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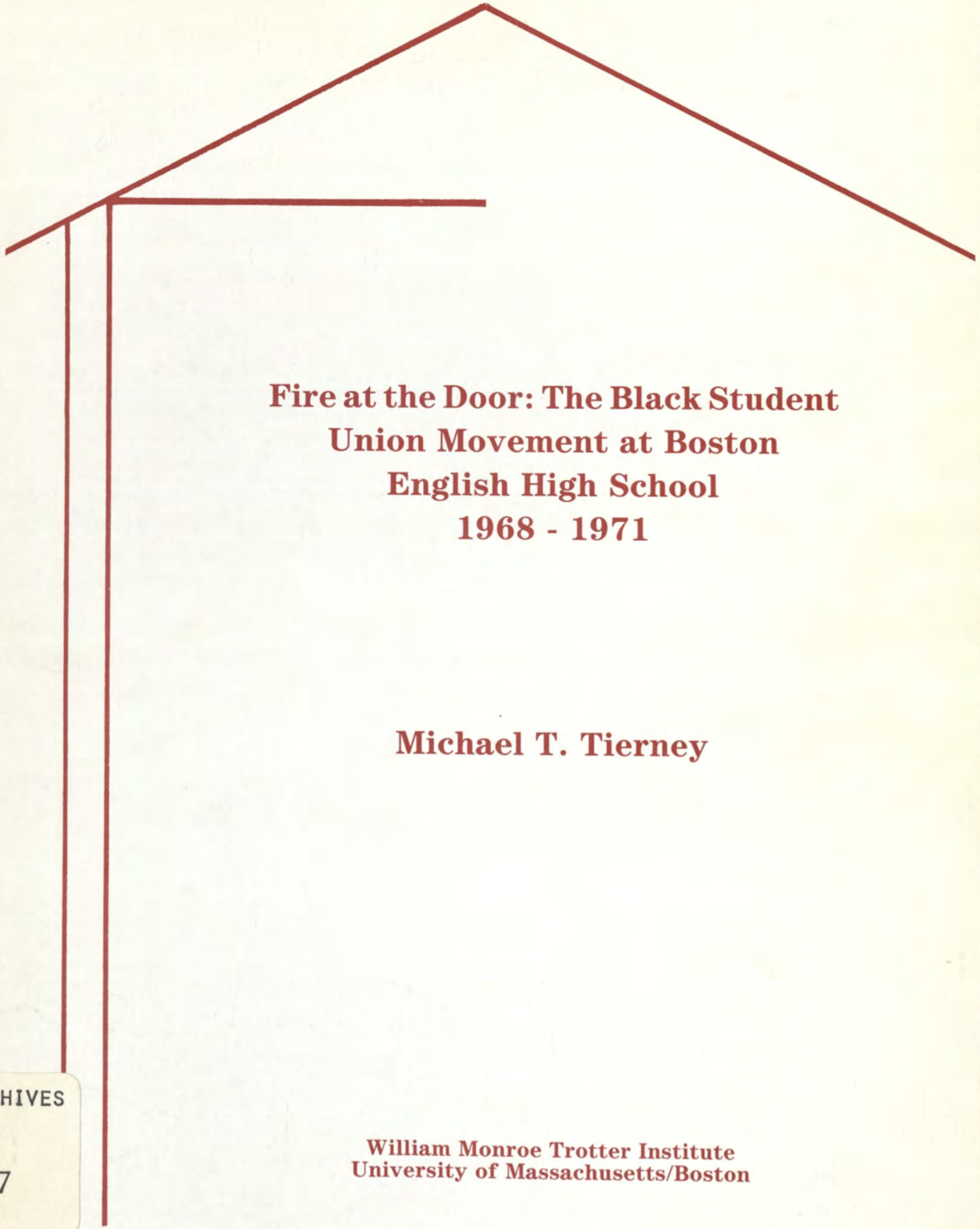

Fire at the Door: The Black Student Union Movement at Boston English High School 1968 - 1971

Michael T. Tierney

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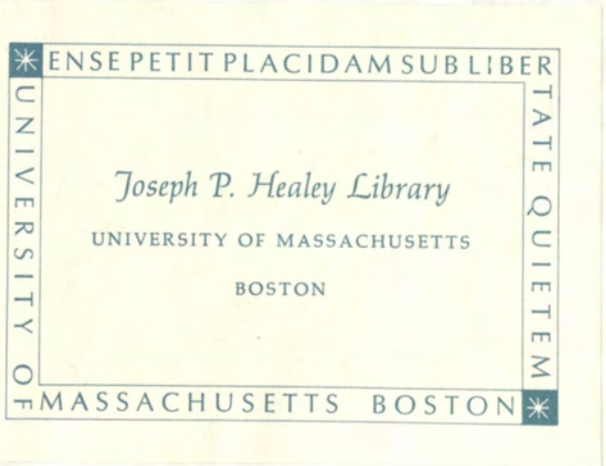

Michael Tierney completed this project when he was a research associate at the Trotter Institute, 1986-1987. He is currently director of Words Walking, a community education program that includes Step by Step, a creative expression and leadership opportunities project for West Virginia Youth and the Community Story Archive, which develops, collects, and encourages wider use of community based publications. He founded and directed the Mosaic Program at South Boston High School in 1980, and currently is a doctoral candidate in the History of American Civilization Program at Brandeis University.

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INTRODUCTION

Rickie Thompson and his friends were surprised by the mob as they cut through the Harvard Medical Complex from Brigham Circle to Louis Pasteur Avenue on their way to Boston English High School. The three black youths, earnest sophomores in the college engineering track of the 1,100-student, all-male high school, had expected a typical day. Rickie had even stayed up past eleven finishing geometry homework that now lay, apparently useless, in his briefcase. To be sure, there had been rumors of a walkout the day before–something to do with the seniors who had been suspended for wearing dashikis. But Rickie had not taken that very seriously. Somewhere between track practice, going over his music for Glee Club, studying for an English exam, and pondering the incongruity of angles A and B, he'd even forgotten the rumors.

The young men moved closer to the crowd, blending into a sea of other students with close-cropped hair, white shirts, and ties. But there were splashes of color as well–some of the seniors sported their dashikis. And there were more black faces than could be accounted for among the English High community, where black students were in a minority and where there were only two black faculty members. Members of the Roxbury community had come to support the students. One of them was yelling at Headmaster Joseph Malone through a megaphone. Others were moving forward to speak as police stood by and nervously watched the crowd.

Rickie and his classmates had limited options. Even before the school was officially closed for the day, no one would have been foolish enough to push through the crowd. They could go home and be thankful for the good luck of a day off from school, but things were just getting interesting. The headmaster was yelling back at the crowd now, and the cops were looking more agitated. The police had grabbed Glen Grayson, one of the suspended students, and Glen was angrily pulling himself away from them. It looked as though there might be trouble, but Rickie figured that

he could watch out for himself. Street-corner demonstrations, planned and spontaneous, had become a regular feature, almost a pastime, in his community in recent years. The young men chose to stay.

Rickie's choice that day was his first conscious step toward a commitment to student activism–a commitment that would be the central focus of his last year of high school. The dashiki protests were an early and key chapter in an unprecedented period of student protest in Boston's public schools. By Rickie's senior year, black student groups at English and other Boston high schools had taken a series of actions that culminated in a city-wide strike that shut down the downtown high schools for much of the winter and spring of 1971.

Discerning whether these actions constituted a distinct black student political movement is the primary purpose of this essay. First, I will present, as briefly as possible, the theoretical framework from which I evaluate the political nature of both the students' individual behavior and that of the associations they formed. This will be followed by a narrative of the key events of black student activism from 1968 to 1971 with a particular focus on English High School, including the backdrop of community protests and demographic change that preceded the swell of student activism. Finally, in terms of the political nature of the student's activities, I will contrast my interpretations of those events with those of contemporary school officials.

I would argue that Glen Grayson in 1968 and Rickie Thompson by 1971 were conscious participants in a coherent political movement to transform the treatment of black students. They and their colleagues brought the "fire to the door" of the Boston Public Schools, illuminating the patterns and effects of racism and proposing concrete changes. If their specific goals, like those of the larger black community in regards to education, were not adopted, the decision-making process of the Boston school system was changed: the factor of racial equity can no longer be ignored. The

fact that their demand for student participation in decision-making did not have a similar impact reflects not only the overall waning of student power movements, but the inherent limitations of schools as arenas of empowerment.

ADOLESCENCE, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, AND GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS

My assessment of the black students' actions as constituting a political movement is not an obvious interpretation. School officials of the time, for instance, used terms like "violence," "unrest," and "disruption" to describe the state of the schools in the late sixties. They consistently refused to acknowledge the students as a political entity, declining to meet with student leaders even at the height of the city-wide strike. Others saw the black student unions as mere reflections of larger forces in society: young people mimicking the black power movement or college student activists.

This tendency among the student's opponents to dismiss or minimize the political content of student actions is understandable. Certainly school administrators and the Boston School Committee had a vested interest in denying the existence of legitimate opposition. As for parents and teachers, they probably found it difficult to distinguish between levels of adolescent questioning. School, after all, is one of many spheres of students' lives, public and private, where norms are challenged.

The matter could be confusing for students as well. City-wide school strikes, battles between white and black student caucuses, and marches on the school committee were only the most public events in the continuum of student political development during those years. For every walkout there were students with a history of questioning school policy, students who were alarmed by such activity and worked strenuously to remain uninvolved, and students who made spur-of-the-

moment decisions to join in. Differentiating between a student who had clear political objectives and a student who was swept up in the crowd can be a hard call.

In the broadest sense, all questioning that goes on during adolescence has political dimensions to the degree that the young person is considering his or her reality in order to have greater control over it.[1] Challenging school rules is one aspect of behavior that also includes questioning parental authority, establishing independence from peer pressure, sorting out the difference between one's wants and needs, and addressing larger social issues. In attempting to describe this questioning, I am drawn to Paulo Freire's discussion of a person's "critical self-insertion into reality" or "conscientization."[2] One of Freire's editors further defines this process as one in which "men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality."[3]

Freire's phrase embodies three key points in distinguishing political behavior. First the subject is "critical" in that an analysis of his or her situation is key to the action that follows. Second the process is one of "self-insertion," meaning that however many other influences may come to bear and however unconscious the beginning of one's involvement with analysis and action may have been, at some point a conscious choice is made. And finally, the end goal of thought and action is to affect "reality" in that there are particular conditions being addressed with particular changes in mind.

