overturn all mandatory busing in the state.

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<sup>139</sup>*Seattle Times*, "CAMB opens its drive to recall four School Board Members," April 20, 1972, A1, University of Washington Special Collections, Palmer Smith Files, Acc. 4512.002, Box 1, Clippings Folder.

<sup>140</sup>CAMB, "Fact Sheet," undated, Seattle Public Schools Archive, A2010-03 box 6, Folder 6, 2.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*

Approving California's 1972 Proposition 21 (Wakefield Amendment) by a sweeping 61% margin, voters ruled against all mandatory desegregation and repealed an earlier statute that "sought racial and ethnic balance in public schools."<sup>142</sup> Prop 21 was initiated by Floyd Wakefield, a Republican assemblyman from the white working class Los Angeles suburb of South Gate, which bordered Watts. This close proximity to the epicenter of the 1965 Watts Riots stoked the anti-integration fire in his neighborhood. The fiery Wakefield, openly railed against all "forced integration." Like many members of CAMB, Wakefield's racism was thinly veiled, arguing he was motivated by a desire to preserve "white rights."<sup>143</sup> While Prop 21 was quickly overturned by state courts because it violated the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment's equal protection clause, it set the stage for a later Californian anti-desegregation proposition that was much more measured and carefully constructed.<sup>144</sup> California's 1972 ballot box success fueled the hopes of CAMB who wished for an analogous victory in their city. The results of the recall demonstrate that Seattle was a city deeply divided along racial and neighborhood lines.

On February 6, 1973 in a citywide election, the recall effort failed as did the school levy and a West Seattle Spokane Street Bridge repairs measure.<sup>145</sup> The Levy required a 60% margin, and it received only a 54% voter approval. However, the following month, a revised school levy was approved by the voters in a special election.<sup>146</sup> In the recall, Beverly Smith, Alfred Cowles, Philip Swain, and David Wagoner, listed individually on the ballot, were retained by only small margins, receiving approval ratings of 51% to 52%. Analysis of the recall vote is more revealing when examined at the neighborhood level. In the outlying neighborhoods of West Seattle, Ingraham and Hale in the North, and Ballard in the northwest corner of the city all but Hale

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<sup>142</sup> Daniel Martinez Hosang, *Racial Propositions*, 91.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 92, 100-101.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>145</sup> Gus Angelos, "School Board Recall, Levy, and Bridge Repairs rejected," *Seattle Times*, February 7, 1973, A1.

<sup>146</sup> Gus Angelos, "Levy Passage Cancels Threatened School Strike," *Seattle Times*, March 28, 1973, A1.

affirmed the recall by 60% or more. 54% of Hale voters supported the recall. In each of these neighborhoods the school councils endorsed the recall effort.<sup>147</sup> Interestingly, inner ring Seattle neighborhoods were more likely to support the School Board, while those residents who lived on the edges of the city, closer to the suburbs and farther from the Central Area, were less likely to endorse the Board policies. Roosevelt and Wallingford the two white neighborhoods who were home to CAMB and directly impacted by the middle school busing plan rejected the recall with a 43% and 48% margin, respectively.<sup>148</sup>

The recall's defeat in CAMB's home neighborhoods illustrates the deep divides that were present in these two North Seattle communities. Roosevelt and Wallingford were carefully chosen to be included in the first mandatory busing plan, though the Districts had underestimated the fervor of the neighborhood's anti-busing coalition.<sup>149</sup> In hindsight, it would appear that there was no Seattle neighborhood that was ideally suited for a limited busing plan because opposition to busing could be found in every corner of the city. The only neighborhood that soundly defeated the recall was the Central Area where only 24% of residents supported the recall. This defeat was reflective of the community's anger over the recall of the only black member of the School Board, Alfred Cowles.<sup>150</sup> Central Area Seattle black church leaders responded to CAMB's campaign by founding the Coalition Against Recall (CAR). A wide range of influential middle class white and black citizens, including: the Seattle Urban League, Seattle Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Church Councils of Greater Seattle, and the Black United

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<sup>147</sup> Gus Angelos, "Ingraham Council supports recall move," *Seattle Times*, May 11, 1972, C1.

<sup>148</sup> Chairman's Report, March 20, 1973, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Advisory Councils-General 1972-74, Community services A1978-10 Box 5 Folder 9.

<sup>149</sup> Similar patterns of support for busing were reflective in Roosevelt School Advisory Council elections where pro-busing candidates received 47% of the vote. School Board Meeting Notes, August 20, 1971, Seattle Public Schools Archive, 151.

<sup>150</sup> Chairman's Report, March 20, 1973, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Advisory Councils-General 1972-74, Community services A1978-10 Box 5 Folder 9.

Clergy for Action backed CAR's agenda.<sup>151</sup> Even CASC, a group which was at times less than enthusiastic about busing, fought to defeat the recall.<sup>152</sup> CAMB's recall drive was abhorrent to African Americans and to many moderate Seattle residents.

CAMB's final act tore the city apart. Despite its failure at the ballot box, the recall movement decimated the District's leadership. This undermining of the Board's leadership was an unofficial victory for CAMB. Superintendent Forbes Bottomly resigned shortly after the election and three out of the four affected Board members either left before the end of their term or chose not to seek reelection.<sup>153</sup> Alfred Cowles was the first Board member to announce his resignation, only a month after the recall election. In March 1973, Cowles bowed out, stating his intention to move to Washington D.C. to be the Vice President of the American Arbitration Association. Superintendent Forbes Bottomly was next. In June of the same year, he resigned to become the executive director of a non-profit conducting research on voluntary desegregation in Boston. The following month, Board members, Beverly Smith and David Wagoner both announced in July of 1973 that they would not be seeking reelection.<sup>154</sup> Philip B. Swain was the only board member on the recall ballot who stayed in his position, continuing until 1975, when he chose not to seek reelection.<sup>155</sup> After the recall controversy, none of the board members in question chose to subject themselves to another election for School Board. More importantly, along with the demise of the Board and the Superintendent, the early 1970s push to mandatorily

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<sup>151</sup>The Seattle League of Women Voters, the Municipal League of Seattle and the King County Labor Council were also part of the campaign. *The Medium*, "Residents Unite to Defeat Board Recall," January 25, 1973, 12; "Human Rights Dept. Urges Defeat of Recall" *The Medium*, February 1, 1973, 15.

<sup>152</sup> *The Medium*, "CASC Announces Recall, Levy Position," February 1, 1973, 1.

<sup>153</sup> Gus Angelos, "Only One Remains from Board who hired Bottomly," *Seattle Times*, July 29, 1973, A21; Gus Angelos, "Forbes Bottomly: A Strong Man," *Seattle Times*, August 12, 1973, A14; and "Cowles Quit School Board," *The Medium*, March 15, 1973, A1.

<sup>154</sup> Angelos, "Only One Remains from Board who hired Bottomly," *Seattle Times*.

<sup>155</sup> Editorial Board, "Excellence in Public Service," *Seattle Times*, May 23, 1975, A11.

desegregate the Seattle School District was running out of steam. By that point, it appeared that only voluntary options were politically feasible.

The fate of the Seattle School Board mirrors the experiences of the 1969 Richmond, California School Board's failure to retain power after the implementation of a two-way busing program. The Bay Area elites who ran the Board were replaced by a relatively weak conservative coalition.<sup>156</sup> However, in contrast to Richmond, the majority of the new Seattle School Board members were not conservatives. CAMB, although successful in stopping the immediate progression of desegregation, could not have predicted that several of the incoming board members would participate in the 1977 historic vote to desegregate the entire Seattle School District without a court order.

#### CONCLUSION

CAMB was a short-lived, but powerful organization that left its mark on Seattle's anti-busing history. They were responsible for delaying the implementation of the middle school plan by two years. Their actions served to weaken the District's already unstable resolve to desegregate the Seattle Schools. Despite CAMB's accomplishments, it was a short-lived group. Their presence would be virtually non-existent by late 1977, which marked the commencement of the city's second anti-busing campaign in less than a decade. CAMB's use of socially conservative ideology in their busing struggle shows how the anti-busing movement was about more than just race, though race and preserving the racial hierarchy were central elements of their opposition to the middle school plan. These social conservatives were threatened by what they perceived of as America's shifting cultural and social landscape that they believed would reshape the mother's role. Busing, along with sexual education, preschool, women's liberation

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<sup>156</sup>Rubin, *Busing and Backlash*, 4-5.



and changes in high school curriculums were threatening to the status quo with which they had grown comfortable.

Unlike liberals who supported the policy, CAMB and their supporters could see no potential benefits of busing their children to schools in unfamiliar neighborhoods that they perceived to be inferior. In addition to their socially conservative, anti-feminist lens, anti-busers also focused their efforts on preserving the neighborhood school, arguing that it was an anchor of their community. It was in these neighborhood schools that the mother's position could be best preserved and enhanced. Nowhere in Seattle was this more evident than in West Seattle and Magnolia, though it was strong in many areas such as Roosevelt.

Seattle's early 1970s, neighborhood politics came to the fore in the community council system where elected parents used their public platforms to try to change school policies from ESL course offerings to desegregation. While the councils were officially banned from endorsing candidates or participating in any political movements, by 1972 most of the councils openly disregarded this directive, using their position as a platform to express anti-busing sentiment and to support anti-busing candidates running for office.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, it was not surprising that on April 12, 1973 the School District defunded the councils.<sup>158</sup> The School District gave no official reason for ending the program, though the timing of the action strongly suggests that anti-busing activism was central to the policy's cessation. Two months after the February 6, 1973 recall election the Board disbanded the councils. A majority of the councils had officially endorsed the

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<sup>157</sup> Kermit Franks, Internal memo to Charles Hough, February 2, 1973, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc.A.A2.40, Community Services, Box 6, Folder 1, Sealth 1971-73; Kermit Franks, Internal memo to Charles Hough, September 28, 1972, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. A.A.20.40, Community Services, Box 6, Folder 7, Citizens Advisory Committee on Community Involvement; and Constantine Angelos, "Ingraham Council supports recall move," *Seattle Times*, May 11, 1972, B5.

<sup>158</sup> "School District Cuts Councils Loose, *West Seattle Herald*, April 18, 1973, 1.

motions to recall the five board members.<sup>159</sup> In 1977, as we shall see in the next chapter, in part the School Board would be more successful because they eliminated the neighborhood platform upon which so much anti-busing activism had been generated.

The Seattle School District learned from CAMB and the middle school desegregation plan fiasco. Administrators in 1978, unlike a few years earlier, would adeptly navigate the political minefields inherent to the implementation of the Seattle Plan. Chapter 4 explains how by 1977, leaders had learned from their own mistakes, such as their 1972 public disunity over the implementation of the middle school plan. They had also learned from the mistakes of school districts around the country, particularly those in New England and the South. When developing the 1978 Plan, administrators realized that it was necessary to take into close consideration the needs and concerns of the African American community. Seattle's blacks as well as African Americans around the country were becoming increasingly wary of desegregation in this period. Thus, from a national perspective, this Pacific Northwest city's successful development of a racially sensitive and reasonably equitable busing program would be especially notable. In 1977, the District could not afford any appearances of disunity or discord, which might serve to upset their cross-racial fragile coalition, so necessary for a successful implementation of the Seattle Plan.

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<sup>159</sup> Chairman's Report, March 20, 1973, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Advisory Councils-General 1972-74, Community services A1978-10 Box 5 Folder 9.

## Chapter 4: The Seattle Way: Selling the 1978 Seattle Plan

I believe the people of Seattle are unique.

A. We are a people willing to try a new concept.

B. We are a diverse group of people who want to learn from and about each other.

C. We are special and will stand apart from the rest of the country in that we abhor racism and inequality and will take positive steps to overcome them.

D. And, I truly believe that Seattle's children will be better educated in the years to come.<sup>1</sup>

Mayor Charles Royer, 1978

On December 14, 1977, with a vote of six to one, the Seattle School Board approved the nation's first non-federally mandated school desegregation program, the Seattle Plan.<sup>2</sup> In August 1978, Seattle Mayor Charles Royer extolled the virtues of this Seattle Plan at a Chamber of Commerce Press Conference. The Mayor, who took office in January 1978, argued that Seattle was setting a standard for the rest of the country to emulate, suggesting that city residents should take pride in the city's busing program. Royer's forward-looking rhetoric put racial equality, innovation, and educational quality on the same plane. His optimistic tone was typical of many of Seattle's most powerful busing supporters who argued that Seattle was exceptional because of its racial tolerance and prescient policies. I argue that pragmatic liberals used the language of Seattle exceptionalism to promote desegregation both as a tool to help create an idealized image of the city for outsiders as well as a method to sell the plan to Seattle citizens who were reluctant to bus their children across the city. These pragmatic liberals believed that Seattle's national reputation could help to secure their own political and economic fortunes.

Contributing to the small, but growing historiography of liberalism in the 1970s, I analyze how Seattle's pragmatic liberals took careful consideration of both the needs of the city's African American population as well as the more conservative leaning Chamber of Commerce,

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<sup>1</sup>Chamber of Commerce Press Conference, August 2, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-06, Folder 2/15.

<sup>2</sup> I alternatively refer to the 1978 District sponsored desegregation proposal as either the Plan or the Seattle Plan.

which provides a new window into our understanding of the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Guian McKee's analysis of Philadelphia's liberal activism from the late 1950s through the early 1970s, demonstrates how business leaders in the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), who were not required to incorporate African Americans in their alliance, made few provisions in their development plans to address the city's racial problems.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the earlier history of the PIDC, my pragmatic liberal explanatory shows how by the late 1970s white business leaders such as the 1978 Seattle Chamber opportunistically converged and cooperated with black community leaders over the thorny question of mandatory desegregation.

However, underneath the racial idealism championed by Mayor Royer and the Seattle Chamber was a practical approach to a very real concern that the School District would be faced with a federal mandate if they did not desegregate on their own. In the spring of 1977, the NAACP, ACLU, and Church Council of Greater Seattle had threatened to sue the District if they did not implement a mandatory desegregation program.<sup>5</sup> The largely white Seattle leadership who carefully crafted their messaging and discourse would not have had the *will* to develop a city-wide mandatory plan if it had not been for the powerful and convincing civil rights lobby, represented most visibly by the District Wide Advisory Committee on Desegregation (DWAC). DWAC was a multi-racial citizens group, established to allow citizen input into the busing process. The group, adeptly led by Richard Andrews, a University of Washington Professor, had

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<sup>3</sup>Tuck et al., "Reconsidering the 1970s;" Miroff, *The Liberals' Moment*; McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*; Osman, "The Decade of the Neighborhood;" Geismer, "Don't Blame Us;" Bell et al., *Making Sense of American Liberalism*.

<sup>4</sup> McKee, *The Problem of Jobs*, 38. For a similar analysis of Philadelphia's development of University City where liberals did not take into consideration the needs of displaced African Americans see Margaret O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, chapter 4.

<sup>5</sup> Hanawalt & Williams, "The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981," 33. Frank Hanawalt who was the principal of the Central Area's Garfield High School in the 1960s and 70s and who became a school district administrator in the late 1970s and Robert Williams, a long-time school district administrator, wrote the pamphlet in order to create an institutional memory of the District's desegregation process. This primary source, written by men, particularly Hanawalt, who lived through desegregation is especially helpful because it provides a clear chronology of events from the 1950s to the 1970s. However, as a document that aims to reinforce the image of the District as a forward thinking and progressive institution, it downplays the tension within the District over desegregation.

a strong African American committee membership. Supporters of busing, such as DWAC, argued that voluntarily implementing desegregation was preferable to having it forced upon them by a federal judge who did not understand the city. However, the success of the mandatory version of the Seattle Plan was by no means assured until late 1977 when the Board and the Superintendent became convinced that if the District were to avoid a lawsuit, the mandatory plan was their only feasible option. It was with their backs against the wall, that the Plan was developed and deftly presented to the Seattle public.

Despite the legal pressure from the impending lawsuit, there were also positive factors that made desegregation more politically attractive to some residents and city leaders in 1978 than it had been in the early 1970s. Unlike in 1972, city leaders in the late 1970s perceived busing as an opportunity for boosterism. With unemployment hovering around 8%, business leaders at the Seattle Chamber of Commerce who were wary of another Boeing Bust saw the promotion of busing as one way to help improve their own business prospects in the economically unstable 1970s. Harry Holloway, a Pacific Bell Telephone Company executive, explained why the city's business leaders became more engaged in social issues such as unemployment and inequality in the 1970s.<sup>6</sup> "A few guys [at the Chamber] woke up 10 years ago fearing that they be burned out. That may be a selfish reason for getting socially involved, but the community result is what's important."<sup>7</sup> Through busing, Seattle's leaders from the mayor to the Chamber could erect an image as a "civil rights city" that was on the forefront of change, which would serve their own interests. A nationally well-regarded city would reap real benefits for municipal and community leaders.

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Dunphy, "February Jobless Rate Fell to 25 month low," *Seattle Times*, April 20, 1977, B6.

<sup>7</sup> Boyd Burchard, "Holloway, 59, Plans Retirement Experiment," *Seattle Times*, April 6, 1977, B8.

Seattle's marketing of itself as a civil rights city that leaders dubbed the "Seattle Way" echoed the language and intent of New South boosterism.<sup>8</sup> In 1959 Atlanta, officials crafted the "City Too Busy to Hate" moniker and in the mid '60s, Charlotte leaders developed the "Charlotte Way" mantra in order to demonstrate how they had moved beyond Jim Crow in favor of a pro-business stance that looked beyond race.<sup>9</sup> Seattle leaders, similar to administrators in Charlotte and Atlanta, hoped that the smooth implementation of a non-court mandated busing program would project an image of forward thinking leadership and minimal racial strife, ultimately serving to attract new businesses and economic activity to Seattle. A physically peaceful implementation of the Seattle Plan would make the city more attractive and notable in a country that was weary of the racial unrest and upheaval that had been so prevalent in 1960s and early 1970s America, a fate that Seattle school and city leadership sought to avoid.

Over the course of the 1970s, Seattle leaders rapidly shifted desegregation tactics and discourse, which was symbolic of the beginning of a wider transformation in the national dialogue about race that increasingly linked anti-busing sentiment to racism. As seen through Seattle's 1970s busing policies, this change in the American racial landscape was largely in language and political posturing, rather than in deeply held beliefs. Due to this change in discourse, by 1978 it was politically pragmatic for city leaders to develop a mandatory desegregation plan. This chapter examines how Seattle Plan supporters successfully developed and implemented this desegregation plan, demonstrating that in less than a decade Seattle's civic, community, and school leadership dramatically changed their approach to busing. By forming a broad-ranging pro-busing coalition, school and city leaders proved that they were much more

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<sup>8</sup> Examples of this discourse that emphasized Seattle as a leading civil rights city include Mayor Royer, Chamber of Commerce Press Conference, August 2, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-06, Folder 2/15 and R.W. Wilkinson, Jr., Speech to School Board, December 5, 1977, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-03, Folder 2/28.

<sup>9</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 11.

sensitive to black and working class concerns in 1978 than they had been in the early 1970s.<sup>10</sup> As we saw in chapters 2 and 3, Seattle leaders from 1970-1972 were often clumsy, inept, and insensitive in their handling of desegregation. The 1978 alliance, on the other hand, which had passionate African American participation made Seattle unique among American cities in the period. Throughout the United States, African Americans in the late 1970s reported declining enthusiasm for desegregated schools and increasingly devalued integrated neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> In light of their successful coalition, pro-desegregation leaders capitalized on their racially forward-looking policies by emphasizing the “Seattle Way” as a unique approach to the problems of racial segregation. However, Seattle’s attempt to stand out on the national stage was more opportunistic than it was indicative of a city that was exceptionally tolerant.

Pragmatic liberals in 1978 crafted a practical and savvy strategy to implement desegregation. This approach included gaining the support of the city’s political, religious, and community leaders, incorporating the will of the black leadership in planning and development, waging a formal public relations campaign, keeping tensions between stakeholders with varied interests (such as the School District and city government) under control, and addressing busing’s influence on socially and economically complicated issues such as childcare and kindergarten. While other scholars have argued that Seattle leaders developed a marketing proposal that mirrored their liberal values, this chapter demonstrates that idealism was only one component of a pragmatic strategy to sell the Plan to a city where racial disparities and the

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<sup>10</sup> Seattle leaders learned from the experiences of other cities as well of their own. Lillian Rubin’s ethnography, *Busing and Backlash*, published in 1972, which analyzed Richmond’s liberal leaders’ failure to incorporate working class concerns in their busing proposal would have been a helpful resource for Seattle’s leaders as they drafted the Seattle Plan.

<sup>11</sup> Schulman, *The Seventies*, 57-58 and Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 167-170.

possibility of unrest remained.<sup>12</sup> This chapter studies the development of and the reactions to the Seattle Plan as well as the people and the institutions who were instrumental in the Plan's construction, including DWAC, the city government, community groups, and the Seattle School District. In addition, the chapter analyzes the pro-busing marketing plan and how stake-holders spoke to the politically charged family and gender issues that came with changing neighborhood and school dynamics.

Seattle's status as a city that aimed to lead the country, or at least have the appearance of doing so, in its desegregation policies, participated in the city's broad-ranging liberal leaning activism of that period. The strength of the pro-desegregation leadership was representative of Seattle's groundswell of liberal activism in the 1970s that increasingly championed the rights of marginalized groups such as gays and Native Americans. The self-conscious rendering of Seattle's image in the 1970s both in the arena of the environment and in busing are aspects of the stage-managing of the city's public image. This idealized imagining of Seattle in the 1960s and 1970s as a site of racial tolerance and environmental forward-thinking grew steadily over time as activists pushed their agendas into the national spotlight. Seattle's vibrant liberal activism in the environmental movement as well as gay rights helped to set the stage for the development of the Seattle Plan. City leadership participated in this activism. Mayor Charles Royer, who took office in 1978, advocated for the Seattle Plan and was an outspoken champion of gay rights and neighborhood revitalization.<sup>13</sup>

While pragmatic liberals' methods, which included significant community participation from across the racial and economic spectrum, were influenced by Seattle's increasingly liberal climate, their message was careful to balance the practicality of desegregating without a court

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<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Hehnke, *The Politics of Racial Integration in the Seattle Public Schools: Discourse, Policy, and Political Change, 1954-1991*, Thesis (Ph.D.), University of Oregon, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Richard W. Larsen, "Anti-Gay Measure Defeated," *Seattle Times*, November 8, 1978, A1.



order with a more muted discussion of liberal idealism. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce, whose endorsement was crucial to the Plan's success, would have been hesitant to support busing if the issue had been publicly linked to other liberal causes such as gays rights or the environmental movement. The Commerce made no comment on Initiative 13, the failed 1978 anti-gay initiative, while they publicly supported mandatory desegregation.<sup>14</sup> Pragmatic policy making and the wide-reaching coalition that was willing to back such a proposal, which helped to manage Seattle's image, were key to the Seattle Plan's smooth implementation.