In my own words I would define political development as a continuum that encompasses the processes by which people analyze the forces that affect their lives, discern options and constraints, and choose to comply with or challenge those conditions.

The relationship between the development of political consciousness within individuals, their actions, and the formation of political movements is even more

ambiguous. Lawrence Goodwyn's discussion of a better known, if equally controversial, grassroots "movement"–the Populists of the late nineteenth century–is worth bearing in mind when exploring the development of black student unions in the Boston schools. Goodwyn presents four sequential stages in the process of "democratic movement building":

(1) The creation of an autonomous institution where new interpretations can materialize that run counter to those of prevailing authority–a development which, for the sake of simplicity, we may describe as "the movement forming";

(2) The creation of a tactical means to attract masses of people–"the movement recruiting";

(3) The achievement of a heretofore culturally unsanctioned level of social analysis–"the movement educating"; and

(4) The creation of an institutional means whereby the new ideas, shared now by the rank and file of the mass movement, can be expressed in an autonomous political way–"the movement politicized."[4]

It is ironic that so linear a diagram would be used to describe something as volatile as a political movement. Thus it is important to recognize the limits of the value of such analytic tools. While scrutinization of the behind-the-scenes development of mainstream political parties or the machinations of institutions such as the Boston School Committee might leave no more coherent or linear a pattern than the black student union movement, Goodwyn highlights the basic problem in evaluating any movement. Since the primary function of a movement is the sustained development of new ideas, the relationship between that activity and concrete social change is especially murky. A movement's central achievement might be the broadening of possible solutions that might not be acted upon until long after its constituents have dispersed.

It is from this perspective that the black student union "movement" should be analyzed. For instance, did black students develop autonomous institutions from which new interpretations could be developed to challenge existing norms? Did they find means to enlist others in their cause? Did they develop a consistent analysis of the problems they wished to address? And finally, did they develop tactics to force the leaders of the Boston Public Schools to respond to their demands.

When Glen Grayson wore his dashiki to Boston English High School on Thursday, September 19, 1968, he did so as a "booster of pride and identity."[5] That expression of ethnic heritage quickly developed into a call for a black student union at the school, in order to attain "some control as far as black rights are concerned."[6] The evolution of black student demands at English and other high schools over the next three years can be divided into three periods. The first, exemplified by the dashiki protests, consisted of efforts to express black identity and rights within the existing structure of the school system. From that grew attempts to establish a power base for black students through the creation of Afro-American societies and black student unions based at and recognized by the schools. The role of those associations, the limits of their power, and the administration's response to them can be seen in the controversy surrounding the April 1970 suspension of the "Committee of Ten"–the program committee of the English High Afro-American Society. In the third phase, students built a network throughout the Boston Public High Schools that culminated in a city-wide strike, coordinated by the Black Student Federation, in which thousands of students stayed out of the city's high schools for much of the winter and spring of 1971. During this strike students presented a consistent series of demands calling for a restructuring of the schools' staff composition, curriculum, and evaluation system.

COMMUNITY PROTEST AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE: SEEDS FOR STUDENT ACTION

These efforts occurred in the midst of a decade of increasing pressure on the Boston Public Schools to be responsive to its black student population. Besides the cumulative impact of court decisions since 1954's *Brown vs. Board of Education*[7] and the momentum of the broader civil rights movement, the Boston black community's struggles around education issues were fueled by dramatic shifts in the racial demographics of the city and its schools. In 1940 Boston's black population was slightly more than 20,000, less than 3% percent of the city total. A sharp increase occurred with the migrations from the southern states over the next three decades: in 1950, 5% or 40,000 Bostonians were black; in 1960, 9% or 63,000; and in 1970, the black community numbered over 100,000 or nearly 17% of the total population.[8]

The change appears even more dramatic when examining the population of the city's schools. While 17% of the city's population in 1970 was black, 32% of the 96,000 students who attended the Boston Public Schools during the 1971-72 school year were black. Due to a complex system of feeder patterns,[9] those students were steered, for the most part, into predominantly white or black schools. For example, when the Boston School Committee had to answer the complaints of black parents in federal district court in 1972 (*Morgan et al. vs. Boston School Committee*), the committee revealed that 84% of white students in the system went to schools that were at least 80% white and that 62% of the black students went to schools that were at least 70% black.[10]

English High, the oldest public high school in the United States,[11] provides a particularly good example of the rapid change in the racial composition of Boston schools. In 1967-68 black students composed 18.5% of the student body at English High. During that school year feeder patterns were adjusted by the school committee, in part due to the lack of a high school for boys in the predominantly black Roxbury community. The entering class of English High in 1968-69 was 56.5% black;

in 1969-70 it was 76% black and 18.5% other minority.[12] By 1972-73, the entire student body of English High School was 81% black. Throughout this period the number of black faculty at the school remained the same: two full-time teachers and one part-time provisional music teacher.

Concern over the growing segregation in the school system and the deteriorating conditions of the city's "black" schools had already led to the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965 by the Massachusetts State Legislature. This law gave the State Board of Education the power to require desegregation plans from school committees and to withhold state funds for systems that did not comply. The lack of response by the Boston School Committee provoked a series of protests by the black community and a course of legal action that culminated in *Morgan vs. Boston School Committee* in 1972.[13]

Students of the time were of course more likely to have been touched by community-based protests and alternative programs than the larger legal and political machinations of their community leaders. On June 18, 1963, nearly 9,000 students participated in a Stay Out for Freedom Day in protest of the school committee's continued refusal to acknowledge and address the problem of segregation in the city's schools. On February 26, 1964, a second boycott took place. In both instances "freedom schools," patterned after those held as part of the civil rights movement in the South, were established in local churches and community centers. The following fall, through Operation Exodus, some 400 black students were voluntarily bussed from overcrowded black schools to schools in nearby white neighborhoods, initially with funds raised by parents themselves. The program grew to 1,100 students before it closed in 1968, having been eclipsed by the larger, state-funded METCO program that bussed inner-city black students to suburban public schools.[14]

1968: BOOSTING PRIDE AND IDENTITY

Seventeen-year-old Glen Grayson's defiance of English High's dress code did not grow directly out of previous experience with community protests regarding Boston Public Schools. His father drove a cab during the day and worked the night shift at a series of Boston hospitals; his mother was a nurse who also worked the night shift. Together they had struggled to send Glen and his two older brothers to the Greater Boston Academy, a private school run by Seventh Day Adventists, located first in Boston's South End and later in suburban Stoneham. But Glen had increasingly been drawn to a street-level education. His hero, Malcolm X, had spoken at the Carter playground when Glen was still in middle school. The offices of youth-oriented groups such as Operation Exodus and the Youth Alliance or the radio station operated by N.E.G.R.O. (New England Grass Roots Organization), were favorite after-school and weekend hangouts. Glen disliked being separated from his Roxbury friends in order to spend his weekdays with the all-white faculty and majority-white student body at the Greater Boston Academy. During his sophomore year, he purposely flunked several classes and transferred to the Boston Public Schools.

Grayson started at Brighton High, but soon switched to English High School, where a growing black student population had made that school a focus of discussion of possible challenges to the school system. In the fall of 1968, street-corner conversation turned to strategizing ways to confront the school system's insensitivity to black students. Wearing dashikis seemed a good way to express black identity and to highlight the antiquated school regulations that still required dress shirts and ties.[15] As many as 30 students talked about showing up to school in African dress on the same day, although only Grayson and one other senior followed through on September 19.[16]

Grayson and the other student were suspended that same day. That afternoon students formed a black student union and presented a series of demands that included:

- The immediate reinstatement of the two black students who were suspended for wearing African dress;
- A verbal and written apology from English High headmaster, Dr. Joseph Malone, for "the insult of such an act, which in essence denounced their right to be proud of their heritage, culture, and black identity";
- A written and verbal apology to the black student body for intimidation over the intercom during and after school;
- An assembly of all black students and teachers in the school auditorium Friday, September 20, where community people would be allowed to be present;
- The recognition of the Black Student Union which would be under the jurisdiction of their community advisors and the Black Student Union Federation;
- The recognition of Black Student Liberation Day on October 16, an event to be celebrated in the community, for which students would not be marked absent;
- The creation of a review board of school officials and Black Student Union officials to review present rules and regulations which, students wrote, were "a direct insult to the Black man. If the students of English High are men, we expect to be treated as such and the office attitudes and procedures concerning the treatment of a student (should) be changed to this effect."[17]

The following morning students and community members staged the rally that stopped Rickie Thompson on his way to school. The Black Student Union's statement and demands were presented to Malone by Reverend James Breeden and a group of black community members.[18] Students were not allowed to meet with Malone, and Glen Grayson was arrested for trespassing on school grounds. After hours of negotiations, Malone agreed to the two central student demands: altering the school dress code to allow dashikis and recognition of the Black Student Union as an official student organization of English High. He also said that students would be allowed to

have an assembly to air grievances the following Monday and that trespassing charges against Grayson would be dropped.

But the following Monday Louis Welch, associate superintendent in charge of high schools, "took command" at English High and announced that while the agreement on dress still stood, the union would not be recognized.[19] Welch also stood in the doorway to bar entrance to Grayson, saying he would not be reinstated until his parents came to school to sign him in.[20] This coincided with a statement by the English High faculty (with only three black staff members out of 73 teachers) rejecting an all-black group as "racially exclusive." The statement concluded: "Racism has no part in the long and proud tradition of English High School. This faculty is unalterably opposed to the policy of racial discrimination unfortunately introduced into the school last Friday."[21]

The next morning 100 black and 200 white students gathered outside English in protest. Several white students burned their ties in defiance of the dress code. At nearby Latin School, which already had an Afro-American Club, students also called for abolition of the dress code. Student protests spread to eight other schools and included demonstrations, tie-burnings, rock-throwing, broken windows, false fire alarms, and ammonia bombs. The Boston School Committee requested that Mayor Kevin White call out the National Guard. White denied the request.

Meanwhile, the Roxbury Leadership Group, a newly-formed association of community groups, called a press conference where Mel King, then executive director of the Urban League of Boston, called for a total boycott of Boston public schools by black students and sympathetic white students "until the current situation returns to normal." The leadership group also came out in support of "the attempts of black high school students in Boston to wear African dress and to organize black student groups in the public schools."[22]

In an interview in *The Boston Globe*, Grayson explained the development of the student unions:

> It was organized quite hastily. It started on the issue of my wearing the "dashiki," but it has grown in these past few days. The structure is set up and we have leaders and representatives and a body.
>
> It was organized by the students themselves. Adults are supporting them. We're supported by many agencies such as N.E.G.R.O. [New England Grass Roots Organization], the Community Education Council, Youth Alliance, Operation Exodus, and many others.
>
> Black student unions are being organized in all the high schools where there are blacks...English, Brighton High, the Jeremiah Burke [for girls]. It goes as far as Hyde Park and Roslindale where there aren't too many blacks, but a few....[A]ll the Black Student Unions of the Boston Public Schools are one. Therefore, no whites will be allowed in the Black Student Union. This is because we feel there are certain problems that are exclusive and unique to blacks alone.[23]

Grayson clearly spoke for many black students. Up to 50 percent of the student bodies in some high schools followed the boycott called by the Roxbury Leadership group. On Wednesday, September 25, Grayson was among speakers at a rally in Franklin Park where he declared, "We want black power in the schools and we can do this by forming a Black student union. A Black student union must get together today so that we can run our schools."[24] Former school committee chair Louise Day Hicks was spotted viewing the rally from the edge of the park and was chased away.[25] Rioting ensued in Roxbury. At its peak, Thursday, September 27, 6,001 students were absent from the city's 16 high schools.[26] On that Thursday, 500 students at predominantly white East Boston High School walked out of school and delivered demands for "better facilities, better lavatories, better lighting, and no more ties for boys" to their headmaster and Mayor White. White responded to the events by promising to appoint a special committee to work out grievances. In his statement establishing the probe White declared:

> Let us not delude ourselves into believing that we are confronted solely by a racial issue when in fact we face the betrayal of all children by a system not

equipped to provide them, as it must, with the very best of educational experiences.[27]

Students, supported by a newly formed 200-member Black Parents Union, returned to the schools. On October 2, the headmasters of the city's 16 high schools approved revising dress codes to allow "ethnic dress" (including dashikis). No official statement concerning the status of black student unions was issued at the time. Instead, Louis Welch, assistant superintendent, declared that that decision would have to made "at a higher level." There is no record of the school committee having acted on the issue during that school year.[28] However, by the following year it was apparent that school-recognized "Afro-American Clubs," open to whites as well, were operating at a number of campuses, including English High.

The rapid spread of the English High protests to other campuses and its growth into an impressive, if short-lived, city-wide boycott by black students could be misinterpreted to imply a more cohesive student activist network than in fact developed. Students at other schools, particularly whites, focused on the broad-based issue of dress codes and gave little attention to the factor of ethnic heritage that prompted the initial protest. Interestingly, Mayor White, whose comments in setting up a committee on "school disorders" deemphasized the issue of race, visited only one school that fall: the predominantly white East Boston High. At Boston Latin the predominantly white student body voted 1,700 to 300 against the formation of a black student union.[29]

The communication necessary for the full-scale boycott and the parental support needed to maintain it can also be related to issues other than the students' action. The spring and summer of 1968 had seen a peak of demonstrations in the black community, and informal street networks would likely have been still in place in September. Black parents had organized during the summer to demand black principals for schools in Roxbury, and at one point the possibility of boycotting

schools had been mentioned. In early September protesters had led students out of the Gibson Elementary School in Dorchester and started the Gibson Liberation School, a move that received considerable publicity and significant parent and community support.[30] In short, the rapid escalation of events after the dashiki suspension can be seen as part of an already initiated, larger pattern of organizing within Boston's black community that focused to an unusual degree on education during that summer and fall.

If the success of English High's black students depended in part on the widespread appeal of the dress code issue and on the momentum around school protest already built within the black community, the limits of that success can also be attributed to the ongoing efforts of school officials to thwart the development of black student groups. During the course of the school year administrators tried to ban students from meeting at the school and at one point tried to link the Black Student Union to a fire at the school. Glen Grayson was particularly targeted by administrators. Michael Altman, then a lawyer with the Greater Boston Legal Services, represented Grayson in no fewer than 12 cases ranging from suspension without a hearing to assault and battery. All but the latter were dropped by the school committee before being brought to decision. The assault charge stemmed from an incident when Grayson reentered the building after he had been suspended. Two plainclothes policemen stood in the doorway, and Grayson brushed past them.

Several weeks after Glenn's suspension, his father overslept for his second job on the night shift at Boston City Hospital.[31] He was awakened by "two burly cops" who asked if Glen Grayson lived there. When John Grayson nodded, they pushed him aside and "yanked Glen out of bed, half dressed, and took him down to Precinct Ten." The elder Grayson had to go to work that night or risk losing his job, and he was unable to call the precinct until the next morning. The morning shift was on duty by then, and Glen's father heard the desk sergeant call out to see if anyone knew about a

Glen Grayson who went to English High. He heard the reply, "He's the one who's causing all that trouble up there. We're going to have to kill us some niggers." Grayson was being arrested for defaulting on a warrant for his arrest, a warrant that had never been delivered, since the Graysons had recently moved.

While the state ultimately dropped the charges on appeal, legal actions preoccupied the Graysons for the next couple of years. In addition, the initial conviction was enough to move Grayson from English High to Dorchester High, where he graduated in June of 1969. Deprived of Grayson's leadership, the English High Black Student Union folded that spring.

The events of 1968 illustrate patterns that would resurface within different circumstances over the next three years. Student protest had initially erupted in response to a single disciplinary action by the administration, but it was quickly connected to broader concerns for black student rights. Parents and community leaders were drawn in for broader support. And school officials vacillated, offering different responses from different administrative levels, announcing a hard public line–"no black student unions"–then allowing for more flexibility at the campus level. There were, however, clear limits to that flexibility: administrators would continue to resist the creation of any power base by students or community members within the schools.

1969-1970: BUILDING WITHIN THE INSTITUTION

The creation of a base for black students at English High and the testing of its constraints as an in-school organization were the preoccupations of student activists during the 1969-70 school year. The Black Student Union created in the wake of the dashiki protests appears to have never been recognized by the administration and was forgotten by students after seniors such as Glen Grayson graduated. A special

edition newsletter of the English High Afro-American Society describes the creation of the group shortly before the winter holidays of 1969-70:

> Last year's student council meeting ended with a black student councilor asking, "Why can't Black Students have a Black Student Union or an Afro-American Society?" When this question was asked, there was a silence that struck the hall, and there was no response from any of the student councilors. One could hear a pin drop as everyone listened very carefully to the brother who had the floor.[32]

The black student was informed by the student council advisor that, while the headmaster would not be addressing the student council until after the holidays, "Mr. Dailey will speak to any group of student councilors who have any grievances." When a group of black students went to see Dailey after the bell rang, they were told to return later in the day. Senior Eddie Crowder described the negotiations with the headmaster:

> Between this time and the end of sixth period, rumors went around the school that a group of black students are going to ask Mr. Dailey for a Black Student Union, a confrontation between leaders of the Black Student Union and Mr. Dailey. These were just two of the many rumors that went around our school that afternoon, but as a result of these rumors, there were several teachers standing in front of the office door, blocking anyone from entering. There wasn't any trouble because Mr. Dailey who we wanted to see wasn't in the office, in fact Mr. Dailey was several feet away from us, although this does not mean that if Mr. Dailey was in the office there would have been a violent confrontation between the teachers who were standing in the hall and the dissident black student councilors who were in the midst of a fairly large group of curious students. I am only stating how the administration overreacted. It almost seems as if the truth was distorted deliberately to show a display of power so that the black student councilors would not enter the office thinking they have the psychological upper hand, in fact they would enter the office knowing their place which will make a tremendous difference. What I am stating is only an interesting assumption that came to me when I saw several teachers standing in front of the office door. Was this behavior on the part of the administration to be taken serious? Or is this what they usually do under the given circumstances?[33]

After "about thirty seconds" Dailey came over and agreed to meet with the students. He agreed to let the students form an Afro-American Society if they did not

exclude white students. According to the newsletter, it was also understood that it would not be the black students' "problem" if the white students chose not to join.[34]

Within the same special edition newsletter, the group issued an official statement as to their purpose:

> Our program is to bring black students together in Brotherhood where we can define and express our cultural values, exchange ideas, act as guidance counselors for those brothers who are planning to attend college next year or in years to come and act as sanctuary for black students who are in trouble with the administration at English.[35]

The relationship between the new in-school group and any student organizing activity outside of school is unclear. Rickie Thompson and his friends were unaware of any exterior school associations. For the average English High student, the Afro-American Society was another of numerous clubs to get involved in during the school's activity period. The society's program committee, dubbed the Committee of Ten, recommended books such as *Before the Mayflower* by Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Three Fourths of a Man* by Floyd McKissick, and *From Slavery to Freedom* by John Hope Franklin. They also gathered applications from black colleges and arranged for recruiters from Boston colleges such as Boston University to speak with the group. The newsletter also featured a column on Afro-American history, including an article entitled "Brother Marcus Garvey, the Father of Black Nationalism" in the first edition.

The requirement that meetings be officially open to white students was met with considerable ambivalence among black students. The society's official statement declared:

> Yes, we must let white students within this society because some of them recognize the inequity of this system in terms of its ill treatment of black students which was a system established by their forefathers and maintained by the descendants of the founding fathers.