Desegregation gained valuable political capital because of the power, enthusiasm, and forethought of its most influential supporters. The Seattle Plan would not have been possible without formal public endorsement by a cadre of Seattle elite including: Mayor Wes Uhlman, Executive Director of the Seattle Urban League, Jerome Page, President of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, Wallace R. Bunn, and Shan Mullin who was the leader of the Municipal League of Seattle and King County. In May 1977 and in December of the same year, Uhlman, Bunn, Mullin, and Page wrote two influential letters to the School Board President Don Olson, expressing their continued support for a 'local solution' to segregated schools.<sup>15</sup> Never before had this group come together to publicly endorse a cause. In contrast to 1972, these leaders, along with the School Board and Mayor Charles Royer, who took over after Uhlman, led the successful and relatively smooth implementation of the 1978 Seattle Plan. The political fallout from the early 1970s middle school plan was instrumental in the eventual resignation of the entire School Board and the Superintendent. On the other hand, in 1978, city and School District

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<sup>14</sup> See Constantine Angelos, "Chamber to Oppose Anti-busing Initiative," *Seattle Times*, August 2, 1978, H1. Similar to their avoidance of the question of gay rights, nationally and locally the Commerce was reluctant to support rights for women, as demonstrated by its reluctance to grant women full membership rights. See: "Jaysees Divided Over Admitting Women" *Seattle Times*, September 24, 1978, M7.

<sup>15</sup> Wes Uhlman, Wallace R. Bunn, Shan Mullin, Jerome W. Page, Letter to Don Olson, May 20, 1977, Seattle Municipal Archive, Acc. 5287-02, Folder 146/7 & Wes Uhlman, Wallace R. Bunn, Shan Mullin, Jerome W. Page, Letter to Don Olson, December 29, 1977, Seattle Municipal Archive, Acc. 5287-02, Folder 146/7.

officials benefited from fortitious timing, which allowed them to learn from the missteps of these earlier Seattle leaders as well as those of other cities. These lessons helped the late 1970s Seattle leaders to craft a desegregation proposal that was more sensitive and responsive than the earlier middle school program had been to Seattle's deep and persistent racial and class divides.

The broad and relatively sudden shift in the Seattle elites' desegregation policy planning would not have been possible without the pragmatic liberals who changed their position on the merits of mandatory busing. Personal stories help to illuminate how racial discourse was changing rapidly in the late 1970s. Many pragmatic supporters of busing demonstrated significant shifts from the early 1970s to the late 1970s. Mayor Wes Uhlman, who took office in 1969 and served until 1977, is a helpful example of this phenomenon. On May 12, 1972, four months before the Seattle School District was set to implement its first two-way middle school mandatory busing program, Mayor Uhlman expressed his distaste for the policy in a letter to Tom Jutland, an anti-busing constituent.

In city after city across our country, the forced bussing[sic] of school children to achieve integration has caused anguish, fear and tension between the races, and in some cases, even violence. Clearly, the American people are not willing to have the integrity and security of their neighborhood schools disrupted by government decrees demanding widespread bussing[sic].<sup>16</sup>

In Uhlman's 1972 letter, his opposition to busing rested on his desire to preserve the neighborhood school concept, which he saw as a crucial component of cohesive communities. The letter showed his fear that a mandatory desegregation program might engender racially motivated violence and unrest and his mention of 'security' suggests that busing could make local schools less safe for children of all races. Because of Uhlman's initial trepidation about busing, it would have appeared highly unlikely that only five years later the Mayor would

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<sup>16</sup> Mayor Wes Uhlman, Letter to Tom Jutland, May 12, 1972, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5287-02, Box 146, Folder 7.

become a crucial source of support for the 1978 Seattle mandatory busing plan.<sup>17</sup> But it is also important to note that throughout his tenure, Uhlman had supported civil rights and *voluntary* busing. However, by 1977 he and many other pragmatic and powerful Seattle liberals such as 1978 School Board President, Patt Sutton, had shifted their stance on mandatory busing, a move that was crucial to the passage of the Seattle Plan.<sup>18</sup>

Patt Sutton, a white woman from West Seattle, was the School Board President who took office after Don Olson's tenure expired. She shifted from an anti-mandatory busing stance in December 1976 to a public pro-desegregation stance one year later on December 14, 1977 when she voted yes on the Seattle Plan.<sup>19</sup> Sutton made a poignant statement at the December School Board meeting before she cast her ballot in support for the Plan.

Eight years ago, one month and three days ago, I sat in this audience as the School Board announced desegregation of Seattle Public Schools [the middle school plan]. Today we have twice as many schools which could be considered racially isolated. But we have come a long way. Community attitude has swung about – racial integration is viewed as a desirable goal for each child... I don't care about making Seattle the first city to solve its segregation without a court order. I do care, very much, about keeping local control over desegregation...<sup>20</sup>

Sutton's remarks demonstrate how attitudes, including her own, were changing over the course of the 1970s and she sought with her yes vote to respect this shift. However, as she downplayed the significance of Seattle's position as the first city to implement such a plan, Sutton saw the Seattle Plan as a pragmatic solution to Seattle's complicated racial problem. Sutton's remarks mirrored the stance of many city government officials who emphasized the legal necessity of the Plan and heralded the benefits of local control over desegregation.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Constantine Angelos, "Patt Sutton paid her dues on the way up," *Seattle Times*, January 22, 1978, A21.

<sup>19</sup> Patt Sutton, Letter to Editor of *The Weekly*, December 17, 1976 in Seattle Public Schools Archive, Maynard unaccessioned files, Box 2.

<sup>20</sup> "Nothing will ever be quite the same again," *West Seattle Herald*, December 21, 1977, A1.

While pragmatic liberals changed their positions to reflect the altered political climate, there were also numerous outspoken supporters of mandatory desegregation whose attitudes did not change over time. Activists such as the members of CORE, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, the NAACP, and District Desegregation Office staff members such as Richard Dyksterhuis had been laboring since the early 1960s to integrate Seattle's most segregated schools. Some of them, though not most, continue to back the policy.<sup>21</sup> From the 1960s to well into the twenty-first Century, the long-term, supporters of desegregation, such as Ann Siqueland, the leader of the Church Council of Greater Seattle's task force on racial justice and education and a key member of DWAC who helped write the Seattle Plan, and Richard Dyksterhuis displayed unwavering support for mandatory busing.<sup>22</sup> In 1981, Ann Siqueland published a first-hand account about her experiences in DWAC and the process of desegregating the public schools. The title of her work, *Without a Court Order: The Desegregation of Seattle's Public Schools* is illustrative of her primary aim to explain how Seattle became a "national leader" in school desegregation.<sup>23</sup> Particularly regarding the role of DWAC, Siqueland's book was an especially helpful source in understanding how the Seattle Plan was constructed; however, it does not analyze or question Seattle exceptionalism. While elements of her personal story and that of others like her provide important background for this chapter, their genuine commitment to desegregation is not the *primary* focus of this chapter. Scholars such as Jennifer Hehnke, Doris Pieroth and Catherine Veninga address these issues.<sup>24</sup> Over the course of the entire 1970s,

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<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed look at the early pro-desegregation coalitions that were formed before mandatory busing was implemented in the 1970s see Doris Hinson Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools*.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Dyksterhuis, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, 8 June 2012 & Ann Siqueland, Interview by author.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Siqueland, *Without a Court Order: The Desegregation of Seattle's Schools* (Seattle: Madrona Publishers, 1981).

<sup>24</sup> See Pieroth, *Desegregating the Public Schools Seattle, Washington*, Hehnke, *The Politics of Racial Integration in the Seattle Public Schools*, and Veninga, *Road Scholars*.

long-term civil-rights liberals such as Dyksterhuis believed that poverty in the city's communities of color was central to the problems of school segregation.

In 1977, there continued to be deep economic divides between Seattle whites and African Americans. In some cases, because of the long-term economic effects of the Boeing Bust, working class blacks were even worse off, relatively speaking, than they had been in the early 1970s. On the other hand, by this point there were fewer instances of open racial violence in the city's public high schools and, as the Black Panthers waned in influence, violence and property damage in the Central Area and unrest in neighborhood schools had also slowed.<sup>25</sup> Unemployment for Seattle's people of color was estimated to be 31% higher in 1978 than it had been in 1970 and nationally, African American unemployment was two times greater than that of whites.<sup>26</sup> Black youth unemployment rates in Seattle and throughout the nation's large cities were bleak, at 40% or higher.<sup>27</sup> The poor employment picture for students of color contributed to a sense of disillusionment with schools that were unable to prepare African Americans to be economically successful.

While Seattle's people of color were disproportionately worse off than whites, Seattle's improving economic picture in 1977 and 1978 had a weak underbelly that crossed the racial spectrum: high unemployment. Business leaders at the Chamber, who supported desegregation, understood that this problem in the white and black communities could ultimately serve to disrupt their own economic security. Locally, unemployment fell by 1% from 1976 to 1977, and at 8% it mirrored the lackluster national average.<sup>28</sup> However, these numbers do not tell the whole

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<sup>25</sup> Dr Abraham Bergman, "Children as pawns in desegregation battle." *Seattle Times*, January 11, 1977, in Seattle Public Schools Archive, Bill Maynard un-accessioned files, box 2 and Ross Anderson, "Madrona Man Battles for Misfits" *Seattle Times*, December 4, 1977, D10.

<sup>26</sup> Robert W. Moss, Commentary: "The Long Hot Summers," *Seattle Times* March 25, 1978, A6.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Dunphy, "February Jobless Rate Fell to 25 month low," *Seattle Times*, April 20, 1977, B6.

story. As the city struggled to recover from the Boeing Bust, by the late 1970s many of the long-term unemployed had dropped out of the labor market altogether or were underemployed.<sup>29</sup> Underscoring the wide range of Seattle residents who were affected by the Bust, in the 1970s, laid-off white collar Boeing employees founded “self-help” groups such as SEAVEST and Talent Plus in order to both commiserate and to help each other find new jobs.<sup>30</sup> In 1975, one former Boeing engineer and father of nine, John Conroy, spoke about his personal economic crisis. “If it wasn’t for the food stamps, we would have been totally devastated because we would have had to use what little money there was for food.”<sup>31</sup> Personal struggles such as Conroy’s were not part of the official economic statistics that economists used to analyze the city’s prospects. Nevertheless, by 1977, with the national uptick in the commercial airline market, the outlook for Boeing had improved considerably and shipping and international trade with China were also bright spots for the region and the city.<sup>32</sup> While stronger than many parts of the U.S., with Seattle’s mixed economic picture, the city’s recovery was by no means secure and African Americans were the least likely to benefit from the improving local economy. Keeping these economic discrepancies in mind, DWAC aimed to develop a busing proposal that would help to alleviate these inequalities.

#### THE SEATTLE PLAN & DWAC

The 1978 Seattle Plan made desegregation a reality, but the ideas were not new. The Plan repackaged the Seattle Urban League’s extremely unpopular 1964 Triad Plan, which drew ire because of its emphasis upon both economic and racial segregation in Seattle’s schools and

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<sup>29</sup> Susan Schwartz, “Students and Job,” *Seattle Times*, May 8, 1977, Magazine 4.

<sup>30</sup> Nelson, *Seattle*, 99.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>32</sup> Boyd Burchard, “Political Economist Sees no Pause,” *Seattle Times*, November 28, 1978, C6.

was rejected by both the city and District leadership.<sup>33</sup> In the mid-1960s, using schools to alleviate economic and racial inequities was unacceptable to most Seattleites. By the late 1970s on the other hand, addressing racial disparities, would become increasingly palatable to residents across color lines. The League's 1964 Plan, and the schematic for the 1978 Seattle Plan, placed schools into groups of three, in which racially and economically imbalanced schools were paired with predominately white and middle class schools. For example, the k-3 students from three different home areas would attend one school that enrolled kindergarteners through third graders. The 4th-6th graders from these three neighborhoods would attend one of the two remaining elementary schools. In the Urban League's proposal and in the Seattle Plan, children would transfer schools two times in the elementary years. Some of the students would never attend elementary school in their home neighborhoods, while others would spend half of their elementary years in their 'neighborhood' school.<sup>34</sup>

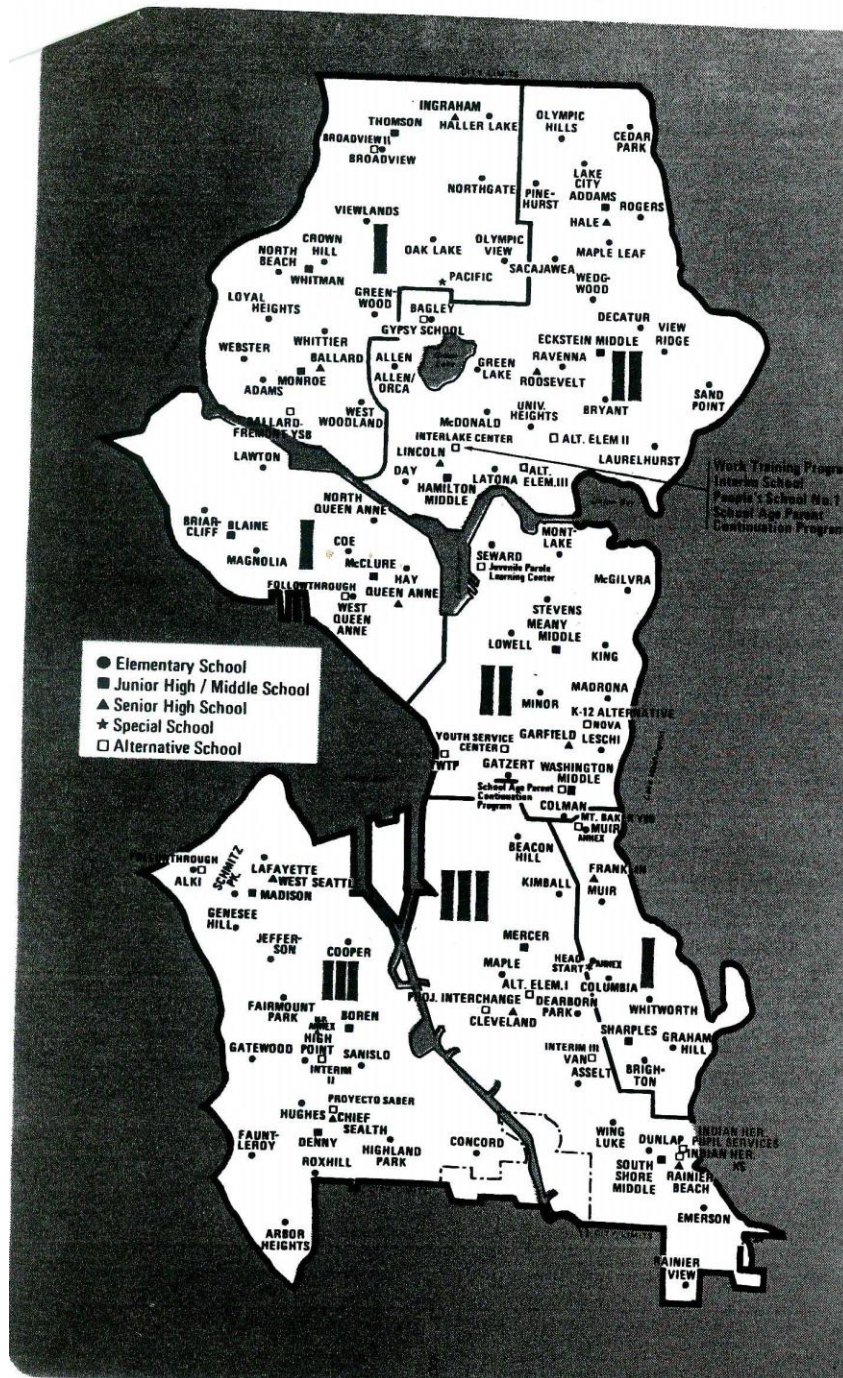
The 1978 Seattle Plan, which aimed to eliminate all racially unbalanced schools by 1979, retained the basic structure of the earlier plan that had called for the movement of students by neighborhood and kept peer groups together throughout their schooling years. The city was divided into three zones, "with approximately an equal number of schools."<sup>35</sup> The following is a map of the city with the zones and schools transposed upon it.

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<sup>33</sup>Hanawalt et al., "The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981," 15.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Seattle School District, "Options in Education: 'The Seattle Plan,'" Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. 330.167, C.1.



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The Plan shifted students by bus within each of the three zones. Despite the mandatory nature of the Seattle Plan, students retained some level of school choice. There were option schools by zone as well as “all city” options that were chosen through a lottery system. With their rhetoric

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.



of “Options in Education” in the title of the Seattle Plan handbook, the District sought to emphasize that parents still had choices in this new desegregation plan.<sup>37</sup>

While many of the details of the Seattle Plan were similar or identical to the Urban League proposal, the most crucial change to the plan was the elimination of socioeconomic integration as a factor for desegregation. While class may have always been under the surface when planners developed the 1978 desegregation proposal, publicly, economic segregation was entirely absent from the discussion.<sup>38</sup> Dr. Richard Andrews, the chair of the District Wide Advisory Committee on Desegregation (DWAC), described the Board’s sensitivity to class in the writing of the 1978 Seattle Plan: “...you won’t find the words socio-economic integration in it anywhere because in the judgment of many people including the Superintendent, socio-economic integration was a bigger issue and a hotter issue than racial integration.”<sup>39</sup> Superintendent Moberly understood that the city’s strong white working class population in areas such as fiercely independent West Seattle and in far North Seattle would have recoiled at the thought that their children, like racially and economically isolated blacks, were in need of “integration” of any kind. In addition to avoiding reference to class, the Seattle Plan exempted kindergarteners from the busing requirement because planners deemed them too young to be bused long distances.<sup>40</sup> While these changes may have ensured the passage of the Seattle Plan, they certainly did not appease anti-busers, who rejected the Plan under any circumstances. The new repackaged

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<sup>37</sup> Seattle School District, “Options in Education: ‘The Seattle Plan’,” Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. 330.167, C.1.

<sup>38</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 15-16. In this section about the development of the Seattle Plan and DWAC, I rely on Ann Siqueland’s first-hand accounts in both her book published by Dan Levant’s Madrona Press and my May 2012 interview. The book is most notable for its extensive, unedited quotations by members of DWAC and the School District Administration, which she recorded in the late 1970s. These interviews are especially helpful because she recorded them so close to the time of the events, thus memories were fresh and details still clear in the minds of the participants.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Dr. Richard Andrews in Roger Hagen’s Ford Foundation commissioned, yet never released documentary, *What Happened in Seattle?: How Seattle achieved ‘voluntary’ School Desegregation*, 1982.

<sup>40</sup> Hanawalt et al., “The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981,” 35.

triad plan was relatively smoothly implemented perhaps because some Seattle residents had begun to shift their ideas about racial integration, and also because the District made important revisions to the Urban League's earlier proposal by eliminating all economic integration that had been a central component of the opposition to the 1964 Triad Plan.<sup>41</sup> Members of DWAC, particularly under the leadership of Dick Andrews, understood that it was crucial to make the Seattle Plan palatable to a wide range of influential Seattle stakeholders, from the Chamber of Commerce to Mayor Charles Royer.

The mandatory component of the Seattle Plan would not have become a reality without significant pressure from the city's powerful civil rights lobby, which included many influential African Americans. The key role that many black leaders played in pushing forth this policy was not widely known because publicly, the School Board and Superintendent emphasized the pragmatism of non-court ordered desegregation rather than the role that the city's small minority population played in the development of the Plan. Not until shortly before the December 1977 vote was the African American lobby successful in convincing the mostly white and often reluctant School Board and Superintendent to support mandatory busing. Up until that point, the School Board had debated the merits of mandatory plans and voluntary plans with mandatory back-ups, such as one similar to the 1972 middle school plan.<sup>42</sup> DWAC, which unofficially led the pro-busing coalition, demonstrated to the Board and Superintendent Moberly that a mandatory plan was superior. DWAC argued that a voluntary plan would be logistically more difficult to implement and that it would lead to potentially harmful competition between the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid..

<sup>42</sup> Hart-Nibbrig, "School Desegregation Politics"

schools for students. Only in a mandatory plan, DWAC stated, would it be possible to set school-specific targets for race distributions, one of the primary goals of desegregation.<sup>43</sup>

However, the “mandatory” component of the Plan’s name continued to be politically problematic. DWAC’s leaders, who were sensitive to the busing opposition’s distaste for the term, suggested that officially the Plan should be “fixed-assignment” rather than “mandatory.”<sup>44</sup> After this, at least publicly, supporters of the Plan always referred to it as the fixed assignment option rather than mandatory desegregation. Busing opponents, on the other hand, never employed the ‘fixed assignment’ rhetoric. CiVIC continued to emphasize the mandatory nature of the Seattle Plan. Despite the tension over the mandatory or fixed assignment plan, this element of the Plan was crucial because it served to reinforce the construction of Seattle’s image as an exceptionally tolerant American city. Only a proposal where equal numbers of blacks and whites were bused would make Seattle stand out among other American cities.

Including DWAC, enthusiastic African American supporters of the Seattle Plan from the Central Area and Rainier Valley saw busing as an important way to address racial injustice, which was a shift from the black community’s more ambivalent and in some cases hostile stance towards busing in the early 1970s.<sup>45</sup> In Seattle, DWAC’s chairman Richard Andrews called the Plan “...a black agenda expressed through white leadership.”<sup>46</sup> This “black agenda” included an emphasis upon equality for all Seattle students and a deep commitment to ending racism. In addition, the only black member of the School Board, Dorothy Hollingsworth, was consistently supportive of a mandatory busing plan, but she was often in the shadows of the pro-busing movement. Some analysts have suggested that it was crucial to the success of the Plan that

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid. and Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 139.

<sup>44</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 145.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies*, 58.

<sup>46</sup>Hart-Nibbrig, “School Desegregation Politics.”

Hollingsworth and other prominent blacks were not in the forefront of the fight for mandatory busing because Seattle's white majority was more comfortable with a policy that appeared to be driven and developed by white leadership.<sup>47</sup>

DWAC's participation in desegregation, which had a strong black presence, would become fundamental to the development and success of the Seattle Plan. However, in the early years of the group's tenure, it was largely ineffectual.<sup>48</sup> Superintendent Troxel founded the group in 1974 in order to gain citizen input into desegregation planning. Dan Levant, a Jewish local book publisher who volunteered for the ACLU and the Municipal League was the first chairperson of DWAC and Arlene Oki, a Japanese-American mother of two and school and desegregation activist who would become an assistant to Mayor Royer, was the vice-chairperson.<sup>49</sup> At its height, the multi-racial group had upwards of fifty members who represented many different community organizations including, but not limited to the NAACP, Citizens for Quality Integrated Education, ACLU, Church Council of Greater Seattle, Parent Teacher Student Association, the Central Area School Council, and the League of Women Voters.<sup>50</sup> Levant, who lived in the heavily African American Madrona neighborhood, had a reputation for being an outspoken liberal who at times was uncompromising in his ideals.<sup>51</sup> During Levant's term, his strategy was to confront the District to try to push them to desegregate. However, the group did not have any specific proposals for the District leaders to evaluate. Levant's confrontational style angered Superintendent Moberly, who saw Levant as an agitator without a serious plan. Levant described his intention as one that aimed to "make the school district do something it didn't want to do, and you could only do that by making it too

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Roger Hagan, Interview by author, Seattle, WA., 19 June 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Arlene Oki, Interview by author.

<sup>50</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 42-43.