> If and when white students come into the Afro-American Society they will have to devote all their energies to the up-lifting of black students, just like we will do for one another. We know that some students won't like the idea of devoting their energies to us, but that's too bad because every society or club has its aims and goals, and our aim is the up-lifting of black students. If anyone does not like the aims and goals our society is being founded upon, then our advice to those students, with an exception to Afro-American Students, is for you to join the society or club of your choice, then again form a club or society with its aims and goals that will suit you and perhaps all those like you.
>
> The only students who can truly be a member of the society, must be persons of an African descent. However members of the planning committee of the Afro-American Society recognize that there is a dissident group among the descendants of the founding fathers of this country who call themselves liberals whom have shown some concern about changing the system to make it more equitable for their so-called black brothers.
>
> We do not plan nor do we intend to destroy the wonderful Black/White student relationship at English High, but we plan and intend to better the relationship of oppressed and deprived students. We want to do something on our own. To only better ourselves, therefore we are not worried about anyone else, other then the Afro-American Students since we are forming an Afro-American Society and in its name it is for the Afro-American Students.[36]

Eddie Crowder stated his ambivalence this way:

> So we will give it a try and see what happens and once [and] for all we will know if the so-called black militants are right that you let "whitey" in and you be worse off than you were before you started.[37]

White students did not attend the meetings. In addition, there is no evidence of the same type of white hostility that had met the initial discussion of black student unions the previous fall when some white students threatened to form an "Anglo Saxon Society" in response to their black classmates' efforts.[38] Rickie Thompson remembers negative response from white students being limited to casual conversation:

> They'd say, "If you can have an Afro-American Society then why can't we have an Italian society and why can't we have an Irish society or a Jewish society?" We said, "Everything you have is geared towards white people so therefore why do you need an Irish society? But if you want an Irish Club why don't you do what we did and go to the administration and get one?" Those kind of things were quickly dispelled. They were really more debate and conversation rather than real hostility.[39]

Some white students openly supported the Afro-American Society. The society's newsletter extended a "commendation" to Edward Weston, then editor of the *English High School Newsletter*, for having "participated in making this special edition possible."[40] The January 1970 edition of the newsletter includes an article by a white student maintaining that white students should not be in the Afro-American Society:

> I am writing this comment in regard to the article by the Afro-American Society Planning Committée. In particular, the part of the statement that allows white students to join the Afro-American Society. Personally, as a white student, I feel that this society should be made up of all black students. Mainly because no matter how devoted a white student claims to be to the Negro cause, I really believe he cannot get a clear picture but only a distorted one on the social conditions of the black people.
>
> So, with this observation, I firmly contend that any member of the Afro-American Society, other than being black, will only hinder the Negro effort, while at the same time, irritate the white student or students who conceal their prejudice against blacks.[41]

The society operated without opposition for three months until, on April 8, 1970, they hosted an "unauthorized speaker," a member of another student union at Cambridge High and Latin School. Eleven students,[42] including the entire Program Committee of the Afro-American Society, were suspended. Students charged Headmaster James Dailey with political repression, asserting that the suspensions were the result of his objections to the speaker's views. Four previous speakers, most of whom had been representatives from area colleges, had not required official authorization. Dailey denied knowledge of the political opinions of the students, and claimed the students were suspended only because they disobeyed a school rule.[43] Students also claimed that the Afro-American Society's advisor, Hugh Jenkins, one of two full-time black teachers at the school, had authorized the speaker.[44]

The next day, April 9, over 500 black students struck the Boston Public High Schools.[45] Four hundred students marched from a rally at Boston English to Northeastern University's Eli Center where they met for four hours in discussion groups from which white students were barred.[46] The following week only 400 of

English High's 1,100 students attended classes. In addition, Jamaica Plain High closed early for spring vacation after 200 black students occupied the auditorium.

Student leaders demanded immediate reinstatement of the suspended students and an end to the rule that required prior approval of all outside speakers. They further charged that the suspensions were an effort to undermine English's Afro-American Society, one of the first officially recognized by the school system and one of only three in the city.[47] The Boston School Committee responded with a vote to inform all Boston school principals that any students disrupting a school "shall be dealt with severely in the way prescribed in the Code of Discipline."[48] School committee efforts to pass a resolution giving headmasters and principals on the scene power to expel students was put aside when Associate Superintendent McKenny mentioned that state laws allowed only school committees to take such action. The school code limited the disciplinary powers of headmasters and principals to impositions of three-day suspensions.

The strike tapered off after the school system's annual April vacation. In part, student demands were met. Suspended students were reinstated and the school committee's threats of heavier disciplinary action were not carried out. While the rule on approval of speakers was not amended, no further restrictions were placed on the Afro-American Society. And, at the end of the first week after April vacation, Friday, May 1, Boston teachers began a three-week strike of their own, overshadowing any potential further student action or school reform for that school year.

It is worth noting that the 1970 student walkout did not generate the kind of community response and support that students had received the previous year, in the fall of 1968. Black community leaders were preoccupied instead that spring with efforts to raise the issues of police brutality and problems with urban renewal. During the same week a full-page ad signed by a wide range of black community

leaders appeared in *The Boston Globe* declaring that "The Black Community is the Target!" The ad detailed eight incidents in the previous two years, including examples of police brutality, targeting of black communities for highway expansion, and development-related arson.[49]

The coverage of "black issues" increased greatly over the next few days but focused for the most part on uncontroversial topics. The Sunday edition that week included the headlines "Big Sisters open office in Roxbury," "Black professionals plan quick cheap housing," and "He gets results for Roxbury Community," as well as a feature on Ted Green, in charge of Roxbury's little city hall, who "likes helping people and maybe that's why things are looking brighter for Roxbury people."[50] That same edition's "Focus" section included the beginning of a series of articles on South Africa, and an article on ballet in Roxbury entitled "Roxbury girls facing the barre," and a piece entitled "Blacks still awaiting a Nixon commitment." A meeting between the Mayor and Roxbury community leaders to discuss the issues outlined in the full-page ad got four inches on page six of the Monday edition.

The English High Afro-American Society hardly received more comprehensive media treatment. Coverage of the April 9 walkout was buried within a weekend roundup of metropolitan student activism called "School eyes race problem." Within the article, the English High action shared space with Cambridge High and Latin's plans for day-long workshops on race, the walkout of 500 of the 618 students at Watertown Junior High to protest a language teacher not being given tenure, and the suspension of 12 students at Salem High after the publication of the school's underground newspaper "The Liberated Witch."[51]

The spring of 1970 proved to be an exercise in holding ground. Black students were not subject to further restrictions in their organizing activities, but it was also clear that there would be little breathing room in a school-based organization. Students would have to create their own community support for broader-based

action. With only three out of the city's 16 high schools having established black student groups and only one school (Jamaica Plain High) going out in conjunction with the English High strike, the time for a more comprehensive challenge to the school system was premature.

1970-1971: BEYOND SCHOOL WALLS

By the following winter students had developed the support structures to create and sustain a city-wide movement. When two English High black students were charged with breaking into a cafeteria worker's locker and were suspended on Friday, January 22, two hundred black students occupied the school auditorium, forcing a closure of the school that lasted five days. By the time the school completed its staggered re-opening on February 1, Brighton High had also been closed after students there took over the auditorium. Three days later the Black Student Federation, an association of black student unions in the Boston Public Schools, called for a city-wide strike by black high school students and sympathetic whites. On February 4, 600 students marched from a rally outside English High to Northeastern University where they held workshops and seminars for four hours in rooms made available to them by the university's Afro-American Institute.[52] The following day 2,500 students stayed out of school system-wide.

The strike marked the first time that the leadership for a multischool boycott had clearly come from the students themselves. The mixture of input from students, parents, and community leaders in previous actions had been ambiguous. The Stay Out for Freedom days of 1963 and 1964 had been run by parents. Similarly, while the week-long boycott in the fall of 1968 may have been a response to student-initiated protests around the dress code and black student unions, the tactic itself had been announced by Mel King of the Urban League. The winter of 1971 also marked the

first time that the Black Student Federation emerged as a public entity with an identifiable spokesperson, former Boston Trade School student Leon Rock.

The first references to a city-wide association of black students had appeared at the time of the dashiki protests in 1968. At that time Glen Grayson described efforts to organize in other schools and newspapers made allusions to a confederation of black students.[53] However, the failure of other schools to support the English High walkouts of April 1970 indicates the lack of a cohesive body at that point. Nonetheless, students were apparently working on organizing at individual campuses and developing community support for a city-wide effort. In *Chain of Change* Mel King notes:

> Nineteen sixty-nine was a relatively quiet year of hard work. Black Student Unions were organized unofficially in all the Boston high schools and students began to raise funds to support the coordinating activities of the Black Student Federation. The Federation acquired legal help through the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and began to work on cases of student rights.[54]

Michael Altman, then Greater Boston Legal Services attorney who worked with the student activists, recalls repeated litigation after the dashiki protests as the Boston School Committee attempted to harass students involved with the student unions.[55] Leon Rock, who dropped out of Boston Trade School in 1968, dated his own full-time participation with the Black Student Federation to 1969. In February of 1971 the group was said to include representatives of black student unions or Afro-American societies from 11 different city high schools.[56]

In practice, membership in the federation was less formal. The group operated out of space provided by local churches and community groups such as the Bridge Fund[57] and the Joint Center for Inner City Change.[58] Some students worked on federation activities during their paid time with programs such as New Careers, a job training program funded through Action for Boston Community Development

(ABCD) but administered through Bridge and other community groups. Such agencies would also occasionally make direct cash contributions to the students' work.[59]

With the exception of Rock, plans for the strike came from students relatively new to leadership roles in student activism. While Rickie Thompson had participated in the freedom schools and could well remember hearing Malcolm X speak at Carter Playground and watching Martin Luther King's march down Huntington Avenue to the Boston Common, he had never taken the lead in any student protest. Thompson described the evolution of his participation this way:

> The day of the walkout [February 4] we gathered in the auditorium. There had been flyers the day before, but a lot of us used to go to the auditorium anyway just to hang out before we went to school. That had nothing to do with the movement. It would be a couple of kids playing the piano, playing songs and stuff like that. And we'd sit in there and talk until the bell rang to go to home room.
>
> The auditorium was filled and I figured that if they suspended me they'd have to suspend the whole school or all of the black students in the school which at that time was 55% of the students. We weren't thinking of what steps to take, we weren't thinking of what was safe or wasn't safe....[60]

One of the announcements made before the march to Northeastern was for a meeting of the Black Student Federation. Thompson called up a friend who attended the all-female Jeremiah Burke High School and suggested they attend.

> The people that showed up ended up being the core committee and deciding what action was going to be taken. The committee wasn't a lot of people–there might have been 15 people. We thought that instead of having little things all over the place if we got together we could close down the whole system. The problems were the same all over the city.[61]

The awareness that there were city-wide problems for black students was new to Rickie Thompson. He had certainly not observed the dashiki protests or gone to his first Afro-American Society meetings with that kind of consciousness. He explained:

> People like myself were probably the last to really feel the real pressure of what was going on in the schools. People at schools like Trade [which Leon Rock had attended] that were supposedly there to get a trade and not getting one felt it a lot quicker. Most of the people on the Ten Man Committee were the people who were getting suspended, who really had the fire at their door. The fire wasn't at my door. I was never suspended and I was always in most of the advanced classes. I didn't have the pressure on me but I saw the obvious things–the lack of black teachers, the way the administration dragged their feet, the way they resented the Afro-American club once we had it. I saw what I had always been told: that when blacks organized whites would become nervous and they wouldn't want to see blacks organized in a group. Some of these things I had heard; now I was beginning to see them.[62]

Thompson had always seen himself as separate from the students "causing the trouble."