<sup>51</sup> Kay Bullitt, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, June 12, 2012.

uncomfortable to stay where it was.”<sup>52</sup> Levant, angry about Moberly’s endorsement of the Magnet Program over a mandatory desegregation policy, became disillusioned with the District, which led to his resignation in the spring of 1977.<sup>53</sup>

Levant’s resignation was a turning point for DWAC. Under the leadership of Dick Andrews, the second chair of the committee, DWAC evolved into a politically nimble organization. DWAC’s shift in methods ultimately secured its influence over the making of the Seattle Plan and garnered it support from the Board and Superintendent. As a University of Washington Professor and PhD, Andrews’s credentials impressed Superintendent Moberly. Furthermore, because Moberly was notoriously difficult to work with and personally reluctant to support desegregation, it was crucial that someone like Andrews, who Moberly respected and liked, was there to convince him of the feasibility of the triad plan.<sup>54</sup> Andrews was highly skilled politically, and he worked with the School District as a partner instead of an adversary, as Levant had become.<sup>55</sup> Andrews did not shift DWAC’s message about desegregation in any dramatic ways, but his delivery was highly effective. As Levant put it, “Dick Andrews is a political creature and he has enormous energy. He managed to do what I thought had to be done, without allowing the superintendent off the hook. I think Dick did a beautiful job. It was perfect.”<sup>56</sup> The road to a mandatory desegregation program in Seattle Schools would have been much more difficult if not impossible without the skillful maneuvering of Andrews who managed to bridge the gap between District officials and seasoned civil rights supporters. In the early 1970s, the District did not have the benefit of a forceful, enthusiastic, and calculated citizen coalition because DWAC formed after the establishment of the 1972 middle school plan.

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<sup>52</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 42-43.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 45-46.

<sup>54</sup> Bill Maynard, Interview by author, 28 June 2012, Seattle, WA.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Hagan, Interview by author & Ann Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 52.

<sup>56</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order* 47.

DWAC's influence over the desegregation process, especially under the guiding hand of Dick Andrews, was important not just because they succeeded in convincing the Board and Superintendent to implement a mandatory busing plan, but because the ordinary citizens in the group were primarily responsible for drafting the final, Board-approved proposal.<sup>57</sup> It is remarkable that a peoples' committee with the significant help of one District employee, Richard Dyksterhuis, was responsible for writing such a complicated and important document. With the Urban League's Triad Plan as its blueprint, DWAC, Dyksterhuis and others developed the Seattle Plan over the course of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend in November 1977.<sup>58</sup> Richard Andrews spoke about DWAC's role. "It was DWAC people who spent Thanksgiving Day down in the school district headquarters, working on that desegregation plan, when the people who were being paid to do it were home enjoying Thanksgiving with their families."<sup>59</sup>

The extent to which DWAC, an unelected multi-ethnic citizens body, instead of the people "being paid to do it" developed and actually wrote the Plan was not made public at the time, nor is it a part of today's official District history. In the Seattle Public Schools' 1981 publication written by Frank Hanawalt and Robert Williams, *History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools 1954-1981*, DWAC's role is underplayed and there is no mention of their participation in the writing process.<sup>60</sup> It would have been controversial if desegregation leaders had explained that such a key document was not the product of a rational, measured School District administration planning and development process. In actuality, the Seattle Plan was more of an organic outgrowth of desegregation activists' anti-racist agendas. Documentary filmmaker Roger Hagen labeled DWAC's contribution to the desegregation process as "rogue

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<sup>57</sup> Ann Siqueland, Interview by author & Kay Bullitt, Interview by author.

<sup>58</sup> Ann Siqueland, Interview by author and Richard Dyksterhuis, Interview by author.

<sup>59</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 150.

<sup>60</sup> Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools*, 30.

democracy.”<sup>61</sup> Hagen’s description was apt because DWAC’s membership was inclusive of many Seattle perspectives and African Americans had an especially strong presence in the group. Yet, DWAC was not truly representative of the Seattle community as a whole and its members were not democratically elected. By downplaying DWAC and their “rogue democracy” and emphasizing the rationality of the Seattle Plan, District officials were better able to quell public discontent.

The fate of Hagen’s documentary about the Seattle Plan, which was never publicly released, reveals how DWAC’s African-American agenda was a potential political liability for Seattle and the District. In 1977, the Ford Foundation commissioned Hagen to make a film about how Seattle implemented mandatory desegregation without a court order.<sup>62</sup> After Hagen had submitted fourteen drafts of the film, in 1982 he was bitterly disappointed to hear that Ford had cancelled the project and it would never see the light of day. The next year, when Hagen returned to the processing lab to retrieve his reels he learned that all copies of the film had been shipped back to Ford’s Headquarters in New York and destroyed. Years later, he discovered that there was no official record of the film’s existence.<sup>63</sup> A local Ford Foundation employee suggested that with the rising tide of conservative ideology under Reagan’s administration, congressmen in Washington D.C., who had gotten wind of the film, pushed for its demise because of Hagen’s portrayal of the influential role of Seattle’s unelected African American community in shaping desegregation. Hagen said that his depiction of the development of the Seattle Plan was “not a story of pure democracy, which made them uncomfortable. It was too conspiratorial for the Ford Foundation.”<sup>64</sup> Ford and the Congressmen who had heard about the film worried that the

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<sup>61</sup> Hagen, *What Happened in Seattle?*.

<sup>62</sup> Roger Hagen, Interview by author.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

powerful role of community groups, particularly DWAC, in shaping and forming the Seattle Plan might serve as a catalyst for other community groups around the country to seize control over what was normally firmly in the hands of government bureaucrats, such as court ordered desegregation plans. A scratch copy of the 12<sup>th</sup> version of the film is the only remaining evidence of Roger Hagan's labors. However, Siqueland's published account, *Without a Court Order*, presents an analogous view of DWAC's influence over the desegregation process.

DWAC's crucial role in the establishment and development of the Seattle Plan and the objections to their role by the powerful, national elite demonstrate how influential citizen groups had become in 1970s Seattle. Their influence echoes action taken by neighborhood-based, citizen-driven environmental groups in Seattle during the 1970s. For example, with the backing of the federal Model Cities program, civil rights groups in the Central Area developed a plan that established small parks, landscaped space, and mixed housing and commercial spaces in blighted areas.<sup>65</sup> While the project was assisted by Walt Hundley, the Director of the Model Cities program who had his roots in the justice movement, it was driven by ordinary citizens who sought change in their neighborhood.<sup>66</sup> While the environmental movement and the racial justice movements in Seattle included citizen actors, the degree to which municipal government participated in the process varied considerably. Seattle's environmental justice movement was much more reliant upon grassroots activism to spread their message. DWAC had the unique position of being composed of ordinary citizens while retaining the endorsement of the District administration. Because of their understanding of the needs of the people, DWAC was able to anticipate what should be included in the Plan in order to ensure the support of the city's multi-ethnic population.

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<sup>65</sup>Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.



Consequently, the Plan had several ethnically appropriate components, which had not been included in the earlier middle school plan. DWAC and their supporters aimed to be sensitive to those who were concerned about how desegregation would affect the preservation of ethnic and cultural identities as well as the availability of English Language Learner (ELL) services, particularly in the heavily Asian communities such as Beacon Hill. At a School Board meeting in November 1977, leaders discussed the potential complications with busing ELL students and recent immigrants.

Mrs. Hittman [Board member] stated compensatory and bilingual programs are of critical concern to the members of the Asian community. These parents felt that their children had just begun to adjust to the local school, and it seemed counter-productive to consider moving their child again.<sup>67</sup>

Because of these concerns about access and assimilation, the Board chose to bus neighborhoods together, which helped to ensure the integrity of ethnic populations. Policy makers also ensured that desegregation “eliminate[d] minority imbalanced schools,” but did not require all schools to have an equal proportion of whites and students of color.<sup>68</sup> This was important because it served to limit the number of children of color who were bused and when children were bused, services such as ELL could be concentrated in their new schools. The drafters of the Seattle Plan, particularly DWAC, did not want to break up integrated schools that had a higher proportion of children of color than white students. Instead, they focused their efforts on highly segregated schools, which helped to increase the Plan’s popularity among people of color who were happy that the Plan left some of their neighborhood schools intact.<sup>69</sup>

In order to gain support from Seattleites across the racial spectrum, busing backers highlighted the Seattle Plan’s commitment to equity, continuity, and neighborhood cohesiveness.

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<sup>67</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, Record 75, March 16, 1977, 172.

<sup>68</sup> Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools*, 37.

<sup>69</sup> Richard Hagen, Interview by author, June 19, 2012, Seattle, WA.

Mayor Royer wrote an open letter to Seattle citizens about the details and unique strengths of the Seattle Plan to allay parents' fears as well as to stress the city's special status as especially progressive and forward-thinking.

In the last few years, Seattle has received national attention as the country's 'most livable city.' People everywhere look to our city to see 'how it's done'... I believe we can show those people, and ourselves, that Seattle is a remarkable city. We can begin peacefully desegregating our schools.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to his boosterism, Royer sought to reassure parents that bused children would have some sense of stability even though they would not attend their neighborhood schools. In his memo, Royer argued that the Seattle Plan was different from the unpopular plans that the federal government had forced upon other American cities and school districts.<sup>71</sup> The Mayor described how the Plan would bus equal ratios of white and minority children and that cohorts would stay together for all of their school years.<sup>72</sup> There would be no surprises for parents and children. From the start of the desegregation program in 1978, they knew where and with whom they would attend elementary, middle, and high school. Throughout the letter and in all of his public communication about busing, Royer's tone was enthusiastic and optimistic about the upcoming transition to mandatory desegregation, which was in sharp contrast to Uhlman's anemic response to the 1972 middle school desegregation plan.

#### SEATTLE CITY GOVERNMENT

The Seattle city government was an enthusiastic supporter of desegregation in both the late Uhlman term as well as in the Royer administration. To demonstrate their commitment to and to help make the Plan more successful, the city's leadership, including successive mayors,

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Royer, Open Letter to the Citizens of Seattle, September 1, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-02, Folder 2/23.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

and the Seattle City Council, studied the experiences of other cities which had implemented desegregation programs. They made public speeches, including testifying at the Washington State level, carefully managed city government/School District relations, and worked to craft a discourse in public and private that emphasized the peaceful nature of the upcoming shift to mandatory busing. With the leadership's aim to avoid violence, Mayor Royer named his busing committee the "Mayor's Taskforce on Peaceful School Desegregation." This seemingly small rhetorical choice demonstrated their belief that optimistic language could help to shape attitudes and expectations and served as a way for the city to forward its agenda.<sup>73</sup> The moniker also placed added pressure upon the administration to ensure a non-violent response to desegregation. In addition to crafting an alliance with the District, city officials also bolstered their connections with business leaders and civic organizations throughout the city. While the city's actions were important, there was an element of luck in how the timing of their policy development helped to make Seattle's efforts more successful.

The timing of the Seattle Plan was a crucial component of the city's successful desegregation efforts. Not only were Seattle officials fortunate to benefit from the knowledge gained from earlier controversial busing programs in cities such as Richmond and Boston, they were opportunistic in that they used their new-found knowledge to gain support for the Seattle Plan. With the goal of learning more about desegregation, late in the Uhlman term, the Mayor commissioned a survey of 25 city leaders in municipalities throughout the United States that had recently desegregated their local schools.<sup>74</sup> This extensive survey and the subsequent analyses, which were overseen by Deputy Mayor R. W. Wilkinson, demonstrated that the Seattle

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<sup>73</sup> Mayor's Taskforce on Peaceful School Desegregation, Memo to 'Interested Citizens', June 6, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-02, Box 146, Folder 2.

<sup>74</sup> Office of Policy Planning, "School Desegregation: a Survey of Selected Cities," Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5287-02, Box 146, Folder 4.

government consciously worked to ensure a smooth implementation of the Plan by using the experiences of other cities to learn from both their mistakes and successes. But it was not just the act of carrying out the survey that was meaningful. The “synthesis of survey findings,” a two page document that highlighted the key discoveries, were a virtual blue-print for how the city government, in partnership with the District and others, would implement the Seattle Plan.<sup>75</sup>

These broad policy recommendations stressed the desirability of implementing a desegregation plan *without* a court order because it allowed maximum local control, emphasized the importance of a well thought-out public relations campaign, stressed the benefits of including a wide range of stakeholders in the implementation process, called for a racially equitable distribution of busing assignments, and suggested that active municipal leadership could help guarantee a wider community buy-in and a smoother implementation process.<sup>76</sup>

Deputy Mayor Woody Wilkinson’s December 5, 1977 public endorsement of the Plan was an example of this active leadership and demonstrated how the city used desegregation as a form of boosterism. In Wilkinson’s speech, which aimed to convince the School Board to pass the Seattle Plan, he emphasized Seattle exceptionalism and simultaneously put a human face on parental worries about desegregation.<sup>77</sup> Wilkinson’s address to the School Board, which discussed the upcoming transition from the Uhlman to Royer administration, was designed to reassure the Board that the city government would continue to work closely with the District during the implementation phase of the policy. Wilkinson, who was white, and Seattle officials believed that the Board would be more likely to vote in favor of the Seattle Plan if they had official backing from the popular city government. Wilkinson was effective in part because of

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid. 4-5.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> R.W. Wilkinson, Jr., Speech to School Board, December 5, 1977, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-03, Folder 2/28.

the personal touch he employed as he discussed his wife's worries about sending their children to Northgate Elementary from Graham Hill in the Rainier Valley.<sup>78</sup>

You know, last week about ten women from my neighborhood got together to plan a visit to Northgate Elementary School. They wanted to see where their kids would be going to school next year. They wondered how long it would take to get there. They wondered what they would find at the end of the ride. I know about this firsthand. One of these women is my wife...<sup>79</sup>

Wilkinson's vignette directly addressed the trepidations that many parents expressed about busing, a fear of the unknown. By openly acknowledging parents' concerns, while simultaneously offering a potential solution – parental visits and bus rides to the new schools – he offered tangible suggestions for how Seattle officials could make busing more palatable for reluctant parents, a problem that the District officials knew would be difficult to face. In addition to putting a parental face on desegregation, he emphasized how the Board's actions made the city stand out on a national stage and that their actions were consistent with the *Seattle Way*.

Wilkinson's speech was also significant because it demonstrated the continuing development of the *Seattle Way* ideology, which he used to commend the School Board for promoting the image of Seattle as a leading civil rights city. Wilkinson described the *Seattle Way* as a desegregation philosophy that included reliable transportation, quality programs, choices in teaching and course content, excellence in all schools, and – most importantly – “Seattle in control,” all of which were influenced by the lessons that leaders learned from studying the experiences of other cities.<sup>80</sup> With Wilkinson's backing, reluctant Board members could justify their support for the Plan as the pragmatic solution to a complicated problem. In the following excerpt from Wilkinson's speech, he praised the Board for both their personal efforts and how they promoted the *Seattle Way*.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 2.

You and your Superintendent ...deserve medals for the long hours, tough decisions, and thoughtful compromises you have made to get to where you are today. The inscription on your medal might read: 'I helped write the Seattle Plan because that's doing it the Seattle way.'<sup>81</sup>

Through Wilkinson's commentary, we see how emphasizing the *Seattle Way* had cultural cache in 1977 Seattle with which Board members would be pleased to be associated. Wilkinson's speech was carefully calculated, expressing both the city government's clear commitment to the Seattle Plan and its preference for the rhetoric of Seattle exceptionalism.

However, despite Wilkinson's, Royer's and other officials' upbeat rhetoric, support for busing within the city government was not always as solid as it might have appeared. In 1977, Charles Royer campaigned on a platform of neighborhood preservation. Some voters saw his position as philosophically inconsistent because he advocated for neighborhoods, of which schools were an integral part, while simultaneously pushing for a desegregation plan that would largely eliminate the neighborhood school in its traditional capacity.<sup>82</sup> In the 1970s, many Seattle neighborhoods were struggling for viability because middle class families, who sought newer and more affordable housing and many of whom who wanted their children to attend suburban rather than urban schools, increasingly retreated to the suburbs, which contributed to school closures.<sup>83</sup> Royer sought to reverse the trend of families leaving the city.<sup>84</sup> However, Royer was never able to satisfy his critics because he could not find a way to address the Plan's potentially negative effects on neighborhood cohesiveness and identity, a topic that had been so seemingly important to him on the campaign trail and in his earlier advocacy. But beyond the more targeted

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>82</sup> See letters to Royer from constituents: Thelma Creighton, Letter to Charles Royer, January 22, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, 5274-01, Folder 2/24, and Linda Dagg, Letter to Charles Royer, September 7, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-02, Folder 2/23.

<sup>83</sup> Carlyn Orians, *School Desegregation and Residential Segregation*, 76. For a discussion of the importance of "neighborhoodism" in Seattle and in the wider U.S. in this period see Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*, 195-199.

<sup>84</sup> Richard W. Larsen, "TV Man Royer Now Presses the Flesh," *Seattle Times*, September 4, 1977, A14.

question of neighborhood unity, there was also evidence that city analysts wondered about the vigor of Mayor Royer and the City Council's commitment to busing in the face of mounting white public opposition to the Plan.

In the spring of 1978, when the major anti-busing group in the period, Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee (CiVIC) was developing anti-busing Statewide Initiative 350, which was slated to appear on the ballot in November, the Seattle Office of Policy Planning leaders worried that anti-busing sentiment might be too powerful for elected officials to ignore.<sup>85</sup> With growing citizen opposition (which, along with I-350 is the topic of chapter 5), it is not surprising that politicians worried about the political ramifications of supporting busing. In an extensive memo from Barbara Dingfield, Director of the Office of Policy Planning, to Phyllis Lamphere, City Council President, and Mayor Royer, she stressed the importance of the leadership's endorsement of the Seattle Plan, despite public discontent.

The community is now looking for City commitment to the District's desegregation plan and City Council, the City Attorney and numerous City departments must begin to help make this commitment clear. If there is a public perception that the City is backing off in any way, the success of the plan may be seriously jeopardized; legally the City may be on dangerous grounds; and Seattle's present national reputation as a strong civil rights city will be seriously damaged.<sup>86</sup>

Potential weaknesses in the projection of Seattle's image as a "civil rights city" was worrisome because it might serve to negatively affect the city's effort to construct a liberal façade. In addition, unlike the tone set in the publicly released documents, there was a sense of insecurity and nervousness about the fate of mandatory busing because the city government was not doing enough to convince Seattle citizens of its merits. To help combat this perception, the city

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<sup>85</sup> Barbara Dingfield, Memo to Charles Royer and Phyllis Lamphere, March 13, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 4636-02, Folder 1/7. Initiative 350 is covered in full detail in chapter 5.

<sup>86</sup> Barbara Dingfield, Memo to Charles Royer and Phyllis Lamphere, 14.

government worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce in order to ensure that the city's most powerful stakeholders, particularly business leaders, would lend their support to the Plan.

#### CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Chamber of Commerce was crucial to the successful implementation of the busing program because they provided behind-the-scenes guidance and helped to make the Plan palatable to Seattle's business elite. Business leaders were convinced of the economic necessity of the Seattle Plan primarily because Chamber president Wallace Bunn's thoroughly analyzed how a smooth implementation of busing would serve to make Seattle a more welcoming business climate for companies throughout the United States. The Chamber would not have been active in the desegregation planning process if it had not been in their best business interest to do so.

The Chamber of Commerce believed that a smooth implementation of the policy would be a way to market the city to a wider national audience. Their 1978 stance was in sharp contrast to the 1972 middle school plan when business leaders publicly avoided the topic. President Wallace Bunn and his organization's belief in the pragmatic necessity of the plan was central to their enthusiastic, public backing of the policy. The Chamber of Commerce was the most powerful of the community groups who supported busing because its members represented a wide range of the city's most profitable industries from Boeing to shipping and transportation to small business owners and the group had the ear of both the Mayor's Office and the Superintendent. As the president of the Chamber, Wallace Bunn was one of the four signatories of the crucial May 1977 letter to the School Board. After writing the letter, the Chamber acted quickly to both influence the process and provide support for the program.<sup>87</sup> In order to organize their efforts, in 1977 the Chamber established its own Desegregation Task Force, which

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<sup>87</sup> Mayor Wes Uhlman, Letter to Don Olson, May 20, 1977, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5287-02, Box 146, Folder 7.



conducted research on desegregation, aiming to be a desegregation policy leader who would influence how the program would be developed and marketed to the Seattle public.

As evidence of the Chamber's pragmatic commitment to desegregation, in 1977 the group both announced its own busing proposal and sought advice from the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, a city with one of the most troubled histories of school segregation and violence. In December 1977, a week before the School Board voted on the Seattle Plan, the Chamber released its own desegregation recommendations, influenced by both their interactions with local education leaders as well as their analyses of the experiences of other cities.<sup>88</sup> These recommendations signaled to the rest of the Seattle elected and unelected city leadership that the Chamber was serious about being a part of the development of the Seattle Plan and was willing to make a concerted effort in order to influence the process. However, where they sought their advice, particularly the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, was indicative of the Chamber's pragmatic, rather than racially idealistic view of desegregation.<sup>89</sup> Chamber leadership aimed to avoid becoming another Little Rock by developing a policy that would minimize racial strife and consequently keep the city's relatively good reputation intact. This goal was much more important than achieving racial equality. Robert McHenry, the Little Rock Chamber member, emphasized the importance of retaining the support of middle and upper class communities, keeping peer groups together, and beginning integration in the early school years when children were still malleable.<sup>90</sup> The Chamber, like the District and the Mayor's office, made a concerted effort to learn from the mistakes of other cities in order to ensure a smooth implementation of

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<sup>88</sup> Seattle Chamber of Commerce, "Recommended by the Desegregation Task Force of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce," December 6, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned, Maynard Box 1.

<sup>89</sup> Robert McHenry, Letter to George Duff of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, June 7, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned, Maynard Box 1.

<sup>90</sup> Robert McHenry, Letter to George Duff of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, June 7, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned, Maynard Box 1, 3-4.

desegregation. It is notable that many of the most important points in the Little Rock letter corresponded with the findings from Mayor Uhlman's 1977 survey of 25 cities, such as the importance of stakeholder buy-in and local control. When Seattle leaders such as the Chamber of Commerce, looked to their counterparts in other cities, they were provided with a wealth of sage advice. However, the cities that they consulted with (such as Little Rock) were under a legal mandate to desegregate, by contrast Seattle was under the *threat* of legal action. The Chamber had time to assist in developing a plan that was sensitive to both the city's unique racial climate and the widespread tensions that were lurking both at and under the surface. The School District was not immune to these racial tensions. School District leaders, particularly at the Desegregation Office, worked tirelessly to keep their own internal debates about desegregation out of the public eye.

#### SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

While Seattle's city government was largely supportive of busing and the Chamber of Commerce presented a strong public face in support of the policy, the situation within the School District was more complicated, which was further evidence of the fragility of the city's façade of liberal exceptionalism. If School District leaders, who displayed more debate and reticence behind the scenes than their counterparts at City Hall, were not supportive of desegregation, how could one substantiate the idea of the city's special status as a civil rights leader? School Board Presidents Don Olson in 1977 and Patt Sutton in 1978, respectively, and Superintendent David Moberly, all white, had individually questioned busing. They came to their public support for the Seattle Plan only gradually and with some degree of hesitation.<sup>91</sup> Don Olson, who presided over the Board when the desegregation vote passed on December 14, 1977, was seen by many as both a busing moderate and a realist. Initially, Olson was a strong supporter of the 1977/78 voluntary

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<sup>91</sup> Don Olson served until 1977 and Patt Sutton took over the post in January 1978.

magnet program, believing that a mandatory integration plan in Seattle was unnecessary.<sup>92</sup> The voluntary program attempted to desegregate Seattle schools by establishing magnet schools throughout the District that were designed to attract white students to largely black schools and vice versa. While Olson was eventually convinced of the necessity of the mandatory plan, he retained his reputation as a moderate who only came to support busing out of necessity. As discussed earlier, Patt Sutton, Board President in 1978, also struggled to shift to a pro-busing stance.<sup>93</sup> School Board members echoed the tone set by Olson and Sutton. However, Superintendent David Moberly, who was hired in the summer of 1976 with the expectation that he would oversee the desegregation of Seattle Schools, was even more hesitant about busing than Olson and Sutton had been.

David Moberly's objections to mandatory busing threatened to derail the city's desegregation effort. Furthermore, his private dislike of mandatory desegregation and his confrontational leadership style led to tensions at the District office, particularly between the Desegregation Director, Bill Maynard, and himself. Moberly, a native Midwesterner who resided in Magnolia, had always planned to implement a voluntary desegregation program in Seattle. Maynard suggested that Moberly secretly hoped that there would be violent demonstrations in response to busing so that he could cancel the program at the last minute.<sup>94</sup> Because of his personal reticence, Moberly granted the District Desegregation Office little autonomy to implement the Seattle Plan.<sup>95</sup> Maynard felt that he was hamstrung because the "desegregation office had no authority," believing that he was hired to lead a project that Moberly never

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<sup>92</sup> Ann Siqueland Interview by author.

<sup>93</sup> "Nothing will ever be quite the same again" *West Seattle Herald*, December 21, 1977, A1.

<sup>94</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 32 and William Maynard, Interview with Author, 28 June 2012, Seattle, WA. Maynard's perception of Moberly's unease with busing was confirmed by Ann Siqueland in my 30 May 2012 interview.

<sup>95</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 32.

intended for him to complete.<sup>96</sup> In addition, Maynard explained that only one of his staff members, Dick Dyksterhuis, was of his choosing. In June 1978, as tensions rose between Maynard and Moberly, Moberly called Maynard back from a business trip in San Francisco in order to fire him. According to Maynard, this discussion resulted in a shouting match between the two men.<sup>97</sup> After this, Moberly dismantled the Desegregation office.<sup>98</sup> It is remarkable that Maynard, who was responsible for managing desegregation and was one of its biggest advocates, was let go three months before the implementation of the program. Moberly, who was not personally supportive of mandatory desegregation, recoiled from the charismatic and strong willed Maynard. The relationship between Moberly and Maynard mirrored Moberly's interactions with the former chair of DWAC, Dan Levant. It took an especially deft political hand such as Dick Andrews to stay in Moberly's good graces and in turn, retain influence over busing in Seattle.

Despite all of this internal tension, the District kept the public largely in the dark about the rumblings within, which was crucial to the smooth rollout of the Plan. As was the case in the early 1970s with Superintendent Bottomly's unsteady hand, the public would have been more likely to protest the policy if it seemed as if the leadership was faltering and unsure. In large part, the Seattle public believed Moberly was committed to the Seattle Plan, while the District's primary desegregation planner and other insiders viewed Moberly as an obstructionist who actually wanted the program to fail.<sup>99</sup> If the press had understood and reported to the public both the extent to which Moberly was uncomfortable with busing and the tensions within the District, perhaps the Plan would never have been implemented or at the very least it would have caused

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<sup>96</sup> Bill Maynard, Interview by author.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. and Joan Bureson, Interview by author.

much more unrest because the reluctant public was looking to its leaders for guidance. Therefore, the all-white School District Desegregation Department, which was in charge of making the plan palatable to Seattle's white majority, attempted to present as unified of a public front as possible.

#### MARKETING THE SEATTLE PLAN

Perhaps the key to the successful implementation of the Seattle Plan was not its crafting, but the marketing of it to an often reluctant Seattle population. The multi-faceted public relations campaign is an example of the calculated steps that pragmatic liberals used in their construction of the "Seattle Way" ideology. Moberly charged Bill Maynard with developing and selling the Plan to the city's population.<sup>100</sup> While Maynard's explosive relationship with Moberly and their philosophical differences that ultimately led to his firing kept him from being as effective in the planning and developing of the desegregation proposals as he might have been, he was an important part of the PR campaign.<sup>101</sup> Before the Plan could be presented to the Seattle population, Maynard aimed to set expectations for his staff so that they knew how to manage relationships with the press and the public during this politically sensitive period.

Maynard's and other administrators' attempts to keep their own house in order was not always smooth. Internal Seattle Public Schools staff memos from 1976 and 1977 demonstrate the challenges of managing staff and their relations with the press. In December of 1976, Dan Riley, a District manager, chastised Gwen Jarrett, a desegregation office staff member, for her performance at a Student Senate meeting as well as her decision to publicly release the names of voluntary racial transfer students.<sup>102</sup> At the end of his note, he explained to Jarrett why he found it necessary to both write the memo and to send a copy to her supervisor Bill Maynard.

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<sup>100</sup> Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools*, 31.

<sup>101</sup> Bill Maynard, Interview by author.

<sup>102</sup> Dan Riley, Memo to Gwen Jarrett, December 9, 1976, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned, William Maynard Files, Box 2.

I share the above concerns with you not to be critical but to point out the need for attention to detail that will be needed if our desegregation effort is to be successful. I am sharing this memo with Dr. Maynard, . . . as an illustration of the need to be impeccably ‘clean’ in our desegregation ‘campaign.’<sup>103</sup>

A year before the Seattle Plan had been developed, District leaders such as Riley understood that it was crucial for busing to be presented to the public in as “clean” as a manner as possible. A “clean” implementation of desegregation would be professional at all times, keep a consistent message to the public, and most importantly demonstrate not even a hint of discord from within the District.

Eventually, Maynard and the Desegregation Office became more stringent about managing their public relations. In February of 1977, Maynard sent an internal memo to his entire staff indicating that all but three members of his organization should refrain from speaking to the media.<sup>104</sup> This memo and at least one subsequent memo, in addition to verbal warnings were not enough to keep staff member Jim Page inline.<sup>105</sup> On November 29, 1977, Maynard transferred Page from the Desegregation Office to another School District department because of his interview with Channel 9, the local public television station, about his belief that the Plan was “poor” and “too disruptive to the city.”<sup>106</sup> Maynard was clearly furious about the breach, he wrote: “. . .I hope that you are fully aware of the potential effects that your comments may have on the Board and on the community during this extremely sensitive time.”<sup>107</sup> News leaks, especially so close to the December 1977 School Board vote were especially worrisome, as any appearance of disunity at the District might serve to undercut efforts to promote confidence in the desegregation proposal.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Bill Maynard, Memo to DPO Staff, February 23, 1977, Un-accessioned, William Maynard Files, Box 2.

<sup>105</sup> Bill Maynard, Memo to Jim Page, November 29, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned, William Maynard Files, Box 2.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

While Maynard worked to manage his internal staff and their relations with the press, he also sought to have an impact over media reportage. Maynard boldly asked members of the media to write in ways that were most favorable to the Seattle Plan. By stage-managing the media's desegregation discourse, he promoted the idea of Seattle as a peaceful city whose leaders voluntarily desegregated their schools. In January 1977, Maynard wrote to Jack Dowdy, the Managing Editor of one of the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, one of Seattle's two major dailies. He asked Dowdy to tone down the *Intelligencer's* education reporter's headlines that employed "emotional words such as 'Busing' and 'Mandatory'" when describing desegregation.<sup>108</sup> Maynard stressed in his letter that the articles themselves were "aggressive, accurate and sensitive," but he worried that the headlines' inflammatory rhetoric might taint readers' perceptions.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, when Maynard was pleased with the content and quality of reporting on desegregation, he did not hesitate to thank a media outlet and/or a reporter for their work. In a letter to the manager of KZAM Radio, he stated that he attributed "...a great deal of our current success to the support of the media and broadcasting industries, and particularly to KZAM and Lee Sommerstein."<sup>110</sup> Maynard was also part of the team that worked to garner donations from the press. In April of 1977, Maynard wrote a letter of thanks to the local NBC affiliate for their \$25,380 donation to the campaign to fund public service announcements supporting desegregation.<sup>111</sup> For the most part, Maynard was highly successful in his aim to ensure that the Seattle Plan and desegregation were presented in the best possible light to the public. The Chamber of Commerce and other community desegregation sponsors took a similar approach to

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<sup>108</sup> William Maynard, Letter to Jack Dowdy, January 21, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned Bill Maynard Files, Box 2.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> William Maynard, Letter to A. Stewart Ballinger, May 10, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned Bill Maynard Files, Box 2.

<sup>111</sup> William Maynard, Letter to Eric S. Bremner, April 20, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned Bill Maynard Files, Box 2.

managing the press where they aimed to “enlist media support in the form of responsible journalism without appearing in any way to dictate what the media should report.”<sup>112</sup> Like Maynard, they sought to encourage favorable reporting, without appearing to discourage freedom of the press. However, the effort to “sell” busing to the Seattle public and its elites was much more complicated than Maynard’s and other supporters’ attempts to manage desegregation reporting.

City and School District administrators understood that in order to be successful in their marketing campaign they needed the public backing of Seattle’s “centralized business power structure.”<sup>113</sup> In an internal School District memo to Superintendent Moberly describing the “civic committee proposal,” administrators highlighted the benefits of widespread labor and business support for busing, arguing that it would:

...tap the reservoir of pride in Seattle and support for the School District which would create a climate conducive to District-originated desegregation. This would not be the District saying it was doing the proper and reasonable thing in desegregation, but would be the community saying it.<sup>114</sup>

Crafting an environment where the “community” was calling for desegregation was a crucial part of the District’s campaign. Fortunately for desegregation supporters, the list of community sponsors was long, many of whom who were active in the public relations campaign. The Ad Hoc Media Committee included representatives from the Seattle Schools, Seattle Municipal League, NAACP, Church Council, League of Women voters, among many. The Chamber of

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<sup>112</sup> Barbara Dingfield, Memo to Charles Royer about Chamber of Commerce Breakfast, June 1, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-06, Folder 2/15.

<sup>113</sup> Clarence Hein, Memo to David Moberly, April 29, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned Bill Maynard Files, Box 2.

<sup>114</sup> Civic Committee Proposal in Clarence Hein Memo to David Moberly, April 29, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-accessioned Bill Maynard Files, Box 2.



Commerce, and representatives from City Hall were also instrumental in developing a successful public relations campaign.<sup>115</sup>

In addition to working with the press to ensure accurate, and what they perceived of as balanced desegregation reporting, the Media Committee in collaboration with all of the major stakeholders developed a public relations campaign entitled: “Seattle’s Children are Learning Together.”<sup>116</sup> It aimed to make viewers move beyond the politics of busing into an idealized world where children from around the city would learn valuable life lessons in a novel setting. The Media Committee hired Seattle Works, a non-profit marketing organization that used its profits from the sales of products such as tee shirts and umbrellas to fund its public outreach campaigns, to formulate the campaign.<sup>117</sup> The text of one of the twenty second public service announcements, which was set to music and sung on the radio, argued that desegregation would open up new horizons for Seattle’s children and would help kids to be more successful throughout their lives.

Learning is what keeps us alive and growing---new people, new places, new friends, new experiences. Learning to get along in life makes it easier to get along in life.  
Seattle’s children are learning together. *Seattle Works*.<sup>118</sup>

Seattle Works designed the folksy tune that emphasized the benefits of expanded social experiences to appeal to both children and their parents. There was no mention of race, desegregation, or busing. Three television advertisements featured inter-racial children playing and learning together. One featured children in a chemistry lab watching a liquid transition from white to black to yellow, another featured girls passing a relay baton, and the third showed

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<sup>115</sup> The citizens’ Media Committee coordinated media relations across the wide swath of Seattle’s media landscape. and was the driver of many of the official desegregation PR campaign, see Ad Hoc Education Committee Organizational Plan, June 6, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 524-02, Folder 2/24.

<sup>116</sup> Ad Hoc Media Education Committee, Press Release, August 15, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 4636-02, Folder 1/7.

<sup>117</sup> Laura Raun, “Ever Wonder How Seattle Works? Here’s the Answer,” *The Argus*, August 11, 1978, 3.

<sup>118</sup> Ad Hoc Media Education Committee, Press Release, August 15, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 4636-02, Folder 1/7.

children playing percussion instruments.<sup>119</sup> The visual imagery of the advertisements set a tone of harmony and peace that needed little verbal explanation.

The heart of Seattle Works' campaign was an emphasis on unity and learning. Their central slogan, pictured below, "Seattle's children are learning together" written on a blackboard was featured on buttons, stickers, and posters placed in all of the city's schools and in many public spaces, driving home the message.



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<sup>119</sup> Gus Angelos, "It all adds up to 'learning together'," *Seattle Times*, August 16, 1978, C1.

<sup>120</sup> Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 4636-02, Folder 1/7.

The traditional image of the school blackboard, familiar to all city residents, reinforced the notion that the school environment would not fundamentally change with desegregation. The concept of learning together reinforced the notion that students of all ethnicities and races could be taught and thrive in multi-ethnic classrooms.

While the advertising campaign, which appeared a few weeks before school was set to start in the fall of 1978, helped to set the tone for a peaceful desegregation, ultimately it failed to convince many Seattle parents and children that desegregation was a desirable aim. In this period, advocates emphasized the legal necessity of desegregation and above all its positive benefits and they were most likely to be successful in convincing parents who were ambivalent about busing. The advertisements also shored up their base of committed pro-desegregationists, generating an air of excitement as September neared.

#### FAMILY LIFE AND THE SEATTLE PLAN

While the official desegregation public relations campaign painted an idealized image of the benefits of school desegregation, the logistics of busing children out of their neighborhoods was especially complicated for single parents and for families with two earners. Desegregation opponents stressed how busing disrupted family life. These debates about busing and the family reflected widening class divisions as well as changing gender norms. Consequently, negotiating the thorny question of before and after school childcare for bused children had the potential to be a public relations nightmare for the District and City Hall. Letters to the editor from parents such as Cheryl Hunter reveal how some white parents perceived the complexities of busing.

I am a working mother, What about neighborhood paper routes after school, league, sports, Scouts and day care? Will my children be bussed[sic] to another home for care or left to walk in the dark or stay home alone? Questions I cannot get answered. I have called the office of desegregation. The answer is, 'We don't know anything...Maybe you could apply for a hardship case.'<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Cheryl Hunter, Letter to the Editor, *Seattle Times*, December 13, 1977, A12.

The School District did not want to appear insensitive to the practical concerns of parents who wondered about where their children would go while they were still working, but school was no longer in session. Seattle Plan supporters' concern with how busing influenced family life was part of a nation-wide interest, on the left and the right, in the health of the American family. While those on the right focused on so-called "family values" such as anti-abortion and anti-sex education campaigns in schools, liberals addressed questions of access to childcare, women's rights, and tax policies.<sup>122</sup> Acknowledging Seattle parents' apprehensions helped to make the first day of school smoother for children and parents.

Consequently, it is not surprising that internal School District communications actively engaged in a dialogue about the question of childcare logistics, an issue that was even more pressing for lower-income families. In one especially salient April 1977 memo from Dan Riley to Bill Maynard, Riley wrote about the potential for "terrible PR problems" if the District eliminated desegregation hardship waivers.<sup>123</sup> Riley imagined the public comment section of a future School Board meeting.

A woman in her early thirties approaches the microphone, with tears dripping on her St. Vincent DePaul sweater, and with three little kids in tow, says: Look, I'm the sole support of my five kids... I guess I could go on welfare like some people but I don't want to. So I get up in the morning, get the kids ready and I take them to my mother's house which is three blocks from an elementary school and eight blocks from a junior high. My mother is 62 years old. She gets the kids off to school and she's close by if anything goes wrong. Now you tell me my kids gotta be bussed way hell-and-gone out in the north end. I've just got too many problems and I can't live with the worry that would cause...<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> For a discussion of "breadwinner conservatism" and "breadwinner liberalism" from 1964 – 2004 see Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (Hill and Wang: New York, 2012). Self argues that the politics of the family were central to reconstructing post-1960s American politics and should be seen in concert with questions of gender, race, and sexuality struggles.

<sup>123</sup> Dan Riley, Memo to Bill Maynard, April 22, 1977, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Un-Accessioned Bill Maynard Files, Box 2.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. St. Vincent DePaul is a non-profit with a thrift store, among many other components, that sells inexpensive used clothing to people in need.

Riley's imagined South End, African-American single mother demonstrates how the District was aware that opposition to busing would come from families who saw busing as a real threat to their livelihood. This imagined mother of five argued that busing might make working impossible because the logistics of childcare would be too complicated to address if her mother was not available to assist with her children. The vignette points to the issue of race and class and how desegregation, which aimed to address racial inequities, might inadvertently have caused negative economic consequences to predominantly African American low income households.<sup>125</sup> The imagined concerns of the fictive St. Vincent DePaul mother and her real life counterparts, who were struggling to keep their collective heads above water, were potentially much more problematic than racial tensions alone.

The concerns about childcare were not limited to internal discussions between Desegregation Office employees. The School Board and city officials understood that childcare and in some cases, particularly in the South End, the lack thereof could be a considerable impediment to implementing a widespread busing program. Unlike in the early 1970s, where concerns of working class parents were not as readily addressed, in 1978, District and City officials were much more careful to anticipate the practical problems that would make busing complicated for parents. Board members debated if hardship waivers submitted by parents who sought to avoid busing should be retained under the Seattle Plan.<sup>126</sup> In a November 1977 meeting, Dan Riley argued that 95% of hardship waivers were for families with single parents or two working parents who had childcare needs.<sup>127</sup> In the end, the Board preserved waivers

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<sup>125</sup> For a discussion of how the labor market affected working class women who struggled to balance work and family life see Dorothy Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, however her work focuses primarily on the 1940s - 1960s.

<sup>126</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, November 9, 1977, Seattle Schools Archive, Record 75, 159 and School Board Meeting Minutes, March 27, 1978 and Seattle Schools Archive, Record 75, 460.

<sup>127</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, November 9, 1977, Seattle Schools Archive, Record 75, 159.

because they realized the elimination of the policy would lead to unnecessary headaches for families and ultimately for the District.<sup>128</sup> The city government was also involved in the question of childcare as Seattle provided municipal support for childcare facilities in low-income areas and, in 1978, it began to target its funds to neighborhoods with limited childcare facilities. Officials sought to make high quality childcare available in part to make the implementation of desegregation smoother. With a balanced approach that allowed exemptions for families and provided improved childcare in all neighborhoods, the District and city at least partially put parents' concerns about juggling childcare and desegregation at ease.

The urgent need to address issues of childcare in Seattle's desegregating school district was reflective of changing gender norms and the gradual shift away from traditional ideas about male-headed family structures. By 1978, it was becoming increasingly common for females to head households and for married middle and lower-middle class women to work outside of the home.<sup>129</sup> When addressing childcare, District and city officials used the discourse of the family to describe the complications of juggling desegregation and parenthood. However, the "family" was actually code for mothers and their struggles to manage childcare. As historian Robert Self makes clear, liberals' wider discourse of the family often emphasized concerns about childcare for working *mothers*.<sup>130</sup> Fathers' concerns about childcare were almost non-existent. Working mothers, particularly those in the lower income levels, objected to the complications of busing children and worried about how it would interfere with their work and childcare schedules. Similarly, busing opponents often used concerns about children's care in the before and after-school hours as a justification for their anti-desegregation position, but with dramatically different perspectives on women's roles. For example, in chapter 3 we saw how conservative

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<sup>128</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes March 29, 1978, Seattle Schools Archive, Record 75, 475- 476.

<sup>129</sup> Schulman, *The Seventies*, 161.

<sup>130</sup> Self, *All in the Family*, 333.

Christians rejected busing in part because it did not allow stay-at-home mothers enough influence over their children's upbringing.<sup>131</sup> Yet, some working mothers did indeed worry about busing and their objections to the policy were usually more multi-faceted than their stay-at-home Conservative Christian counterparts. Addressing the realities of these changing gender norms was an unspoken component of the childcare and busing conundrum that the city government and the District faced.

The District also deftly addressed the question of kindergarten. Like childcare, it was an issue of concern for parents across the racial and economic spectrum. Opponents of busing and even some supporters of the policy emphasized the relatively young age of kindergarteners, who were five years old, “only babies” when they enrolled in public schools.<sup>132</sup> Since kindergarten was only a few hours each day, children would have spent almost as much time on the bus as they would have in school. Consequently, coordinating childcare for these young children would be more complicated than for their older classmates. Some mothers also wondered when bused children would eat lunch if kindergarten concluded at 11:30 and they were on a bus for an hour or more after school. Because of these concerns, on December 7, 1977, the Board voted unanimously to exempt kindergarteners from desegregation.<sup>133</sup> By exempting kindergarteners, the District addressed the anxieties of parents who were worried about their five and six year olds' introduction to the school system. In addition, their decision served to partially appease conservatives like Margaret Byers, a mother from North Seattle who questioned if “it was wise to include kindergarten” in desegregation planning because she would prefer children in the early

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<sup>131</sup> For discussions about Conservative emphasis upon the importance of the mother's role in raising and spending as much time as possible with her children, see Lillian B. Rubin's, *Busing and Backlash*, 63-64.

<sup>132</sup> Claudia Isquith, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, 13 June 2012 and Burreson, Interview by author.

<sup>133</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, December 7, 1977, Seattle Schools Archive, Record 75, 249.

grades to “begin their school experience in their own neighborhood.”<sup>134</sup> Byers and others like her saw this as a partial victory because the youngest of school children would not be bused.

In addition to questions about kindergarten and childcare, parents worried about the safety of busing their children across town, an issue that pro-busers such as the multi-racial Church Council of Greater Seattle adeptly addressed.<sup>135</sup> These worries about security paralleled with the concerns that parents expressed during the development of the 1972 middle school busing plan. However, in contrast to 1972 when there was little effort to assuage these worries, desegregation supporters such as Ann Siqueland, the Council’s desegregation liaison, and her team helped to establish volunteer efforts that spoke directly to parents’ fears. They developed a telephone information service and staffed it with volunteers 24 hours per day, seven days per week in all of August and early September 1978.<sup>136</sup> The Council designed the well-publicized service to answer parents’ questions about both busing logistics as well as more complicated questions about why Seattle was implementing a busing program.<sup>137</sup> In addition to their volunteer efforts, Siqueland spearheaded a summer program that allowed all children and parents to take a practice bus ride to their new schools as well as facilitated teacher exchanges across schools.<sup>138</sup> The District and Mayor’s Office wholly backed the Church Council’s initiatives and these policies helped to calm the nerves of parents from around the city by providing practical information and physical support for students and parents who were riding the bus for the first time into unfamiliar neighborhoods. The School District, city government, and community organizations such as the Church Council successfully cooperated in many aspects of planning

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<sup>134</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, November 23, 1977, Record 75, 193.

<sup>135</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 62.

<sup>136</sup> Letter to Church Affiliates, Ann Siqueland, August 17, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc 5274-02, Folder 2/24.

<sup>137</sup> Press Release, Ann Siqueland, September 1, 1978, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc 5274-02, Folder 2/23.

<sup>138</sup> School Board Meeting Minutes, June 28, 1978, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Record 75, 103.



for and anticipating the challenges of desegregation. Their careful acknowledgement of and sensitivity to the concerns of parents about all kinds of issues, from how to juggle childcare to questions about the safety of waiting at a bus-stop at 6:30 AM, were crucial to the Seattle Plan's non-violent implementation.

However, underneath this appearance of cooperation across city and District agencies lurked unresolved tensions about how much the public should participate in and be aware of the desegregation planning process. Municipal leaders and analysts felt increasingly frustrated with what they perceived of as a closed desegregation planning process that was not open to public scrutiny. In a handwritten note attached to an internal government memo about a meeting between School District officials and City Hall, an unnamed Mayor's assistant blasted the District for "trying to keep this [desegregation] under wraps" and ended the note by asking: "Are they kidding?"<sup>139</sup> City analysts, frustrated by their inability to convince the District to become more transparent, correctly perceived that the District's strategy of minimal press and public interaction would stoke the fire of public unrest.<sup>140</sup> However, not all officials at the District agreed. In late 1976, Bill Maynard expressed his support for the Seattle government's position.<sup>141</sup> As we have seen, Maynard's concerns about openness did not put him in good stead with the Superintendent. By early 1978, six months before he was fired he had been "muzzled" by Moberly and was banned from speaking to the press.<sup>142</sup>

The tensions between those, primarily at the city government, who sought transparency and those, mostly in the District, who worried that too much openness might cause more controversy, were never entirely resolved. In 1980, when Moberly announced his resignation, he

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<sup>139</sup> Casey Jones, Meeting Notes, December 1, 1976, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 46012-02, Folder 9/15.

<sup>140</sup> Edmund J Wood, Letter to Len Mandelbaum, February 7, 1977, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5287-02, Box 146, Folder 4.

<sup>141</sup> Casey Jones, Meeting Notes, December 1, 1976, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 46012-02, Folder 9/15.

<sup>142</sup> Bill Maynard, Interview by author.

wrote a letter to Mayor Royer expressing his thanks for his cooperation over the years, highlighting their “exceptional” personal relationship. He also expressed regret that their respective staffs felt that the two leaders were often “battling each other.”<sup>143</sup> While Moberly disputed the notion that there had been tension between the two men, internal memos make it clear that there were unbridgeable gaps between the District and the city government in this period. Despite these fissures, these two pragmatic liberals managed to keep their animosity under control and work for a common cause: the appearance of a peaceful and racially progressive implementation of desegregation.

## CONCLUSION

The leadership of Seattle’s pragmatic liberals was crucial to the Plan’s success, but timing also played a role in its successful launch. Because the Seattle Plan was developed a few years later than most of the other busing programs, city leaders were fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from the positive and negative experiences of other cities. My examination of the relatively late implementation of the policy also contributes to our wider understanding of busing because the vast majority of the historiography addresses opposition to desegregation in the early 1970s.<sup>144</sup> From a local perspective, the District also ironically benefited from a teachers’ strike that resulted in a delay of the first day of school.<sup>145</sup> Ann Siqueland argued that the strike deflected negative attention away from desegregation. Once school began in late September, many parents weary of the strike, were relieved to see their children return to the classroom, even if it was not at their neighborhood school.<sup>146</sup> However, while timing was important, it does not tell the whole story. Seattle leaders made a conscious effort to capitalize on

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<sup>143</sup> David Moberly, Letter to Charles Royer, July 22, 1980, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-02, Folder 10/15.

<sup>144</sup> Formisano, *Boston against Busing*; Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race*; Gamm, *Urban Exodus*; Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; and Hosang, *Racial Propositions*.

<sup>145</sup> Siqueland, Interview by author.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

and take to heart the suggestions of many city officials who had come before them. This choice was one that required significant effort on the part of Seattle officials such as the city government and the Chamber of Commerce.

In 1978, from the School District to the Church Council to the Chamber of Commerce, Seattle's pragmatic liberals constructed a plan that would both be sensitive to the city's African American population and incorporate the learning from other municipalities' missteps. However, all of these thoughtful implementation strategies and structural components of the Seattle Plan would not have been possible without a changing national racial climate that was making it more and more difficult to be anti-busing and simultaneously appear racially neutral. Conversely, acting in a racially sensitive manner was increasingly seen as a politically wise strategy. Nevertheless, none of this change would have come about without the threat of a lawsuit, which forced Seattle leaders to find a creative solution before the city faced a potentially damaging federal mandate. What is most notable about the Seattle case is not that it implemented the Seattle Plan without a court order, as its supporters championed, but how its leaders found a pragmatic way to address the problem of school inequality. Furthermore, the crucial role of the city's business community cannot be underestimated. To ensure their own survival, because of the Boeing Bust, the Chamber of Commerce had changed their approach to social issues over the course of the 1970s. Leaders realized that they needed to find creative ways to make Seattle more competitive in the national marketplace. As appearances of racial liberalism had increasing national political cache, leaders seized the opportunity to shape the city's image to match.

In chapter 5, we move from busing supporters to busing opponents. Like busing advocates, busing foes learned from the mistakes of the earlier anti-busing groups, such as CAMB. Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee (CiVIC), the primary focus of chapter 4,

led Seattle's late 1970s anti-busing movement and their rhetoric was much more sophisticated and racially neutral than CAMB's had been only a few years earlier. In the 1970s, the norms of racial discourse were changing from left to right and everywhere in-between.

## **Chapter 5: Cracking the Liberal Veneer: Anti-busing in 1978 Seattle**

The city's second anti-busing movement in less than a decade cracked the liberal veneer that pragmatic pro-busers had so painstakingly attempted to construct. In 1978, the powerful and newly formed Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee (CiVIC) railed against the School Board, calling the Seattle Plan "preposterous, counterproductive" and not legally necessary because no court had ordered the desegregation of the city's schools.<sup>1</sup> CiVIC, a largely white, well-oiled, and popular organization was openly hostile towards the School Board, but they were always careful to construct an appearance of race neutrality. This chapter explores Seattle citizens' angry, though usually measured and calculated responses to busing. CiVIC's popularity demonstrates how the majority of city residents' views on desegregation contradicted leaders' attempts to portray Seattle as an exceptionally tolerant city. While elites had come to realize the pragmatic benefits of the Seattle Plan, residents were slower to shift their deeply held beliefs. Yet, the rhetoric of Seattle exceptionalism and the Plan's liberal discourse influenced how both ordinary citizens and CiVIC leaders and members talked and wrote about their cause. This busing discourse spoke to concerns about race and class.

Under the cloud of the Boeing Bust and the West Seattle Bridge debacle, anti-busers and pro-busers understood that in Seattle, appearances of sensitivity to class, in addition to race, would be crucial to their broad-ranging appeal. With Matthew Lassiter's analysis of the middle class Southern anti-busing suburbanites, who stressed their personal success, as a comparison, I argue that in Seattle, which had only a few years earlier been so severely affected by white and blue-collar job losses, anti-busers deliberately distanced themselves from their own affluent

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<sup>1</sup> Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee, 'Fact Sheet', December 29, 1977, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 5274-02, Folder 2/24.

roots.<sup>2</sup> This strategy was wise, given that in the midst of the Boeing Bust, *Newsweek* magazine wondered if “Appalachia had come to Seattle.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, CiVIC’s discourse aimed to present a balanced approach that stressed their anti-elitism as well as their racial sensitivity. My analysis of CiVIC’s racial dialogue aims to complicate and contribute to the findings in Daniel Martinez HoSang’s recent study of Californian ballot initiatives that argues white racism became more entrenched and insidious over the course of the 1970s as whites borrowed the discourse of civil rights to overturn programs such as busing.<sup>4</sup> Like their Californian counterparts, CiVIC’s leaders used the language of rights and choice to justify their cause. HoSang finds no cause for optimism in his assessment of the entrenchment of structural racism in the 1970s. On the other hand, my analysis shows that in Seattle the shifting racial discourse of pragmatic liberals was more than just window dressing. In contrast to the botched middle school desegregation planning process, in 1977 pragmatic liberals fully incorporated the desires of the African American community leaders into the writing and the development of the Seattle Plan. Leaders of CiVIC came into direct conflict with pragmatic liberals who sought at least a modicum of change to the racial status quo.

In less than a decade, the image that Seattle anti-busers sought to project had drastically changed. By analyzing the language CiVIC and other anti-busing groups used to talk and write about their mission, this chapter aims to understand Seattle’s late 1970s anti-busing discourse as displayed in their advertisements, letters to the editor, public statements, and promotional material. While CiVIC led the 1978 effort, the group’s members and supporters were not the only Seattle residents who were wary of busing. PTSAs throughout the city also fought against

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<sup>2</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*.

<sup>3</sup> Klinge, *Emerald City*, 235.

<sup>4</sup> Martinez Hosang, *Racial Propositions*. Thanks to John Findlay for his help in formulating my ideas in this section.

the policy.<sup>5</sup> CiVIC leaders constructed their message to reflect shifting norms in racial discourse that increasingly linked anti-busing sentiment with racism, demonstrating that they had learned from CAMB's failures and that of others in Seattle's early 1970s anti busing movement. Strategically, CiVIC's leadership publicly distanced themselves from CAMB, avoiding all mention of the group and their anti-busing struggle.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to CAMB who included opposition to pre-school and sexual education in their anti-busing agenda, CiVIC's messaging was largely divorced from family and social issues. By avoiding mention of a socially conservative agenda, they were more like moderate Southern anti-busing activists than the earlier anti-busers from their own city.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, CiVIC leaders aimed to make their anti-busing propaganda mirror the pro-desegregation leaders' rhetoric of racial liberalism.

Despite their status as a middle class organization, CiVIC's discourse was deliberately anti-elitist, employed the rhetoric of populism, and emphasized "choice," which was code for retaining the racial status quo of segregated Seattle. Furthering historian Jim Carl's recent analysis of anti-integrationists' use of the choice rhetoric, this chapter describes how CiVIC leaders insisted that Seattleites should have the choice to remain in their segregated neighborhoods and schools, if they so desired.<sup>8</sup> Other dissertations focus primarily upon the city's 1978 pro-busers and the effects of busing upon students, but this chapter's discussion of the anti-busing lobby's tactics widens our understanding of desegregation in Seattle.<sup>9</sup> In order to

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<sup>5</sup>In addition to CiVIC and some vocal PTSAs, in 1978 other busing protest groups included the Concerned Parents Against Busing and Citizens Against Forced Busing. Terry Finn, "Arbor Heights Parents Snipe at Deseg Plan," *West Seattle Herald*. December 7, 1977 & Terry Finn, "Poll Shows 96% Oppose Mandatory Plan," *West Seattle Herald* December 14, 1977, A1.

<sup>6</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author, CiVIC president stated that he was unfamiliar with CAMB.

<sup>7</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*.

<sup>8</sup> Carl, *Freedom of Choice*.

<sup>9</sup> Hehnke's Political Science institution focused study, *The Politics of Racial Integration in the Seattle Public Schools*, describes, from the perspective of the Seattle Public Schools administration and pro-busing coalitions, how the language of busing, race, and equality changed over time and how those ideas were written into policy. Veninga's Geography dissertation, *Road Scholars* describes students' experiences with busing, how it shaped their

interrogate CiVIC's rhetoric, learn about PTA activism and explore how anti-busers came into conflict with and at times appeared similar to pragmatic liberals, this chapter is divided into five parts. The chapter addresses CiVIC's founding, their attempts to appear race neutral and liberal, their anti-elitist tone that sought to obscure their status as a middle class organization, the role that the PTSAs played in furthering their anti-busing message, and CiVIC's controversial anti-busing initiative I-350.

#### CIVIC'S FOUNDING

Robert (Bob) Dorse, a successful West Seattle entrepreneur, founded CiVIC in December 1977. The group quickly gained momentum because of its wide-ranging appeal to middle and working class whites and sophisticated tactics. Publicly, CiVIC leaders and members were supportive of busing and integration, as long as the busing program was *voluntary* and emphasized neighborhood schools.<sup>10</sup> However, their public approval of integration was a politically calculated move to appear sympathetic to questions of racial inequity. CiVIC members came from around the city, but some of the most active participants were parents from the predominately-white neighborhoods of West Seattle, Magnolia, Queen Anne, and the outlying areas of North Seattle. Dorse attributed the popularity of CiVIC in these neighborhoods to the long distances the children in these areas were required to travel under the Seattle Plan.<sup>11</sup> However, distance traveled only tells one part of the story. By the late 1970s, whites were much more likely to be opposed to busing than people of color, which was a shift from what we saw in the early 1970s.

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perceptions of the racial other and argues that from a social perspective students were largely positively influenced by their experiences with busing. She provides important data about neighborhood dynamics including racial and economic demographics and describes precinct specific Initiative 350 vote tallies.

<sup>10</sup> CiVIC, "The CiVIC Plan for Seattle Public Schools: Open Enrollment: Equal Opportunity, Educational Quality, Freedom of Choice" Seattle Public Libraries Special Collections. I discuss the CiVIC Plan in more detail later in the paper. Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



It was not long before CiVIC led a full-fledged anti-busing movement. By January of 1978, they had organized fund raising campaigns, which involved advertising in the major local papers, the *Seattle Times* and *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, written letters to the editor of city-wide as well as community newspapers, and printed yellow and black tee-shirts that read “Ban the Plan” across an image of a map of the Seattle Plan’s busing routes. They also had spread their message through the local PTSA meetings and newsletters and organized neighborhood gatherings throughout the city to discuss ways to oppose desegregation.<sup>12</sup>

In their advertisements and tee-shirt messages, CiVIC consistently highlighted the Seattle Plan’s integration map, questioning the legality and practicality of busing. Below are two images used in a January 1978 advertisement CiVIC placed in the *Seattle Times* and *Post Intelligencer*.<sup>13</sup>

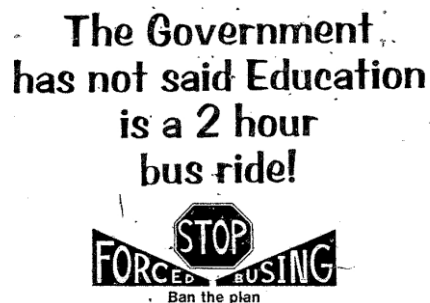


Figure 1

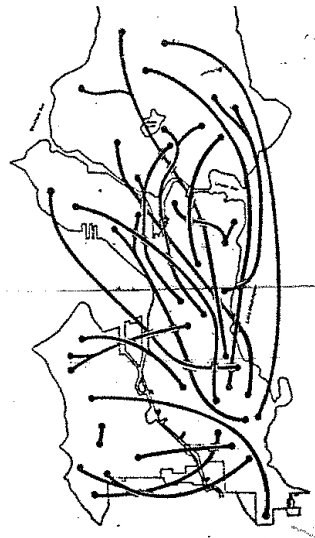


Figure 2

“The Government has not said education is a 2 hour bus ride,” was a powerful slogan used in CiVIC propaganda to remind readers of two important ideas: that the Federal Government had not mandated the desegregation of the Seattle Schools and that the School Board could have

<sup>12</sup> Constantine Angelos, “CiVIC Numbers, Funds Grow” *Seattle Times*, January 17, 1978.

<sup>13</sup> CiVIC Advertisement, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, January 15, 1978.

pursued a voluntary enrolment plan that did not involve busing children long distances. By emphasizing that Seattle was not under court order to implement two-way busing, they alluded to the fact that by 1978 the legal standing of busing had become less secure. The 1974 *Milliken v. Bradley* Supreme Court ruling heartened busing opponents.<sup>14</sup> In *Milliken v. Bradley* the Court put some limits on the geographical reach of Detroit's busing program, ruling that the Detroit Public Schools could not include neighboring suburban districts in desegregation. After *Milliken v. Bradley* there were no Supreme Court rulings on busing until the CiVIC case in 1982, discussed in the final section of this chapter.<sup>15</sup> Because the Seattle School District did not include suburban neighborhoods, it would not have had a direct impact upon the city. However, it suggests that the national climate surrounding busing was changing, as was the composition of the Supreme Court.

Figure 2, the map of Seattle, with the busing routes imposed upon it, looks like a mess of confusing lines, demonstrating the “chaos” of busing children around the city. CiVIC's use of the image emphasized the long distances that many Seattle school children would be required to traverse in order to attend school. Yet, their advertisements, while forceful in their messaging, did not instill fear in the same manner as CAMB's early 1970s announcements such as “Parents of School Age Children **WARNING!**”<sup>16</sup> CAMB aimed to shock parents, while CiVIC was more calculated. Although CiVIC criticized busing policies, as seen in their advertisements, they also stressed the problems with the policy-making processes that led to busing, calling them undemocratic.

CiVIC and other anti-busers argued that the District's decision to institute the mandatory component of the Plan was undemocratic because they believed that the majority of Seattle's

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<sup>14</sup> *Milliken v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717.

<sup>15</sup> *Washington et al. v. Seattle School District No 1 et al.*, 458 U.S. 457 (1982).

<sup>16</sup> C.A.M.B. advertisement, *Seattle Times*, August 22, 1971, August 27, 1971, and September 3, 1971.

population only supported a voluntary plan. The busing proposal passed by the School Board was one of five options (some mandatory, some voluntary with a mandatory back-up component) that were on the table. CiVIC and other opponents to the Seattle Plan could not understand why, in the face of what they saw as overwhelming public opposition to mandatory busing expressed in School Board Meetings and community meetings sponsored by the Board, that a mandatory busing plan was passed.<sup>17</sup> What CiVIC leaders and other opponents to the Plan did not publicly acknowledge was that all of the plans contained a mandatory back-up component. There were no truly voluntary plans proposed.<sup>18</sup> However, to some extent CiVIC leaders were correct in their assessment of the skewed nature of the selection process. DWAC, which was tasked with developing a desegregation proposal, only presented *one* plan for final consideration to the School Board.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the Board could only vote on one option. Board members did not have a choice between two different types of plans. Furthermore, DWAC with its “rogue democracy,” was not truly representative of the Seattle polity. CiVIC leadership’s decision to emphasize the failures of government policies and policy making over that of race was a strategic move that was consistent with their attempts to appear race neutral.

#### RACE NEUTRALITY AND “CHOICE” RHETORIC

Suburban dwellers in 1960s and 1970s Atlanta, Charlotte, and Richmond also fought against busing and integration using a ‘color-blind’ discourse that emphasized property rights.<sup>20</sup> Matthew Lassiter’s regional history that primarily focuses on American race politics, argues that 1970s Southerners were not out-of-step with the rest of the United States. These Southerners

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<sup>17</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

<sup>18</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 138.

<sup>19</sup> Because of time constraints due to the December 14, 1977 deadline and because the pro-mandatory busing faction of DWAC was successful in putting forth their agenda, the group justified their development of a single plan.

<sup>20</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*. Other important works that address anti-busing activism include: Douglas, *Reading, Writing & Race*; and Formisano, *Boston against Busing*.

asserted that busing trampled upon their rights as homeowners to live in and use the amenities and services that the neighborhoods of their choice provided. CiVIC's leadership and many Seattle anti-busers also used this neighborhood rhetoric. In a CiVIC brochure from the fall of 1978, they evoked the problem of white flight as they argued for the value of neighborhood schools. "Initiative 350 will return common sense to our city schools. It will save tax dollars. End unnecessary busing. Preserve our neighborhood schools. And stabilize our neighborhoods."<sup>21</sup> Ellen Roe, the only anti-busing Board Member, who represented Seattle's most northern neighborhoods including the heavily white and middle class Sand Point and Blue Ridge areas, was a vocal CiVIC supporter and sought to highlight the cross-racial appeal of neighborhood schools.<sup>22</sup>

I do not agree that we have listened very well to the citizens. We have alienated hundreds of parents and other residents, by robbing children and families of time for music lessons, scouts, church, family activities but mostly the freedom to send their children to the school near the family home they have chosen. The freedom of choice is obviously important to me and many other people, Black, White, Yellow, and Red.<sup>23</sup>

While Roe employed race-neutral dialogue in her reference to "black, white, yellow, and red," she was primarily talking about whites. Nevertheless, at this point, the majority of African Americans in Seattle supported busing. Seattle's Asian populations, which consisted largely of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos were neutral or downplayed any resistance to the policy.<sup>24</sup>

John Pearson a parent of a Thomson Middle School student in North Seattle echoed Roe's race-neutral discourse in his pro-neighborhood, anti-busing letter published in the school's PTA newsletter.

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<sup>21</sup> CiVIC, "Save Our Neighborhood Schools," undated Fall 1978 brochure, courtesy of Nancy Beadie, University of Washington.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Seattle School Board Minutes, Record 75, March 8, 1978, 422, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Veninga, *Road Scholars*, 104.

During the past several months the vast majority of Seattle citizens, representing all ethnic backgrounds, and ways of life have come to recognize the fact that their neighborhoods were sold down the drain, as six of the seven Seattle School Board Members voted to adopt the “Seattle Plan” of forced mandatory school busing. The “Plan” is designed in a manner that takes children from their neighborhoods, destroys many after school activities, and breaks down the traditional values of the neighborhood school. All of this simply so the social engineers can numerically balance the books. It would be interesting to see just one honest attempt by the school administration and Seattle School Board to justify the “Seattle Plan” of forced busing with actual examples of how forced busing in other cities has reduced segregation...

Pearson’s letter, highlighting concerns about “social engineers” resonated with CAMB’s early 1970s rhetoric. While privately his message might have appealed to CiVIC members, publicly CiVIC sought to distance itself from this type of socially conservative ideology. In addition the city’s wider anti-busing movement, as seen in Roe’s and Pearson’s comments, readily employed homeowners’ rights as a justification for their anti-busing activity. While CiVIC also employed neighborhood rhetoric, Bob Dorse and others in his group prioritized the rhetoric of ‘choice’ over that of property rights.

Freedom of choice was a politically expedient, rhetorical ploy that aimed to make their cause seem acceptable and legitimate to city residents of all political persuasions. Their emphasis upon choice suggested, incorrectly, that school choice and neighborhood schools were fundamental to American freedom.<sup>25</sup> However, two decades later, when asked if ‘choice’ was CiVIC’s organizing principle, Dorse downplayed its importance. When pressed to define choice in the context of CiVIC, Dorse argued that it meant that parents could choose to send their child to a school outside of their home area if the local school did not meet a child’s needs. This constituted a “safety valve” that would be used only on rare occasions.<sup>26</sup> He noted that in

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<sup>25</sup> Carl, *Freedom of Choice*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

CiVIC's plan most students would be required to attend their neighborhood schools. Thus, in CiVIC's proposal, the majority of students would have had *no* choice as to where they could attend school.<sup>27</sup> CiVIC's emphasis on choice is consistent with many reactionary movements, including school voucher campaigns that began in the 1950s with the primary aim to avoid integration.<sup>28</sup> In 1951, Georgia was the first state to allow vouchers for parents to use public funds to attend private, segregated schools, citing freedom of choice as a justification for the program's implementation.<sup>29</sup> In another use of the 'choice' concept, in the 1950s, anti-integrationists throughout the South proposed school 'choice' enrollment plans as substitutes for mandatory integration. In practice, however, most school district administrators built such complicated bureaucratic hurdles that it was virtually impossible for blacks to enroll in "white schools" of their choice.<sup>30</sup>

Despite CiVIC's attempts to present itself as a race-neutral organization that emphasized choice, at times, especially in the early days of the campaign, their dialogue was off-target. For example, on January 8, 1978, Dorse claimed that there was no appreciable difference in quality between South and North End schools. "Russell's [Bill Russell - former Seattle Supersonics NBA coach and Democratic activist] implication that Seattle minorities don't live in the neighborhoods with the good schools is debatable. I don't think even the school administration would agree with him on that..."<sup>31</sup> Dorse's statement was consistent with CiVIC's argument that neighborhood schools served most students best. However, his denial of an appreciable difference between schools throughout Seattle conflicted with their message, which usually

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Carl, *Freedom of Choice*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Fuquay, "Civil Rights and the Private School Movement in Mississippi, 1964-1971," *History of Education Quarterly* 42:2 (Summer, 2002): 161-63.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

avoided discussions that might suggest that there were deep disparities in the quality of schools. After January 1978, Dorse no longer openly suggested that South End schools were equivalent to North End Schools and stuck more closely to the CiVIC message of choice and race neutrality. Their increasingly careful messaging can be seen in the group's desegregation plan.