> I had come there for one thing–to get an education. My grandmother always said that for a black man to want to do something, he's going to have to work twice as hard as the white man and take twice as much. That was ingrained in me. When things were harder for me I knew that was going to be that way anyhow. If you start off behind someone you just run faster. I just accepted it. A lot of students that maybe couldn't do that or weren't raised that way just reacted and blew up.[63]

For Thompson, becoming friends with a wider range of students through the Afro-American Society and seeing them suspended because they stood up for their cultural identity brought "the fire" closer. He started thinking about what had happened to some of his childhood friends in Mission Hill who had dropped out of school. Even though Thompson was not at that time a member of the Committee of Ten of the Afro-American Society at English, he became his school's representative to the City-Wide Strike Coordinating Committee.

The call for the boycott met with immediate success. In addition to the 2,500 students who did not show up to their high schools on February 5, other schools staged spontaneous walkouts. At Hyde Park High a group of 300 students, half black, half white, left school that morning. The boycott continued to grow during the week, leading to the cancellation of a two-day, city-wide conference of students and

faculty at Boston University, planned for the end of that week. In an emergency session, called two days before the February 13-21 vacation, the Boston School Committee unanimously called for Boston Police to patrol school halls when school resumed.

When the disturbances had begun in late January, English High staff responded with several proposals in response to student demands. The Faculty Senate recommended a modified open-campus plan which would provide a more relevant curriculum and greater student freedom. They also suggested the creation of a new council including student, faculty, parent, and community representatives, although they did not make any specific suggestions as to what that council's jurisdiction might be. Headmaster James Dailey suggested that English move towards a goal of a 50 percent black faculty, which would reflect the student body composition more accurately than it did at that point, when there were only three black faculty members out of a total of 77.[64] Along with this proposal, however, Dailey also asked parents to accompany students when they returned to school and to have their sons sign an agreement which read:

> The student named below agrees to abide by the rules and regulations of the school, agrees to be bound by the Code of Discipline posted in each home room, agrees to attend school each day except when ill, agrees to arrive on time, agrees to go to each class on his program (including study classes), agrees to abide by the courtesies of a classroom and understands that the school must consult his parents and exclude him from the school if his conduct disrupts the education of others.[65]

As the boycott spread to other schools, theBoston School Committee took an increasingly hard line. Besides calling for police in the schools, the committee also voted on February 11 to direct Superintendent William H. Ohrenberger to "investigate immediately the double standard of discipline" in the schools. This order was a direct affront to striking students, since it came in response to white parents ' who suggested their children received more punishments than black students. The

school committee also voted unanimously not to allow "one group to exclude another group" during meetings on school time, a reference to the growth of Afro-American societies.[66] They also expelled two students from English High and moved to notify the district attorney to investigate the activities of Leon Rock, codirector of the Black Student Federation, for violation of laws regarding truancy.[67] The school committee seemed to attempt a repeat of their strategy of the previous spring: crack down immediately before a school vacation and expect the school break to dissipate student unity.

But the school committee underestimated the breadth and depth of the black students' organization. Strike leaders called for a continuation of the boycott until police were removed from the schools and the student's basic demands were met. Those demands, while echoing protests from previous years, showed new clarity and consistency. And while individual students and campus-based groups detailed a wide range of school procedures and conditions that they wished to have changed, each communication included the same basic five points:

- More qualified black teachers and guidance counselors;
- An end to harassment of black students by white students and teachers;
- Black studies courses;
- An evaluation of the Boston school system by the Bridge fund; and
- Complete amnesty for all high school students participating in or supporting the strike.[68]

These five demands became the basis of dialogue, standoffs, and, in particular, a series of postponed, canceled, and disrupted meetings over the next several months. The Boston High School Student Conference, held at Boston University after a two-week postponement on February 25 and 26, concluded that a "strike was necessary in all Boston high schools" but that a strike vote would be held off until after a school

committee meeting to be held the following week.[69] However, when delegates returned to their schools that Monday, several spontaneous walkouts occurred. At Jamaica Plain High School only 130 of 700 students showed up for school. At Hyde Park High School the nine student delegates addressed 100 representatives from the school's homerooms. After one black female student suggested picketing the school that day, a white male responded "Why not now?" and a 600-student walkout ensued. Even predominantly white East Boston High was drawn into the boycott for the first time, and 300 students walked out of Dorchester High. After several weeks of false fire alarms at English High, an actual fire was set that same day.

When the Boston School Committee rejected proposals for the outside evaluation of the Boston Public Schools and for amnesty for striking students, the boycott spread. At Fanueil Hall, where the school committee called an afternoon session on March 5 to hear student complaints, 20 striking students were barred from attendance as "truants" who were illegally present. The school committee then heard from a delegation of students from South Boston High School, one of the few schools unaffected by the strike. These students disavowed the actions of the striking students, suggesting that grievances could be handled "within the structure of our own administration."[70]

At this point the battle lines were clearly drawn. On one side stood the school committee and the superintendent's office, which refused to meet with anyone directly involved with the strike or its supporters. The school committee also refused to come to meet with parents in Roxbury and started proceedings to prosecute any teacher who "induces or intends to induce students to leave school."[71] On the other side stood the Black Students Federation and the "Change Committee," an ambiguous body that may have been another name for the federation. Students were supported in their demands by groups of black parents and organizations, including the Black United Front, the New Urban League, the Massachusetts Negro Education

Association, and the NAACP. White student organizations such as the Student Mobilization Committee also came out in support of the strikers, as did a group of teachers who called themselves the Ad Hoc Committee of Teachers Supporting Students.

The school strike continued through early May, during which time a series of proposals and programs were put forth by the schools. At a March 9 executive session the Boston School Committee negotiated with State Representatives Royal L. Bolling and Carter Kimbrel, both of Dorchester, whom students had asked to act as mediators.[72] In addition to the three demands previously agreed to by the board, Bolling and Kimbrel won assurances that groups such as the Bridge Fund would be included in future evaluations of the schools and that students would not be punished for participating in the strike. The last point was negotiated with particular delicacy. The demand for "amnesty" was dropped in exchange for a promise that students could come back without "fear of punishment or harassment."

Despite these relatively successful negotions, when the school committee voted down a request to meet with black students, parents, and community leaders to discuss details of changes in schools the following week, the strike was continued. The downtown schools continued to suffer 25%-35% absentee rates. Police were again ordered into high schools, and 25 students were suspended from English High the week of March 22-26.

In April a program of mini-courses at Northeastern was proposed as part of the curriculum reforms at English High. Courses included "Your Constitutional Rights," "Intergroup Relationships," "The Psychology of Prejudice," "Black Literature," and "Remedial Reading." Northeastern professors involved with the program, however, postponed its inception for over two weeks in deference to leaders of the black community (including Mel King of the New Urban League and Alan Clarke of the Bridge Fund) who wanted to ensure that the mini-courses would not be used to deflect

attention from the students' demands. By the beginning of April vacation, police had been removed from the schools and replaced by a student and community member patrol.

No formal ending to the strike was ever called. On April 28 four of the five school committee members finally agreed to meet with parent and student representatives of the black community in Roxbury. At the meeting, school committee chair Paul Tierney refused to vote on the students' five demands on the grounds that no committee member planned to change his or her vote. In addition, the school committee would neither formalize the informal compromises that had been made on school evaluations by community groups, nor would they formalize assurances made at the March 10 meeting that striking students would not be punished. Thus, black parents and students reaffirmed their support for the boycott, and the meeting soon turned to other issues, such as community control of schools in black neighborhoods.

Despite the reaffirmation of the boycott, with the end of the school year approaching students drifted back to school and the boycott was effectively halted. The informal agreement not to hold students responsible for their absence was apparently honored; students interviewed 15 years later recall getting basically the same grades they were getting before the strike began, without having to make up three months worth of work. Nor do graduation rolls from that year show an appreciable decline in the number of students graduating from English High.[73] As in the previous years' disputes, the faculty was glad to have the students' back and eager to avoid any further confrontations.[74]

For most students, participation in the movement waned as the school year drew to a close. Rickie Thompson continued to support the aims of the strike but was discouraged by the loss of momentum.

> For the rest of the year if I had a test I would come in for it and then I would leave. It was obvious that you weren't going to get any amnesty if you went back after that time.
>
> When the school year ends everything ends. There was a student who was accused of pushing a teacher during one of the fire alarms. On the day he went to court a large group of black students were with him. The judge continued the case until the summer–"Peter let's see how many friends you have in August." I didn't go. Kids are kids.[75]

The following year the Black Student Federation, rechristened as the Black Student Union after individual unions were banned at the campus level, itself turned to legislative action. It spearheaded efforts to ban the requirement of students IDs, supported voter registration drives, and published studies of drug traffic on high school campuses and a student rights handbook.[76] Legislative action tied to the Racial Imbalance Act and the organizing that led to the lawsuit that brought about court-ordered desegregation soon carried forth the demands for restructuring of the Boston school system.

BRINGING THE FIRE TO THE DOOR: THE BLACK STUDENT UNION AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

To what extent did the black student groups of Boston English and other high schools from 1968 to 1971 constitute a cohesive political movement? While many students' initial participation in walkouts, demonstrations, and efforts to disrupt the school day were spontaneous and unconscious, the history of the black student unions reveals a consciously-built, student-run power base with very specific aims.

Lawrence Goodwyn's stages of mass democratic movement building provide a useful lens to reexamine that history.[77] The various groups students developed, from street corner rap sessions to informal youth adjuncts to community organizations to formal structures such as English High's Afro-American Society and the Black Student Federation, constitute what Goodwyn called "autonomous institution where new interpretations can materialize that run counter to those of prevailing authority." Actions such as the dashiki protests, rallies, and the formation of Afro-

American societies during schools' activity periods can be seen as "tactical means to attract masses of people." Goodwyn's "movement educating" stage can be discerned in speaker series, workshops, and out-of-school educational programs developed by students from 1970-71. And finally, the establishment of the city-wide strike coordinating committee with its conscious ties to parents and black political leaders in the spring of 1971 demonstrates Goodwyn's final stage: "the movement politicized."

Ironically, the school department's most consistent interpretations of the movement, all of which denied its independence and legitimacy, further clarify the coherent political nature of students' actions. From the first walkouts in 1968, school officials charged that students were merely puppets of larger forces. When rioting in Roxbury coincided with the boycott that followed the dashiki/black student union protests, school committee chair Thomas S. Eisenstadt termed the events "well organized" and "anarchistic," and asked the mayor to call out the National Guard to see that "force will be met by force."[78] In the winter of 1971 Eisenstadt's successor Paul Tierney charged that local unrest was part of a "national conspiracy to disrupt and destroy the public school system" of the United States. He cited "extremists, the Progressive Labor Party, communist sympathizers, and SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]" as the sources of the conspiracy.[79] The March 5, 1971, school committee meeting at Fanueil Hall was a turning point in the polarization between strikers and the school department. South Boston High School senior president Martin Ridge read the statement:

> We issue this warning to all other schools to beware; we feel you are being exploited and manipulated by the Progressive Labor Party, and the Student Mobilization Committee, whose only purpose is the corruption and destruction of the Boston school system.[80]

It was at this meeting that striking students were denied entrance.

Students who participated in the movement consistently denied being manipulated by outside groups. This is borne out in part by the absence of references to such groups in initial reports on incidents at schools. For instance, a gap of a week or more usually occurred between the initial outbreaks of student protests and both the first reports of community group endorsements of student actions or the presence of such groups at student rallies. But perhaps the strongest evidence that the black student unions were not run by outside groups came from an unlikely source: the *Commission on Violence Report on the Boston Public Schools*, published in June of 1971. In the section on "Outside Influence" the report states:

> There was great disparity, even polarization [,] between students and faculty about the influence of outside agencies on the behavior of students in school. Teachers averred that outside groups did, in fact, influence students and effect disruption. Students, on the other hand, stated that they almost totally disregarded the pamphlets and exhortation of these groups.[81]

Certainly, outsiders' participation in student actions was crucial. A wide array of churches, community groups, and even government-funded youth programs provided resources for students. In addition, increasing numbers of community organizations–black and white, student, political, and parent-based–endorsed student efforts. When school officials refused to meet with students, community figures such as the Reverend James Breeden, State Representative Royal Bolling, and activist Mel King were drawn in as negotiators for student groups. The student organizations themselves also made use of former students. Black Student Federation codirector Leon Rock, for example, had dropped out of Boston Trade School in 1968 and worked for the federation full-time for over a year before emerging as a spokesperson during the city-wide strikes in 1971. Importantly, however, the use of outside advisors and resources and the recognition that the movement required some full-time, out-of-school workers did not convert it into a puppet organization.

A more subtle version of the students-as-puppets analysis is found in assertions that the black student unions were merely the inevitable overflow into schools of the larger Black Power and student activist movements. Certainly students were influenced by participation in the former and the political climate produced by the latter. The emphasis on education in black community protest, for instance, was crucial to the rapid growth of the dashiki/student union protests in the fall of 1968. But in both 1970 and 1971 students developed their own agenda and timing quite separate from larger community movements. If anything, the city-wide strike of 1971 refocused the black community on school issues. As Mel King put it, "the educational conscience of the city was also raised."[82]

Similarly, while there was an overlap between the unions and white student movement–notably around issues concerning freedom of expression and association–the black students' demands remained distinct. White students declared that they did not need ties to learn; blacks pointed to the subjugation of their cultural heritage. The curriculum of the schools was generally outdated, as white students complained; but black studies was the specific cause that black students championed. From the first actions in 1968, black students also called for more black faculty. Accusations of double standards in discipline were directed at the administration, but the student unions consistently objected to the harassment of black students on the part of both white faculty and students. And there were no attempts to build city-wide, mixed-race student groups. The Black Student Federation remained an organization of black students, respecting other students' movements and demands, but keeping in mind, as Glen Grayson put it, that "there are certain problems that are exclusive and unique to blacks alone."

A second common description of student behavior during this period is that it was random and arbitrary; that its nature was one of "violence and disruption" rather than systematic organization for student rights. In looking at the

development of the black student movement, it is apparent that disruption was indeed a tactic. It was not, however, the dominant feature of students' behavior. In each case "outbreaks" were in response to actions on the part of school officials: the dashiki suspensions in 1968, the suspension of the Central Committee of the Afro-American Society in 1970, and the suspension of two black students charged with stealing in 1971. School disruptions–walkouts, boycotts, auditorium take-overs–were bargaining chips to pressure school officials into meeting student demands.

As for the charge of violence, student actions did take an increasingly violent turn in the spring of 1971. By that time false fire alarms, ammonia bombs, broken windows, and actual fires were becoming regular features in the city's high schools. For the most part, however, the violence was directed towards property and school procedure, not teachers and other students. There were black/white student fights, and certainly some of those entailed harassment of students who declined to participate in the strike. But the reports of such incidents actually became less frequent as the scope of students' actions grew larger. The random community violence that accompanied the first high school students' boycott in the fall of 1968 did not recur during the far longer and more extensive boycott of the winter and spring of 1971. While a number of factors contributed to the early vandalism and community rioting, their absence in the later period can be attributed, at least in part, to the cohesiveness of the black students. For instance throughout the spring of 1971, students organized speakers, seminars, and workshops in local churches as alternative educational experiences.

A third charge against the black student movement was that it was an example of "reverse racism," a generic reaction against whites that was played out in school. The increasing sophistication with which black students formed alliances with white student groups, yet developed their own separate power base, belies that accusation. In both 1968 and 1971 black students painstakingly made connections between their

issues and those of the broader school community. The dashiki protests were linked to the larger attacks on the dress code. In 1971 black students were supportive of a wide range of demands generated from white student groups, many of which had to do with irrelevant curriculum and the appalling physical conditions of school buildings. In addition, during both strikes black students were joined in the walkouts by large numbers of white students, and schools that were predominantly white (such as East Boston High with 23 blacks out of 500 students) were drawn into the boycotts.

Another measure of the insignificance of "racism" in black students' actions can be seen in white students' reactions to the movement. As mentioned above, activist white students supported the student unions at various stages. But a far more mainstream source can be cited as well: descriptions of black student protests in the school yearbook's "four years in review" column. In 1968-69 the Boston English High yearbook declared:

> The school year started off with one heck of an incident. Never before in the Boston Public Schools had racial demonstrations disrupted the process of learning. However, things were a bit different this year. For some reason the Black demonstrators, most of whom did not even go to our school, chose to open their Pandora's box on the English High School. Demands such as being able to wear Afro-style clothing and start a segregated Black Student Union were thrown into the lap of the Headmaster. Outside authorities tried to take over and caused white students to retaliate for equal rights with Blacks.
>
> The attempt to mar the name of English High School was futile. What in turn did occur was the strongest unification of school loyalty ever seen in an integrated institution in this country.[83]

The following year the first paragraph of the 1968-69 school-year description was repeated verbatim (with the exception that black in "black demonstrators" was no longer capitalized). But the new description also included the fact that English High was the first to overturn the age-old school dress code. There was no mention of the connection between the "black demonstrators" and the hard-won policy of

freedom of dress. The 1969-70 yearbook also included the following description of that school year:

> The spring proved more interesting as black students demonstrated for an autonomous Afro American Society and white students for a more powerful student council. Just when things seemed to be returning to some semblance of normalcy, the faculty joined their colleagues around the city for a "Professional Day" to emphasize their concerns for the upcoming contract. It seemed that it was the year for demonstrations and everyone wanted to get into the act.[84]

By the spring of 1971, the yearbook staff had given up trying to describe the previous four years. But, while a number of administrators bemoaned the "loss of so many days of normal school...due to profitless dissension,"[85] class president Daniel R. Bird concluded, "In my opinion you have been very fortunate at English High. You have not only learned what is written in books but you have received an education in people."[86] If the majority of students did not endorse black students' actions wholeheartedly, there had at least been a progression of respect and a waning of condemnation.

The creation of an independent base of power for black students is the most striking feature in the evolution of their movement in the Boston Public Schools. From the first assertions of cultural identity in Glen Grayson's wearing a dashiki, through the development of Afro-American societies on campuses, to the work to shut down the school system for the bulk of a semester, students operated increasingly from a base outside of the schools themselves. The development of the Black Student Federation, a topic worthy of its own article or book, is the story of students organizing in a way that was increasingly independent of anything a headmaster, teacher, or school superintendent could do. Campus-based groups were important as symbols of resistance within the institution, but they were not the basis of organizing activities themselves. Rather, they were shadow institutions for the real bases of support and ideas–bases that existed and met outside school walls. The failure of

school officials to recognize the possibility of a movement that was both student-run and independent of the institution itself was the foundation of their ongoing misinterpretation of the black student unions.

From the first reversal of permission to have a black student union at English High in the fall of 1968, students learned that change would not occur at the campus level alone. A city-wide organization was necessary to effect change. Black students needed a power base that was sufficiently independent so that asking "permission" for change would no longer be necessary. Instead, independent parties that shared common turf with the school committee would negotiate. To those negotiations students brought the strongest bargaining chip they could–their very participation in the school system. In the spring of 1971, with the state legislature threatening to cut off funds and court battles being readied that would lead to desegregation, the students' power was sufficient to effect significant change in that system.

The final measure of potency of the black student unions can be seen in the seriousness of the school system's response to them. For instance, associate superintendent Louis Welch had to "take command" of English High and reverse a headmaster's decisions in the fall of 1968. The school committee also went to considerable lengths that year to pursue Glen Grayson through legal channels, eventually forcing him out of English High. The following year English High suspended 11 students because they invited one student speaker from another high school. And in the spring of 1971 the school committee repeatedly exhorted the district attorney, Mayor Kevin White, and the police department to defend the school system from black student activists.

By the spring of 1971 black students in the Boston Public Schools had brought "the fire" of their concerns to the door of the city of Boston. Through simple acts of civil disobedience, they had revoked a decades-old dress code and won the right to their own association with the schools. "Trouble maker students" had raised their

concerns with college-bound students like Rickie Thompson and drawn them into a city-wide movement. They also won the first clear promises for increased proportions of black teachers and for black studies in the Boston Public Schools. If the school committee continued to be intransigent on some demands (and indeed went back on other concessions), the students had certainly done as much as their elders had in the previous decade to raise the plight of black students in the Boston Public Schools and to keep that plight consistently before the public eye.

AFTERMATH

Twenty years later it is as difficult to measure the impact of black students on the Boston Public Schools as it is for a teacher to define his or her impact on a particular student. The forces that shape both are so myriad that distinguishing between being a major influence in an individual's or institution's life and being a fellow traveler during a period of change is impossible. The black students' demands of 1971 were initially met. Forty black teachers were hired by the Boston Public Schools during the summer of 1971–a one-sixth increase over the previous number.[87] But it would take the court orders accompanying desegregation in 1974 to bring as many as one thousand additional black teachers to the system in a single year. Complex systems to monitor treatment of black students and the participation of community groups (although not necessarily those specified by black community leaders) in the evaluation of the school system also came about as part of desegregation. In addition, black studies courses were instituted in most Boston high schools during the spring of 1971; although they have since been dropped due to budget cuts and waning enrollment.