CiVIC's polished thirty-eight page self-published manual, *CiVIC Plan for Voluntary Integration in the Seattle Public Schools*, which was designed as an alternative to the Seattle Plan, demonstrates how far the anti-busing movement had progressed since CAMB's overtly polemical newsletters of the early 1970s. CAMB's newsletters sought to spread their socially conservative message. In a 1971 CAMB article, their patriotic and anti-communist agendas were central. "We **must** endure these pains so our children will once again look with pride at our beloved flag. And so again we must, as Americans, STAND UNITED OR DIVIDED WE'LL FALL."<sup>32</sup> Historian Jim Carl suggests that anti-integrationists linked their use of school choice to Cold War rhetoric because "[it] was a patriotic alternative to a civil rights movement tinged by communism and it was a way out of the growing collectivism of public schools regulated by distant federal bureaucrats."<sup>33</sup> In contrast to CAMB's bold Cold War rhetoric, a few years later CiVIC's highly sophisticated proposal would mimic the city's rhetoric of racial liberalism, while much more subtly alluding to a patriotic, anti-communist message. Even the cover art on CiVIC's *Plan* provides insights into how the organization positioned itself politically.

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<sup>32</sup> John Towney, "Let's hear it for the School Board!", *CAMB Newsletter*, April 1971, 1, Seattle Public Schools Archives, Acc. 2010-03, Box 6, Folder 6.

<sup>33</sup> Carl, *Freedom of Choice*, 3.



Using an iconic image of American freedom, the Liberty Bell, they suggested that the freedom to choose your child's school was a central tenet of American liberty and that this right should be guaranteed by the government for its citizens. The Liberty Bell image, an uncontested symbol of American democracy, and the scroll type-font on the cover page gave their proposal a sense of timelessness, suggesting that their ideas were consistent with traditional American values that linked neighborhood schools to a time in which Americans had a freedom to choose where and with whom their children would attend school. The words they used on the cover evoked the

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<sup>34</sup> Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee, *The CIVIC Plan for Seattle Public Schools: Open Enrollment*, title page.



concept of choice in three different ways: the CiVIC Plan used “Open Enrollment,” “Freedom of Choice,” and “Voluntary” as in Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee as their conceptual vocabulary.

The *CiVIC Plan* provided a critical analysis of other busing programs, demonstrating why mandatory busing was an inherently flawed policy solution. CiVIC asserted that busing programs in other cities had “...neither improved the academic performance of minority students nor measurably enhanced attitudes of racial tolerance and understanding.”<sup>35</sup> By placing the Seattle Plan in a national context, they attempted to convince their readers that their objections were backed up by research. Based on the idea of lessons learned, they developed a proposal for Seattle that would avoid what they viewed as problems that other cities had encountered and that Seattle would likely experience if the Plan was implemented. In effect, they suggest that their *CiVIC Plan* would improve racial tolerance and academic performance where other more misguided plans had failed.

However, when one looks more closely at the structure of CiVIC’s Plan, the idea of race neutrality begins to unravel. In many passages, they downplayed the problems of inequity and racism and instead emphasized the importance of choice and traditional school attendance patterns. In the “Resolutions” they wrote:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we the members of CiVIC, recognizing the benefits of multi-ethnic experiences, do hereby recommend a plan for desegregating the Seattle Public School System which permits students to attend the school of their choice, emphasizes academic excellence and provides for equal educational opportunities for all.<sup>36</sup>

In this passage, choice appears to have been more crucial than “educational opportunities for all,” which comes across as an afterthought, designed to make the CiVIC’s plan mirror the

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Seattle Plan. By reading the introduction to the Seattle Plan, we can see how CiVIC borrowed their liberal language. The District wrote that it:

... has worked for over a decade to improve racial balance and to provide the opportunity for a multiethnic education for all students in the Seattle Public School. It is the position of the School Board that a quality, integrated education will best serve the needs of the students of Seattle.<sup>37</sup>

“Multi-ethnic” was used in both passages, though there was a key difference in the intentions of the two paragraphs. CiVIC recognized the “benefits of multi-ethnic experiences,” but proposed nothing that would foster those experiences, while the Seattle Plan stated that *all* students should and would benefit from learning in an integrated setting. Furthermore, the Seattle Plan called for integration of all students while the *CiVIC Plan* aimed for “equal educational opportunities for all,” which could conceivably occur in segregated schools. On the surface, the two plans often paralleled one another, but the structural elements of the plans were sharply divergent. The Seattle Plan was mandatory, while the *CiVIC Plan* was voluntary and the two plans differed in how they defined a segregated school. In the Seattle Plan, a school that was 52.3% minority was considered segregated, while in the *CiVIC Plan* only when a school was 70% minority would it be deemed segregated.<sup>38</sup> Out of a total enrollment of 54,160, the CiVIC Plan required 2,131 students to bus as opposed to 12,500 students who were actually bused under the Seattle Plan, a difference of almost 600%.<sup>39</sup> While CiVIC’s anti-busing message appealed largely to whites, there were also a few African American members.

Al Winston, the group’s sole African American Board member, was a rarity in what was a predominantly white organization and his experiences at CiVIC reveal much about the group’s

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<sup>37</sup> Seattle Public Schools, *The Seattle Plan for Eliminating Racial Imbalance by the 1979-80 School Year*, December 13, 1977, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Citizens for Voluntary Integration Committee, “The CiVIC Plan for Seattle Public Schools: Open Enrollment” & Seattle Public Schools, *The Seattle Plan for Eliminating Racial Imbalance by the 1979-80 School Year*, December 13, 1977.

<sup>39</sup> Karen West, “CiVIC’s Plan for Voluntary Busing,” *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, June 10, 1978, A1 and Hanawalt et al., *The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools*, 69.

racial politics. Winston, a Central Area resident, actively, though not very successfully, attempted to convert African Americans to his cause. In August 1978, he initiated a neighborhood drive to boycott the Seattle Plan, which he hoped would garner support throughout the city and across the racial divide.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, his bus boycott, which was inspired by the Black Brigade Against Bussing's national movement was not officially sanctioned by CiVIC.<sup>41</sup> It is impossible to know exactly why the CiVIC leadership did not endorse Winston's plan, which called for students to stay away from school until the Seattle Plan was discontinued, but it is likely that they worried that a black sponsored boycott would not appeal to whites. Winston was opposed to busing because he believed that African American children were more likely to be victimized by a mandatory busing program and that the policy would not produce the desired result to improve black student achievement. A *Seattle Times* reporter summarized Winston's views. "The CiVIC Board member [Winston] argued that black children are being used as pawns and that mandatory busing plans have been a 'total failure' everywhere."<sup>42</sup> In November 1977, Seattle School Board Member, Richard Alexander, who helped to conduct community meetings in the Central Area, heard similar concerns from black residents. "He stated the citizens from the Central Area stressed they did not want to be 'used' for desegregation purposes, and argued 'don't make us bus and then not get an education at the end of the ride.'"<sup>43</sup> However, despite some grumblings, in 1978 Central Area blacks largely supported desegregation.

Because of the generally widespread support for desegregation in the Central Area, Al Winston found it necessary to justify his allegiance to CiVIC. In a meeting with African American pastors on August 2, 1978, he defended CiVIC's racial politics and explained his

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<sup>40</sup>Constantine Angelos, "Black Forum' Bus-Boycott drive Begins' *Seattle Times*, August 15, 1978, A15 & Constantine Angelos, "Harsh Words: Clergy, Black CiVIC Leader Debate" *Seattle Times*, August 26, 1978, A9.

<sup>41</sup> Constantine Angelos, "Black Forum' Bus-Boycott drive Begins.'

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, November 16, 1977, 174, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

views on busing. “Winston told the ministers that there is a ‘great amount of suspicion that I belong to a lily-white organization that is racist in every concept, and that’s regrettable.”<sup>44</sup>

Constantine Angelos, the author of the article, observed that the black ministers were not swayed by Winston, leading him to go on the offensive. Winston suggested that whites wrote the Seattle Plan without the input of Seattle’s communities of color. Reverend E.E. Boyd of Walkers Chapel in the Central Area responded to Winston’s accusation, inserting that “What we had to say [about the Seattle Plan] was very much taken into consideration.”<sup>45</sup> The debate became more personal when Winston was confronted with the question of whether he personally had helped write the *CiVIC Plan*. According to Angelos, “Winston hesitated, then said, ‘I did an awful lot of it.’ The clergymen were not convinced.”<sup>46</sup> Black church leaders were not persuaded that Winston was a central part of writing and crafting the CiVIC proposal, believing he was just a tool of the white CiVIC leaders.

CiVIC sought to capitalize on Al Winston as evidence of the group’s racial neutrality and forcefully employed liberal language to mask their racially motivated intent. When asked if CiVIC had any openly racist members, Dorse spoke fondly of Winston. He also described a CiVIC organizing meeting where a bigoted man spouted racial epithets about African Americans. “We didn’t tolerate that at CiVIC. He was asked to leave immediately.”<sup>47</sup> Conveniently, Dorse chose to remember a single example of racism in his group. Through recalling this incident, he declared his racial innocence. However, members of CiVIC such as Dorse who sought to emphasize their liberal credentials were not the only Seattle citizens who

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<sup>44</sup> Constantine Angelos, “Harsh Words: Clergy, Black CiVIC Leader Debate.”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

found it politically expedient to use race-neutral rhetoric as a cover for their desire to preserve the city's segregated schools.

Seattle residents across the political spectrum, including a few politically active mothers in the wealthy, Democratically leaning Laurelhurst neighborhood, also sought to display their racial liberalism, while concealing their private reservations about desegregation. The Laurelhurst mothers who lived northeast of downtown, near the University of Washington used their opposition to CiVIC as evidence of their liberalism. They publicly objected to a meeting that the group held in their neighborhood, claiming that CiVIC did not represent their community's values. Linda Howard, co-president of the Laurelhurst PTSA, and Gail Hofeditz, president of the Laurelhurst Community Club, spoke to a reporter about the January 1978 CiVIC meeting: "... they [Hofeditz and Howard] feared the public would think the meeting reflected that neighborhood's views... 'There was absolutely no publicity about this in the neighborhood,' Mrs. Howard said. 'And no one here but us is from Laurelhurst.'"<sup>48</sup> Certainly, the liberal political tendencies of Howard, Hofeditz, and others in the Laurelhurst community played a role in their rejection of CiVIC and their support for the Seattle Plan, but the fact that their local elementary school was exempt from busing cannot be overlooked.

Officially, Laurelhurst Elementary School students avoided busing because the site was home to a citywide magnet multi-arts program, but this designation does not tell the whole story.<sup>49</sup> In the Spring of 1977, District leaders designated Laurelhurst and other magnet school sites based on thirteen criteria ranging from building capacity to level of racial isolation in the building. Under the first criteria, the Board explained that "parent interests and wishes are

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<sup>48</sup>Linda Daniel, "CiVIC 'community meeting' wasn't" *Seattle Times*, January 28, 1978.

<sup>49</sup> In 1976, the magnet school plan was approved by the School Board. Hanawalt et al., "The History of Desegregation in Seattle Public Schools."

paramount in the selection of magnet programs.”<sup>50</sup> Consequently, affluent, politically active parents who had the time and resources to work through established channels could often ensure that their children avoided busing. However, despite the school’s exemption from busing, on November 16, 1977, Linda Howard submitted a letter to the School Board, which ironically expressed both her opposition to busing Laurelhurst children and offered her support for the Seattle Plan. In the letter, she noted the school’s relatively high percentage of minority students (36%), arguing that the school was already integrated and therefore should not participate in desegregation.<sup>51</sup> What she failed to mention was that the majority of the students of color at Laurelhurst were children of foreign graduate students who resided in the nearby University of Washington student housing.<sup>52</sup> These minority students, who came from a higher economic class than many of the Central Area African Americans, were less threatening to Howard because they did not disrupt the socio-economic hierarchy. Howard’s perceptions of a racial hierarchy where people of color who had economic means were more desirable than poor minorities, shows how the issues of race and class were intimately intertwined. Howard’s decision to speak to the School Board demonstrates cracks in her liberal veneer. In many ways, Laurelhurst residents had the best of both worlds. They could appear liberal in their support for the Seattle Plan, while simultaneously enrolling their children in a high quality *neighborhood* school.

Laurelhurst liberals were Seattle’s version of “limousine liberals.”<sup>53</sup> In Thomas Sugrue’s analysis of New York and Boston, he describes working and middle class frustrations with “limousine liberals” who publicly supported busing while having the resources to send their children to either suburban or private schools. However, these Seattle liberals differed from their

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<sup>50</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 73, February 16, 1977, 327, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, November 16, 1978, 165, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Goldie Silverman, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, 21 June 2012.

<sup>53</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 188 & 488.

New York and Boston counterparts because – due in large part to Seattle School policies such as magnet schools – they kept their children in the city’s *public* schools. The attitudes and prejudices of Laurelhurst liberals also paralleled the perspectives of the founders of West Philadelphia’s University City, which aimed to make the racially and economically diverse West Philadelphia, adjacent to the University of Pennsylvania, into a science-based center of research and industry.<sup>54</sup> Margaret O’Mara describes how, in their early 1960s development plans, these self-proclaimed Philadelphia liberals aimed to eliminate “blight,” which was code for the economically declining largely African American areas. In its place they aimed to build a neighborhood that would house educated, professional white families.<sup>55</sup> In order to appeal to these parents, they proclaimed that “university-related schools,” emphasizing science and math, would be of higher quality than other Philadelphia public schools. The West Philadelphia Corporation, which was in charge of the redevelopment effort, understood that well-educated liberals who were attracted to the “cosmopolitan” nature of University City would demand suburban quality public schools.<sup>56</sup> As their counterparts in Laurelhurst, these new residents of University City wanted to live an ‘urban’ lifestyle, but only if their children would receive the best possible education, a tall order, which resulted in the exclusion of poor blacks from their public “university-related schools.”

Because of the material advantages of the parents, schools in neighborhoods such as Laurelhurst had a significant advantage in the magnet selection process, which was not lost on members of CiVIC. Laurelhurst’s exemption from the busing plan was a point of contention for members of CiVIC. Unprompted, Bob Dorse questioned why Laurelhurst and Sand Point Elementary School students (directly North of Laurelhurst and one of the city’s most affluent

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<sup>54</sup> O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*, 143.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 158 & 164.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

areas) were not bused. He speculated that some of the Laurelhurst and Sand Point residents had connections with the “liberal establishment” in Seattle.<sup>57</sup> CiVIC members were not the only Seattle residents who wondered how the District chose schools that would be included in the busing plan. Art Skolnik, a Seattle parent, opposed to busing, spoke at the Seattle School Board meeting on November 23, 1977. The note-taker paraphrased Skolnik. “He stated that from his own view he noticed that several districts [neighborhoods] were being heavily bombarded with desegregation emphasis while other neighborhoods were unaffected.”<sup>58</sup> Despite CiVIC’s suspicions and the questions of parents such as Skolnik, Laurelhurst does not appear to have been targeted for any particular, nefarious favoritism, excepting the inherent class biases in the magnet program designation process. On the other hand, it is more difficult to assess why Sand Point Elementary, which did not have a magnet program and was primarily white, avoided mandatory desegregation. However, the developers of the Seattle Plan never intended to make every school racially balanced, instead they aimed to eliminate high minority, segregated schools.<sup>59</sup> CiVIC leaders were frustrated by what they perceived of as an unfair school selection process that “rewarded” schools in well-connected liberal neighborhoods with a busing exemption. However, while CiVIC did not have as strong of ties to the city establishment as the liberals who supported busing, they had rich resources from which they could draw.

#### ANTI-ELITIST AND POPULIST RHETORIC

In order to differentiate themselves from the liberal Seattle elites who supported busing, CiVIC leaders sought to downplay their identity as a middle class organization. Unlike anti-busing groups in Sunbelt cities such as Atlanta and Charlotte, they did not stress a middle-class

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<sup>57</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

<sup>58</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, November 23, 1978, 194, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>59</sup> Siqueland, Interview by author.



meritocracy message.<sup>60</sup> Matthew Lassiter argues that upwardly mobile suburban middle class anti-busers in the South asserted that mandatory busing was a punishment for their economic success. These Southern activists insisted that it was through their merit and hard work, not their racism that they were able to live near good schools, which were “coincidentally” all white. CiVIC, on the other hand, based in the largely working class West Seattle neighborhood, emphasized their cross-class appeal that used grass-roots tactics in their battle against Seattle elites.<sup>61</sup> As we saw in chapter 4, the pro-desegregation activists included a wide-range of powerful Seattle individuals from leaders of the Chamber of Commerce to the Mayor to School District officials. Dorse argued that CiVIC, on the other hand, was an activist powered, not money driven, movement.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, CiVIC garnered widespread support: individual donations to the organization were small, on average less than \$50/contribution.<sup>63</sup> The many, relatively small donations indicate that it was not only wealthy or big special interest groups who supported the organization. However, while CiVIC did not have many representatives in Seattle’s official halls of power, their attempts to differentiate themselves from the city’s elites were hollow. The group also included many politically well- informed, successful executives and business owners, such as Dorse, who had deep pockets, and extensive resources from which they could draw.

From newspaper advertisements to letters to the editor, CiVIC sought to reinforce their carefully crafted anti-establishment image. At times, the leaders of the movement characterized their anti-elitist approach as populist. Bob Dorse used the term “populist” in a January 1978 letter to the editor in the *Seattle Times* about his fight against the Seattle Plan. By employing the “populist” concept he sought to evoke an image of CiVIC fighting for the rights of ordinary

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<sup>60</sup> Lassiter’s *The Silent Majority*.

<sup>61</sup> CiVIC, “The CiVIC Plan for Seattle Public Schools: Open Enrollment: Equal Opportunity, Educational Quality, Freedom of Choice” Seattle Public Libraries Special Collections.

<sup>62</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

<sup>63</sup> Constantine Angelos, “CiVIC Numbers, Funds Grow” *Seattle Times*, January 17, 1978, C7.

Seattleites in opposition to the powerful Seattle establishment. Responding to claims by Bill Russell that he was a “newly spawned populist,” Dorse said:

...that status is not new for me. I have been fighting government tyrannies for as long as I can remember. If he had read two of my past letters to the Times he would have seen my populist solution to the desegregation issue. Namely open enrollment with absolutely no qualifications. That means that any student could go to any school that he or she wanted to in the Seattle School District.<sup>64</sup>

All Seattle residents, regardless of race or economic status, could theoretically take advantage of Dorse’s open enrollment plan. Through his self-described populist lens, he depicted children as the innocent victims of the tyrannical School Board. While in the 1970s, CiVIC appropriated the language of populism, today, scholars use it as a concept to describe anti-busing activity.

According to Ronald Formisano, Boston’s working class activism was “reactionary populism” that expressed itself in both non-violent, anti-elitist discourse and in violent rebellion. In conversation with Formisano, Matthew Lassiter argues that Southern middle class activists expressed a “suburban populism,” which reinforced their middle class entitlement message.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, historians have shown that advocates for school vouchers in New Orleans, Milwaukee, and Cleveland used their emphasis upon the freedom of choice to reinforce their populist appeal.<sup>66</sup> Seattle’s populist discourse was most similar to the non-violent component of Boston’s populist anti-elitism. However, CiVIC had other tools from which they could draw, particularly the ballot initiative system that was much more prominent in Western states than on the East Coast.

CiVIC activists employed populist ideology at the ballot box, which was largely unavailable to activists in the South and Northeast. When Dorse and his followers realized that

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority* and Formisano, *Boston against Busing*.

<sup>66</sup> Carl, *Freedom of Choice*, 7.

they would be unable to stop the implementation of the Seattle Plan, they turned to electoral politics. Employing a Western States' style populism, they drafted their anti-busing Ballot Initiative 350 (I-350), which appeared on the November 1978 ballot. I-350 was only possible because in 1912, when populist ideology was at its height, Washington State passed initiative and referendum laws. However, at its root, Progressives who used the rhetoric of populism, were the real fuel for initiatives and referenda in the period. In the first two decades of the century, many other western states, a smattering of mid-western states and a few eastern states passed similar laws. Over more than a century, with California's 1978 Proposition 13, which limited property taxes to "1% of the full cash value" of the property and inspired a tax revolt across the U.S., as one of the most notorious, these laws have continued to be influential vehicles for public protest.<sup>67</sup> If victorious and made into law, I-350 would have overturned the Seattle Plan and required all Washington State students to attend their neighborhood schools, with limited exceptions. Dorse stressed the grass-roots nature of the I-350 campaign, noting that volunteers personally collected all of the signatures required for the initiative's inclusion on the November Ballot. Volunteer signature gatherers suggested a strong community engagement and a committed membership. However, the money behind the campaign was even more crucial than the volunteer signature gatherers. Donors such as Dorse largely used their personal funds to bankroll the expensive Initiative-350 campaign.<sup>68</sup>

As individual CiVIC members spent thousands of dollars on I-350, it increasingly called into question the group's populist, anti-elite message. A few days before the election, the following political cartoon appeared in the liberal-leaning *Seattle Post Intelligencer*. The artist's

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<sup>67</sup>"California Constitution: Article 13A," Accessed on May 28, 2014, [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/const/article\\_13A](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/const/article_13A).

<sup>68</sup> Constantine Angelos, "Initiative 350 wins; long court fight seen," *Seattle Times*, November 8, 1978, B5.

portrayal of CiVIC was emblematic of the classification that the group sought to avoid, that of being a wealthy, elitist Seattle organization that opposed busing on racist grounds.



McFarlane, the artist, used the affluent mother dressed in fur and heels to demonstrate the hypocrisy of I-350 supporters who claimed that their objection to desegregation and the Seattle Plan indicated an inherent rejection of busing. However, as McFarlane exposes, CiVIC parents were willing to bus their children if the destination, such as the fictive “White Mountain Ski School,” was segregated, economically and racially. Despite objections from the liberals that sought to emphasize the group’s duplicity, CiVIC’s ballot measure was wildly successful. While the initiative, examined at the end of the chapter, garnered the most press and public attention, anti-busing activism in the PTSAs by CiVIC members and other anti-busers also helped to spread their message. In Seattle, as in most cities, PTSA activism appeared in neighborhood schools as well as at the citywide association level. In 1978, the Seattle PTSA association administrators and local branch leaders sparred over busing.