The desegregation of schools was not a particular aim of the black student movement, yet student concerns shared the public eye with a number of other groups in instigating the reforms that accompanied that transformation of the Boston Public

Schools. The power dynamics of student and community participation in the school system's decision-making since desegregation is the subject of another essay. But it is important to note that the broad sweep of the court order bypassed structures that represented years of organizing efforts on the part of black parents and students. Black student organizations had already been effectively eliminated within the schools: single race student groups were banned after the spring of 1971. The black student union movement left no legacy of student power structures within schools, a product both of the changing constituency of the movement and the nature of the institution it sought to reform. Rickie Thompson reflects, "Schools don't empower young people. That would be like a prize fighter showing you how to throw him the knockout punch."[88]

If students' impact on their schools is undefineable, the impact of the experience of student activism on students themselves is as difficult to ascertain. Rickie Thompson recalls his initial disillusionment with taking political leadership after the city-wide strike dissipated in the spring of 1971:

> People will let you stick your neck out until it gets chopped off and then they will retreat. People just went back to school. We had stuck our necks out, and there they were going back to school; and worse than that they're guarding the fire alarms–they were part of the administration we were protesting against.
>
> When I went to college, I never really sought a leadership position in political movements. [My student activist years] made me look at everything critically. I was still a participant, but it made me less of a leader.[89]

It wasn't until he took a job in the Boston Public Schools as a math teacher that he realized he had accomplished something. He explained:

> When I got my job I realized that what I did then is part of what I've got now. Back then we were talking about role models. The fact is these jobs would not exist for black people if we hadn't stood out back then.[90]

Thompson became an active member of Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM) and was vice-president during the time BEAM fought to maintain court-ordered percentages of black teachers in the Boston Public Schools.

Leon Rock went on to run (twice unsuccessfully) for state representative. He worked in community programs in the Columbia Point Housing Project, attended UMass/Boston, taught in Atlanta, and has since lost touch with much of Boston's black activist community.[91]

Glen Grayson, whose decision to wear a dashiki and whose example of leadership sparked the fire of the first black student union movement, found the community celebrity status a blessing and a curse. In the fall of 1968 he was front page news in the *New York Times* and received an invitation to appear on *The David Susskind Show* in New York. Unfortunately, the television network only thought to send him the plane fare and neglected to think that Grayson might not have the proper dress for network TV. That same week he was caught shoplifting a sweater.' While his lawyer got the charges dismissed, the incident indicated the pressures and incongruities in the life of a poor black teenager thrust into the political limelight. After being transferred from English High, the ongoing pressures of court cases and the loss of a focus for his political convictions added to his difficulties.[92]

Glen's lawyer, Michael Altman, had not heard from him for several years when he received a call in 1972. Glen was in jail, convicted of possession of heroin. Glen's father believes that his experimentation with drugs predated his attendance in the Boston Public Schools.[93] Friends in the community disagree and also assert that Glen continued to be active with community politics, in particular the needs of young people, throughout his adult life.[94] Glen came back home to live in January 1985 and made an unsuccessful attempt to kick his drug habit. On October 30 of that year he asked his mother to take him to the hospital for testing. Three weeks later he died of pneumonia related to AIDS.

There is a photo of Glen that is the centerpiece of the front page of the League of Women Voters "Voter's Guide for Nov. 5" printed in *The Boston Globe*, October 22, 1968.[95] In it his head is raised proudly, defiantly, and stylishly. He wears the dashiki that brought him so much fame, power, and harassment. He is surrounded by photos of a peace medallion, police at a riot, a soldier in Vietnam, the State House, and a judge's gavel. But Glen's photo is the centerpiece. Inside, the League of Women Voters admonishes citizens to "Vote, Baby, Vote." For a season Glen and his political views grabbed the attention of Greater Boston. Two-and-a-half years later thousands of students, part of a "chain of change" that included Glen's initial stand, brought the school system to a halt and raised issues that would fundamentally alter the Boston Public Schools. It is ironic, but not surprising, that the movement that did so much to push the concerns of black students to the center stage of Boston's political arena played so little a role in the schools' transformation in the following decade. But that does not lessen the achievement of having changed the terms of the conversation. For a crucial period in the schools' history black students brought the fire of their indignation to their peers, their parents, their schools, and their city.

SOURCES

Many of my initial leads for this paper came from oral history interviews conducted during the fall of 1986 and the winter of 1987. I am particularly indebted to Rickie Thompson and Mr. and Mrs. John Grayson for their time, willingness to share their papers and mementos with me, and determination not to fabricate history. Where they were uncertain of an incident, they declined to speculate; where their interpretations differed from newspaper or other interviewees' accounts, they helped me discern the most credible version. While, as my interviewees asserted, drawing on 20-year-old memories is tricky business, I have been able to ground material drawn from oral history with discussions from other participants and from printed sources.

Contemporary newspaper accounts also offered contradictory information, thus my version of the events of 1968-71 again came from comparions of three to four versions from the papers, which I then ran past my interview sources.

I am also indebted to staff of English High School for sharing archival materials with me. In particular Richard Sonego, who started at the school as a history and civics teacher in 1967 and is now a guidance counselor, has organized an archives of official publications of the school (school catalogs, yearbooks, etc.). I also relied on former students of the school for copies of student newspapers.

Finally, my research has included comparatively little discussion of secondary sources. As noted in the paper this is because few published historians have taken the black student movement in Boston seriously. The exception to that is Mel King, whose account of student protests in *Chain of Change* (Boston: South End Press, 1981) first inspired this chapter in my own long-term interest in the political activity and development of adolescents. Other books listed in the bibliography have shaped my thinking about adolescence, political activities in schools, and the life of inner city teenagers, but are not mentioned (beyond footnotes) in the actual text. If I were to

expand this piece into a longer treatment of adolescent political action, I would draw on them for a theoretical chapter.

NOTES

1. Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, Youth and Crisis.* London: The MacMillan Press. Erikson's work is amplified (and criticized for its bias towards middle-class males) in: Perry, W. (1968). *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; Miller, J. B. (1976). *Toward a New Psychology.* Boston: Beacon Press; and Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

2. Freire, P. (1970). *Cultural Action for Freedom.* Cambridge, MA: Center for the Study of Development and Social Change. Harvard Educational Review Monograph Series #1, pp. 21-22.

3. Ibid., p. 27.

4. Goodwyn, L. (1976). *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. xviii. I would not venture any broader comparison of the Populists and the black students' activities other than the observation that their status as coherent political movements have been similarly challenged.

5. *The Boston Globe*, September 29, 1968, p. 18.

6. Ibid.

7. This landmark case reversed the segregatory "separate but equal" doctrine that had taken precedence in the nation's legal system since the Supreme Court's *Plessey vs. Ferguson* decision of 1896. The best text on *Brown vs. Board of Education* remains Kluger, R. (1976). *Simple Justice.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

8. Fraser, J. W. (Ed.). (1979). *From Common School to Magnet School: Selected Essays in the History of Boston's Schools.* Boston: Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston.

9. In a nutshell, since 1917 the Boston public schools had included both middle schools and junior highs. The former were organized on six years of elementary school, leading to three years of middle school, and then to three years of high school. This was the pattern in the neighborhood high schools (both those in the black community and in the all-white neighborhoods such as South Boston). Other schools were organized into eight years of elementary and junior high schools leading into four years of high school. These schools had a higher proportion of students feeding into the exam schools such as Boston Latin, as exams were only given to students terminating one phase of their education at the end of seventh or eighth grade. I discuss the formation of this system in my Brandeis first-year essay "A School for the Community: Struggle and Compromise in South Boston: 1853 to 1906." That this pattern led to segregation is affirmed by Fraser. (1979). *From Common School to Magnet School*, p. 122.

10. Fraser. (1979). *From Common School to Magnet School*, p. 121.

11. English was established as the English Classical School in 1921 to provide for boys who were to be prepared "not for the university but for various mercantile and mechanical pursuits." School Committee of the City of Boston. (1903). *Boston School Committee Reports.* Boston: Author, p. 39.

12. Adkins, J., McHugh, J. R., & Seay, K. (1975, August). *Desegregation: The Boston Orders and Their Origin.* Boston: Boston Bar Association Committee on Desegregation, p. 20.

13. There is neither the space nor time in this essay to provide an adequate history of the struggles of Boston's black community to have an impact on the Boston public school system. In fact, that history remains to be written. The best known treatment of the immediate impact of desegregation on Boston is Lukas, J. A. (1985). *Common Ground.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, gives relatively little information on the organizing efforts of the black community concerning schools that led up to the court order. King, M. (1981). *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development.* Boston: South End Press, includes school issues within a broader discussion of black community organizing from the 1950s through the 1970s. The above-cited collection of essays on Boston public schools, Fraser's *From Common School to Magnet School*, includes two essays that outline the history of blacks in the public schools: "Black Schools in White Boston, 1800-1860" by Byron Rushing and "Segregation and Desegregation in Boston's Schools, 1961-1974" by Henry L. Allen. Kozal, J. (1967). *Death at an Early Age*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, an account of teaching fourth grade during the 1964-65 school year, is perhaps the most famous indictment of Boston's segregated system. Shrag, P. (1967). *Village School Downtown.* Boston: Beacon Press, presents the broader political context of de facto segregation in Boston's schools during the same period. Other discussions of desegregation, such as Lupo, A. (1977). *Liberty's Chosen Home: The Politics of Violence in Boston.* Boston: Little Brown, or Hillson, J. (1977). *Battle of Boston.* New York: Pathfinder Press, deal almost exclusively with the period after the court order for desegregation in 1974.

14. METCO stands for the Metropolitan Council on Educational Opportunity, founded in 1966.

15. The dashiki was a fairly new popular symbol of black pride. Roxbury stores had only recently begun stocking inexpensive, locally produced, African style dress (in the $10 to $50 range as compared to expensive imported clothing). The religion caucus at the previous month's Black Power conference in Philadelphia urged black clergymen to change their traditional robes to African dress. *The Boston Globe.* October 6, 1968.