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<sup>69</sup> McFarlane, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, November 4, 1978, A4.

## PTSA ACTIVISM

Despite objections from School District leaders, PTSAs throughout the city openly pushed their anti-busing agendas. The District's 1973 cancelation of all of the community councils (except for CASC), which had provided a formalized mechanism for neighborhoods to express their grievances about busing, created an opening for local PTSAs to play a greater part in the anti-desegregation battle.<sup>70</sup> However, one cannot equate PTSAs with the community councils because these female dominated organizations lent a gendered dimension to the anti-busing struggle. The PTSA led activism in the late 1970s, provided an opportunity for women at the grassroots level to use their status as mothers to advocate for political change that often dovetailed with and bolstered CiVIC's agenda.

The controversial Seattle PTSA Council desegregation advisory vote demonstrates the rising tensions between CiVIC and busing supporters. The Seattle Council, an affiliate of the national PTSA, led and set guidelines for the local branches and their meetings provided a place for members to share their views on issues pertinent to K-12 education. While the majority of PTSA members were wary of desegregation, some of its leaders were active Seattle Plan supporters.<sup>71</sup> Kay Groves, the president of the PTSA was also a DWAC member and activist for desegregation.<sup>72</sup> On February 14, 1978, in a highly publicized and contentious move, the Council voted to approve a set of guidelines on how local PTSA organizations should approach parental concerns about the Plan such as safety, busing logistics, and transfer policies.<sup>73</sup> Crucially, the vote was not intended to reject or endorse the Plan. Nonetheless, the vote was highly

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<sup>70</sup>The council system was defunded on April 12, 1973, though the groups were allowed to continue to operate on a self-funded basis. The *West Seattle Herald* argued that the councils were "cast adrift" by the School District to wade in the murky waters of school policy without the endorsement or assistance from the Administration. "School District Cuts Councils Loose, *West Seattle Herald*, April 18, 1973, 1.

<sup>71</sup>Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 163.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. 62.

<sup>73</sup>Constantine Angelos, "P.T.S.A. Council Sets Guidelines," *Seattle Times*, February 14, 1978, A14.

controversial, despite its advisory nature, because members feared that a yes vote would be an endorsement of the Seattle Plan. While the guidelines were approved with a 136/93 margin, this victory was not an accurate representation of Seattle PTSA member sentiment.<sup>74</sup> The contested vote led to widespread public mudslinging. PTSA members around the city were infuriated by news that District administrators, who had been alerted of the upcoming vote, called upon building principals (who officially were members of the PTSA council and allowed to vote in all Association matters) to attend the meeting and express their support for the Plan.<sup>75</sup> In turn, Kay Groves accused CiVIC of stacking the vote by alerting anti-busing PTSA members from around the city to attend the meeting and vote no on the proposal.<sup>76</sup> Essentially, both sides understood the importance of the vote and attempted to sway it in their favor. After the contentious February 1978 meeting, the Seattle Council made no other public statements about the Plan. Council leadership had planned to vote on a formal endorsement or rejection of the Seattle Plan, however the vote was scuttled and “postponed indefinitely.”<sup>77</sup> Despite President Kay Grove’s pro-desegregation stance, the organization chose to avoid further controversy and were publicly “neutral” on the Seattle Plan. Consistent with PTSAs around the country, their “neutrality” concealed the fact that the majority of Seattle’s PTSA members rejected busing.<sup>78</sup>

Memories of this controversy linger today. To members of Citizens for Quality Integrated Education (CQIE), Kay Groves was “brave” for what they perceived of as her bold public stance

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 163.

<sup>76</sup> Carol Lowe, “Letter to the editor,” *Seattle Times*, January 20, 1978, A13.

<sup>77</sup> Mike Wyne, “P.T.S.A. skirts desegregation vote,” *Seattle Times*, March 15, 1978, D5.

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of the history of PTA activism up to 1970 see Christine A. Woyshner, *The National PTA, Race, and Civic Engagement, 1897-1970* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009). She demonstrates how, since the national organization’s founding, PTAs traditionally have stayed away from controversial issues such as busing and desegregation, arguing that the national PTA often looked the other way when local branches reinforced racial segregation.

in support for desegregation.<sup>79</sup> The notion that Seattle's PTSA procedural vote on the Seattle Plan was groundbreaking demonstrates the policy's deep unpopularity. However, the PTSA's public neutrality on desegregation in 1978 showed a subtle shift in the organization's approach to busing. During the middle school desegregation debates, the PTSA Council outright rejected mandatory desegregation and offered assistance to anti-busing parents who were concerned about the safety of their children in a desegregated school system. While Kay Groves and others in the Seattle PTSA Council leadership endorsed busing, the organization as whole did not back the Seattle Plan.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, individual chapters avoided any notion of neutrality and used their local branches as a springboard for their anti-busing activism.

Anti-busing women, who were often CiVIC members, used the PTSA platform to express their objection to mandatory desegregation. Fauntleroy Elementary School, which is located in an upper middle class waterfront neighborhood in the south end of West Seattle, was a site of significant PTSA-based anti-busing activism. The Fauntleroy PTSA and Principal Clint Richards held a widely-attended community meeting two days after the Seattle Plan passed in which they conducted a vote asking participants if they approved of the Seattle Plan.<sup>81</sup> The *West Seattle Herald* reported on the front page that 96% of participants expressed disapproval of the Plan. This Fauntleroy meeting was unique. It was the only example of school sponsored community-wide meetings and it was rare, for fear of repercussions from the District leadership, to find active principal support for any anti-busing activity. Nevertheless, the school's community meeting in December 1977 was only the beginning. The Fauntleroy PTSA expressed their anti-busing sentiment in School Board meetings, discussed the Seattle Plan in their own meetings,

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<sup>79</sup>Kay Bullitt, Interview by author.

<sup>80</sup>Siqueland, *Without a Court Order*, 74 and 163.

<sup>81</sup> Terry Finn, "Poll Shows 96% Oppose Mandatory Plan," *West Seattle Herald*, December 14, 1977, A1. As we saw in chapter 1, the *Herald* continued its own opposition to busing in the late 1970s, though the editorials were significantly less caustic and reactionary than they had been in the early 1970s.

wrote articles for the *Fauntleroy Foghorn* (PTSA newsletter) and wrote letters of complaint to the press and the School District.<sup>82</sup> On February 14, 1978, they wrote a formal letter to the Seattle School Board, explaining that “at a general membership meeting of the Fauntleroy Elementary School PTSA on February 8, 1978[,] it was adopted by a 93% majority vote that the Fauntleroy PTSA is adamantly opposed to the Seattle Force Busing Plan.”<sup>83</sup> Fauntleroy’s PTSA activism was exceptional because most of the PTSA activism in schools throughout the city kept their anti-busing messages within the bounds of the school and PTSA newsletters.

Fauntleroy’s PTSA also took private, surreptitious action in their opposition to busing. Similar to what James Scott observed in the *Weapons of the Weak*, these West Seattle women practiced resistance to busing through sabotage.<sup>84</sup> Fauntleroy’s inclusion in the Seattle Plan incensed the PTSA mothers. First through third grade Dunlap Elementary School children, from the heart of the multi-racial Rainier Valley, would bus to Fauntleroy the following year. Likewise, Fauntleroy fourth and fifth graders would attend Dunlap Elementary. Anger over this arrangement led the Fauntleroy PTSA to virtually empty their coffers in protest. The following chart provides a visual representation of their budgetary subversion.

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<sup>82</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, March 1, 1978, 381, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>83</sup> Fauntleroy Elementary School PTSA Notes, University of Washington Special Collections, Parents and Teachers Association of Seattle, Acc. 3421-007, Box 3, Red binder.

<sup>84</sup> See James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 25-26. While these largely middle class women were not class warriors, as the peasants Scott describes, they were less powerful than School District and city officials who were tasked with making policy decisions. In addition, the Fauntleroy PTSA’s decision to keep their subversion quiet resonates with Scott’s analyses of peasants who masked their disobedience in order to avoid punishment or public censure.



Fauntleroy PTSA Budget	
Anticipated 1977/1978 Budget	\$1,042
Actual 1977/1978 Budget	\$3,936
Difference	\$2,894
Remaining Funds for 1978/1979 (when Seattle Plan was set to go into effect)	\$200

On May 25, 1978, a few months before mandatory busing was to begin, the group voted to spend \$1,802.93 on a field day, teacher gifts, and “mementos” for all Fauntleroy students. They had included none of these expenditures in their *anticipated* 1977/78 budget, going \$2,894 or three times over budget. In previous years, the Fauntleroy PTSA kept to their budget, leaving significant surpluses in their account to carry over to the next year. While the Fauntleroy PTSA notes did not explain why they drained all but \$200 from the PTSA account, their actions suggest that they sought to ensure that *their* children would directly benefit from their fundraising efforts, rather than the children of color who would be bused to Fauntleroy the following school year. To secretly protest busing, the Fauntleroy PTSA flagrantly manipulated their budget, one of the few tools over which they had complete control.

While Fauntleroy might have been unique in the extent to which PTSA members took public and private political action, they were not alone in their use of the PTSA platform to express anti-busing sentiment. However, by 1978 when these groups expressed anti-busing rhetoric in PTSA newsletters they did so at the risk of censure from the School District or their principal. In January of 1978, the Seattle Superintendent’s office demanded that principals monitor PTSA publications at local schools to ensure that no anti-busing rhetoric was included in

newsletters.<sup>85</sup> While the directive clamped down on some of the anti-busing rhetoric and activity at the PTSA level, it did not eliminate it. In the Magnolia neighborhood, Vicki Schmitz the PTSA president of Briarcliff Elementary expressed her defiance to a *Seattle Times* reporter, declaring that she planned to continue to post CiVIC meeting notices in her newsletter despite the School District's policy change.<sup>86</sup> Schmitz's defiance of School District policy was only one instance of many in her extensive anti-busing campaign.

Indicating how the movement had the power to shape neighborhood dynamics, PTSA President and CiVIC member Vicki Schmitz, divided the Briarcliff community. Many saw Schmitz, who married the heir of Ferdinand Schmitz, a wealthy Seattle banker and real estate developer, as the public face of the Magnolia neighborhood.<sup>87</sup> However, others such as the Magnolia Neighborhood Historian Monica Wooton, mother of four and PTA member at Briarcliff in the 1970s objected to her outspoken tactics that "implicated all of Magnolia."<sup>88</sup> Schmitz's mission was to stop all busing for desegregation, regardless if it was voluntary, which she frequently expressed at Seattle School Board meetings. Ironically, despite all of Schmitz's anger, Briarcliff students were not bussed under the Seattle Plan. Their paired school, Hawthorne Elementary that was located in the Rainier Valley, was under renovation. Therefore, only Hawthorne children were required to bus. Schmitz's most significant contribution to the School Board desegregation debate was the Briarcliff resolution regarding the PTSA's opposition to mandatory desegregation, which she presented to the Board on November 16, 1977.<sup>89</sup> Ultimately, the Board did not take Briarcliff's resolution seriously even after Schmitz returned to the Board on November 23 to clarify the PTSA's position. While her resolution failed at the

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<sup>85</sup>Peter Lewis, "Principals to halt CiVIC use of PTSA newsletters" *Seattle Times*, January 27, 1978, A4.

<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Monica Wooton, Interview by author, Seattle, WA, 18 June 2012.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, November 16, 1977, 164-165, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

School Board, her public anti-busing activism would serve to poison the waters, even after Schmitz moved to West Seattle in 1978.<sup>90</sup> Because of Schmitz's agenda, Wooton felt that the relationship between Hawthorne parents and Briarcliff parents was already damaged before busing even began.<sup>91</sup> Notably, despite scars over desegregation, the tone of the Briarcliff PTA changed dramatically after Schmitz's departure in 1978. Busing became a "non issue" and according to Wooton the "rest of us just went on" and cooperated with the desegregation policy.<sup>92</sup> Wooton sought to emphasize that Schmitz did not represent Magnolia. Despite the presence of liberals such as Wooton and Erin Gosma, the neighborhood was and remains divided over desegregation.

Today, white Magnolia grandmothers, unable to conceal their racism and classism, continue to bemoan the changes that the Seattle Plan wrought. Erin Gosma, a pragmatic liberal, joined the Briarcliff PTSA shortly after Vicki Schmitz and her anti-busing friends left the school. In the early 1980s, she was a desegregation supporter who bused her son to the Central Area for middle and high school. However, her willingness to and enthusiasm for busing was not typical of many in the area. Gosma observed that busing is still a topic of conversation at neighborhood gatherings.<sup>93</sup> Over thirty years later, women make comments such as: "It [desegregation] just ruined our little school" or "[Busing] totally changed the neighborhood."<sup>94</sup> She describes a lingering distaste for busing, a sense that even for parents whose children were not required to bus, the change in the racial and economic demographic at their school was unwelcome because

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<sup>90</sup> Monica Wooton, Interview by author.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Erin Gosma, Interview by author.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

no longer were their children attending school with all white, middle class children in a homogenous “Leave it to Beaver” like environment.<sup>95</sup>

Busing crossed the city’s geographic and racial dividing lines. After 1978, no longer was Briarcliff or Magnolia as racially or physically isolated as it had been. One of Gosma’s friends, Claudia Isquith, whose eight children were bused under the Seattle Plan explained that “people weren’t happy” with desegregation and for a “whole period of time you couldn’t find young families” in the neighborhood.<sup>96</sup> Isquith noticed a demographic shift in Magnolia, which has since turned and now the “place is flooded with young families.”<sup>97</sup> However, in the late seventies, many Magnolia families chose to exit the Seattle Schools and move to neighboring northern suburbs that were not included in the Seattle Plan such as Mukilteo and Shoreline.<sup>98</sup> While the parents who left the neighborhood might not have publicly acknowledged their distaste for desegregation, philosophically they were not significantly different from Vicki Schmitz who so loudly used her position as PTA president and CIVIC member to spread her anti-busing, pro I-350 agenda.

#### INITIATIVE 350

In November 7, 1978, a little over one month after busing began, State Initiative 350 garnered over 60% of the vote in Seattle and won by even wider margins throughout the state, a major victory for CiVIC’s ideology. I-350 blocked all mandatory busing, while allowing for voluntary busing. At the ballot box, Washington State voters were asked to judge the merits of the following question: “Shall public educational authorities be prohibited from assigning

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Claudia Isquith, Interview by author.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

students to other than the nearest or next-nearest school with limited exceptions?”<sup>99</sup> For Dorse, the “limited exceptions” component of the bill meant that there was some “choice” for families whose children were not served at their local neighborhood school.<sup>100</sup>

The liberal rhetoric of Seattle exceptionalism unraveled as the majority of the city’s residents rejected mandatory desegregation. While stressing his race-neutrality, Bob Dorse jubilantly responded to the news of I-350’s victory. “We are genuine. We are not bigots. We feel there’s a basic goodness in society, not a sinfulness, and there’s enough strength and talent in this community to make the public-school system click.”<sup>101</sup> Dorse’s optimistic tone suggested that the school system could successfully educate children of color, without desegregation because of the good intentions of humankind. His folksy statement deliberately underplayed the complexity of solving Seattle’s racial inequities. Not surprisingly, considering their history of anti-busing activism, the support for CiVIC’s Initiative 350 was highest in West Seattle where many precincts reported over 75% approval rates. In pockets of Magnolia and North Seattle, support also reached up to 75% or more.<sup>102</sup> Except for West Seattle, some of the best public schools were located in the neighborhoods that were most likely to support I-350. In a mandatory busing system, the local schools were no longer a resource from which *their* children could benefit. On the other hand, in the 37<sup>th</sup> precinct, which includes the Central Area, 61% of voters rejected I-350 and in the 43<sup>rd</sup>, including the University District and Capitol Hill, 54% opposed it.<sup>103</sup> The following is the map that Geographer Catherine Veninga developed to represent the I-350 vote by neighborhood.

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<sup>99</sup> Richard W. Larson, “Voters Reject Busing,” *Seattle Times*, November 7, 1978, A1.

<sup>100</sup> Robert Dorse, Interview by author.

<sup>101</sup> Constantine Angelos, “Initiative 350 wins; long court fight seen,” *Seattle Times*, November 8, 1978, B5.

<sup>102</sup> Veninga, *Road Scholars*, 104.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

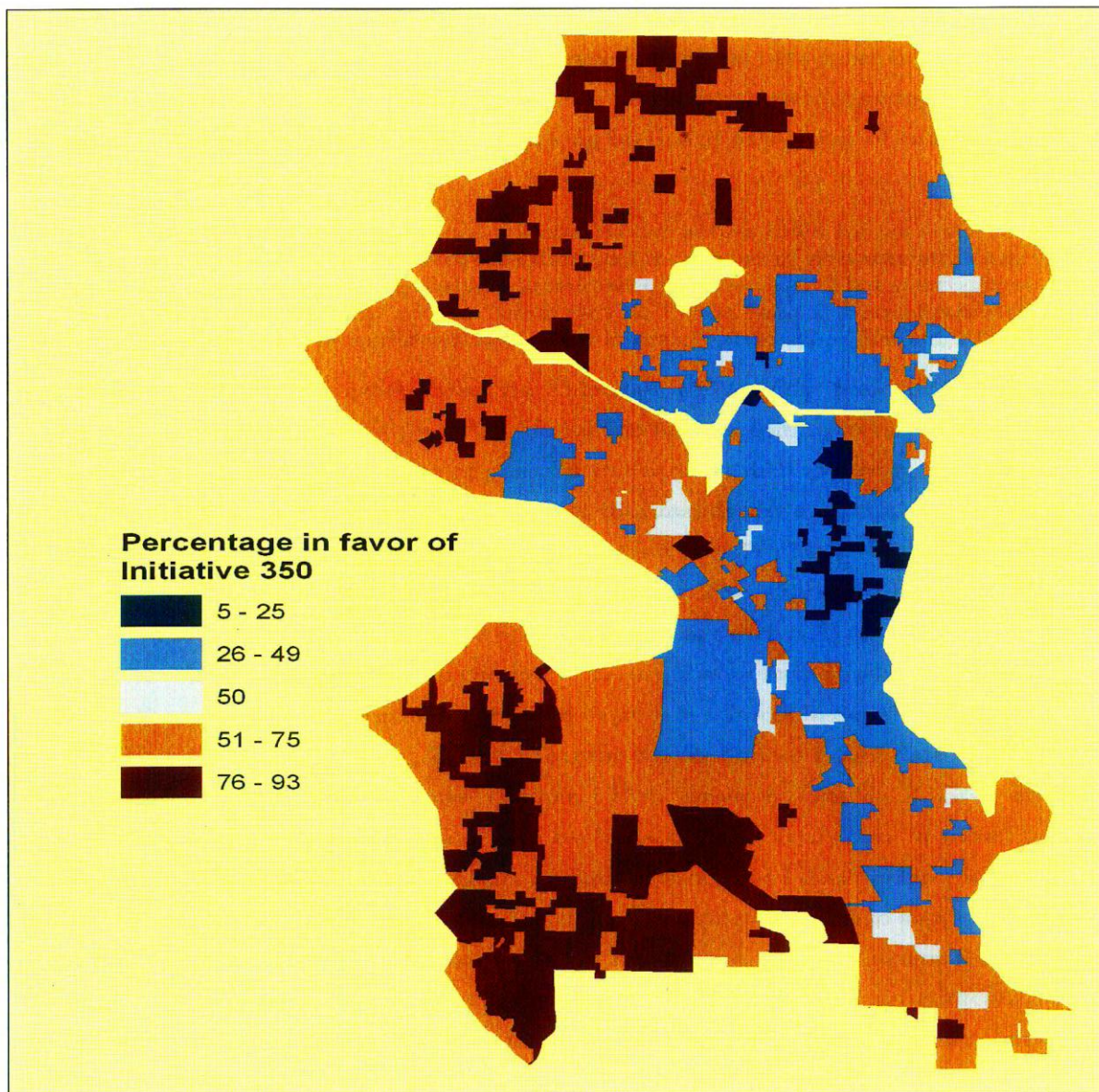


Figure 3. 13. Map of Initiative 350 Vote, by precinct

<sup>104</sup> Catherine Veninga Analysis of I-350 vote

Seattle was a deeply divided city, only in the heart of the city and in some of the close-in northern neighborhoods such as Wallingford and Roosevelt did I-350 fail.

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<sup>104</sup> Veninga, *Road Scholars*, 104

One year later in 1979, by 68%, California voters passed a comparable, though with one important distinction, statewide initiative Proposition 1. Alan Robbins, a Jewish state lawmaker from the San Fernando Valley, northwest of Los Angeles, founded the Robbins Amendment, as Proposition 1 was commonly known.<sup>105</sup> Unlike the fiery Floyd Wakefield who in 1972 had drafted the successful, though unconstitutional, Proposition 21, Robbins recruited a cadre of black and Chicano leaders to support his cause.<sup>106</sup> The proposition prevented “state courts from issuing school desegregation orders in excess of federal requirements.”<sup>107</sup> Having learned from the judicial failures of the earlier Wakefield Amendment, Robbins carefully drafted the measure to withstand equal protection clauses, a lesson that CiVIC had not learned from CAMB’s State Supreme Court loss.<sup>108</sup>

The success of I-350 was a blow to the city’s committed integrationists and the pragmatic liberals who developed and promoted it. The School District responded combatively to I-350’s victory, immediately filing a lawsuit that questioned the constitutionality of the measure.<sup>109</sup> While District leaders sought to over-turn the measure in court, they also attempted to downplay I-350’s success. School Board Member, Cheryl Bleakney spoke about CiVIC’s deep coffers, further undermining CiVIC’s attempts to appear “grass-roots” and anti-elite. Bleakney said: “...it seemed we didn’t have enough money to get our message out because I thought our message was correct. We had all the leadership of the state supporting us, but CiVIC outspent us 15 to 1 and there was no way we could overcome that on an emotional issue.”<sup>110</sup> Bleakney was careful not to

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<sup>105</sup> Martinez Hosang, *Racial Propositions*, 104.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Citizens Against Mandatory Bussing et al. v. Edward Palmason et al.*

<sup>109</sup> Constantine Angelos, “Initiative 350 wins; long court fight seen,” *Seattle Times*, B5.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

stress her disappointment with the Seattle public's vote. Instead, she blamed CiVIC's vast funds for the District's loss.

On the other hand, in the same election, Seattle voters soundly defeated the city's anti-gay Initiative 13 (I-13) by a margin of 63% to 37%.<sup>111</sup> The initiative aimed to overturn the 1973 Seattle City-Council ordinance, which had ensured equal protection under the law for homosexuals. Consequently, I-13 called for the removal of "sexual orientation" from city housing and employment ordinances.<sup>112</sup> The measure also included a component that would "strip the city Office of Women's Rights of its power to investigate complaints of discrimination against women," an element that helped mobilize women's opposition to the bill.<sup>113</sup> Yet, the most important factor in I-13's failure was the argument that the privacy of all Seattle residents was at stake if it was passed.<sup>114</sup> In 1978, with the contrasting results of I-350 and I-13, we see how Seattle's liberalism was a work in progress. When it came to integrating white children with children of color, the majority of white Seattle was opposed. However, regarding the rights of homosexual adults to live unencumbered by workplace and residential discrimination, Seattle residents who worried that these restrictions might affect heterosexuals, were more easily swayed. Voting yes on I-350 could be seen as defending the right to attend a neighborhood school while, on the other hand, voting yes on Initiative 13 would have taken away rights from homosexuals and possibly even heterosexual Seattle residents. For passionate anti I-350 and Initiative 13 activists such as Mayor Royer, November 7, 1978 was a day of mixed emotions.

On the other hand, for the School Board and pro-busing supporters, it was a heart-breaking day. While the School District avoided mentioning racism as an explanation for I-350's

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<sup>111</sup> Jack Broom, "Initiative 13 Loses Big," *Seattle Times*, November 8, 1978, B5.

<sup>112</sup> Ray Ruppert, "Church Leaders Ask Defeat of 13" *Seattle Times*, November 4, 1978, A7.

<sup>113</sup> Gary Atkins, *Gay Seattle*, 241.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 247-249.



victory, ordinary citizens were more blunt in their assessment of the measure. Seattle resident Jessie Kinnear wrote to the *Post Intelligencer* about Initiative 350. “Again we see racial hatred and bigotry masquerading under the guise of reasonableness in the issue of Initiative 350. Nationally more than 50 percent of children have been or are being bused. In the Highline area where I live, my children have always been bused for a variety of reasons, with no detrimental effects...”<sup>115</sup> Kinnear chastised Seattle voters and CiVIC for their “racial hatred and bigotry” that CiVIC, the crafters of the initiative, had so carefully cloaked in reasonable, race-neutral language. Furthermore, calling out the racial inequity that the white community “created,” Carol Barber, a Seattle mother, refused to accept CiVIC’s declarations of racial innocence. “The outdated notion that the white community can avoid the problems it has created in the minority community by walling itself inside its racially segregated neighborhoods is a fantasy of the past. Such a fantasy should have died in the flames of Watts.”<sup>116</sup> Undermining Seattle’s liberal veneer, Barber drew direct comparisons between Seattle and Los Angeles, suggesting that the city’s racial tensions would explode if desegregation failed.

While the initiative passed at the ballot box, it did not stop the mandatory busing program. The School District engaged in a four-year legal battle to overturn I-350. Eventually the District was victorious in 1982 when the United States Supreme Court deemed I-350 unconstitutional because it singled out race as the sole policy making area where local jurisdictions such as school districts would be required to cede their authority to the state government. Furthermore, the justices ruled that racial minorities, who called for redress against discrimination, would be subject to too high of a burden because they would be required to turn

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<sup>115</sup> Letters to the Editor, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, November 4, 1978, A4.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

to the State instead of the more accessible local jurisdiction, the school district, for assistance.<sup>117</sup>

On the same day, the Supreme Court ruled on California's Robbins Amendment in *Crawford v. Los Angeles Board of Education*, calling it constitutional because it allowed for equal protection under the law.<sup>118</sup> Bob Dorse, who was in attendance when the verdicts were read, recollected that he was stunned by the rulings. He had assumed that the justices would rule in the same direction in both cases.<sup>119</sup> Dorse, who had not done his homework as thoroughly as Congressman Robbins, did not provide safeguards to ensure equal protection under the law.

## CONCLUSION

From Vicki Schmitz to Bob Dorse to Ellen Roe, Seattle's 1978 anti-busing movement led by CiVIC was polished, sophisticated, and far-reaching. It was also at times caustic, particularly in the case of Schmitz, signaling a dramatic change from CAMB's early 1970s activism. In addition, Al Winston's participation in the movement showed that CiVIC's appeal could stretch beyond the bounds of the white community. However, blacks and whites in the group had different objections to busing. Echoing the early 1970s black opposition to middle school desegregation, Winston rejected the Seattle Plan because he sincerely believed that desegregation would have detrimental effects on black children. On the other hand, the whites in CiVIC objected to busing because they wanted *their* children to attend "good" schools in racially segregated neighborhoods. Inherent in their desire for neighborhood schools was a hard to capture, slippery racist undercurrent.

By the late 1970s, open racism was politically untenable in mainstream America and CiVIC members knew it. Furthermore, as the decade progressed, it became increasingly important even among social conservatives, to project a racially neutral posture that was separate

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<sup>117</sup> *Washington et al. v. Seattle School District No 1 et al.*, 458 U.S. 457 (1982).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 92 & *Crawford v. Los Angeles Board of Education*, 458 U.S. 527 (1982).

<sup>119</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

from their objections to other issues such as feminism or gay rights. Bob Dorse, unlike the leaders of the earlier CAMB, realized the benefits of appearing to align CiVIC's discourse with that of the pragmatic liberals who crafted the Seattle Plan. Seattle's anti-busing activists, who changed their approach to race over the course of the 1970s, had Californian counterparts. From the openly racist Congressman Wakefield in 1972 to the "liberal" Jewish Congressman Robbins in 1979, we see how the dialogue of race was changing in California as well. Robbins learned from the mistakes of Wakefield and crafted an initiative that could withstand the demands of the Court. In Seattle, CiVIC members' attempts to perpetuate this race-neutral image continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2010, Bob Dorse re-asserted his liberal credentials by talking at length about his weekly tutoring at a predominately African-American elementary school in the Rainier Valley.<sup>120</sup> Dorse was and continues to be strategic in how he creates his public persona.

Underlying all of these discussions about race, were class tensions that highlighted Seattle's changing economic landscape. While Boeing was still a central economic driver in the region, the 1970 Boeing Bust had lasting effects, bringing income insecurity to many working and middle class Seattle residents. In Magnolia, the 1970s signaled the end of the PTA "silver tea set."<sup>121</sup> With more working mothers in the PTA, the group had to adjust to the changing needs and desires of its members, including those who did not own silver and those who did not have the time to or interest in hosting elaborate tea parties. CiVIC, like the Magnolia PTA, realized that the affluent middle class status of many of their members was a potential political liability. Thus, they sought to downplay their own privilege, connecting their message with the politics of their largely working class home, West Seattle. Therefore, they did not engage in a middle class

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<sup>120</sup> Bob Dorse, Interview by author.

<sup>121</sup> Erin Gosma, Interview by author.

meritocracy argument that had been so powerful in the suburban South.<sup>122</sup> Then and now, CiVIC's members such as Bob Dorse seek to differentiate themselves from the affluent, well-connected liberal elite in Laurelhurst. However, Dorse's attempts to stress CiVIC's populist, cross-class appeal ring hollow in his well-appointed waterfront home. Across the political spectrum, from West Seattle to Laurelhurst, the debates over desegregation and the emotions it evoked have lasting effects on how residents think about race and class.

These divisions over busing left deep scars in Seattle. After the implementation of desegregation in 1978, white parents voted with their feet and left the public schools in large numbers. However, in the 1980s and '90s, the policy became increasingly unpopular across the racial spectrum. In 1996, CiVIC's aim to overturn mandatory desegregation was realized. To the delight of Al Winston and his CiVIC co-leaders, Seattle's first African American Superintendent John Stanford dismantled the Seattle Plan. However, this policy shift was not a victory for the neighborhood schools concept. Rather, as Al Winston predicted, and much to the disappointment of its enthusiastic backers, it was indicative of the Seattle Plan's failure to improve the educational outcomes of students of color.

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<sup>122</sup> Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 1.

## Epilogue: The Legacy of Desegregation

The interaction was great for our kids and also for the parents. Our son was student body president when the school [Franklin High] was mostly minority. They got special opportunities.

Claudia Isquith<sup>1</sup>

I think our kids are better for it. They are more passive and forgiving.

Joan Burreson<sup>2</sup>

In 2012, Claudia Isquith and Joan Burreson, white grandmothers from Magnolia, reflected upon how the Seattle Plan had enriched their families' lives. In a program that aimed to eliminate racial inequalities in schools, it was the white pragmatic liberals and their children, rather than the African-American children it was primarily designed to serve, who benefited the most from mandatory desegregation. From 1979 to the early twenty-first century, this epilogue analyzes the Plan's fading legal and political fortunes, showing how blacks in the racially divided Madrona neighborhood rallied against its shortcomings, while whites, looking to escape busing, fled the city in large numbers.

Less than a year after the implementation of the Seattle Plan, black anti-busing sentiment, which had been so loud and forceful in the *early* 1970s and almost nonexistent in 1978, reemerged. In 1979, African American resistance to desegregation in the Madrona neighborhood exemplified this renewal of earlier objections to mandatory busing. Madrona, adjacent to the Central Area, was evenly split between black and white residents. Yet, the public schools were predominately black.<sup>3</sup> Affluent whites who resided largely east of 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue, many of whom

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<sup>1</sup> Claudia Isquith, Interview by author.

<sup>2</sup> Joan Burreson, Interview by author.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 82-84.

lived in spacious lake-view homes, sent their children to private schools. While, west of 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue, further from the lake and in the valley below, was home to largely African American working class families. Pre-adoption, the community was generally supportive of the 1978 Seattle Plan, though after implementation the mostly African American parents of children who attended Madrona Elementary School quickly mobilized against it.<sup>4</sup>

Madrona Elementary was a site of particular contention in the lead-up to the Seattle Plan and in its aftermath. The conversion of Madrona from a middle school to a K-5 elementary school caused much debate at the School Board.<sup>5</sup> The move was especially controversial because the District had projected that the school would be highly segregated, with over 80% minority enrollment. Thus, according to the Seattle Plan desegregation guidelines, Madrona Elementary should have been paired with another school, which had a high proportion of whites. Nevertheless, the School Board ruled that in 1978-79, the first year of the Plan, the school would not receive any bused students. Administrators doubted that in its first year of operation, Madrona would meet Seattle Public School quality standards because it was a new school with a new principal and the staff was almost entirely composed of temporary teachers. Because of these concerns, the Board granted Madrona students the right to attend any school in the District.<sup>6</sup> District administrators also designated the school as an ‘area magnet’ for science, math, health, and the gifted program, Horizon.<sup>7</sup> In the 1978-79 school year, despite their efforts to make Madrona more appealing, the white and the well-connected African American parents seized the opportunity to place their children in other schools throughout the city, resulting in a

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<sup>4</sup> Veninga, *Road Scholars*, 104.

<sup>5</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, March 8, 1978, 413-414; Record 75, March 29, 1978, 462-464; Record 75, May 24, 1978, 48-49; June 28, 1978, 105; Record 75, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, March 8, 1978, 414, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Seattle Public Schools, “Options in Education: ‘The Seattle Plan’ Seattle Public Schools April 3, 1978,” Seattle Public Schools Archives, Acc. # 330.167 c.1.

shift from a projected 82.5% to an actual 94% minority population.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, in the first year of the Seattle Plan, the school was more segregated than it had ever been.

In light of Madrona's extreme segregation and the poor quality of the school, African American parents rose up in the winter of 1979, calling for a high quality neighborhood school. Rather than escaping Madrona by busing their children out of the area, black parents demanded more resources and better teachers and facilities. Before this point, during the 1977 and 1978 debates about the fate of Madrona, black parents who had chosen to keep their children at the school, were largely silent. However in January 1979, less than six months after the school year began, a group of Madrona parents in collaboration with the Central Area School Council (CASC) called for Madrona to be turned into an 'all city' rather than an 'area magnet,' with adequate facilities and resources. As an 'all city' magnet, Madrona students would not have been required to bus out of their neighborhood.<sup>9</sup> Angry parents wrote a letter about the school's problems. "When school finally opened this Fall, there was no library, no playground equipment, no startup funds, and staff made up of substitutes and teachers from the surplus pool, many of whom were unable to cope with the special needs of the children."<sup>10</sup> When advocating for the 'all city' status, Madrona parents used some of the same tactics that white parents in Laurelhurst had so skillfully deployed. However, the Madrona parents, unlike their Laurelhurst counterparts, did not succeed in their quest to convert the school into an 'all-city' magnet, though program funding increased and teacher performance did improve.<sup>11</sup> In their activism that called for strong

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<sup>8</sup> Seattle School Board Meeting Notes, Record 75, June 8, 1978, 103, Seattle Public Schools Archives.

<sup>9</sup> Madrona School Parents and the Central Area School Council, "Letter to Dr. Moberly," January 16, 1979, Seattle Municipal Archives, Acc. 4636-02, Folder 1/7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>11</sup> In 2014 the school has been converted to a K-8 model and it continues to be a place of political contention and a site of gang violence.

neighborhood schools, these parents were ahead of the curve, in what would become a groundswell of black opposition to busing in the 1980s.<sup>12</sup>

While African American families primarily stayed in the District and fought to secure change from within, middle class white families who had more economic resources, resonating with national trends from North to South, voted with their feet and left the Seattle Schools in large numbers. The sharpest drop in white enrollment came in the fall of 1978, the first year of the Seattle Plan, when 4,400 students fewer students registered than the previous year. From 1979 to 1983, white enrollment fell by over 8,000 students leading to a 10% drop in white students.<sup>13</sup> These school district leavers attended private schools within the city limits and many moved to the suburbs. In 1978, white families with children moved from Seattle to the neighboring suburbs at a higher rate than they had in any previous year on record.<sup>14</sup> Much to the disappointment of municipal and District leaders, with Seattle residents' mass-exodus from the public schools, they showed once again that they were no more liberal than any other city in the country. Opponents of the Plan who demonstrated their discontent by exiting the system, cheered when a series of local and national events secured the end of all busing for desegregation.

Busing did not turn out to be a panacea for curing race-based inequality as its advocates had hoped and that, coupled with a changing national political climate, ensured the demise of mandatory busing in Seattle and beyond. Beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, across the racial and political spectrum, former supporters began to question the effectiveness of busing, noting that African Americans and other minority students continued to lag behind whites and showed little academic improvement when enrolled in racially balanced schools. Even the most committed Seattle Plan advocates such as members of CQIE, became increasingly disillusioned

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<sup>12</sup>Dougherty, *More than One Struggle*, 201.

<sup>13</sup>Orians, "School Desegregation and Residential Segregation," 75-76.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 107.



with the Plan's failure to raise African American achievement.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the high economic cost of busing children across American cities came into question during the Reagan and Bush eras, whose administrations espoused the rhetoric of smaller government. President Reagan defunded desegregation programs and appointed anti-mandatory busing federal judges.<sup>16</sup> In light of these events, in 1987, Seattle's mandatory desegregation plan was modified and weakened and by 1997, under the leadership of the popular African American Superintendent, John Stanford, the Plan was abandoned altogether.<sup>17</sup> Together with the School Board, Stanford adjusted school attendance policies to reflect an open enrollment schema in which parents could enroll their children in any city school providing it had space available. Admission to the most popular schools was decided through a combination of neighborhood preference, lottery number, sibling preference, and when all of these factors were equal, the student's race was used as a tie-breaker. The inclusion of race, albeit in a limited fashion, would lead to the demise of Seattle's choice plan.

In a dramatic turn from the political climate of the 1970s, in 2007 the Seattle Public Schools faced a legal mandate to abandon all race-based preferences when the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in the *Parents Involved in Community Schools (PICS) v. Seattle Schools District No. 1* that it was unconstitutional to use race as a tie-breaker in admissions decisions.<sup>18</sup> Kathleen Brose, a Magnolia mother whose daughter was not admitted to Ballard High School, was PICS's president and the main plaintiff in the case. Brose, whose politics diverged sharply from that of

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<sup>15</sup> CQIE Meeting at Kay Bullitt's Home, June 12, 2012, Seattle, WA.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the national shift away from mandatory desegregation to a choice model of integration that became popular in the 1980s and 90s see Hehnke, *The Politics of Racial Integration in the Seattle Public Schools*, 183.

<sup>17</sup> Seattle Public Schools, Basic principles and general procedures of the revised Seattle student assignment plan, May 18, 1988, Seattle Public Schools Archive, Acc. 330.195, c1.

<sup>18</sup> *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701 (2007).

Joan Burreson and Claudia Isquith who also resided in Magnolia, spoke to reporters after their Supreme Court victory. She used race neutral language that paralleled 1970s rhetoric.

‘When the school district made this assignment they didn't look at the academic needs of these kids. They didn't look at the social needs of these kids. It's like they had no value except for their skin color,’ she said. ‘The thing that really bugs me the most about it is that they teach our kids in the schools that discrimination is wrong. You can't have it both ways. You just can't.’<sup>19</sup>

Borse was vindicated by the Court's decision. The justices ruled that in and of itself, the Constitution does not require racial balance in schools. Furthermore, according to the Court, the Seattle School District did not present a convincing argument that the program had a real and significant impact on racial minorities' educational outcomes.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Seattle and other schools around the nation who used race as a factor in public school admissions decisions were forced to quickly change their policies. By 2010, a little over 30 years after pragmatic liberals implemented the Seattle Plan, the School Board reversed the final remnants of the policy. Besides the legal mandate, Seattle Schools would have been forced to abandon busing because of budgetary restraints brought on by declining enrollments and by two economic downturns in the early twenty-first century, including the Great Recession of 2008. In 2014, school choice is no longer an option for Seattle students who for the most part have returned to their neighborhood schools, excepting those who qualify for one of the few magnet, gifted, or alternative programs.

The debate over busing and neighborhood schools has come full circle. While racially neutral and sensitive discourse is now commonplace and protections have been put in place to eliminate the most egregious racial injustices, the return to neighborhood schools mirrors the pre-civil rights era in many disconcerting ways. From the perspective of students' lived experiences,

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<sup>19</sup>“High court rejects school integration plans,” *Seattle Times*, June 28, 2007, Accessed on May 7, 2014, [http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2003766015\\_webrace28m.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2003766015_webrace28m.html).

<sup>20</sup> *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No.1*, (2007).

particularly for those children who reside in neighborhoods that remain stubbornly segregated, the school environment does not look that different from 1950s America. African American students continue to lag far behind whites and Asians, and while technically resources are allocated proportionally across all schools, the reality is more complicated. Public schools in wealthy Seattle neighborhoods and around the country reap the benefits of PTA-led fundraising that serves to funnel money directly to neighborhood schools. These funds, allocated for anything from art teachers to computers, widen the gap between rich and poor in our supposedly *public* schools. Much to the disappointment of Seattle's civil rights crusaders from CORE to CQIE to the NAACP, these educational injustices have yet to be adequately addressed, locally or in the broader United States. While desegregation was unable to affect meaningful change in minority student outcomes, over the course of the 1970s, the process of desegregating Seattle's Schools made many city leaders realize the pragmatic benefits of embracing racial liberalism. The peaceful and smooth implementation of the Seattle Plan brought acclaim to the city and its government.

## Conclusion

My dissertation has shown how the 1970s, with its changing racial discourse that coexisted with stubborn racial divisions, was a decade of contradiction. From the early 1970s to late in the decade, Seattle leaders rebranded themselves, embracing a new kind of pragmatic liberalism that placed appearances of racial equality at the forefront. Through developing and marketing the Seattle Plan, these leaders carefully stage-managed the city's national reputation, cementing the city's liberal facade by employing racially-sensitive discourse and carefully taking into consideration the needs of African American community leaders. As a microcosm of American racial politics, Seattle leaders learned how racial liberalism that was divorced from economic liberalism could produce real political benefits. From the local uproar in West Seattle to Boston's busing riots in working class neighborhoods, by 1978 supporters of desegregation understood that throughout the United States economic integration had become politically more controversial than racial integration. Beginning in the late 1970s, race received a unique status in American politics that would require special care. As Seattle's desegregation battles have shown, by this point, American politicians and citizens of all political stripes found it necessary to incorporate at least a modicum of racial sensitivity into all of their public messaging that addressed social issues.

In an era where scholars have stressed the widening divisions between the two parties, my analysis of Seattle's pragmatic liberals from School Board President Patt Sutton to Chamber of Commerce President Wallace Bunn, provides a fresh understanding of the political middle space between Republicans and Democrats. Busing was a formative policy for liberals and conservatives who adapted their ideologies to meet the changing racial politics of the 1970s. My work also complicates our understanding of the rightward shift in American politics by showing

how in the case of Seattle's pragmatic liberals, particularly in the arenas of school and race, there was not a sharp dichotomy between left and right on the political axis. Rather, in the 1970s, there was room for compromise.

As evidence of these cross-party connections, in all but the extreme far right, the 1970s were a period of real change in how one talked and wrote about race. The transition from CAMB to CiVIC demonstrates that it was not only liberals who endorsed an appearance of race-neutrality. These changes in racial discourse that could be seen in Seattle city government rhetoric and even CiVIC propaganda were dramatic and illustrate how the civil rights movement was finding its way into the everyday language of ordinary Americans. The transformation in racial discourse foreshadowed the rise of the politically correct discourse of the 1980s and '90s. Through Seattle's contestations over busing, where racial discourse was highlighted and refined, the city became a laboratory for America. Changes in Seattle would become reflective of a permanent, nationwide shift in how Americans publicly spoke about race and other contentious social issues.

By analyzing the relationship between social and cultural identities and parental attitudes towards public school policies, I have also shown how busing backlash was not only about race. In the fiscally unstable 1970s, the web of race and class could not be untangled. Laurelhurst mothers, who welcomed middle class children of color to Laurelhurst Elementary while they simultaneously objected to busing their children to the poor, black Central Area, exemplified this tension. The city's pragmatic liberals, such as Superintendent Moberly who worried about how West Seattle might explode in class-based racial anger, deftly navigated Seattle's treacherous economic waters. In this geographically divided city, class and neighborhood remain intimately intertwined.

Furthermore, by examining cross-racial opposition to busing, I have widened our understanding of busing-specific backlash to demonstrate that gender, motherhood, and neighborhood identities were also crucial components of this activism. My work has shown that “family values,” an ideology, which scholars have used to explain the rightward shift of American politics, was more elastic than previously understood. Blacks, Asians, and some liberal whites objected to busing because of how the policy affected family dynamics and the logistics of parenting school-aged children. As we saw in Seattle’s Central Area, blacks who advocated for their neighborhood schools resented how busing disrupted community cohesiveness and increasingly questioned integration, which had failed to live up to its lofty goals. On the other end of the political and racial spectrum, protecting traditional family norms particularly in the early 1970s were central to CAMB’s socially conservative anti-busing campaign. Throughout the busing debates from ardent supporters to fervent opponents, the family played an important role in shaping how the policy was perceived.

Inherent in these debates about the family, were controversies over changing gender norms. Scholars of busing have not commonly stressed how desegregation affected the lives of stay-at-home and working mothers. Because of the rise of working mothers in the 1970s, when developing the Seattle Plan, savvy politicians found it necessary to address issues such as after-school childcare, a concern that would have been less salient only a decade earlier. On the other end of the spectrum, many stay-at-home mothers resented how busing eliminated the neighborhood school and consequently the local PTA, which had traditionally been a place where these women connected to and helped to improve their local communities.

In the 1970s, liberalism and conservatism changed dramatically. Conservatives found ways to incorporate the liberal ideology of racial justice into their messaging. On the other hand,

liberals honed their discourse to make racial liberalism, which was divorced from all vestiges of class, appear politically and economically pragmatic. Finally and most crucially, from pragmatic liberals who resided in a political middle ground to black backlash that failed to fit into a strict political silo, my work demonstrates that American politics in the 1970s were more hybridized than clearly rightward bound.

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