16. Interview with Dan Richardson, January 30, 1987. Richardson was active with a number of youth organizations at the time and recalls Grayson and other students talking about wearing the dashikis for several weeks before the action.

17. Demands summarized in Black Student Union statement cited in *Bay State Banner*, September 26, 1968.

18. Breeden, an Episcopal minister, had long been active in educational issues in the black community including announcing, in his capacity as chair of the Citizens for Human Rights, the first "Stay Out for Freedom" to protest de facto desegregation on June 12, 1963. He was also cited in the newspapers as one of the community leaders who had taken to wearing "his collar beneath a dashiki."

19. *Boston Record American*, September 24, 1968, p. 3.

20. Photo in *Boston Herald Traveler*, September 24, 1968, p. 2. Glen's father recalls Malone calling him asking him to keep Glen home from school because he was a "disruptive influence." The elder Grayson asked if that meant his son was suspended. Malone refused to acknowledge that but said only that he would like Glen kept home until things calmed down.

21. September 23, 1968, statement by Faculty Senate of English High School cited in *Bay State Banner*, September 26, 1968, p. 7, and *The Boston Globe*, September 25, 1968, p. 39.

22. King cited in *The Boston Globe*, September 26, 1968, p. 1.

23. Grayson was one of six English High School students interviewed in a full-page article in *The Boston Globe*, September 29, 1968, p. 18.

24. Quoted in the *Boston Record American*, September 26, 1968, p. 20.

25. Ibid., p. 3. Hicks had drawn particular ire for her standoffs with the black community over implementation of the Racial Imbalance Act during the mid-sixties. Her appearance at the rally was likened to "George Wallace's attending a Black Panther or Blackstone Ranger conference. Could you see Rap or Stokely taking notes at a gathering of the [Ku Klux] Klan without being harmed?" Quoted by rally attendant in *Bay State Banner*, October 4, 1968, p. 1.

26. Boston School Department figure cited in the *Boston Record American*, September 28, 1968, p. 30. The figure remained high at 5,013 the following day.

27. Cited in *The Boston Globe*, September 29, 1968, p. 19.

28. *Boston Herald Traveler*, October 3, 1968, p. 5. School Committee minutes show no decision on black student unions. Boston School Committee. (1968, 1969). *Proceedings of the School Committee of the City of Boston.*

29. *The Boston Globe*, October 1, 1968, p. 22. Current school census figures were unavailable, but during the previous year Latin's student body consisted of 1,904 whites and 140 nonwhite students. Not surprisingly, during the height of the boycott Latin only had 119 students absent compared to 357 absent from English, which was roughly half Latin's size. *Boston Herald Traveler*, September 28, 1968.

30. The Gibson School "fracas" dominated media coverage of school issues up until the dashiki protests and subsequent boycott took priority.

31. The information in this and the following paragraphs was taken form interviews with Michael Altman and Grayson's parents, January 27, 1986.

32. English High School Afro-American Society. (Undated). "How the Afro-American Society Was Founded," in *English High School Afro-American Society Newsletter,* Special Edition. Boston: Author, pp. 2-3. While the four-page, stenciled handout is undated, from references to upcoming meetings of the society, it appears to have been distributed during the first week of January in 1970. I have taken the liberty of correcting typographical errors (e.g., spelling) to enhance the readability of my citiations from both this publication and the *English High School Newsletter.*

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. English High School Afro-American Society. (Undated) "Official Statement by the Afro-American Society Planning Committee," in the *English High School Afro-American Society Newsletter,* Special Edition. Boston: Author, pp. 1-2.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 3.

38. Even at that time white students appear to have been open to the idea of an Afro-American Club that would also be open to white students. *The Boston Globe,* September 29, 1968, p. 18.

39. Richie Thompson interview, January 12, 1987.

40. Weston's politics are indiscernible. For the most part the surviving issue of the *English High School Newletter* is apolitical, dedicated to the basketball team, and filled with club news and sports. However, he does fill some extra space underneath the staff box with the following quote from the Progress Party Platform of 1924: "Every generation must wage a new war against new forces which seek through new devices to enslave mankind."

41. English High School. (1970, January). Letter to the editor by Mark Winston, in *English High School Newsletter.* Boston: Author, p. 6.

42. There appears to be some confusion as to whether this was nine or eleven. Two out of the three Boston papers reported the suspension of eleven students.

43. *Boston Herald Traveler,* April 11, 1970, p. 5.

44. This is only reported in the *Bay State Banner,* April 16, 1970, p. 1. According to Rickie Thompson, Jenkins let students make their own decisions.

45. *Bay State Banner,* April 16, 1970, p. 1.

46. *The Boston Globe,* April 12, 1970, p. 7. The *Boston Herald Traveler,* April 11, 1970, p. 5, refers to a student takeover of the hall. After complaints from the Boston School Committee to Northeastern, the university acknowledged that they did indeed allow students to use the hall, but only because they did not want a mob of 400 students roaming the campus. Also reported in the *Bay State Banner,* April 16, 1970.

47. *Bay State Banner,* April 16, 1970. The *Banner* further states: "One student, who was suspended for 4 days because he invited the headmaster to join the allegedly unauthorized meeting said that the headmaster told him if he would drop out of the Society, he would be readmitted to school and charges would be dropped against him."

48. *Boston Herald Traveler,* April 24, 1970.

49. *The Boston Globe,* April 17, 1970, p. 17.

50. *The Boston Globe,* April 19, 1970.

51. *The Boston Globe*, April 12, 1970, p. 7.

52. After protests and threats of a suit from the School Committee, Northeastern said that the rooms were only made available to prevent the 600 students from disrupting campus.

53. *The Boston Globe*, September 19, 1968, p. 18.

54. King. *Chain of Change*, p. 121.

55. Interview January 26, 1987. Altman recalls efforts by the administration to keep unions from meeting in the school and to connect black student union members to a fire in the school among other actions.

56. *The Boston Globe*, February 21, 1971, p. 42.

57. The Bridge Fund started in 1965 as a program that placed black students in Boston area private and parochial schools as an alternative to the public system. It expanded to include pre-school and after-school day care, tutoring, an Upward Bound program, and to host a number of educational programs such as the Educational Conference–a group of parents, activists, and public school personnel working to develop an instrument for parents to evaluate the schools their children attended.

58. A group that was developed between the Urban League and Boston College.

59. My description of the informal support received by the Black Student Federation comes from interviews with Rickie Thompson and Allen Clarke, then director of the Bridge Fund.

60. Interview with Rickie Thompson, January 12, 1987.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. *The Boston Globe*, January 26, 1971, p. 18. There is some discrepancy as to the number of black and white faculty at the school at this time. Other news reports say four out of 80. In his "Report on English High School Conferences–January 24-26, 1971," Daily specifically recommended "That staff at English High School, academic and nonacademic, be racially proportional to the student population. The intern program from local colleges should be used."

65. Memos from James W. Daily, Headmaster of English High School, January 25 and 26, 1971.

66. *The Boston Globe*, February 12, 1971, pp. 1, 10.

67. Specifically, Chapter 76, Section 4 of the General Laws, which has to do with encouraging minors to be absent from school. Interestingly, that month's student School Committee Representative, a Tom Morrison from Boston Latin, said "that members of the Black students do not feel that direct action against Leon Rock will resolve any of the problems but will only compound the situation." He further suggested that the School Committee and Superintendent communicate directly with the Black Student Federation and any students who want to make any suggestions for the problem. Boston School Committee. (1971, February 9). *Proceedings of the School Committee of the City of Boston.*

68. Cited in *The Boston Globe*, February 22, 1971, p. 10, and reiterated in dozens of articles, Boston School Committee minutes, and BSF statements that spring.

69. Conference steering committee member, John Rudnick (of Boston Latin), quoted in *Boston Herald Traveler*, February 27, 1971, p. 1.

70. *Boston Herald Traveler*, March 6, 1971.

71. Ibid.

72. The representatives apparently did this in their capacity as community leaders and not from any regular association with the student groups. Neither Bolling nor Kimbrel's name appears in association with the student movement again, and Black Student Federation members and supporters interviewed do not recall any meetings with the politicians.

73. A number of students, however, did not return to English High School and one of the ongoing activities of groups such as the Bridge Fund and the later versions of the Black Student Federation was finding alternatives for student who did not want to stay in the Boston Public Schools.

74. Interview with Jim Corscadden, then Faculty Senate president.

75. Interview with Rickie Thompson, January 12, 1987.

76. King. *Chain of Change*, p. 126.

77. Goodwyn. (1978). *Democratic Promise*, p. xviii.

78. Thomas Eisenstadt, cited in *The Boston Globe*, September 25, 1968, p. 39.

79. *The Boston Globe*, February 12, 1971.

80. *Boston Herald Traveler*, March 6, 1971.

81. Boston School Committee Commission on Violence. (1971, June 30). *Report on the Boston Public Schools.* Boston: Boston School Committee, pp. 8-9. I say this is an unlikely source because it was created at the request of Louise Day Hicks and included no representatives of the striking students or community groups that supported them in its membership.

82. King, *Chain of Change*, p. 126.

83. English High School. (1969). *Yearbook*. Boston: Author.

84. English High School. (1970). *Yearbook*. Boston: Author.

85. English High School. (1971). *Yearbook*. Boston: Author. Dailey had retired mid-March due to an ulcer.

86. Ibid.

87. *Christian Science Monitor*, July 15, 1971, p. 4.

88. Interview, January 12, 1987.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. King's *Chain of Change* traces Rock as far as his political campaigns. Rock left Columbia Point by 1982 and is presumed to be still in the Boston area although no longer active in community politics.

92. Interview with Michael Altman, January 1987.

93. Interview with John Grayson, January 28, 1987.

94. Interviews with Jacquie LeBeau and Dan Richardson, January 1987.

95. *The Boston Globe*, Special Supplement, October 22, 1968.

INTERVIEWS

Michael Altman, lawyer with Greater Boston Legal Services through 1971; worked particularly with Glen Grayson.

Steven Bing, director, Massachusetts Advocacy Center.

Allan Clarke, former director of the Bridge Fund.

James Corscadden, teacher at English High School, Faculty Senate president in spring of 1971.

Lawrence Cotin, lawyer, former staff member of Massachusetts Law Reform Institute.

James Dailey, headmaster, English High School, September 1969 to March 1971.

Mr. and Mrs. John Grayson, parents of Glen Grayson.

Jacquie LeBeau, youth worker, Operation Exodus.

Dan Richardson, youth worker, community activist.

Richie Thompson, English High School student, class of 1971.

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